EAST WIND

Politics and Culture of Asians in the U.S.

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SPECIAL FOCUS:

CULTURAL FEATURES

Cover *by Nancy Hom*

FROM THE EDITOR

The Murder of Vincent Chin

Life sometimes passes in a blur of events, tasks, and obligations. There's the job, the kids, weeding the garden, new video games, knitting, social engagements, vacations, etc. The mundane and the profound fused together in a vortex.

And then something happens that is almost unbelievable, that strikes like a bolt of lightning and makes you wonder, "What the hell is goin' on?"

Did you hear the news? Vincent Chin, a 27 year old engineer who immigrated from Hong Kong, was murdered in Detroit in June, 1982. And seven months later, his killers are freed on three years probation and a $3,000 fine.

How could this happen? It's 1983 but it might as well be 1883.

The crime was heinous; the sentence appalling. Two white men, Ronald Ebens and Michael Nitz argued in a restaurant with Chin, who was celebrating his upcoming marriage. A fight broke out. Ebens and Nitz waited outside the restaurant for 20 minutes, followed Chin, and beat him to death with a baseball bat. Charged with second degree murder, the killers were released on bail.

In the sentencing, Judge Kaufman noted that Ebens, an auto plant foreman, and Nitz had never been convicted of a crime before and that "they weren't the kind of people you send to jail."

There was no justice in Judge Kaufman's court. Henry Yee, a Chinatown restaurant owner, commented: "You can kill a dog and get 30 days in jail, 90 days for a traffic ticket."

It's been noted many times before from DeTocqueville to H. Rap Brown — racism is as American as apple pie. It's a sickness running through American history from the slaughter of the Native Americans to the Southern slave plantations to the robbery of Chicano lands in the Southwest and to the coolie labor of Asians in the mines, railroads and fields of the West. Racism and national oppression are a product of a capitalist system. Today, racist violence is on the rise. As the economy worsens, racism is fanned up to scapegoat minorities for the problems brought on by decaying capitalism.

What can we do about the murder of Vincent Chin? We mourn for his family for as they have lost a son, we have lost a brother. And we will fight as Vincent Chin fought with every fiber in our bodies, with determination from the depths of our souls.

The murder of Vincent Chin and the perversion of justice in Judge Kaufman's court lays bare a fundamental reality of being Asian in the U.S. As long as one of us can be murdered, his/our rights trampled, then none of us is free.

There is struggle ahead. There are debts to be settled, dues to be paid. There are battles to be won. □

Eddie Wong

Uniting for Redress/Reparations

Representatives of the Japanese American Citizens League, National Coalition for Redress/Reparations and Washington Coalition for Redress met in Reno, Nevada on April 23, 1983 and agreed to the following statement:

"The leadership of the JACL, NCRR and WCR recognize that the ultimate objectives of the three organizations in regard to redress are: (1) substantial monetary compensation in an amount reflective of the overwhelming testimonies presented at the Commission hearings and (2) direct individual payments to evacuees and their heirs within a reasonable amount of time for losses and violations of basic human rights, imposed by arbitrary actions of the federal government under Executive Order 9066 during World War II. In rec-ognition of the commonality of these objectives, JACL, NCRR, WCR agree that monetary reparations must be paid to individuals, that the above groups would cooperate to develop such legislation and to obtain the most effective sponsorship as possible. Additionally, such legislation should provide funds to compensate for community losses. Such funds should be authorized for community projects and other purposes as would benefit surviving evacuees and their descendants."

The JACL, NCRR, and WCR agreed to continue meetings to discuss unresolved issues and refinements in approaches to redress.

Floyd Shimomura, President, JACL · Bert Nakano, National Spokesperson, NCRR · Chuck Kato, Chair, WCR

Stan Shikuma

Rebuilding Seattle's I.D. — the story of Inter*Im —

By Bob Santos

The history of the International District of Seattle can be characterized as one of neighborhood values competing against larger political and financial interests. Residents of the International District ("I.D.") have long striven to create a unique mix of commercial, residential, cultural, social and recreational activities aimed primarily at the needs of its multilingual, multicultural community. However, outside economic and governmental interests have, until recently, ignored the residents' wishes, pursuing projects without consideration of community needs or objections.

The International District has been the focal point for the Asian population of Seattle and the Pacific Northwest since the 19th century. Beginning in the 1860's, Chinese immigrants began settling in Seattle just west of the present International District. During the 1880's, the Japanese migrated to Seattle from California and established a community in the District. The first Filipino immigrants came to the District after 1900 and were later joined by Koreans, Samoans, Vietnamese and Cambodians. Today the International District is home for a diverse mix of Asians, Blacks, Whites, and Native Americans, and includes both long-term residents and recent immigrants. Because of the variety of ethnic groups living and working in the same neighborhood, the International District is unique among Asian communities in its diversity.

The International District has a history of struggle to maintain its unique character.

1885 — 1886 Anti-Chinese riots forced merchants to flee Chinatown

1889 — Washington State passed an Alien Land Law prohibiting aliens to own land

1889 — The Great Seattle Fire destroyed the Chinese

neighborhood

1920 — The extension of 2nd Avenue cut through the middle of the original Chinatown in Seattle. This action resulted in the movement of Chinatown to what is now the International District.

1939 — 1945 The internment of Japanese citizens resulted in the reduction of land and business ownership by residents of the I.D. and a decline in the population of the I.D.

1900 — 1945 The City practiced segregated housing practices in a covert manner. Asian persons seeking homes or business opportunities were met with discrimination in the real estate, industrial and financial communities. Quite often they were left with only the I.D. as a place to reside or conduct business.

Since 1970, a new cohesive strength has developed in the I.D. As the symbolic and actual center of the Asian Community, the International District has become a focal point for community seeking to revitalize the area. This has created the base from which we have been able to improve the character of housing, social and health services, and business in the neighborhood.

Charged with the responsibility to bring all factions together in a fight for survival was the International District Improvement Association (Inter*Im).

Not an easy task when you consider each major ethnic group, Chinese, Japanese, Filipino exists separately because each has its own language, customs and social outlets. American Indians, Blacks and elderly Caucasians also lived in the I.D.

Inter*Im had to break down the historic barriers and gain the community's trust. The I.D. was then a very conservative, traditional community, and leaders still were skeptical about a single agency, Inter*Im, serving the combined interests of all the different cultures in the neighborhood. Each ethnic group had survived in the past by helping its own people through its own family associations, service clubs, societies and fraternal lodges. But Inter*Im had something else going for it: When applying for government funding, projects could not be discriminatory; it was fiscally necessary to work together.

Inter*Im built a bilingual staff of young people familiar with the problem of neighborhood residents. Most came from among the many volunteers, already involved in Inter*Im's various program activities. Thus, the staff had a built-in enthusiasm as well as a sensitivity to the agency's clients.

The Inter*Im staff introduced themselves to the local shop owners, becoming more familiar with their concerns on a daily one-to-one basis. It was known that building a consensus could not happen overnight. The staff would need collective and individual patience to pace themselves, particularly when working with elderly Asian Americans. Inter*Im then went to work to assess critical needs of the neighborhood in three problem areas — social services, economic development, and physical environment.

Up to now progress in the form of commercial and highrise development forced the displacement of mostly low income and elderly residents from their homes in downtown neighborhoods. Inter*Im visited several cities to witness this fact and to talk with various leaders who experienced mutual problems of displacement. Every city had its problems from Los Angeles' Little Tokyo to San Francisco's Chinatown and Manilatown. In Seattle this phenomenon was happening next door to the I.D. in Pioneer Square and further into town at the Pike Market and Denny Regrade. Hundreds of people were being displaced. Inter*Im knew

Stan Shikuma

*Bob Santos, Inter*Im Director (center)*

Stan Shikuma

The elderly organized to save their community.

if the I.D. was to retain its residential character, the highest priority had to be decent, affordable housing. In 1972, a long-range target of 1,000 units was agreed upon. The goal involved hardheaded negotiations and sensitivity training, including demonstrations and sit-ins. Such tactics ran against the grain of the elders' cultural upbringing. But change in acceptable forms was preferable to unwelcome varieties imposed from the outside. The I.D. was becoming the dumping ground for new public uses. Examples included the construction of Interstate 5 through the residential part of the I.D.; the planning of Interstate 90 on the southern border of the district; the construction of a 60,000-seat Kingdome on the west boundary and the planned but abandoned Intermodel Transportation Center at the Union Station within the I.D.

The housing struggle was a lengthy one, but within four years Inter*Im gained the cooperation of the Seattle Housing Authority and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in creating 400 units of new or rehabilitated housing by 1974, more than one third of its overall target. By 1979, 200 more units were built again as the result of pressure by the community, and finally in 1980, the I.D. was designated a Neighborhood Strategy Area (NSA), which allowed the I.D. to get an allocation of 225 Section 8 "set aside" units. Set asides are the best kind of Section 8 units because you don't have to compete with other neighborhoods for them; they're "set aside" from the usual competitive allocation process for Section 8 units. The NSA set aside units are being used for the substantial rehabilitation of vacant, but structurally sound multi-family housing stock and will permit the completion of five buildings within the next four years. To enable to further reach our housing goal, another allocation has been awarded for the rehabilitation of the vacant Atlas Hotel into 46 single-room occupancy units (SRO) to begin construction in the summer of '82 and complete in 1983.

Another major concern of Inter*Im was the absence of any health care facility to serve the needs of non-English speaking Asians. Inter*Im reasoned that the first place I.D. should take its concern was to the county government since it was King County which had imposed the multipurpose stadium upon the neighborhood. It was argued that a multilingual health clinic would be appropriate compensation for the increased traffic congestion in the community.

Inter*Im secured matching county funds from the city and state. A demonstration grant was funded by the Department of Health Education and Welfare. The resulting health center soon was staffed by medical men and women who could discuss their patients' ailments in fourteen Asian languages.

Another bit of negotiating was done with state highway officials to obtain some form of compensation for neighborhood devastation caused by the freeway. The state agreed to lease Inter*Im part of the air space beneath the elevated freeway in the district. Soon 183 parking stalls in a paved, rain-sheltered lot were generating revenue to enable the community to continue its struggle for life. Today, along with the newly created I.D. Merchants Parking Association, the community controls 14 other parking lots.

The project that Inter*Im feels brought the community together was the development of the I.D. Community Garden. Inter*Im acquired land from Dan and Wilma Woo, private land owners, and the City of Seattle, and began the construction of 110 terraced gardens on a hillside overlooking the I.D. Inter*Im staff hustled 1,200 railroad ties from Burlington Northern, gravel from local quarries, building material from Seattle-based construction suppliers and the use of heavy equipment from rental companies. Four terraces were cut; retaining walls were constructed from railroad ties;

Stan Shikuma

A community luau builds a spirit of cooperation.

Stan Shikuma

Railroad ties serve as retaining walls at the community garden.

Stan Shikuma

The garden provides the elderly with recreation, exercise, friendship and produce.

Stan Shikuma

The terrace apartments.

a drainage system and irrigation system installed and tons of top soil trucked in. The gardens are maintained by the Inter*Im staff for 150 low income elderly residents of the I.D. who garden every month of the year. The project not only allows the elderly to grow their own produce but gives these residents of elevated housing in hotels and apartments their own piece of land. It also provides recreation, exercise and friendship with other cultures.

But successful development does not occur by waving a magic wand. Tools have been developed through legislation to protect and build the I.D. To protect the district from speculative development from past stadium expansion, the I.D. was designated a Special Review District which is controlled by a board of I.D. residents, property owners and shopkeepers who control the types of development that can occur within its boundaries, and acts as an overlay zoning.

The other tool was the City's agreement to authorize the creation of a public corporation, set up by Inter*Im in the I.D., acting as a kind of mini-municipality. Our public corporation can receive funds to acquire property directly from the public sec-

Stan Shikuma

tor, and gets lower interest rates on loans from banks because the interest paid is tax free to the lender. It is the public corporation which is acting as the developer of most of the new low income housing under the NSA program, and it also manages the buildings.

The Public Corporation has just completed a $3.4 million renovation of the Bush Hotel which includes 200 units of housing and is headquarters for six social service and housing advocacy agencies; a fully equipped kitchen that serves an average of 140–150 meals daily for low income elderly; meeting space for use of community groups; commercial space housing Asian oriented stores and restaurants; and a rooftop greenhouse for the tenants of the building.

Inter*Im has played the rough role, the advocacy role and the developer role, but it has also learned to play a sophisticated political role in the preservation of the I.D.

Progress this time had been reconnoitering the I.D.'s 1911-vintage Union Pacific Railroad depot. The massive Port of Seattle proposed to build a $17 million regional intermodal transportation terminal on the 11-acre site, principally for inter-city buses and AMTRAK. The port's proposal would destroy the residential character of this pioneer district forever. Residents and shopkeepers alike protested the threat of air, noise and visual pollution inherent in the proposal for a regional bus terminal in the neighborhood. Inter*Im argued that the environmental hazards to the elderly would be particularly unhealthy. It was pointed out the local transportation need already accounted for 32 daily bus routes through the I.D., peaking at 200 buses during rush hours.

Another catastrophic result of the terminal proposal would have been the sharp escalation of property

value and the freezing of low income housing rehabilitation. As evidence of temptation to speculators in the community, Inter*Im cited the private owners of a major low income facility near the old train station who were exploring the possibility of converting their property into a tourist hotel.

To counter all this, Inter*Im organized a community-wide protest directed at local decision makers and elected officials, members of the Congressional delegation, neighborhood groups which had opposed port proposals elsewhere in the city and county and from the I.D.'s former Congressman, the then Secretary of Transportation, Brock Adams. The Port of Seattle was applying for a $400,000 federal feasibility study grant from DOT. Inter*Im took issue with portions of the application and it subsequently was returned to the Port for rework. The members of the Seattle City Council took a keen interest in the issue and agreed in concept with the community position.

After a six-month battle with the Port and with support coming in from all over the nation for the protection of our community, the Port withdrew its application for federal funds and announced it was dropping the Union Station Project.

Union Station is still being studied as one of the three sites for Metro's mini terminal, a one-block low-rise development which will intercept diesel buses below grade and where passengers will then board an electric circulation that will proceed through downtown.

This time Metro approached the I.D. two years ago with the idea and is working with several district organizations, including Inter*Im, for community input.

As of this date, city planners are supporting a site near the government center at the north part of the I.D. Community sentiment is divided. Some businesses favor the Union Station site for the anticipated spin off of terminal passengers.

Inter*Im, in opposing the Union Station site, is still concerned about the environmental impacts that will directly affect residents; plus problems of congestion, parking and possible transportation related commercial development which could cause another sharp rise in property value. At this point we are not sure what the final Metro decision will be or what Union Station will become. But because Union Station is part of the I.D., it must work to the benefit of the I.D. and its residents.

The saga for the preservation and development of the International District will certainly continue and we'd all run out of jobs and stories to write. □

Bob Santos *was hired in 1972 as Director of the International District Improvement Association (INTER*IM).*

*Inter*Im was incorporated as a non-profit organization in 1968. Charged with the preservation and development of the International District of Seattle, it has become a viable and successful force of generating over $40 million in public and private funds for housing, social services and economic and physical development.*

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Lewis Suzuki

Socialist Modernization — Chinese

In writing about China, one has to remember that it was only 30 years ago that China liberated herself from foreign domination. Thirty years is a very short time . . .

By Lewis Suzuki

My wife and I were in China for two months in 1952, three years after liberation. China was then at a historical turning point. It was the time of land reform, of the promotion of health campaigns, literacy campaigns; the people were determined to kill all flies as carriers of disease, and the new Marriage Law was passed. We attended the National Day celebration in Beijing on October 1st. We visited the Huai river project and saw thousands of peasants and workers building a dam to control the river's annual floods. We saw many buildings being built including new housing. Everywhere we went the Chinese people were working joyfully, full of hope; they had purpose and energy. The people were full of confidence and creative in their work. The people were in motion at that time. The feeling of creative energy I got from this trip has never left me.

Last year I visited China twice. As an artist I have always dreamed of painting the landscape of Guilin, China. I was able to do that on these two visits. I painted the communes, the mountains and the rivers of Guilin. I sketched the Great Wall, the Ming Tomb, the Summer Palace, and West Lake in Hangzhou. I came back with many paintings and sketches — yet it was only a beginning! When I

Xin Hua Photo

Style

look back on these two trips to China, as much as I value the experience of painting China's ancient landscapes and buildings, what remains with me most deeply is the memory of the Chinese people themselves. Seeing people working, shopping, eating, enjoying their days off with their families, exercising in parks, going to concerts — their faces made me feel the same kind of hope, energy and purpose in their lives that I had seen and felt 30 years ago when I first visited China.

In writing about China, one has to remember that it was only 30 years ago that China liberated herself from foreign domination. Thirty years is a very short time when you think of 5,000 years of Chinese history. Thirty years is a very short time in the evolution of any human society. One has to remember what China was like before liberation and then look at the developments of the last 30 years since their revolution. China has had many difficulties as well as developments in the last 30 years. The Chinese have reached their primary goal of feeding, clothing, housing, delivering basic medical care and education for a population of one billion people. As the Chinese peasants told me 30 years ago, "We have stood up."

China is still a poor country, and its modernization has begun late. In traveling through China last year, I saw and heard of the ill effects of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). People are still talking about their problems with bureaucracy and corruption. There are complaints about cadres (government workers) who take advantage of their positions. I read complaints in the letters to the editor columns of local newspapers about certain older cadres putting their own interests above that of their community. I read some complaints about incidents of black marketing. My friends in China told me that much of this corruption and bureaucracy is a remnant of certain practices during the Cultural Revolution, and that the Chinese people are being successful in overcoming these anti-social practices.

The standard of living of the people has improved greatly in the last few years. I was amazed at the number of items that were available in stores and how people were able to buy such things as furniture, radios, television sets, and many other appliances. I enjoyed walking through the many, well-stocked food markets, and I watched the shoppers with their full baskets of produce and meat. China's communes are producing the food people need. Within the commune structure there is a new "Responsibility System" being promoted and practiced. A household agrees to take charge of a given area within the commune and to produce a certain quantity of crops, forest woodland, fish or livestock — depending on what kind of commune it is. So far, this system has increased production, and families have more buying power. Family savings are increasing and there is no inflation in China.

I wanted to learn and see as much as I could on these trips to China so I would get up early everyday and go for a walk. On these early morning walks I saw the people going to work on bicycles and by buses. Many people were out doing all kinds of exercises and the sun had barely risen. People were already on their way to the food markets. I wondered where all this energy and hard work came from? I think I saw part of the answer on a billboard which was over a theater in downtown Guilin. The slogan on the billboard in bold Chinese characters announced, "BY WORKING TOWARDS THE FOUR MODERNIZATIONS WE WILL BUILD A SPIRITUAL CIVILIZATION." 建設精神文明，齊心奔向四化。 In Shanghai in a food market that took up a whole block I saw the following signs. One wall proclaimed, "Long live Marxism, Leninism, and Mao Zedong Thought!" Another wall in this market puzzled me with its slogan, "In practicing and developing the five stresses and four beauties, we will build a socialist, spiritual civilization." 開展"五講""四美"活動，建設社會主義精神文明。 I became aware of the fact that the words, "Socialist Spiritual Civilization," were everywhere. In Hangzhou, these words were on large banners hung over the streets. In Guangzhou, a banner with the same words was hung on the side of a bridge. They were on billboards in Beijing. I began to wonder what the Chinese meant when they say they are going to build a Socialist Spiritual Civilization through their modernization program?

The idea of modernization is not new to China. It was promoted after liberation. But it was only after the downfall of the Gang of Four and the defeat of the Cultural Revolution (1976) that a concrete program for modernization became a reality. The program puts a priority on four areas of development: the development of agriculture is the first priority at the present time. Their next emphasis is to build a modern light industry and then modernize their heavy industry. The other two areas that China wants

to modernize are: their national defense system and their science and technology. I think the new socialist modernization program is another turning point in Chinese history.

In my talks with Chinese friends, they stressed the point that modernization in China will be socialist and Chinese in style. China wants to import modern techniques but they do not want to copy the experience or model of other countries in a mechanical way. Only that part of industry and technology that is useful and appropriate to the Chinese people and to the specific conditions in China will be used. They want to plan their modernization so as to avoid the disease and social evils that industrialism has brought to other peoples. The goal is a better material civilization and a socialist society. After listening to my friends I thought this is why the Chinese are using the phrase, "Socialist Spiritual Civilization," in their present struggle to modernize.

Modernization also stresses the need to develop education, culture, public health, recreation and entertainment. In order to accomplish this socialist modernization, the Chinese see it as necessary to work, at the same time, on raising the political consciousness and the socialist ethical standards of their society. The slogan that had puzzled me — "In practicing and developing five stresses and four beauties, we will build a socialist, spiritual civilization," is related to raising political consciousness and socialist ethical standards. I found out that the Chinese mean by "five stresses," human decency, common courtesy, sanitary health practices, and a sense of inner self-discipline and the practice of socialist ethics in their daily living. The "four beauties," referred to living with a sense of beauty (dignity) in one's mind, in one's use of language, in all of one's actions, and in caring for one's environment.

On my early morning walks I would see small groups of people studying. Some were studying English language books, others had technical books. I decided to visit bookstores everywhere we went. I found out that some of the popular titles were books on Marxism, Leninism and on Mao Zedong Thought. There were many novels by Chinese authors and foreign authors. There were many technical books on the shelves. In Hangzhou and Guilin I watched people reading at sidewalk libraries. These are set up with the book racks against a building wall, and with rows of benches for people to use. People paid about a few pennies to read a book or magazine. Books and periodicals were not for taking home but read on the spot. The sidewalk library users were mainly young people. I also saw many signs announcing where meetings would be held for study, discussion or listening to a lecture on ways to implement a modern, socialist, spiritual way of life. All these slogans, I thought, are being actively discussed and practiced. If the people of China succeed in building for themselves a better standard of living, and at the same time implement a way of life of socialist ethics then, I think, we may see a society of new people, and a socialist country where people can live securely and with full dignity.

I don't want to give the impression that everything in China is going smoothly. There are great difficulties — such as planning for all of the people. There are many problems with family planning and population control. There are difficulties with the communication system, such as the mail and telegraph — they need to use computers to improve these facilities. They need to work on their internal transportation system. They still feel that they don't have enough schools in the area of technical training and higher education. They know that even as one difficulty is solved, new contradictions will arise. The Chinese people often expressed to me their concern for peace, and their feelings of friendship for the people of the United States. As an artist, I was deeply touched by the Chinese landscape; I was moved by the people, and most of all I felt the vision of a new society that China has dared to take on — the building of modern, socialist, spiritual civilization. □

Lewis Suzuki

An Impression of Guilin

. . . and most of all I felt the vision of a new society . . .

Lewis Suzuki *is an artist who resides in Berkeley, Calif.*

Asian American Resource Workshop

Art and Culture for the Community

By Peter Nien-chu Kiang

AARW's Chinese folksinging group.

"Your work is profound and significant," said Liu Yuzun, Professor at Zhongshan University's Southeast Asian Historical Research Institute in Guangzhou, China. In Shanghai, Te Wei, Director of China's Animation Film Studios, echoed Professor Liu. So did Dr. Chen Han-seng, 86-year old cadre, sociologist, and founding father of Overseas Chinese Studies in Beijing.

In September 1982 as Program Director of Boston's Asian American Resource Workshop (AARW), I had the opportunity to visit the People's Republic of China. The trip included meeting filmmakers, students, and scholars of Overseas Chinese (華僑) history as well as sightseeing and some family business.

To talk about the Workshop, I brought along some posters and flyers as well as photographs and slides of AARW activities to show. Included were 1982 Asian American Calendars, bilingual booklets written to commemorate the Chinese Exclusion Act's 100th anniversary, and posters for our 1982 China Film Festival to be celebrated in Boston the week of October 1st. The materials generated much interest and discussion about the Workshop, the experience of Chinese in America, and the role of Asian American art and culture. With the following article, I hope more discussion will follow, so that we can continue to grow, improve our work, and serve our community.

Originally known as the Asian American Resource Center, the AARC was founded in 1978 by Chinatown community activists and progressive Asian American educators. The AARC grew out of the more research-oriented local chapter of the Pacific Asian Coalition in order to work directly in Chinatown. The AARC set up a small office and library, produced bilingual community newsletters, disbursed small grants to grass-roots organizing projects, and produced the 1979 Asian American History Calendar, "130 Years of Oppression and Resistance."

In 1979, several progressive Asian American students and musicians joined. They helped to renovate an abandoned garment factory next to the Chinatown People's Progressive Association (CPPA) on Beach Street in Chinatown. The new loft-space included a music studio and large gallery-performance area. After moving in, the AARC was officially incorporated as the Asian American Resource Workshop (AARW). The change in name reflected the group's movement from serving as a resource center to working more actively with

people to shape and document Asian American culture and history.

Since 1979, the AARW has worked to serve the community by offering workshops in guitar, music, silkscreen printing, photography, and other artistic skills. By teaching these skills we encourage all Asian people to express, enjoy, and document their experiences creatively. Our guitar teachers, for example, have taught classes in Chinatown for several years, while performing in their own Asian band and working full-time. We have also encouraged professional Asian American artists and musicians to develop their work in relation to the community through performing, teaching, and organizing programs. A strong Asian American culture can develop only if it is grounded in the community's daily experience.

The Workshop tries to ensure that community people have access to relevant art and culture. In addition to teaching classes, we sponsor Asian cultural performances throughout the year. Much of the cultural opportunities available to community people are limited to discos and Kung-Fu movies. Every summer as an alternative, the AARW sponsors coffeehouses that feature local Asian musicians, dancers, and artists from the community. The coffeehouses are warm and informal. Performances range from Chinese instrumental music and folksongs to Vietnamese and Laotian dance to original Asian American songs and skits.

Each year the AARW also sponsors a major celebration of Lunar New Year in Chinatown. Performances are similar to the coffeehouses, but more formal. The variety of Asian performances has been well-received by the community. While enjoying its own traditional culture, the Chinatown audience has also appreciated the heritage of other Asian nationalities. The Workshop has always tried to bring different Asian groups together. Performances have been varied and exciting for this reason.

The cultural performances have also included skits, songs, statements, and information tables about various community issues. The skits, in particular, have been both entertaining and meaningful. Centering on themes such as family life, bringing together foreign and American-born, and uniting Chinese from Hong Kong and Vietnam, the skits come from daily life in Chinatown. They represent an indigenous cultural form, all the more significant because the writers and actors have no formal training.

AARW

AARW serves the community by offering artistic skills such as silkscreening.

Many AARW cultural celebrations have included performances by our own Chinese Community Folksinging Group. Community residents of all ages meet every week to sing traditional Chinese folk and popular songs in Mandarin and Cantonese. For some of the older members, the Folksinging Group gives them the chance to sing songs from their childhoods in China thirty or forty years ago. Some of the younger members enjoy the challenge of singing and performing with a group. For the American-born, they have a chance to practice their Chinese and learn about their traditional culture.

Cultural opportunities are so limited in Chinatown. The Folksinging Group provides one of the few alternatives for community people to actively enjoy their traditional culture. One of the Group's older members once said that if she didn't have folksinging on Sundays, she'd be spending her time playing m.j. (mah jong) — losing money or losing friends. Some people think that traditional culture is only found in museums or schools. But for us, traditional culture is a vital and vibrant part of our community's experience and our collective heritage.

In addition to music workshops and cultural performances, the AARW has become increasingly involved in media. In 1979 and 1980,

AARW

Laotian dancers at AARW's summer coffeehouse.

the AARW initiated boycotts and letter-writing campaigns against *The Deerhunter* and *The Fiendish Plot of Dr. Fu Manchu* for their racist depictions of Asians. Protests culminated in January 1981 with the release of *Charlie Chan and the Curse of the Dragon Queen*. As part of the national Coalition of Asians to Nix Charlie Chan network, we found broad support from both immigrants and American-born for our anti-Chan work. The issue could have united a majority of Asians in Boston.

However, protests against stereotypes could only go so far. What we needed to see was media written, directed, and produced by Asian Americans. Three months later, *HITO HATA* premiered in Boston.

Visual Communications' production of *HITO HATA* represented an enormous breakthrough in Asian American media. For the first time a feature-length film presented genuine, non-stereotypic images of our people and realistic depictions of our history. The Boston premiere symbolized a major breakthrough in our own work as well.

Chinatown is the only physical Asian community in Boston. Consequently, we have always seen Chinatown as the base for our work. For *HITO HATA*, though, we wanted to bring together the dispersed Japanese American community. Many of Boston's Nikkei migrated here following the WW II relocation. As in the rest of New England, there is no neighborhood or community center for Japanese in Boston. Picking Japanese names out of phone books wasn't the easiest way to generate a mailing list, but it was the only way. And it worked.

Five hundred and fifty people — a majority of whom were Asian American with a majority of Nikkei — filled a 500 seat auditorium to welcome *HITO HATA* and its producer, Steve Tatsukawa, to Boston. By the end of the film, there were few dry eyes in the auditorium. Maybe it was because the film's story had been so genuine; maybe because we had never seen images like that on a film before; or maybe because we remembered once more how good it felt to come together as a community. The *kimochi* of Little Tokyo was every bit as real in Boston, three thousand miles away.

The overwhelming response to *HITO HATA* showed us that it was possible to organize the Nikkei and Asian American communities outside of Chinatown. It also demonstrated a strong local need for Asian American media programming. Out of the *HITO HATA* coalition we formed an ongoing AARW Media Group. Since *HITO HATA*, the Media Group has sponsored several showings of Asian American films, organized an annual Day of Remembrance program to commemorate the camps, and brought the China Film Week Festival to Boston. The Media Group also distributes a catalogue of Asian American films, slideshows, and videotapes to Asian student clubs, teachers, and community organizations. Through the Media Group, we have raised issues such as redevelopment, reparations and redress, and the Fifth Preference. Most importantly, we have realized the importance of both documenting the history of Asians in Boston and producing media ourselves.

May 1982 marked the 100th anniversary of the first Chinese Exclusion Act. With the Workshop's first major grant, we organized an ambitious program in Chinatown for Asian Heritage Week to commemorate the Exclusion Acts. Because of the scale and significance of the program, all parts of the Workshop came together to contribute.

The Folksinging Group sang at the cultural performance. Members of the Media Group produced a bilingual booklet, *Our Roots in History*, a bilingual slide-show, *Pioneers and Paper Sons*, and a set of four bilingual photo-panels that chronicle the history of Chinese exclusion and immigration. Others presented a dramatic reading of poetry from Angel Island. The Sojourners, our guitar class teachers, performed three original songs written especially for the occasion: "Angel Island" in English, "Chinatown 3 a.m." in Cantonese, and "One Hundred Years We've Survived," an instrumental.

Like *HITO HATA*, the Heritage Week Commemoration was a breakthrough for the Workshop:

> Culture had become conscious;
> Music and poetry, slides and songs,
> Images of strength and survival
>
> Culture had become history;
> Pioneers and paper-sons,
> One hundred years we've survived
>
> Culture had become pride;
> A legacy to remember,
> A spirit to carry on
>
> Culture had become movement;
> Build our community,
> Save the Fifth Preference

More than any other program, Heritage Week tied us to the life and livelihood of Chinatown. It set the stage for our newest area of work.

In 1934, Congress passed a com-

munications act stating that broadcast media should serve the public interest. The airwaves were identified as a limited resource that ultimately belonged to the people.

In contrast, a look at Boston network television reveals that out of the City's total on-camera news personnel, there is only one Asian American, and she was only hired in January 1983; there is only one Asian public affairs program, and it airs on Sunday mornings from 7:30 to 7:45 am; there are no plans for Chinese-language programming or other Asian nationality programming. The airwaves do not belong to the Asian community.

The coming of cable television to Boston may improve this situation. Boston will be fully wired for cable television by 1985. Chinatown may have cable as early as Summer 1983. The Boston cable system will feature a non-profit foundation designed specifically to facilitate community access to training, production equipment, and airtime on the cable.

For Chinatown, cable television may mean that community people will begin to program and produce shows that directly relate to their needs and experiences. Possibilities include Chinese-language news programming, cultural and entertainment shows, E.S.L. classes, documentaries, and movies. There is great potential to raise the level of communication and consciousness in the community through cable television.

The Workshop has begun a video training program so that some of our members will learn the necessary production skills to produce for cable. We are currently completing a fifteen-minute documentary on the history of Boston Chinatown. We are also involved in the cable process on the level of recommending policy to the Foundation so that Chinatown and other minority communities are truly ensured access.

However, community access will not materialize without conscious, progressive organizing in Chinatown and other grass-roots neighborhood communities. At this point, all access decisions are controlled by the Mayor's allies in City government, business and large institutions. Community people have no role in deciding or implementing access policy. Nevertheless, we believe that Chinatown should fight for its right to have access to production and relevant programming. We hope to unite other sectors of the community to work with us in raising this demand.

Over the years, I've seen the Workshop grow tremendously. The AARW's current work involves everything from workshops and music classes to cultural performances and history projects to the Folksinging Group, library, and Media Group to cable television in Chinatown. Our work has reflected principles of bringing together different Asian groups; encouraging pride in our community, history, and traditional culture; promoting Asian American art and media; and serving our peoples' movements for equality.

We are still a young organization — still exploring different ways to develop our culture and build our community. Other groups across the country like Japantown Art and Media, Visual Communications, and Asian Cine-Vision have greatly inspired us by sharing both their work and lessons from their experience. They show us that we are part of a national movement.

So, sometimes when energy runs low, or funding prospects look dim, or it's the sixth meeting of the day, I remember the warm, supportive words of Dr. Chen Han-seng, Director Te Wei, and Professor Liu Yuzun from China: "Your work is profound and significant." They remind me that the Asian Movement is profound, and that Asian American cultural work is significant. And maybe if we work hard enough, we'll someday speak from the same experience. □

Peter Nien-chu Kiang *is Program Director of the Asian American Resource Workshop, Teaching Assistant in an Asian American Studies class at Harvard, and a Contributing Editor to* EAST WIND.

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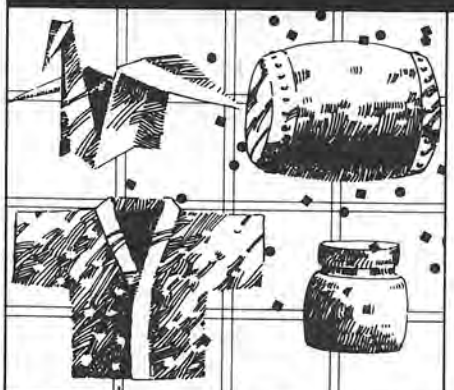

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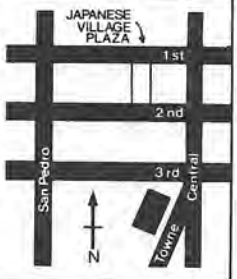

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Chol Soo and Mrs. Lee

A Message from Chol Soo Lee

Dear Friends,

Very best of greetings!!

After 10 years of enduring struggle and through years of your support, I am now enjoying my freedom in free society. However, this freedom that I am now enjoying, while on bail, is a limited freedom. For I shall soon be forced to stand trial once again on the prison case.

For years I have been imposing on your goodwill, to seek justice and regain my freedom. But only your continuing support will prevent the prosecutor from returning me to State prison.

I urge all of you to realize that even though I am free, I am still being prosecuted. It will be a long time before this unjust prosecution comes to an end for me.

I ask you to continue to struggle and work with me in the months ahead to our final victory.

I am fully aware how long you have supported me and this cause, but once again I turn to you for your full support because I think that this will be a crucial factor in bringing about the dismissal of the prison case. I also need to ask for your continuing aid to raise funds to meet the growing legal costs of the case. We have even more costs to meet at this time due to the possibility of a re-trial. That is why it is especially important that you work with me in urging the prosecutor to dismiss the case.

I look forward to a final victory in the months ahead. My sincere thanks to all of you. Your support has helped me to get this far. Please walk the last mile with me. Thank you once again.

In Solidarity,

Chol Soo Lee

Chol Soo Lee

Editor's Note: Please send your contributions to The S.F. Committee to Free Chol Soo Lee, 827 Pacific Ave, No.122, San Francisco, CA 94133. Please send a letter to the San Joaquin County District Attorney, 222 E. Weber St., Stockton, CA 95202 to urge the dismissal of charges in the upcoming trial. Chol Soo was unjustly convicted on first degree murder for the self-defense slaying of Morrison Needham, a neo-Nazi prisoner, who attacked him.

RICHARD KIM — Martial Artist

By Alex Hing

The martial arts have always been a source of pride for Asians in this country. Asians are attracted to the martial arts primarily for self-defense and cultural awareness, although good health and artistic expression are equally important factors. The goal of the martial arts, however, is to spiritually strengthen one's being. To accomplish this, an aspiring martial artist needs a good teacher.

Sensei Richard Kim's martial arts training began when his mother enrolled him in a judo class in Hawai'i when he was six years old. In Hawai'i, he also took up boxing in the local clubs and was a sparring partner to some of the top world contenders of the era. During the 1930's, Kim pursued his study of the martial arts in Asia. In Japan, he studied under some of the great karate masters of the time including the legendary Yabu Kentsu. From Japan, Kim went to China where he studied *tai chi chuan, pa kua* and *shorinjiryu kenpo*. He also studied under Yoshido Kotaro, whom he says taught him an insurmountable amount of knowledge. During this period, Kim gained entrance into the *Butokukai*, which was founded by the 50th Emperor of Japan as a school for the martial arts.

Reminiscing on China during the war, Kim says, "Mao Zedong was one of the greatest Chinese who ever lived. I should know; I fought against him and lost. It was the Communists who defeated Japan, not Chiang Kai-shek. The Chinese people hated Chiang. Before Mao, you couldn't walk down a street in Shanghai without seeing people dying all around you. They starved to death, and every day a truck would come around to pick the bodies up off the street. Because of the Communists, everyone in China now has something to eat."

Following the war, Kim traveled back and forth between the U.S. and Japan, increasing his knowledge of the martial arts by studying with many karate masters. In 1959, he settled down in San Francisco and opened a *Butokukai dojo* at the Chinese YMCA where he taught for 17 years. He presently lives in Sacramento and commutes weekly to the Bay Area to teach at the *dojo* in Colma.

The style of karate that Kim teaches is *shorin*, the Okinawan art that developed from the Chinese Shaolin *gung fu*. However, in the *dojo*, Kim will teach techniques drawn from such diverse martial arts as *tai chi* and boxing. He also teaches the more esoteric techniques such as hypnotism.

When he explains the techniques, especially street fighting situations, you can be sure that he knows what he is talking about. For instance, Kim was attacked once by five people, one armed with a knife. He disarmed the person by taking a stab in his forearm and jerked the knife out of the attacker's hand.

Kim, however, is a peaceful man who strives to have his students better themselves by being able to deal with violence by instilling them with a martial arts philosophy and martial arts training.

Propagating the theory and practice of the martial arts is what *Sensei* Kim is all about. At age 62 he can lead the *dojo* in exercises that leave everyone's muscles screaming without having worked up a sweat. Then, while the class is catching its breath, he will delve into a philosophical discourse about a particular aspect of the martial arts citing Sun Hsu, Buddha, Jesus Christ, Mao Zedong, Muhammad Ali or Lenin, among others. This juxtaposing of practical self-defense techniques with their philosophical and social implications is a martial arts tradition rarely practiced by instructors today. He will, for instance, demonstrate a self-defense technique that sends a fourth *dan* black belt flying across the *dojo* and then say to the class, "We might all be speaking German today if it weren't for the people of Stalingrad. They stood their ground. They had the determination to face the German Nazi army with their bare hands. They were prepared to die before giving up. When the Germans realized this, they broke down. A martial artist has to be able to stand his ground. This ability exists in your mind."

Kim never ceases to amaze me with his insights. However, I disagree with the feudal and metaphysical aspects of his philosophy. I do not believe that man's inhumanity to man is inherent to his nature. It has its origins in class society. Violence is a question that cannot be dealt with by the elevating of an individual's consciousness above the rest of society. It can only be eliminated when the basis for class oppression — the monopoly capitalists' rule — is eliminated.

Still, there is much to what Kim says with which I completely agree. He is one of those outstanding Asian Americans who can adapt traditional cultural values to the current situation. I still remember clearly that day in the Chinatown *dojo*, August 6, 1975, when I went to class feeling slightly saddened that the 30th anniversary of the Hiroshima atomic bombing was not being widely commemorated by the Asian Movement. Kim opened the class with a lecture on the horrors and insanity of war, particularly nuclear war. He posed the question: "Why did the U.S. drop the bomb on Japan and not Germany?" and answered, "Because of racism, the same reason why Japanese who were American citizens were put into concentration camps and not Germans or Italian Americans." He then made a passionate appeal for peace but drew the conclusion that "there will be another war — one between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. You must be prepared for that." He then proceeded to lead an exhaustive three-hour workout, ending the class by having us meditate on peace.

Kim's knowledge of the martial arts is formidable. Professor Wally Jay, a ninth *dan* in *jujitsu* acknowledges that, "He is considered the greatest living historian (of martial arts). His uncanny ability to cite dates, people and incidents involving renowned *samurai* of any era is incredible." Kim also impressed Hirose Kinjo as being a "walking karate encyclopedia."

Among Kim's many achievements are the following: In 1973, he was voted into *Black Belt* magazine's Hall of Fame as Sensei of the Year; he was the director of the U.S. team for the last four IAKF World Championships; he is the head of the *Zen Bei Butokukai* in the U.S. and international representative of the *Dai Nippon Butokukai* of Kyoto, Japan; he is the author of two books, *The Weaponless Warrior*, an informal history of Okinawan karate and *The Classical Man*, a collection of the columns of the same title which he wrote for *Karate Illustrated* magazine. He is presently working on a third volume which will be published soon. It should be noted that unlike most karate instructors in the U.S. today, Kim does not teach for money, but to promote karate. □

Alex Hing *is a staff member of* EAST WIND, *a culinary worker in Local 2 of the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees Union, and a longtime activist in the Chinese National Movement. He was the former Minister of Education of the Red Guard Party in San Francisco Chinatown in the late 1960's.*

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FOCUS

Asian American Women

Asian American women. Our stories provide a rich tapestry; our contributions remembered and recounted will surely grow in the '80s.

It is in this spirit that we introduce the Asian Women's FOCUS section of *EAST WIND*.

Reflecting a sampling of a diverse group of women, ages 20 to 65, American and foreign born, occupations spanning from garment worker to a Municipal Court Judge, the FOCUS section gives a small glimpse of our lives, struggles, and contributions.

The pieces, although diverse, reflect the common obstacles that Asian women face in leading equal and productive lives in society. While the women offer different solutions, each in her own way has contributed to fighting for our emancipation as women and equality for Asian peoples.

The featured essays by Miya Iwataki, Sasha Hohri, and Sadie Lum point to the need for a conscious and all-rounded solution to the problems Asian women face.

This conclusion comes from studying and understanding our actual history and examining the concrete situation which Asian women face today. So many barriers remain for most of us — whether we are the 24% of Chinese women who still labor under the harshest conditions in the garment sweatshops after 100 years or the old or new generation of mostly underpaid, underrated and sexually harassed Asian women professionals striving to break through on our own.

In an unfair society, can we expect fairness, justice and equality? Only in the most limited sense. We need to make some fundamental, some revolutionary change!

Let's consciously unite, learn from each other and join the movements of our people so that we can stand tall and with pride as Asian women. □

Wilma Chan
Sasha Hohri
Evelyn Yoshimura

Women, Community and Equality

Three garment workers speak out

By Shiree Teng

It was a hot and humid morning in late June when I first met Mrs. Ka, Alice Tse, and Wing Fong Chin, all of whom are active garment workers in New York's Chinatown. They were amongst the many speakers who would address the rally that day called by their union — Local 23-25 of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU).

There are 28,000 members in Local 23-25 making it one of the largest locals within the entire ILGWU. There are about 20,000 Chinese members, 85% of them women. The rally was being held because the owners of the 500 factories in Chinatown had voted down the renewal of the union contract which provided many basic rights and benefits for the garment workers. The very same union contract had already been signed covering 120,000 garment workers in the Eastern states area, leaving workers in Chinatown without benefits such as medical coverage, minimum wage, overtime pay, vacation and holidays, etc. And most importantly, leaving them without their dignity as workers and protection against unfair labor practices with which non-union workers everywhere are so familiar.

As the 18,000 Chinese garment workers continued their steady stream coming into Columbus Park in the heart of Chinatown, they overflowed onto all the side streets, Mrs. Ka handed me a piece of scribble to translate. "The Chinatown contractors' attempt to break our union is like a grasshopper trying to stop a car in its tracks. They are daydreaming in broad daylight, and acting like a blind bat trying to knock down a tree." With these simple words and subtle analogies, I was given a quick introduction to the trade union sentiments of the thousands of women workers. The Chinese garment contractors had declared war on the union and on their workers. The workers responded by thunderous applause to Mrs. Ka's statements.

Another brilliant chapter in the American labor movement had been written. This time the heroines are Chinese women!

Alice Tse followed Mrs. Ka at the podium. Being a sewing woman herself for the past six years in Chinatown and the elected Shop Chairlady in many of the shops where she has worked, Alice was more direct and to the point. "We cannot accept any treatment that is inferior. Chinese workers are people too! We should receive equal treatment as all the other workers. This is the true eternal spirit of being Chinese! If we cooperate and stand together behind our union, we will win! Let's celebrate our coming victory! Let's celebrate our historic show of unity demonstrated today!"

Being the translator for these fiery speeches was not an easy task. I was very moved and inspired by these working women. It reaffirmed my beliefs that women have always played a vital and important role in the history of the working class — not only in the daily struggles, but also in the larger society by improving the lives of all working people. The obstacles confronting women today are many — at work, at home, and in society in general. For Third World and Asian women, these obstacles are further compounded by thousands of years of feudal ideas and traditions.

These two topics, the role of workers and unions, and the fight for women's equality brought me to conduct three personal interviews with these women. Their individual stories and backgrounds may differ, yet they share aspirations, strength, and hope that should only serve to guide us in the future.

I asked Wing Fong Chin, the Chairperson of the Executive Board of Local 23-25 about how Chinese garment workers became unionized, and what were some of the differences before the union and after. Wing Fong has been residing in New York since 1950. "In 1955, there were a total of 8-10 garment factories in Chinatown. There was no union back then. Soon thereafter, the union learned about women sewing in Chinatown and sent people down to do organizing. The bosses really disapproved and disliked the idea of workers joining the union. Whenever union people came down to the shops, they would send all the garments into the basement and send us home for the day. At first we didn't know what was going on.

"After two to three months, we found out about the union. In 1957, many of us started to join. At the time, the older ladies did not like the idea either. They would say things like, 'Oh, the union is only here to take our money. We shouldn't join.' But they did not understand all the benefits the union would provide for us in return. The more progressive minded workers, including myself, would ask, why not join the union? I translated for the union *lo-fans* about all the rights and benefits to the workers in the shop. We were young then, in our 20's, and we'd all join the union except for one or two of us. Most of us worked nine or ten hours a day back then including Saturdays and sometimes Sundays. After we joined the union, the hours were considerably cut down and the piece rates went up. The union contract gave us many improvements. Ever since, anyone new into the factories would automatically sign up. I don't remember seeing picket lines then. It just became a natural practice to join the union.

Images unlimited

Wing Fong Chin (right)

Cyd Weldon

Alice Tse leading a garment workers rally

"Today, some workers are still wary of the union. I would tell them about the old days when there wasn't any union benefits. The boss used to take all our holiday money. Now we have maternity benefits, vacations . . . . the union has really helped to improve things for Chinese workers."

Alice in responding to the question about what are the vital issues facing Chinese workers today, said, "I think the current problems facing Chinese women workers are basically two. One is the overall worsening of the economic situation and the rate of inflation. So in the garment industry, this translates into the slow season that we are in right now. The unemployment rate is quite high. Workers' incomes are constantly on the decrease.

"The second problem I see is with the children. The mothers who have to work long hours worry about their children's safety and what they are learning everyday. This is a real problem for women who don't have a lot of time to spend with their children."

Mrs. Ka immigrated from China ten years ago. She is 50 years old and used to be a gynecologist, obstetrician, and medical doctor in China. Since coming to the U.S., she has worked in restaurants and garment factories. Being the Shop Representative in her factory, Mrs. Ka helped to lead a recent struggle to win back $40,000 in back wages owed to the 50 workers in her shop.

In responding to the same question, Mrs. Ka said, "For new immigrants, and long time ones like myself, the first and foremost problem is with the language. This results in extreme difficulty in finding jobs. Secondly, the problem is adjusting to the new environment and culture. Because of these problems, the majority of Chinese women who come here go to work in the garment factories."

"Do you think Chinese garment workers are oppressed?" I asked her.

"Definitely! The recent struggle of our Local to win the three year contract was a good example. A lot of the everyday exploitation became very clear. The employers didn't want to give us overtime pay, make us work long hours, and pay us whatever piece rates they wanted to. Some of the workers who hang up garments,

and the pressers have to work until 10 or 11 at night. This is exploitation, Chinese style."

In this profit-motivated society, the employers will always try to squeeze the maximum amount of labor out of the workers. It's only when the workers are effectively organized will they be able to ensure that their rights are not trampled upon.

The two militant rallies that were held at Columbus Park this past summer have left a deep and permanent impression in the minds of the garment workers. It was like an awakening roar of a long-asleep tiger. Organizers arose from each and every factory — they organized the workers to meet at a specific place and time to march to the park together. They stood by each other and being union members, held their heads up high. Once they arrived at the park, they were greeted by fellow garment workers from the Bronx and Brooklyn . . . immigrant women just like themselves, Black workers, women from Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic . . . all came to show their support and solidarity with their working class sisters. They all stood under one common banner of a multi-national union.

As the union contingent of garment workers proceeded to march down the heart of Chinatown, the true meaning of trade union militancy and class solidarity was everywhere in the air.

During this very intense period to settle the contract dispute, many of the Chinese contractors boasted, "We are all Chinese and should be able to settle this in-house. There is no need to go to the white man's union." They used these nationalistic phrases to cloud over their real intentions — Chinese exploiting Chinese. This is a common practice.

A recent trend has been developing in New York Chinatown where restaurant workers are organizing "independent unions," or Chinese-only unions. I asked Alice what she thought of this idea.

"For me as a Chinese person, I don't think it's exactly right. We are now living in the U.S., we need to come into contact with people of different nationalities and backgrounds. Unions are the organizations of workers, no matter what nationality. The barriers that exist between the ethnic groups would never be broken down if everybody organized into their own national group. For the Chinese who are only organizing themselves, they need to learn that eventually, they have to break out of the narrow thinking and try to come into contact with workers of other nationalities. I think the whole idea is rather infantile!"

Mrs. Ka responded by saying, "I don't think it's the right thing to do. U.S. is like the United Nations with different peoples and colors. It's wrong to divide the workers along national lines. Workers are like the five fingers of the fist. If you took one of the fingers away, the fist wouldn't be strong. I guess on the surface and in theory, a Chinese-only union is all right. But in reality, where would the strength come from? Where would the benefits come from?"

Shui Mak Ka

Being women, mothers, having to work and bearing most of the day-to-day responsibilities of the household have hindered many women's ability to take part fully in the political realm of the community and affairs of the union. What are some of these concrete problems? How are active workers like Alice and Mrs. Ka dealing with it?

"According to the old prophecies, a proper woman isn't supposed to leave the front door of her house by more than three steps. Her feet would be bound so that she really couldn't. For hundreds of years, the man was the sole money-maker and reinforced many of the feudal ideas. But today, women are stepping outside of the home and making a living. The situation is beginning to change. The main problem still, is that women have always seen themselves as housewives in the main. They tend not to be very career minded or motivated. Outside of the kitchen and the home, their interests are not as developed. I think there should be more women's groups organized for women to really liberate our thinking.

"I think today's men also need to wake up to the reality. They should understand that the thousand years of women tolerating everything that men did, and accepted them, don't mean it is right. For us women, it's not liberation for liberation's sake. It's a matter of the times."

Mrs. Ka stated, "In order for women not to be taken advantage of in this society, we need to learn the political system here. We need to understand the laws that govern this society, and understand the reasons why the inequality between men and women exist. I think equality means the ability of women to participate in all the affairs of the community and in society. But to do so, they really need to break away from the bondage of the home. For Chinese mothers, they come home, cook, clean, and wait for their husbands. To take part in any activities, they must rearrange their home life in order to allow for it."

"How does your husband feel about your activism?" I asked Wing Fong. She replied, "Chinese wives are basically sensible. They take care of family business, their husbands, kids . . . The ones with the family troubles are usually the wild ones. They stay out all night playing mah-jong. I have my business and my husband has his own activities. If the couple don't like it, then they should just leave each other. I think the attitudes are more open these days. All those old ways of thinking, how much are they worth anyway? If men and women continue to hold onto those ideas,

UNITY Newspaper

ILGWU rally, June 1982

then they might well give up living!"

"To tell you the truth, my husband doesn't like what I'm doing," said Alice. "His thinking is quite conservative and traditional. He is a waiter in a Chinese restaurant and he sees my job as superior to his. He doesn't like that, and feels threatened. I think it's because he has a lot of self-pride, and at the same time, feels sorry for himself. I try to tolerate the situation for the sake of the kids. Being the wife, I try to leave enough time to take care of the house and not take work related problems home with me. It's not very easy!"

Many barriers continue to exist within our national movement today, standing in the way for more unity. Being an immigrant from Hong Kong myself, and having spent half of my life here, I have felt these contradictions. The American-born tend to look down upon the immigrant parents as too conservative, feudal, *lo-saw*, ignorant . . . The immigrants tend to think of the ABC's as wild, uncultured, hollow, and not "real" Chinese. These attitudes and misunderstandings have only served to further isolate us from each other.

Experiences with racism, alienation, and oppression are the common bond that run through our history as Chinese in America. But how can we begin to build bridges amongst ourselves? Are American-born women "more" liberated?

"I think the American-born women are not as conservative in their thinking as compared to the women raised in the old school of thought," Alice said. "By never attending that old school of thought is a kind of liberation in itself. The cultural habits of the American-born are different from that of the immigrants. But people can change and adapt. There really shouldn't be such a big gap between the two. Immigrants should try to learn English in order to communicate. The American-born should try to learn some of the old school of thought since some of the traditional teachings are not all without basis, like: respect, trust, loyalty, manners, righteousness, uprightness, and shame. These teachings are valid, up to a degree. For example, I think some Chinese American women are too Western-minded when it comes to marriage and divorce. There isn't the patience and tolerance to go through changes. For immigrants, divorce is rare. Women brought up here are more impetuous."

Wing Fong has a daughter in college. She said, "To my daughter, whatever you say as being Chinese, they think it's silly. They tell you this is America, and things are different here. You can't force them to believe in anything. They have a mind of their own."

Women Hold Up Half the Sky! In the spring time, when frozen rivers begin to melt, we see the rebirth of a million living things. Oppressed women all over the world, in the loudest voice cry out for FREEDOM . . . . Let us forever overcome the shackles of this people-eating world. □

Shiree Teng *works in the ILGWU research department. She is also a member of the Chinese Progressive Association.*

Karen Wing: Postal Union Leader

By Lynne Moy

Leon Sun

Karen Wing, vice-president of the San Francisco local of the APWU

Karen Wing has been a postal worker since 1973. In 1980 she was elected vice-president of the 2,800-member San Francisco local of the American Postal Workers Union (APWU), making her one of the highest ranking Chinese women union officials in California. As *EAST WIND* goes to press, Karen is in a hard fought campaign for the union presidency.

EAST WIND talked with her to find out about her background and her opinions on organizing around workers and women's issues in the trade unions and in the community.

A native of Baltimore, Maryland, which had a small Chinese community of approximately 200 people, Karen encountered much racism when she was growing up. This, of course, had a big impact on shaping her identity and subsequent political commitment. As a child, she remembers times when she and her father would be refused service at a restaurant solely because of their race. And there were the usual taunts — "Jap" and "Chink" — on the schoolyard and the times boys threw stones at her. Her father always told her, "Be proud you're Chinese. Never forget that you're as good as anyone else."

When Karen entered the University of Wisconsin, she decided to major in East Asian Studies. "I really wanted to learn Chinese and find my roots. They didn't have Asian American studies then, just Asian studies. And I wanted to learn more about China," said Karen.

Going to college in the late sixties was quite an experience. Colleges across the country were bursting with political activity around the Vietnam War and ethnic studies and the University of Wisconsin was no exception.

"I think the Black strike really politicized the whole campus. Blacks were demanding the right to learn about their own culture and history. Eventually, some Black students took over a building to press their demand for Black Studies and the university responded by sending in the National Guard with unsheathed bayonets. The whole campus was in an uproar. There was a massive strike, boycott of classes, and mass rallies," said Karen.

Impressed by the demands of the Black students, after the strike, Karen and other Asian, Black, Puerto Rican and Latino students formed the Third World Unity Movement, which began holding educational programs on China and other Third World issues. But being in Madison, isolated from the masses of Chinese people, was no place to discover her roots, so she decided to move to San Francisco to get involved with other activists in the Chinatown community.

"Working in Chinatown was a little scary at first and not knowing the language, it was difficult," said Karen. "I and other Asian women were impressed by the 'barefoot doctors' in China and the concept of serving the people, so in 1971 we decided to form an Asian Women's Health Team to bring health services to the Chinatown community. We did some study on basic health care, blood testing, and TB testing with some friends at the Los Siete Health Clinic in the Mission. And we began by giving presentations on nutrition at some of the Chinatown schools.

"Through the class presentations, we began to meet some of the parents, especially the mothers. I remember being invited into their homes, which were usually small apartments in Chinatown. Most of the women were garment or restaurant workers and they worked long hours. But no matter how tired they were, they would invite us in for

tea. I'll never forget them. Although they had very little, they would share it with us to show how much they appreciated our work."

After several years of working in Chinatown and taking part in the formation of the Chinese Progressive Association, Karen got a job at the post office as a mail clerk.

"I always thought the post office was made up of carriers and clerks at the neighborhood stations. I wasn't prepared for the huge mail factory with rows and rows of clerks sticking letters in pigeon holes 24 hours a day, or rows of machine operators keying zipped letters at a rate of almost one a second."

One of the things Karen noted at the San Francisco Post Office was the high number of minorities. Out of a total workforce of 6,000, approximately 30% are Asian and 35% are Black.

Karen became active in the union after seeing conditions worsen. For two and a half years, she and other workers were part-time flexibles. Working on graveyard, one could be sent home after four hours or made to work 11½ hours, seven days a week. There were also speed-ups and harassment.

"By 1978 it was pretty clear that the post office was bent on making profits through mechanization of the workforce. These machines were noisy and dangerous. One place where it was most obvious was the Bulk Mail Centers where large packages are processed. The machines not only destroyed packages, but were destroying the workers too. Health and safety conditions were terrible.

"By this time it was also clear to the majority of postal workers that the union leadership was closer to management than to the rank and file. By contract time, workers at the Bulk Mail Center in New York City and Richmond, California went out on strike demanding better working conditions and demanding that the union leadership not sell them out. Unfortunately, all the strikers were fired and the union leadership did not fight for amnesty."

During the 1978 strike, Karen and other workers formed the Postal Workers Contract Committee. Through educational work like waging campaigns to get elected instead of appointed shop stewards, and raising issues around discrimination, the Committee won a lot of respect among the workers. As one of its leaders, Karen became widely recognized as a fighter for workers' rights.

Karen explained how she eventually became vice-president of the Local: "By the 1980 local election, many members were encouraging me to run for office since it was clear that the leadership was not representing the membership. So, a coworker and I decided to go ahead and run for office. He ran for president and I ran for vice-president. After a rather dirty campaign of red-baiting and mudslinging, I won the position of general vice-president and became the first woman in the Local to be elected to the vice-presidency.

"After I won office, it was very difficult to function on a predominantly male executive board. It was difficult for them to accept that a young woman had actually won an elected high office. The president refused to think of me as an equal. He tried to exclude me from meetings and discussions with the other officers and with management. He considered my views to be 'too radical.' Although he would introduce me as the general vice-president, he would treat me like his secretary.

"To retain some of my own self-respect and confidence, I pulled together some of the active women stewards. They would come down to the union office with me and we were able to give each other mutual support. At first, we just got together for lunch or at each other's house to talk about our problems and share experiences. We formed an informal women's group. Coincidentally, about this time, women nationally were coming together to form a woman's group which eventually was named POWER (Post Office Women for Equal Rights). So locally, we developed our informal women's group into a local chapter of POWER. Our aim is to organize women to fully and equally participate in all aspects of the union."

When asked why POWER was formed, Karen pointed out that as the post office heads towards mechanization, women workers who are among the most recently hired workers will be the first laid off. Issues such as retraining and advancement into areas besides the clerk category are important issues among women. Management is hiring mechanics and electricians from the general labor market instead of offering women in the post office a chance of in-house training.

UNITY Newspaper

Postal workers demonstrate at Bulk Mail Center, Richmond, Calif.

"We're also concerned about childcare, health and safety issues, and sexual harassment on the job," Karen added. "One of the women's biggest concerns is around taking leave from work without penalty when their children are sick. When there is no adequate childcare and when husband and wife work on the same shift, it's a big problem. We've also found that there seems to be a high case of miscarriage among women postal workers and we're trying to identify the cause.

"We hope that POWER can be a place for women to gain mutual support and can develop their talents and skills. As women become more active the union will become stronger," Karen added.

In the past few years, Karen has been very outspoken about social and political issues. As vice-president of the Local, Karen spoke out against the use of postal clerks to handle draft registration.

"The draft registration program was part of the overall military build up by the U.S. government. We felt that any postal worker who did not want to take part in draft registration shouldn't have to do it."

Karen took the resolution to a meeting of APWU local presidents and published her views in the union newspaper.

"I feel it's very important to take stands on social issues because union leaders have a lot of influence. I have a responsibility to try to change policies I feel are wrong like the current Simpson-Mazzoli anti-immigrant bills. By speaking out, I hope I can influence and educate others," said Karen.

Karen has always enjoyed the respect of her Asian and Chinese coworkers. "I think the Chinese like having me as a Chinese union official. It is difficult trying to break through the stereotype of a young passive Asian woman. Unfortunately, I don't speak Chinese very well. This is definitely a disadvantage. Most of the Chinese workers are Chinese speaking. English is their second language. So while they may feel more comfortable talking to me, there is still somewhat of a language problem. I have been trying to get the union to translate more things about the contract and union activities so that Chinese can feel more comfortable and begin to get more active in the union. However, there is a lot of resistance to this."

Besides her work in the union, Karen still maintains some ties with the Chinatown community by participating in the Workers Mutual Aid Committee of the Chinese Progressive Association. Along with other Chinese workers and Chinese American trade unionists in the Hotel and Restaurant Workers Union, Karen has helped work on an educational seminar on Chinese working people. The committee is also involved with investigating individual back pay and other workers' grievances as well as support work for unionizing drives.

But the main focus of Karen's work remains fighting for a stronger union and better conditions for all postal workers. Her platform is best summed up in her campaign slogan: "Jobs, Justice and Equality."

"We want to develop a stronger union with better representation and organization of workers on the floor. Knowledge is strength. People have to know what their rights are and have to begin to see themselves as a powerful organized force and can make a difference.

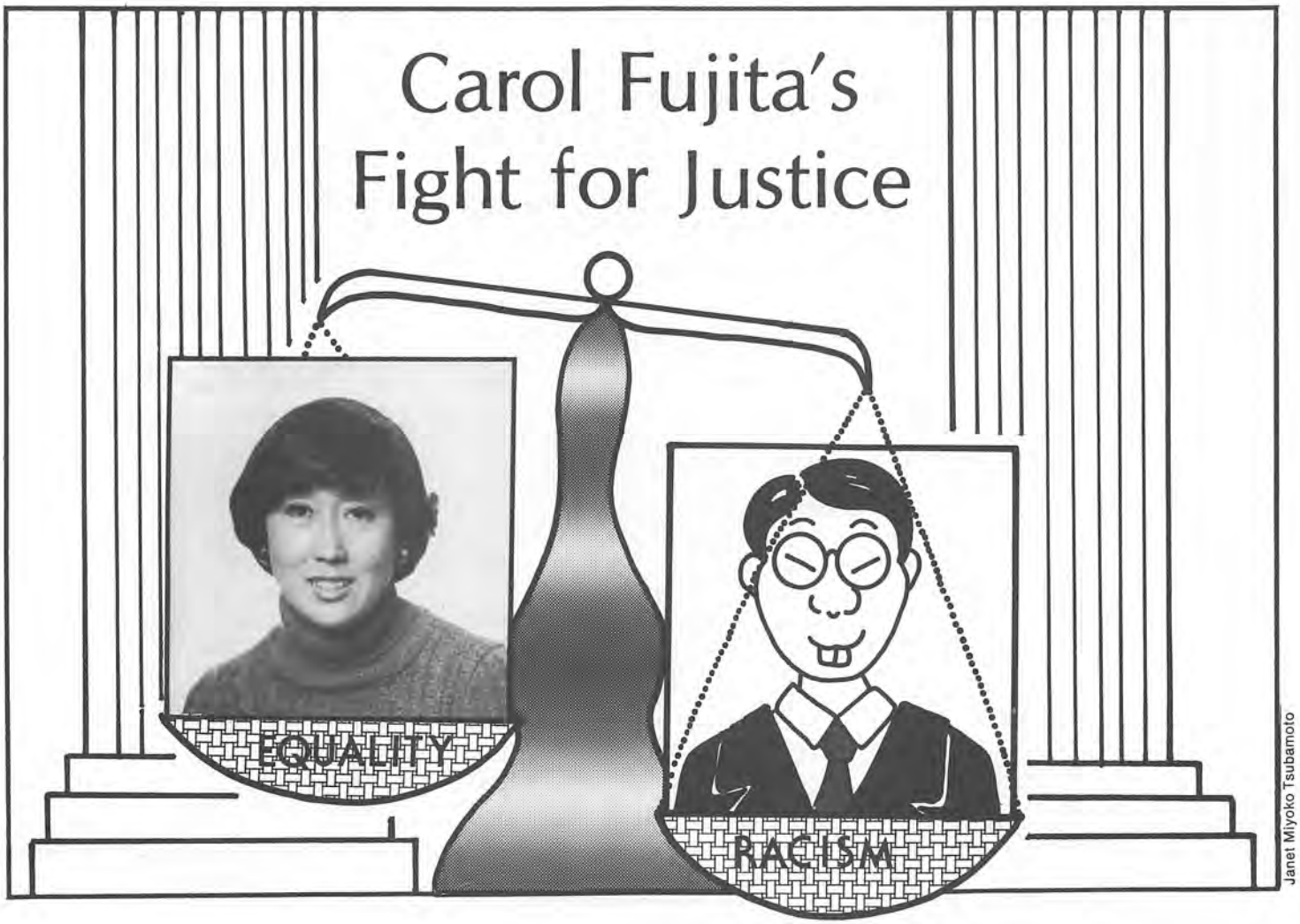
"To build a strong union and an organized labor movement we have to work towards real multi-national unity. We must ensure the opportunity for full and equal participation in our union of men and women of all nationalities. We will have to provide translations and interpreters when necessary, work towards setting up childcare for working parents particularly mothers, cut through the stereotyping and learn from the contributions made by various ethnic groups to the labor movement.

"I think it is very important for women to become active. Women hold up half the sky. Women have to play an equal role in determining the future. For Asian women, we have to step out of the stereotype that holds us back. It's going to be difficult. The unions historically have been male dominated and white dominated. They haven't paid attention to organizing minorities and women. Therefore, we have an important role to play. We have to initiate the organizing. We have to demand to be recognized and treated on an equal basis." □

Karen Wing, fellow members of the "Jobs, Justice, and Equality" slate and supporters

Lynne Moy *is a member of the Chinese Progressive Association's Workers Mutual Aid Committee.*

Carol Fujita's Fight for Justice



Janet Miyoko Tsubamoto

This interview was conducted by Miya Iwataki in January 1983.

* * *

EAST WIND: Could you tell us about your background and the case?

Carol Fujita: I was born in Los Angeles. My family went to a camp in Arkansas in 1942, after which they were relocated to Ogden, Utah. Then they moved back to the Wilmington/Torrance area. I graduated from Banning High School and spent two years at UCLA. Then I went to the USC School of Pharmacy for four years.

When I first started working for Harbor/UCLA Medical Center in 1969, I was the first woman who was hired as a pharmacist. I only stayed there a year and then went to County/USC Medical Center where I did a lot of things that I had been wanting to do in my career: research and teaching. In 1978, I went back to Harbor/UCLA Medical Center because they were under the mandate by the Joint Commission on Accreditation to put up a Unit Dose Drug Distribution System, a specialized system where a pharmacist reads all the orders and supplies directly to the patient. I received a call from the director, Mr. Hollenbeck, who wanted me to come over and set up the program for him. For that I would be compensated as a supervisor. I did the work for nearly two years before I decided that I was having a little problem in that I didn't think that I was going to get promoted. I would inquire and they would say, "You know how the County is. It always takes time." I was doing all this work not to get my position, not to be compensated but for the experience. But in January 1980 something occurred.

There was an altercation in the Director's office when we were discussing the program's objectives. There was a disagreement and the disagreement erupted into an argument. He told me to get out of his office and came around the table, grabbed me, and tried to throw me out. Instead of hitting the opening of the door, I hit the wall next to the door. For that I had neck and back strain and injuries to my right arm. I had to go to the doctor, have treatments and take medication. There was a period during the seven months I was off that I was not receiving any pay because my workers compensation case had to go to

trial, and I used up my sick time. So it was a very difficult seven months for me.

EAST WIND: Did your supervisor have a previous record of racism or sexism?

Carol Fujita: Sure. Three employees told me that approximately a year before I arrived to work there, there had been posted on the wall outside my supervisor's office a picture of a stereotyped Japanese. It looked like one of the cartoons you would see during WW II: buck teeth, slanted eyes, funny glasses, tight black suit and a briefcase. He had it posted on the wall for one week, and a Japanese American pharmacist asked him to take it down. He refused to take it down and finally did after this one Japanese American continued to insist that he felt it was very offensive.

One of the strong points in my favor when I took this case to the Civil Service Commission in October 1980 was that there was a past pattern of practice (of discrimination). There was a Japanese American male who had consistently placed high on promotional examinations, but had always been passed over when a promotion became available. In addition to this, there was another suit filed with the EEOC (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission) by a Black American pharmacist.

We also developed a statistical argument to show that 40% of the pharmacists in the County were Asian Americans and only approximately 10% were supervisors. So there's an under-representation of Asian supervisors. There was under-representation of minority women and especially Asian American women in management positions. We were able to prove that not only is there discrimination with respect to my case, but also it had been a past pattern of practice. I think this is why we won our case.

EAST WIND: What made you decide to fight?

Carol Fujita: I guess one of the main reasons is that there was an assault, and I knew that I would have to challenge that. I filed a lawsuit against the supervisor and the County for the assault and battery. I wouldn't have done so if they would have terminated him, but they said, "It's his word against your word." So I said, "Fine, we'll take it to court."

I decided that I had to resolve my work situation too. They did make offers to transfer me to various facilities, to become a staff pharmacist at Long Beach Hospital, but I felt that there was a promise made. I had lived up to my end of the obligation. I had committed to put up the program and I put up the program. I supervised 23 people. I had greater responsibility than the other three supervisors who were white males. Why should I give it all up? So I decided that I would go for it and to get what I was entitled to. It wasn't easy but it had to be done.

There were three cases: a workers compensation case, an assault and battery case and the discrimination case. Two of the three are resolved. The workers compensation case was for compensation for injuries sustained on the job. In November 1981, the judge ruled that there was an injury on the job and that I should have all of my sick time reinstated and receive workers compensation benefits which wasn't much, but at least I got my sick time back on the records. The discrimination case, we won that. The Department of Health Services agreed with the Civil Service Commission to give me the next available promotion. However, three or four other people were promoted before they finally gave me the promotion. So as it turned out, the community had to meet with the Department of Health Services and use a little bit of influence.

EAST WIND: Why did you decide to turn to the community?

Carol Fujita: When I first started, I thought that I was going to win because I was right and that I could do it alone. But unfortunately, as I was going along I was denied on all levels of my grievance. I realized that as an individual there wasn't much that I could do because I didn't have enough power on my own. One way I could gain some of that power was to contact some people in the community and work as a group to get this resolved. I felt that if the community would back me up, the County would be more responsive than to one individual, Carol Fujita. I mean they could just bury her and that would be the end of it. They can't bury a whole community.

I needed assistance, both public education and support. I was deeply in financial problems because I was off seven months and was adding up legal fees. I think my whole legal case for the discrimination case cost $17,000. It's been very lucky for me that the two fund raisers that we had paid off my legal expenses.

If it were not for the community, I would not have won. It's just as simple as that. Being right is not enough. I could have taken my case to court and I probably would have won everything. But even though you win, it doesn't mean you get it resolved. Even as the Civil Service Commission said that I should have been promoted, they said they did not have the power to order the County. They could only recommend it. That's where the community came in. Now I feel a tremendous obligation to the community.

EAST WIND: Is there anything you would like to leave people with like a lesson learned or just sharing a last thought?

Carol Fujita: I guess I would only like to say that most people when they hear about an experience like mine say, "Gee, it's not worth fighting because it's too much effort and too costly, or most people are not like you." I don't think that's true. If there is an opportunity that you see and you think you can do the job, you go for it. And if you run into problems like I did, just fight it. Hopefully it will be easier now because we've got the Asian/Pacific Legal Defense Fund set up to help people who run into these problems. I don't think that it is anything that is going to stop. I just encourage people who face these things to challenge injustices because nothing is going to change unless we challenge them. □

Lillian Sing: From Community Activist to Judge

Lillian Sing is a Municipal Judge in Dept. 3 in San Francisco, Calif. She resides in the city with her husband and 14 1/2-year-old daughter and 9-year-old-son. The interview was conducted by Pam Tau and Denise Imura in February, 1983.

EAST WIND: Could you tell us about your background?

Lillian Sing: I was born in Shanghai, China in 1942 and stayed in China until I was about eight or nine years old. Then I stayed in Hong Kong for another seven years. I came to the United States when I was about 16 years old.

I attended high school in L.A. and then went to Occidental College (in Los Angeles) as a recipient of the Boxer Rebellion scholarship fund. I think that may have started my involvement in the Chinese American community since that fund had something to do with Chinese history in the U.S. I majored in psychology and then went to Columbia University in New York and obtained a Master's Degree in social work.

I came to San Francisco in 1966 because my husband is from San Francisco and in those days women simply followed their husbands rather than the other way around.

I had no friends and relatives here and was quite lost. Being from a Shanghainese background, I didn't speak Toisanese and felt a little bit alienated from the Toisan community of the Chinese American community. However, I started working as a social worker part-time at Big Brothers Inc. I also became involved in the Chinese American community through the district council in Chinatown. By becoming involved through the district council I became more aware of the issues facing Chinese Americans.

My husband was born in Salinas (and) has suffered discrimination in this country. He sensitized me to some of the problems in the U.S. Having entered the U.S. in my teens as a student, I was not familiar with the problems of the old-timers who came to the U.S. as sojourners and workers. Also, after being involved in the civil rights movement in the 60's, I became more and more involved in the Chinese American community.

I started working in the community with the immigrants, mainly because I identified with them since I came as a foreigner. I was involved when the Chinese Newcomer Service Center first started . . . as a member of the board and then assistant director. I quickly realized that a lot of the problems regarding immigration have nothing to do with the individual, but with society and the laws related to it. It is the law itself that needs to be addressed and that immigrants themselves are just victims of that law. Up until 1965 only 103 Chinese were allowed to come into the U.S. Therefore, a lot of problems related to illegal aliens is created by that chapter of the U.S. history. I wanted to go into law and see whether or not I could do something about changing the law and therefore work from that angle rather than from a case worker's angle.

When I went to law school in 1972, I believe I was considered the "older woman" in law school because I had by then worked in the community for about eight years; had one child already; was over 30 years old; and in those days, an older woman's reentry to school was still considered *not* the thing to do. Unlike most of the law students there who didn't understand why they were pursuing a law degree, I had my objective all set out. Even before I graduated, I had two offers from law firms specializing in immigration law.

EAST WIND: As a Chinese woman you seem to have established a sense of purpose pretty early. Was there support from your family?

Lillian Sing: My family never expected that a girl would go to college. When I grew up, I grew up in a very traditional Chinese family and if there were any financial resources, it would go to the boys in the family. Knowing that very early, I knew I could only pursue a college career if I were to obtain a scholarship. Even though my family supported me morally, I never imposed on my family for financial support in my pursuit of higher education.

My mother has always been opposed to my pursuing a higher education because older traditional Chinese women always feel that a woman's

place is at home. However, once I had obtained the degree she was very proud of me and she's the first person to brag to her friends about her daughter's accomplishments.

EAST WIND: How do you manage your life with your family, community involvement, and a demanding career?

Lillian Sing: It's very, very difficult. I think I was fortunate that I became involved in the community very early before I went to law school and before I had any children. When my first child came, I took her everywhere and she was too young to complain at that time. It is a real struggle in terms of balancing the needs of the family and the needs of the profession. Children are very good in giving guilt trips about how much time you are spending away from the family. In a way, it's a matter of organizing your time. For example, if people wish to meet with me, I try to meet with them during my lunch hour or during breakfast so that it doesn't impose upon the family in the evenings. I encourage people to be involved in the community, but I really feel that the family is really the most important part of us and we shouldn't do it to the detriment of family life. And sometimes the family can be involved together. We take our children to a lot of functions. I remember taking Jenny to demonstrations and she used to carry flags and all that. She was involved with me throughout the 60's. But really, it's not easy. I don't know what advice to give young parents except to say that when the children are really young you can do it without their permission and then at that point you establish a habit of bringing them around and they get into a habit of being with different kinds of people and different kinds of environments so they don't act up and feel strange. But if you keep them secluded and separated and suddenly you try to get them involved, it is very difficult. When they decide that they don't want to go, it's important not to force them otherwise they will then rebel against you and rebel against what you stand for.

EAST WIND: Do you get a lot of support from your husband?

Lillian Sing: Actually, my husband is the one who really helped me become independent mainly because he is a very independent person himself. If I did not become involved in other things, I would be at home by myself a great deal of time and feeling very lonely and depressed. And that's what happened in my first year of marriage. He forced me to become involved. If I were to cling onto him then I would be nothing but a parasite. So, he did help me a great deal to develop my independence. Now that I'm independent, we still have struggles in terms of how much independence is too much independence on both sides. We're both in our 40's so it's another generation; the standard is a little bit different. But we have both come a long way. When we were first married, I did most of the cooking; I did most of the house cleaning; I did most of the caring of the children. Now he helps with lots of things at home.

EAST WIND: What changes do you see in the community?

Lillian Sing: Well, I see a backlash happening in our community. I think that the gains we have achieved in the 60's have gone backwards. Affirmative action was much further ahead in the 60's than now. In the 60's, there was a guilt feeling about the inequities in society; in the 80's, people are more hardened by it. They're more sophisticated in terms of their discrimination. It's disguised more and there are more explanations for it. For example, the Bay Area Rapid Transit board recently talked about affirmative action applying to whites. It's a real cynical approach to the whole issue of affirmative action. It's comparing apples and oranges. If you look at the employment picture, you still find the minorities basically underemployed and underrepresented in higher positions where the salary is higher. Minorities are over-represented in the service areas where the pay is much lower. I still find that as far as Asians are concerned, the number of years of education versus the kind of employment you are able to obtain is greatly disproportionate. Discrimination is still there but in the 80's there's a real backlash in the sense that people are no longer willing to accept that it is happening and are creating excuses. They are going backward instead of forward in remedying these problems. I think it's very important that we have associations like Chinese for Affirmative Action who can speak out on the inequities of society.

Another area that there's a backlash is toward immigrants. People are very opposed to immigrants and very cynical towards the recent refugees coming from Vietnam and Indonesia and Cambodia. And it's apparent in the newspapers; they make fun of it in columns in the newspapers. And I think it's very sad since this country is made up of immigrants.

Of course I'm opposed to the Simpson-Mazzoli bill for various reasons. One is the elimination of the 5th preference. Family reunification was the underlying objective when the immigration law was revised in 1965. Now that it's applied fairly and equally, they wish to take that aspect away from citizens. It will be especially discriminatory towards the Chinese American families because they do have large numbers of brothers and sisters (overseas). I'm also greatly opposed to the employer sanction provision because it will work adversely towards people of color.

EAST WIND: Are you involved in any community projects right now?

Lillian Sing: Well, it's interesting because one of the things I had to take when I became a judge was (an oath) to abide by the canons of Judicial Conduct. Canon 5 prohibits judges from involvement in bipartisan politics as well as in any activities that help raise funds. So, it's limited me to a large extent. On the other hand, I still attend a lot of functions and I visit schools and try to be a role model to young persons. But in terms of actual organizations I'm mostly involved in the organizations related to my profession as a judge. I am chair of the Northern Calif. Chapter of Asian American Judges. I can say that they're only five of us. I'm the first Asian woman to be appointed to the bench in Northern California and I think that it in itself speaks to California's history towards not only Asians but Asian women specifically. □

Asian Sisters . . . Take the Lead!

Sheri Miyashiro

By Sheri Miyashiro

In my second year at the Calif. State University at Los Angeles I became active in the Asian/Pacific Student Union (APSU). When I first became involved in the Asian Student Movement in 1978, the woman's question was very prominent. APSU had just formed an Asian women's group, which was composed of students from campuses in the L.A. area. The women's group served as a way for us to learn more about the historic roots of women's oppression. It was a vehicle for us to share our own experiences with male chauvinism, and brought out the need for more women to become leaders within APSU. We participated in activities such as International Working Women's Day, put together a photo display on women in China for October 1st, helped facilitate a workshop on Asian women at the first working conference of APSU, and planned various social activities so the women could just get together informally. The women's group, although it was difficult to maintain in an ongoing way, had a very good impact on the character of our student organizations. It provided an atmosphere where women felt they could and should get actively involved. It also helped give encouragement to women in Northern Cal and the East Coast to start up women's groups within their own organizations. We received support and participation not only from the women in APSU, but from the men also, who for the most part honestly struggled to root out their own male chauvinism. The men as well as the women saw dealing with the woman question as an integral part of building a strong Asian Student Movement. Unlike many white feminist groups who view men as the problem, we brought out the triple oppression of Asian women as workers, women, and oppressed nationalities. It was clear that the women's group was formed to build more unity and respect among the men and women of APSU so we could work together on an equal basis in fighting for our common goals. Many of the women in APSU did move forward, gaining more confidence in putting forth ideas and giving direction to the work. More women could be seen chairing meetings, emceeing conferences, holding key positions in their campus organizations, setting an example that women are capable of carrying out leadership responsibilities and should be equally respected.

Today I feel there is less attention being paid to the role women play in the Asian Student Movement. This is not so surprising given the conservative trend in this country overall. I think we are all being affected to a certain degree in all spheres of our life, whether in our political involvement, our personal relationships, or in determining our future aspirations. I feel it is becoming increasingly hard for Asian women to deal with male chauvinism. There is less of a conscious effort among men to struggle with their male chauvinism. At the same time, there aren't very many Asian women's groups in existence that could help provide more of a supportive atmosphere for women. In most organizations the woman question is rarely discussed.

The effect this has on our organizations is the tendency for women to play a secondary role rather than a leading role. Many women end up doing secretarial types of responsibilities instead of taking part in the decisions and direction of the club. This is either because these are the types of jobs women are assigned or because of a lack of confidence in our own abilities. It is especially difficult for women to develop politically be-

cause of this.

There are various obstacles standing in the way of women becoming more involved that many times go unnoticed. Too many times in meetings women will raise ideas or suggestions only to be ignored or not taken seriously. One sister I know was even "jokingly" told to shut-up by a brother while trying to participate in a group discussion. Incidents like that only reinforce the idea of keeping women in their place. There is no humor in that.

I know of another woman who was pretty active in ASU until she got together with her boyfriend who was involved in a fraternity. After she got into the relationship her whole life was geared around him, his frat activities, and getting to know his family and friends. He put down her involvement in the ASU, taking very little interest in what she was doing, and making little effort to get to know her friends. After a short period of time, she stopped coming around to the ASU completely, although she said she felt tied down and wanted to do more things of interest to her. She felt in order to keep the relationship going she had to go along with what he wanted. In essence that meant giving up her own needs and interests and accepting him as the center of her life.

Relationships are a major influence in the lives of most women. Especially for politically active women, the contradictions many times become sharpest when put into the context of a relationship. On the one hand we're told a "good" woman should be a perfect hostess and housekeeper. She should be good-looking and self-sacrificing. She should put her man first in everything she does, and make him feel important by trying to fulfill all of his needs. For women in the movement it is a struggle to combat these ideas which promote our non-involvement and give us the idea that our self-image should revolve around men.

In the typical relationship the woman is usually the one who sacrifices the most in regard to her opinions, her identity, and when she's involved, in her political activism. These sacrifices are seen as necessary to maintain a "good" relationship. In many relationships disagreements or criticisms are seen as bad. Part of this is because we are supposed to believe that in "good" relationships couples never have any conflicts — everything always runs smoothly. We all know this isn't what really happens. However, this idea results in an atmosphere of non-struggle, and ignoring conflicts that are really there thinking they'll just go away or get better in time. Usually what happens is the situation only gets worse. I feel dealing with problems in relationships or with differing views in an open way helps strengthen the relationship because it shows a true concern for each other's thoughts and feelings. I don't think it's even always necessary for couples to agree with each other. Sometimes women hesitate to put out their ideas out of fear of rejection, or not wanting to hurt the other person's feelings, while many men presume they speak and think on behalf of both themselves and the woman. I feel a strong relationship doesn't mean two people have to meld into one, but that each person has something to contribute to the relationship independent of the other too. Especially for women in the movement, being in a relationship with a man who isn't involved doesn't have to mean giving up or toning down her political involvement. Both people should feel free to develop themselves independently as well as together.

In my relationship with my boyfriend, sometimes I find it's not all that easy to do what I know is correct. It is difficult at times for me to combat feelings of dependency, or to try to be open about things that might be bothering me. The influence of some of the traditional views of what a "good" woman should be are affecting me too. But I feel because we both have an understanding of how our relationship is going to work, and through our mutual involvement and commitment to the movement, we have developed a strong relationship.

UNITY Newspaper

Combatting male chauvinism will build a stronger Asian student movement.

The question of women's equality is something that needs to be addressed within the Asian Student Movement and in the movement overall. We shouldn't feel the situation of women has changed so drastically that we no longer need to deal with women's oppression. At the same time we shouldn't feel the problem is too large to do anything about. Combatting male chauvinism is a struggle, but it's a struggle that will ultimately make for a stronger Asian Student Movement and help provide real unity among men and women. □

Sheri Miyashiro *is a student active in the Asian/Pacific Student Union in Los Angeles.*

Asian Sisters In Action

By Lydia Lowe and Beth Shironaka

Asians Sisters in Action (ASIA) was founded in February 1980 out of a conference entitled "Women and Racism." After the conference, eight Asian women decided to meet socially every week. From there, the meetings went to once a month, and the membership grew to nearly 80 women. ASIA still acts as a social group, but is also networking, striving for greater visibility, and providing support.

Most of ASIA's members are students or professional women, living apart from the Asian community and working in "the white world." Dispersal and upward mobility both create feelings of isolation in many women. ASIA's rapid growth is a response to that isolation.

Beth Shironaka is a graduate student at Boston College School of Social Work and originally from California. "During my first week in graduate school," she says, "I found I was the only Asian in a program of 100 people. My sense of identity was threatened. I realized that for me to remain in Boston, I would need to continue being involved in the Asian community. ASIA provides a sense of community for me."

Anna Fang, a woman of Chinese and Austrian descent, comments, "I came to ASIA because I wanted to finally meet other Asian women, and other Asians in general. I hoped it would be a place where I could express that side of me and have that side of me recognized, that maybe wasn't recognized by other white people. I think the founding group was more politically involved than I was, so I wasn't sure that I wanted to be in the group. I was sort of turned off. I thought of it more as a social

Logo from "Bridges To Ourselves" conference

AARW

A group discussion at ASIA's conference

thing. As my involvement has grown and as we've become friends, I think that you really can't separate the political part of it and the social part of it."

Another member, Irene Wong, adds, "I think it's a great support group. I feel that we are all coming from the same point, just understanding each other without having to really talk about it."

ASIA provides support through networking. A good example is the issue of Alan, a white male who frequently harasses Asian women here in Boston. After he followed and verbally abused several of the group's members, these Asian sisters took action. "We've passed out a number of flyers describing his looks and who to contact at the local police department," says Beth. "When one of our members recently encountered Alan she immediately started calling people to warn them that he's on the loose again. Then both people called others." Now, although many ASIA members have not met this man, they can all recognize him.

"We want to be visible as Asian women," Beth emphasizes, "inside and outside of the community." Some members are doing doctoral research on Asian American issues. Others are also involved in Asian student clubs, the Asian American Resource Workshop, or *Sampan* newspaper. As a group, ASIA has participated in the annual Dragon Boat Festival, a Chinese cultural celebration by the Charles River. ASIA marched in "Take Back the Night" for the safety of all women. The group joined the June 12th nuclear disarmament rally in New York City and the 1982 Bonne Belle 10K Run.

This spring, ASIA wanted a project to unite the group and commemorate International Women's Day. As ideas got rolling, dozens of women got involved. The result: Boston's first Asian women's conference, "Bridges to Ourselves." Held at Boston University on March 5, the conference drew over 150 women. A highlight of the conference was a keynote address by May Chen, a community and labor organizer from New York Chinatown. May described her experiences growing up in the Boston area and talked about why she became active in Chinatown community organizing.

One point that touched off discussion throughout the day was the question of "making it as an Asian woman." May noted that while Asian women must fight for advancement against racial and sexual discrimination, the process of "making it as an individual and assimilating into the white society is not a path that will uplift the community as a whole."

The conference offered a series of workshops on issues such as "Mother and Daughter Relations," "Women in Management," and "Political Activism." An evening cultural program at the Quincy Community School featured songs by Siu-wai Anderson, a play in progress by Rosanna Yamagiwa Alfaro, poetry, martial arts, and folk and modern dance.

"Bridges to Ourselves" and a post-conference retreat helped the group define its future direction. ASIA will hold smaller follow-up discussions on topics broached at the conference. There are plans for a job referral network and ideas for a future conference involving Asian American men.

"We still need to define things," says Beth. "We need to clarify bylaws and establish more structure. I'd like to reach out more to the Chinatown community, but Chinatown women may not need the same type of network as primarily single, professional women. The success of the conference showed the need and desire for a strong networking group."

Being the only group of its kind in New England, ASIA has a lot of challenging work ahead. □

AARW

The conference featured many lively workshops

Lydia Lowe *is a student at the University of Massachusetts at Boston.* **Beth Shironaka** *is a member of ASIA.*

Visual Communications

Group singing by LA Asian women's group at Youth Training Services, 1971

The Asian Women's Movement — A Retrospective —

By Miya Iwataki

My wish is to ride the tempest, tame the waves, kill the sharks. I want to drive the enemy away to save our people. I will not resign myself to the usual lot of women who bow their heads and become concubines.

Trieu Thi Trinh, 248 AD (1)

The Asian American women's movement has traveled a path full of many twists and turns — moving from basic awareness/sharing-what-it-means-to-be-a-woman, to focusing on man-woman relationships, to building programs, building Third World unity and doing anti-imperialist work. Yet, at all stages, we have been conscious of and motivated by the national and international climate; we have been a part of our Asian national movements and the overall movement. At the same time, we have distanced ourselves from the mainstream white women's liberation movement.

What have been our main issues and themes, and how have they been implemented? What stages have we moved through? Who have been our allies, our inspirations? How has (or has) the Asian women's movement moved women towards social change? This article will focus on the years between 1966–1974, identifying key issues and trends, and organizing efforts of Asian women from Los Angeles-Southern California in general strokes. Although it is West Coast oriented, there are many events that speak for the Asian women's movement as a whole.

I am a woman of Asian persuasion . . .

The first order of business for the Asian movement was to address the question of identity. And so it was for the movement of the 1960's across the United States . . . the dramatic entrance of the Black Panther Party, "la causa" of the Brown Berets and later Young Lords Party, the rising up of the American Indian Movement, the challenge of the women's movement, the tremendous impact of the anti-war movement . . . the coming of age of the 1960's youth . . . the strength and inspiration of Mao's China and Ho Chi Minh's Viet Nam . . . all were the seeds from which the Asian women's movement sprang.

For the Asian movement, the amount of cultural genocide was widespread and deep. Years of anti-Asian legislation, concentration camps, pervasive racist stereotypes and other forms of attacks against our people had eroded the self-respect, self-concept, cultural heritage and cultural pride in ourselves and our community. Massive efforts were being made to "out white whitey" or to be the "baddest" in the streets. Respect for our history, our parents, our community, and our women needed to be improved.

I hate my wife for her flat yellow face
and her soft cucumber legs, but mostly
for her lack of elegance and lack of
intelligence compared to judith gluck

She married me for love but she can't
love
me, since no one who went to Fresno
State
knows anything about Warhol or
Ginsberg or
Viet Nam. She has no jewish friends.

I thought I could love her at first,
that she
could teach me to be myself again, free
from years of bopping round LA
ghettos,
western civilization and the playmate
of the month.

But I wanted to be an anglican
too much and listened too long to
dylan
or maybe it was the playmate of the
month or poetry and judith gluck.

I married my wife, daughter of a rich
east los angeles banker, for money.
of course, I thought I deserved better,
but
suffering is something else altogether.

She's like a stupid water buffalo from
the old country, slowly plodding
between
muddy furrows, and that's all she
knows of
love beneath my curses and sometimes
blows.

since she was raised a buddhist with all
the arts of dancing, arranging and the
serving
of tea, and I thought I saw in my
arrogance some long forgotten warrior
prince.

Black Panther rally 1969

So I hate my gentle wife for her flat
yellow face and her soft cucumber legs
bearing the burden of the love she has
borne for centuries, centuries before
anglicans and dylan
playmates and rock
before
me or judith gluck. (2)

Motivated by the Civil Rights Movement and the fierce ethnic pride of groups like the Black Panthers and Brown Berets, around 1966 an "Are You Yellow" Conference was held followed by an explosion of Oriental Concern chapters on most of the major campuses, and the more radical Asian American Political Alliance, and street organizations like Yellow Brotherhood and Asian American Hard Core. At each of these stages in time, and within each of these groupings, women began to meet to talk about their own specific situation. Although in many different forms, women have always been in the forefront of "bringing things home," of bringing theories, concepts and rhetoric down to the personal level/implications on our daily lives.

And in the 1960's it was critical that women come together. Too many years of competitiveness, life-limiting boundaries on our dreams, and American materialism had affected our values and our lives. In the first informal women's groups, women began talking about years of scotch-taping eyelids to create a double eyelid fold then carefully painting it over with heavy strokes of Maybelline black liquid eyeliner. Women began to break through years of checking out each other as potential sources of competition for Asian men; of fearing being found out that one was not a virgin; of having to be anything but a "natural woman."

Man-woman relationships was a big area of discussion. Many of us recognized immediately that most of the so-called movement men or activist men had very quiet, unassertive, usually non-active "girlfriends." Many women who became active in women's groups or in the movement found themselves in relationships with non-movement men or men of other nationalities. Many painful struggles took place between couples when women began taking stronger roles.

There were also struggles among the women, many of whom had low concepts of Asian men either be-

Vietnamese militia woman

cause they had fallen prey to negative racist stereotyping of Asian men or because they had bad experiences with "unenlightened" Asian men.

However, just having the opportunity to begin to think, and share experiences and provide mutual support, and to . . . of all things . . . stand together instead of deferring to men or being afraid to turn men off, was a great victory! Years of frustration, pain, and anger at realizing the weak, awful roles we had been relegated to exploded into an up-against-the-wall-motherfucker attitude towards our men. Many men were threatened and bewildered by the vehemence. Some were angry and defensive. And many were very supportive and understanding, except with wives or girlfriends. Sensitivity groups, conflict-resolution techniques, and plain old confrontations took place. But the most volatile and most healing tests came from working together as equals.

The Asian movement, in concert with movement activities nationally and influenced by China's serve-the-people concept, began developing programs to address the needs of the community. Centers were developed like the JACS Asian Involvement Office which was run by commitment and principles of unity and a little bit of monetary support from the community. Programs were built from scratch, with labor and love and people with Ph.D's from the streets who hustled, cajoled, agitated, educated, mobilized, and organized to get things done. It was here that role contradictions and another level of male chauvinism had to be recognized and combatted.

IN THE MOVEMENT OFFICE

Sister: *(walking in) What do you think of women's liberation?*

Brother 2: *Well, Chairman Mao says 'Unite and take part in production and political activity to improve the economic and political status of women.'*

Brother 1: *Far out. Hey man, we better start getting the conference together. (all sit)*

Brother 2: *Yeah, I been thinking about that. Hey, did you dig on the article brother Alan put out? It runs down some heavy shit!*

Brother 1: *Right on! Let's put it on a stencil and run it off for the conference. Here, sister, can you type it up (hands it to her without waiting for her to answer) . . . and do this one on illegal search and seizure, too.*

Sister: *Here's an article that Yuki wrote on women. It's really heav . . .*

Brother 1: *Yeah, that illegal search and seizure is important because the students need to get their shit together as far as legal matters are concerned. Hey, before you start typing, can you get me some coffee?*

Brother 2: *Me too. I take two sugars. (she gets up without saying anything, goes to get the coffee. Brothers look her up and down)*

Brother 2: *When do you think we should have it? During Christmas vacation?*

Brother 1: *Yeah, right on. Let's try the first weekend. Maybe we can get the Center. Hey sister, can you call the Center right now and get a confirmation?*

Sister: *(bringing back the coffee) We can't use the Center anymore. Remember what happened last . . .*

Brother 2: *Oh, shit! We can't use the Center. Last year someone left cigarette burns in the furniture and those s.o.b.'s aren't letting anyone use it on weekends.*

Sister: *The first weekend of Christmas vacation might be rough for the students because of papers and . . .*

Brother 1: *Fuck that shit! If they place their priorities on a bullshit paper, fuck'em.*

Brother 2: *Right on! Hey, I got a meeting now. Can you get some press releases out and start contacting people for a general meeting? Thanks baby, you're a righteous sister.*

Brother 1: *Yeah, I got to split now, too. I have to go out in the field and do some people's work. I'll try to help you if I get back in time. But I know you can take care of business, baby. (both split)*

Sister: *(alone and pissed off) What's going on! I got a goddamn meeting, too! The people's work . . . What the hell do they think this is!!* (3)

Leon Sun

Anti-Viet Nam War Demonstration

It was now 1970. The war in Viet Nam had escalated, but not as quickly as the people's understanding that the U.S. had no right to be

there. China had taken a great leap forward, and the role of women in China was looked upon with envy and pride. Asian women now had two countries worthy of Asian role models. The strides forward women were making in these countries were not lost on the movement in general. An understanding of the contradictions that existed between what the movement was working towards, and what was actually happening with respect to women, was in place. There was a basis for struggling for our rights, for organizing women, for providing leadership in the movement, for being in women's groups. It was now time to move beyond personal and immediate issues and reach out.

Breaking out

A solid women's group had formed, was involved in all levels of the movement, whether in campus or community programs, and was meeting regularly. Women who had not been a part of this experience were hungering for contact with other like-minded women and new ideas. The L.A. Asian women's group developed a multi-media educational presentation which was an immediate hit. Requests from throughout the West Coast and East Coast came from campuses that were seeking contemporary, Asian/Third World women-oriented information in a creative style not found at school; from organizations ranging from Optimist Clubs to church and youth groups that wanted (whether from a pooh-pooh perspective or a genuine curiosity) to hear from Asian women who were standing up and working to improve their conditions; and from other developing women's groups or interested women who wanted to establish contact and use the script. (4)

Asian women had put style, creativity, and fun into educational work, incorporating timely issues — personal and political — group participation, and action. At that time, women and Asian women as a whole were not being encouraged into high levels of academia, performance roles, roles as speakers and leaders. We did not have university tenures or college publications. Our means of communication, therefore, had to take place through organization and creativity.

Asian movement conferences were held, but now there were women's workshops and rap sessions. Women participated in the main sessions and as part of the conference leadership. In January, 1971, *GIDRA*, the first Asian American newspaper, had its first "Women's Issue." (5)

Meanwhile, contacts with other Third World women's groups of the time like the New York based Third World Women's Alliance and the Latina group Movimiento were established, as well as interaction with white women's liberation groups. At the historic Vancouver Indochinese Women's Conference in April 1971, 150 Third World women from North America and representatives of the women's liberation movement met with Indochinese women in an inspirational exchange of information, solidarity against U.S. imperialism and what it was doing. (6) A sour note of the conference took place when a lesbian group criticized the Indochinese women for not taking up the question of homosexual oppression in Viet Nam . . . this in the midst of napalm, tiger cages, and other American atrocities in Viet Nam. Although this was not the position of all the women's liberation groups, it was becoming clear that the established women's movement was *not* addressing questions of racism and imperialism and related concerns felt by Third World, poor, and uneducated women.

MS.

I got into a thing with someone
because I called her
miss ann/kennedy/rockefeller/hughes
instead of ms. *(spelled capital m small s period)*

I said it was a waste of time
worrying about it.

her cool blue eyes
iced me — a victim of sexism.

I wanted to accomodate her
and call her what she deserved,
but knowing that would please her
instead I said,
white lace & satin was never soiled
by sexism
sheltered as you are by mansions
built on Indian land

Visual Communications

Preparing for the Asian women's skit at Youth Training Services, 1971

your diamonds shipped with
slaves from Africa
your underwear washed by
Chinese laundries
your house cleaned by my
grandmother

so do not push me any further.

and when you quit
killing us for democracy
and stop calling ME gook

I will call you
whatever you like. (7)

The dichotomy between the needs and concerns of the Third World women and white women, the tense international situation (U.S. imperialism's war in Viet Nam) and national persecution of Third World movement leaders by the same enemies of Viet Nam, propelled our movement in a specific direction.

Hiroshima
Viet Nam
Tule Lake

And yet we were not
devoured
And yet we were not humbled
And yet we are not broken. (8)

Genocide

The late '60s and early '70s brought a new and special energy and spirit to the movement. The principled courage and humanity shown by Vietnamese people who, in the face of unimaginable atrocities and destruction of their homeland by U.S. imperialism, still regarded the American people as "friends" — making clear differentiations between U.S. imperialism and the American people — had a powerful impact on our movement. The great strides forward that China was taking as she stood strong and proud to the world were not lost on the Third World people in America, especially we Asians! The example of downtrodden peasants defeating the mightiest world power with ideology and guerrilla warfare provided an endless supply of lifeblood to our movement.

The U.S. government was quick to retaliate . . . with the carrot and the stick. The stick was the ruthless and brutal murderous force used to wipe out the leadership of the Black Liberation Movement. Provocateurs, police spies, infiltrators tried to undermine the unstoppable growth of the movement in the only way they knew . . . murder and intimidation, from Malcolm X to Fred Hampton. Provocateurs wreaked havoc at what could have been orderly demonstrations against the war. Mass arrests, phone taps, police surveillance and harassment, and then drugs began invading our communities.

UNITY Newspaper

Demonstration demanding normalization of U.S.-China relations — S.F., 1978

As women activists, the seriousness of our struggle and our work was recognized and we began to make long term plans. The impact of U.S. imperialism was brought home with a sudden force during the summer of 1971 when in one month over 30 Asians, who were within our circle of friends in L.A., died of drug overdoses, primarily heroin and reds (seconals). Through investigation we found that Eli Lily Mfg. Corp. was producing an unrecorded amount of seconals designated specifically for the illegal street market in Third World ghetto communities. The serve-the-people programs we had started, although desperately needed, were only band-aids temporarily dealing with a much deeper cancer. People grew tired from talking sisters out of suicidal depressions, driving sisters to hospital emergency rooms at 3 a.m. to have their stomachs pumped while they screamed for hours in unconscious agony, troubleshooting 24 hours 7 days a week, always on call. (Where were the professionals who were paid to do this type of work?) This in addition to other serve-the-people programs assisting our seniors, health care needs, counseling, education, youth groups, and on and on. There was a need to talk about long range permanent change which could eliminate the self-destruction and the destruction of our people. We began studying the roots of the problem which were systemic — institutionalized in this system, and solutions that other countries had and were attempting.

The Carrot

"Every system, no matter how oppressive, must provide certain benefits or there will surely be revolu-

tion," — so goes an old movement adage.

In order to survive and be able to work in the non-paying serve-the-people programs, many living collectives were formed. The Asian women's groups had now gone forward through many stages. We needed to build action oriented programs. Committee structures were established in 1971;

1. Children's Lit — examining sexual and racial stereotypes with a view towards writing our own.
2. Women and Media — analyzing sex and racial stereotypes and developing our own media to counter it.
3. History of Asian women — reading and analyzing written materials on Asian women.
4. Women in Struggle — dealing with joint work with Third World women, certain events with white women. (9)

The Women in Struggle committee of this very ambitious plan merged with Asian Sisters, a group dealing with jr. high and high school Asians who were struggling with drugs and identity.

With the daily 24-hour on-call work of Asian Sisters, the underlyng ways in which the system was tearing apart our Asian self-esteem and providing (selling for profit) self-destructive escapes to keep us down became crystal clear. Through the educational system, these young sisters were tracked into a limited world not much broader than their neighborhood turf where connections with the best pushers, how much ass you could kick, and how "fine" your boyfriend was put you at the top of the "class." During the fatal summer of 1971, another alarming statistic emerged: one out of every three overdose deaths were women. (10) That Asian women faced a special form of oppression was now indisputable *fact.*

A key issue in the eyes of the young sisters was man-woman relationships. Because neither school nor the neighborhood encouraged them to have aspirations beyond ending up with a good "old man," happiness and fulfillment was equated with only what they knew. They had grown up with specific sets of values and lifestyles, they were rebels . . . and the goody-goody Asian image was not them. Of course this narrowed the range of men they could relate to, other street types. However, the street men were not as limited. They could attract the goody types who sometimes found a romanticism in the macho street dude. But machos and straights alike all seemed to be looking for the traditional submissive woman. The contradiction was very clear; the hypocrisy undeniable. It also existed among "movement" men. Men definitely needed re-educating, the community needed re-educating especially in relation to sisters that had been to jail or had drug raps. We needed to look into the real roots of the problems, and begin to make changes within ourselves and our thinking as well as changing the system.

UNITY Newspaper

Miya Iwataki (second left), Asian Women's Health Team, 1980

From A Lotus Blossom Cunt

so you come to me for a spiritual piece
my eyes have the ol' epicanthic fold
my skin is the ideologically correct color
a legit lay for the revolutionary
well, let me tell you, brother
revolution must be total
and you're in its way
yeah, yeah, I'm all sympathy
your soul and your sexuality has
been fucked over by Amerika
well, so has mine
so has ours
we chronic smilers
Asian women
we of the downcast almond eyes
are seeing each other
sisters now, people now
asian women
I'm still with you, brothers
Always
But I'm so damned tired
of being body first, head last
wanting to love you when all
you want is a solution to glandular discomfort
that I thought I'd better say my say
Think about it, brothers
We are women, we are Asian
We are freeing ourselves
Join us
Try to use us,
and you'll lose us
Join us. (11)

Funding for an Asian Women's Center came through in 1972. The first center for Asian women in the history of the U.S. This center was the only fully federally funded program in which the staff analyzed past experiences of other funded programs to try to fully understand

the pitfalls, the co-optation, the seemingly inevitable diversion from long-term complete solutions. Federal funding was recognized for what it was . . . a band-aid to keep us quiet. We would wear ourselves out trying to deal with flare-ups resulting from institutionalized problems taking our mind/time away from working towards total social change. And when the money ran out, the band-aid programs would collapse and we'd be out on the streets with no job, and perhaps some of us would be co-opted and forget about what our goals originally were, and think only of what would promote our individual careers.

The Asian Women's Center core group tackled the problem head on. Principles of unity were established: guidelines to give direction and content to our methods of work and our goals. Hiring was conducted based on the candidates' willingness and/or understanding to work by these principles. The funding was *truly* used to benefit the most. A full-time staff of 17 plus some part-time workers was culled out of funding meant to support only 4–5 women. Programs that were really needed were attempted. Concrete material and people-power support was given to key Third World as well as Asian causes. We tried to test if federal funding could be used in a way that could benefit our people and not stifle work for radical social change.

It's significant that it was women who were the only ones to try to test federal funds in this way. For so many of us, it was an opportunity to test our leadership; it was a challenge to build and squeeze as much as we could out of a system that had been squeezing us for decades, and even centuries. But in many ways it was a lonely battle. It was indeed a first.

However, it seemed that because of the amount of other activity and issues happening at that time, our movement comrades took more of a wait-and-see attitude than a support-through-struggle-and-participation stance, thus leaving us with a brand new and very difficult situation alone. Also, there were so many women who were brand new to the movement or some of its more developed perspectives, that an inordinate amount of time was spent on internal education and struggle, thus eating away time which could have been directed toward program development and external political education. It is a story that still needs to be fully analyzed and told.

What have we learned from these early years? One, that a movement of women — whether Asian, Third World or white — must be integrated with the movement as a whole. For the impact of national and international events affects our communities and our lives very thoroughly. Two, at the same time, there are a number of ways in which our "oppression" is very special, and there is a very concrete means for organizations, forums, and activities especially directed to, for, and by women. Three, that the woman question, the right and responsibility of women playing an equal role in leadership and production, is still a very important question within the movement as a whole just as it is in countries building socialist societies. The roots of the woman's question are centuries deep, and like the roots of centuries old trees, cannot be suddenly ripped out of the soil without leaving huge gaps and fissures that would be destructive to the rest of the ecology (or the communities). A separatist woman's movement would fall right into the divide and conquer tactics of the government.

By the early 1970's, the Asian women's movement, Asian women cadres and leaders were most definitely "holding up half the sky" in the movement and in the world. And as an integral part of the leadership in all these spheres, faced a much more intensely sophisticated struggle, and a serious fight against co-optation. □

Miya Iwataki *is a Contributing Editor to* EAST WIND.

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(4) Asian Women's Presentation, 1969, L.A. Asian Women's Group.

(5) Bound volumes and complete sets of *GIDRA* which ran from 1969 through 1974 available at Asian American Studies Centers and Asian bookstores.

(6) *ASIAN WOMEN'S JOURNAL*, Berkeley, 1971, "Indochinese Women's Conference," "Six Years in a Tiger Cage," and back issues of Asian American newspapers.

(7) *THIRD WORLD WOMEN*, 1972, "MS." By Janice Mirikitani, pg. 166.

(8) *AWAKE IN THE RIVER*, By Janice Mirikitani, "We, the Dangerous."

(9) L.A. Asian Women's Group minutes, April 1971.

(10) Information on this and the resulting Community Drug Offensive of 1971–72 can be found in old Asian Sisters and JACS-Asian Involvement files and minutes.

(11) *YELLOW PEARL*, published by Basement Workshop, New York, 1972, "Lotus Blossom Cunt," by Tomi Tanaka Ohta.

Are You A Liberated Woman?

Feminism, Revolution and Asian American Women

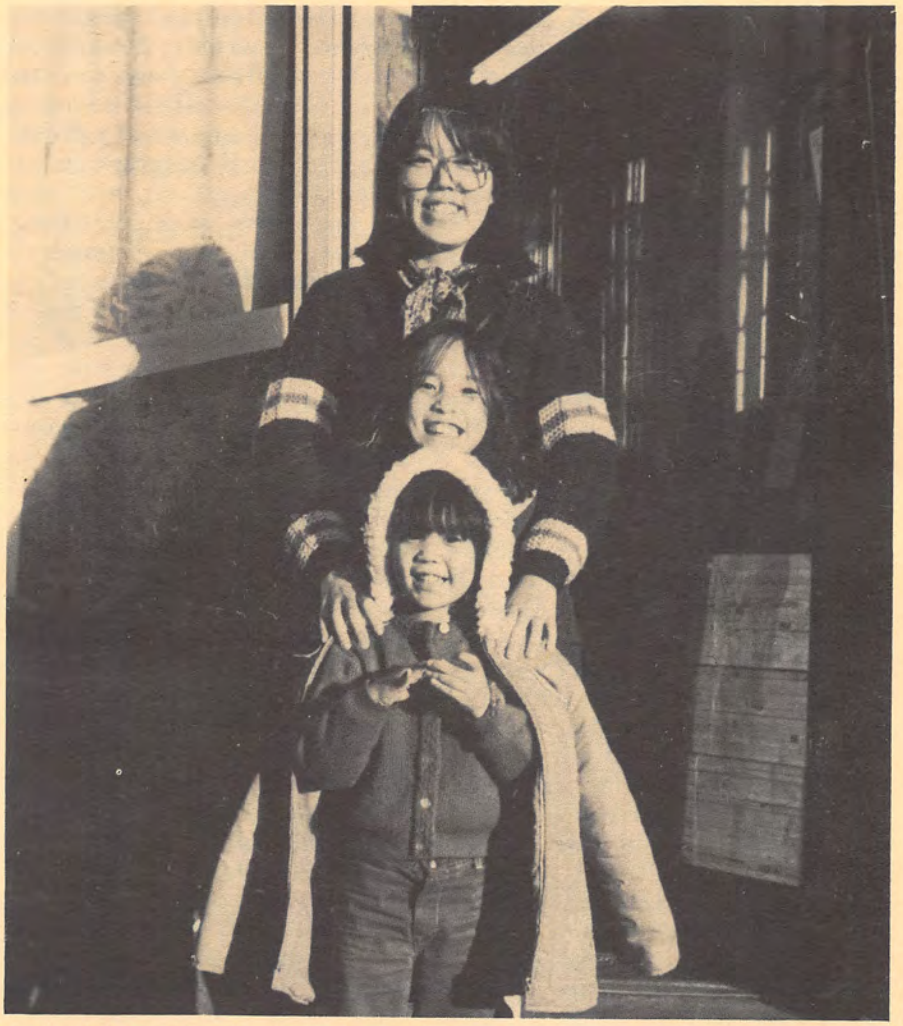
By Sasha Hohri

March, 1983

I began to write this article/essay several months ago. It is an article about Asian women and feminism, but probably not what you expect. My job is with a feminist foundation — the Ms. Foundation for Women. In my job capacity, I read and evaluate proposals from women's groups and women's projects nationally. I also participate in discussion, with other staff and Board members, on the parameters and definition of feminism. Much of what I say in those discussions is contained in my article below. But I must say that my views as expressed are my own, and that I know there are those within the feminist community who would not agree and some who would agree, with all or parts of it.

I think this is because I see socialist revolution as the basis for the elimination of women's oppression in this country and see the future of Asian women as most closely connected to the future and struggles of our people as a whole because of racism and national oppression.

For Asian women, this is a confusing period of time — personally and politically — as the pull between Asian tradition and America becomes sharper, and as the U.S. drifts rightward becoming more conservative and racist. What I try to do below is to lay out some problems facing Asian women, and some alternatives or paths to take to resolve those problems.



Sasha Hohri and her daughters Otsu and Tsuya

Let me begin by saying that I "came of age" in the late 60's and early 70's and that much of my consciousness was shaped by participation in the massive social movements taking place in this country at that time. I grew up in the Midwest — Chicago to be exact. I got active in high school around the anti-Vietnam war movement, and student and civil rights issues.

It's important to remember if you're over 30, or understand, if you're under 30, that 10–15 years

ago there was no Asian American studies, no *Roots*, *Counterpoint*, etc. Growing up, Asian American literature was *5 Chinese Brothers*. Asian American theater was "Flower Drum Song." As far as the educational system was concerned, Asian Americans and Asian people, much less Asian women, did not exist.

The anti-war movement sparked our national consciousness by giving us both victims and heroes to identify with. Of course, I was initially outraged by the injustice, racism, and inhumanity of the war — the napalm, the anti-personnel bombs — and then began to understand that those "helpless victims" were actually winning the war — and that I wanted them to because we all had the same enemy — U.S. imperialism. I saw Asian women fighting wars for the liberation of their people — carrying equal, if not more responsibility — in positions of leadership. So for me, consciousness of being Asian arose simultaneously with developing an understanding of being a woman.

A decade has elapsed from those times until now. Gains have been made, won through hard struggle and sacrifice. But Asian working women still face triple oppression as women, as Asian women and as Asian women workers — oppression by sex, race and class.

Examples highlighting the accomplishments of Asian women "success stories" who may have gone through some struggles in the past but now have their lives together, figured out, no rough edges or hard times, no anger or struggle, make us wonder why our lives are still so hard and why the majority of us still work in some sweatshop, behind a typewriter or doing some other job mainly relying on our hands. They make us wonder what's wrong with us?

I think as our collective sojourn/history becomes longer in America, some Asian sisters manage to make it through various strata of society to become lawyers, doctors, scholars, television newscasters, or some other type of professional. But I think the true measure of our progress has to be seen in relationship to what the majority of us do, and to the obstacles that our most oppressed Asian sisters face. When looked at in this light, things have not changed all that much. As the rightward trend of American society continues, what little gains we have made are being threatened.

UNITY Newspaper

Garment worker, S.F. Chinatown

Except for a few tokens, we are again being relegated to invisibility or worse yet to the revival of degrading, sexist stereotypes along the lines of "Dragon Ladies" or "Susie Wongs."

So what do the majority of us do? The overwhelming majority of Asian women work in clerical, service and light industry. We work in hospitals, downtown offices, hotels, kitchens and sweatshops in some of America's biggest cities. The economic exploitation and inequalities that Asian women suffer allow the capitalist class to make extra money off of our labor and keep us "in our place." By and large, the labor of women — including tens of thousands of Asian women — is essential to the functioning of society. It is the woman worker who sews your clothes, types the letters, and takes care of the children. It's a trip to think about where the rich and powerful would be without the unpaid and underpaid labor of women. They couldn't live. Ronald Reagan wouldn't have clean socks.

The capitalist class needs to justify our special oppression, so they develop racist and sexist ideology. Perhaps the cruelest blow of this ideology is that it tries to get us to think that there's no problem at all or that we're the ones who have messed up . . . we can't do anything about it because we're too passive and marginal . . . or we're too ugly, not socially skilled enough to make it. So the problem must be with us. It's not that the system is messed up and has to be changed. That's where we get to seeing ourselves as the oppressor sees us, believing the lies, limiting ourselves. Systematic national oppression slams doors in our faces, limits our options and opportunities for growth. Racist ideology tries to get people in society to see us in a certain way but also tries to get us to see ourselves that way too. This facilitates our oppression by getting us to think that we are incapable, unattractive, not worth it, and tries to get us to close the doors on ourselves.

Racism and national oppression tries to twist our values, and denies us our heritage of struggle, perseverance and resistance. It is painful to me to realize how difficult and long it took to learn to value and appreciate the strengths and bamboo resistance of my mother and grandmothers against all that would uproot and obliterate us. Because of my political involvement, I have been able to understand their lives in a broader social context. For Nisei and Issei women to continue to struggle to keep the family together through the incarceration of the camps and beyond is quite something. For me it is hard to imagine going ahead, as my mother did, after a war when she was put in a prison camp as the enemy, to a strange city to find a place to live for her parents and three younger sisters. It is just as difficult to put myself in the shoes of my grandmother watching these tall white men take away her husband, my grandfather, on Pearl Harbor day. Being able to continue to live, persevere through these awful conditions are not characteristics that are valued, understood or promoted in capitalist society.

But Asian women are not only oppressed by this American government and society which is based only on what is profitable, Asian women are also oppressed inside our communities by the force of Asian feudal tradition. This tradition continues to define us as so-and-so's daughter, mother, or wife. Such feudal ideas serve to keep us quiet and think "family first." Endless layers and rituals of obligation try to smother us, make us lose ourselves, or we must be "bad" mothers, "bad" daughters and "bad" wives. Is there a balance?

From all sides, we are challenged to define and redefine our lives, history and role. For Asian women there is beginning to be a heritage we can learn from, a heritage we are beginning to understand, speak of and be proud of. We have only begun to understand the sufferings of our older generations of Issei and Nisei women as we have begun to appreciate their incredible strength and courage in their collective testimony at the Commission hearings on the concentration camps. Their candor, honesty and anger laid bare the outrageous injustices of the camps, breaking 40 years of silence. This new appreciation, definition and heritage can be seen as many of those "decade ago women" — like Miya wrote about — have matured, had families, worked and continued to be active in the political movement around issues close to the heart and future of our people.

UNITY Newspaper

Issei woman at redress conference, November 1980

For many of us, this has meant going *against* tradition and role models, and creating new ones in their place, by speaking out and being politically active in the Asian American movement. This has been the case in my own life.

I am a Sansei, one of those "decade ago women," still a revolutionary, and now a single parent of two daughters. I have been all the "bads" by divorcing the father of my daughters — who is not really a monster — but whom I no longer loved, having been married at 19, by speaking my mind, and by becoming a revolutionary (at best, society says these things should be left to men). Having broken so many rules — I didn't finish college either — perhaps the easiest thing to do would have been to turn my back on the community, tradition, and family who had raised me. Kind of say "goodbye to all that mess. I must get on with my own life and you people don't understand or appreciate me anyway." And there are some things about being Japanese that I absolutely can't stand sometimes like the indirectness, silent suffering, guilt tripping, and deferential treatment of men and status — all remnants of feudal culture.

But I realized that I could separate the positive and negative parts of growing up Japanese in America. I could reject the suffocating feudal remnants and capitalist stereotypes, and still retain the best in what my grandmother and mother have stood for as Japanese women. I could see myself as part of the collective struggle of my people in relation to society as a whole. I think this is because no matter how much I may struggle with those questions/oppressions internal to the community, changing those things in and of themselves will not qualitatively change our lives if we are still oppressed by those "outside" things. So I choose to stay in the community and deal with those feudal and backward ideas that exist in the context of taking up issues that affect our people as a whole. I see the struggle for the emancipation of women in this context. We must fight to be free and to fight to be free, Asian women must fight against feudal sexist tradition and attitudes that prevent us from fully participating in the struggles which will determine our future.

Because of being a revolutionary, I can better understand my relationship to the world — what brought me here and made me what I am, and how those social forces affect me, my children, family and people in general. So that when I look at my

own life and the lives of my Asian sisters, and of my mother and grandmother, I see that consciously, women have always had to put family first, self second, which is a legacy from feudalism. Further, I see that feudal, oppressive family relations are one thing — family/future in the context of racist America and struggling for a new society is another. Family at the expense of woman's active participation in political struggle is one thing. Family as part of deepening that understanding and commitment, and building a better future is another. I love my children very much. I see my role as trying to give them the tools to understand the world and the confidence, hope and determination to fight for what's best for all people.

UNITY Newspaper

Demonstration against evictions, S.F. Japantown 1979

For Asian women and working class people in general, conditions are worsening — economically and politically. It's a challenging period to grow up in or to raise kids by ourselves. Tradition tells us to fulfill familial expectations — get married, have children, preferably sons. Society tells us to be passive and sexy. Some "liberated women" tell us to reject all that and fulfill our own potential to its fullest. In the ultimate sense, we want this for all people. But it is not possible for Asian women in this society to fulfill their human potential.

It is not possible for us to live in this society free from exploitation and oppression. It is impossible for my children to grow up without having felt and experienced racism and sexism. I recall a discussion a few years back around "are you a liberated woman?" Now what the hell does this mean and further, what does it imply? If we don't think we're liberated, are we politically unhip or out of it? Is liberation a state of mind? Is oppression a state of mind? Maybe for some professional Asian women it is, but for the majority of Asian women, it is a tangible and real thing that we live with every day of our lives. In that sense, I am not liberated. I am oppressed. These kinds of questions anger me because their impact is to confuse the issues and play around with words and ideas that have meaning to people's lives.

I am a revolutionary. I am very serious about ending the oppression of women. I continue to deepen my understanding of the extent that sexism and racism keep us from thinking of ourselves as capable of changing society. I also understand the extent that middle class ideology — me first, second, and third; up by the bootstraps — can make some women think they can do it on their own. And some of these women do make it on their own. They achieve some professional recognition and marry white men. This is fine for them, but let's not fool ourselves that this is the path to end the oppression of Asian women.

Because of the confused and mixed messages (feudalism and sexist and racist ideas) promoted in society, sometimes Asian sisters close the doors on ourselves. Some sisters choose to opt out — the most oppressed and lost, through drug addiction and suicide. It is easy to succumb, and in a lot of ways, much harder to fight. Capitalism and feudalism breathe these messages to us in subtle and not so subtle ways. How do we see ourselves if we are invisible, if our most courageous acts are unrecognized? How do we understand our role and place in society if we are not "success stories"?

For me, the strength to fight comes from understanding our situation, and taking a path which sees political struggle as an integral and fundamental part of my life. It comes from seeing myself continuing in the best tradition of my people and of the working class — scrappy fighters, survivors, makers of history. And the women are the glue. It comes from appreciating the struggles of mothers, grandmothers, sisters and comrades across nationality lines. It comes from my participation in the movement to end the oppression of Asian peoples and the working class, and seeing that the movement will develop and grow through twists and turns. □

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Asian American Women and Revolution: A Personal View

By Sadie Lum

The position and role that we, Asian women, occupy — our potential and how to tap and unleash our resources and full capabilities — is an important question to understand and address. Failure to do so will cripple the Asian peoples' struggle for full equality as well as harm the struggle for revolutionary change in the U.S.

I was asked to share some of my experiences as an Asian woman active in the revolutionary movement with *EAST WIND* readers. I am looking forward to reading *EAST WIND*'s FOCUS section on Asian women as it is by sharing and learning from each other's life experiences that we become stronger, collectively and individually. Collectively we have a common oppression — oppressed just because we are yellow-skinned and oppressed because we are women. Asian working women also bear the added weight of being exploited and oppressed as workers. We have many different, as well as similar, experiences in dealing with our oppression. In sharing them we become stronger as our understanding is broadened and deepened with experiences and lessons going beyond our own personal lives.

I am and have been a member of the League of Revolutionary Struggle (Marxist-Leninist) and organizations that came before it, for over the past ten years. Our organization was born and grew up as an integral part of the new, contemporary revolutionary movement in the U.S. dating back to the 1960's. In our early history we embraced the view capsulized in the slogan we learned from the Chinese Revolution: "Women Hold Up Half the Sky!" This has guided our work to promote and develop the full participation of women in the peoples' struggles and in the revolutionary movement.

Like many Asian women of our generation, I was deeply affected by the times and circumstances in the late 1960's and early 1970's. My political history dating back to that time is also the history of my life growing up and maturing as a woman, a mother and a communist.

It was an explosive time — the rage of the peoples' militant struggles here inside the U.S. and around the world exploded with such a force that you could not be untouched by it. It was a time when our emotions ran a full spectrum — we cried at the military viciousness of the U.S. imperialists in Viet Nam; and we screamed our anger at many anti-war demonstrations in support of our brothers and sisters in Southeast Asia. We were inspired as we saw Vietnamese and Cambodian women take up arms to liberate their people. We marched, picketed and chanted against racist injustice and for our rights. We talked to everyone we could talk to — we learned a lot, we educated ourselves about ourselves and the world around us. We organized, organized, organized to fight. And, throughout this entire process, in every aspect of this process, Asian women were right there — leading, contributing, working hard and inspiring others!

Most of us, Asian women, were brought together because of the times, and there was great diversity in who we were. Many of us had had very different life experiences. Our ages ranged from over 50 years to 18 years old. Some of us were working women from the community and some of us were students from universities and campuses from all over the U.S. One of our greatest strengths was our ability to come together and to learn and share the lessons from our lives.

Among the most active of us, we were convinced and motivated by the understanding that in order to deal with the particular issues facing Asian peoples, we had

UNITY Newspaper

Pro-China rally sponsored by the Red Guard Party, Portsmouth Square, 1970

to bring this whole capitalist system down! We could not just change one piece here and there. We had to change the whole thing!

We committed ourselves to the goal of revolutionary struggle to establish socialism right here in the U.S. It was with this outlook, this consciousness, that we carried out day-to-day organizing in the community. We set up programs and took up issues affecting the majority of our people, the working and poor people in the community — the people who have no choice but to fight if they want a decent and better life.

For Asian working women, this reality hits to the heart of their daily existence, i.e., to even try to improve something in their basic, day-to-day situation and position at home, they have to fight. (*Equality between husbands and wives? Equal distribution of the work at home? Where did that come from?*) So, to deal with this, in any real way, women must fight to change their immediate situation and must do this as part of fighting to change the society that puts us in this position in the first place and then keeps us there.

This time in my life was very important. Doing community work in Chinatown and being involved in the anti-Viet Nam war movement gave me new eyes — a new outlook — to look at myself and at life. It was through my political activism that I came to believe in socialist revolution and communism and came to see how Asian women like myself would really win liberation. The developing revolutionary movement turned my life around. It gave me an understanding of myself which enabled me to bring my life under *my* control and gave it direction. It gave me belief that my life was of value and that I was worth something and had something to contribute to society for the betterment of mankind. This may seem very simple, but it was not an easy or simple realization.

I was raised in San Francisco Chinatown in the Ping Yuen housing projects. My mother, a single parent, working mother (a wonderful and strong woman), raised me and my two sisters on her own. I went to Francisco junior high and Galileo high school and "hung out" at the Chinese Recreation Center and Commodore Gym and in the streets of Chinatown. I grew up conditioned to feel that human life is not worth much generally. (*You read and hear so much about people being killed and dying every day.*) I now understand that to cover their crimes against the people and the decadence of this capitalist society, the ruling class must promote an atmosphere of indifference and numbness towards the value of human life. Also, as a Third World woman from a working class family, I felt I had very little to hold my head up about, since everything promoted in this society as things to be proud of and to strive for were not relevant to me. This includes almost everything, from all kinds of material possessions, to what you looked like and how you acted, to what school you went to, to where you lived, to what job you were going to get, to almost anything you can think of — was someone we were not and never would be; and were things we did not have nor would we ever have in our lifetime. (*What were we doing here, then?*)

This kind of thinking led me to strive hard for what I thought I could have, and to draw sharp limitations on myself. To avoid experiencing repeated disappointments in my life, I made up all kinds of justifications to not want more. It was also this kind of thinking that nurtured my greatest insecurities about who I was and my self worth.

I grew up judging a woman's value and goals in life with: who you were (*lucky enough*) to marry; then to be a good a wife and mother, period. (*Is this all our life is?*) Who you married determined your economic status in life and your new circle of friends — his friends. That's why there was always so much emphasis on going out with the "right guy," a guy with a "future." It got to be so that I thought there was something wrong with me because all the guys

I went out with either couldn't even get a job or their "futures" were in the post office or the phone company (or something like that). Later I realized that it wasn't just my luck to end up with the "wrong" guy, but that the majority of Asian guys at my school were working class guys whose futures were to be workers.

I had my first daughter when I was still in high school. I went to work right after she was born and struggled to deal with being a young mother and a wife. Life was hard. It was hard to make enough money. (*My husband was unemployed most of the time.*) I really wanted to move out of the apartment, into our own place, without his mother. (*Who wanted to live their entire life there, or even most of it?*) I was tired when I got home, but I had to pick up my daughter, do all the cleaning, all the cooking — everything. (*Why can't he do some of it, especially since he isn't even working?*) And, I took care of and had the main responsibility for raising my daughter. (*Of course, I'm the mother!*) Fights and frustrations. Frustrations and more fights.

About three years later, I began to become more aware of the importance of the rebellions taking place all across America, and saw that the war in Viet Nam was a plunderous war being waged by the U.S. — people here and overseas were really fighting against the *same* enemy. By this time I had left my husband and was in a really oppressive relationship with this possessive man who thought and acted as though he owned me and all my emotions and my thoughts — everything that's me. I really felt I would suffocate and die (or be beat to death) in this relationship. I never had the nerve or strength to just break it off. The extreme insecurity I had about myself kept me tied to him.

At this same time, some of my friends were beginning to become politically active in the San Francisco State Strike (a massive Third World student strike in 1969 at the San Francisco State University), and in doing youth work, draft counseling, etc., in the community. They had formed an organization — the Red Guard Party, a revolutionary organization. I was really interested and began to go around to see what was happening. This did not sit well with the guy I was going with. According to him, I could only be interested in the Red Guard and community work because I was interested in some guy there! Doesn't that

Ben Ferris

Sadie Lum

sound terribly, typically awful? Women can't have any other independent reason for interests in her life separate from liking a guy or doing things because of a guy.

It was this realization that actually made me more determined to get involved in political work. I was going to stake out my own claim in life, and do what *I* wanted to do. Amazingly, this was the first time in this completely oppressive relationship that I felt I had the strength to break up with this guy. I must have told him and myself, at least 20 times in the year we were together, that I was going to break this off. But, this time I actually did it! It was like a hundred pounds lifted off my shoulders.

I joined the Red Guard Party and later, I Wor Kuen (IWK), a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist organization. It was the community organizing work that led us to become Marxist-Leninists as this was the only scientific, only real way to bring socialism to the U.S.

We got completely involved in doing community organizing work — to build a strong base and ties among the masses in the community. We paid special attention to developing our work among women. The women I met and worked with taught me a lot, reinforced my feelings of independence and pride and inspired me deeply. Some of us became like sisters and with the older women, we became their daughters and they, our mothers.

It was at this time (1971) that I had my second daughter and settled into a stable relationship with my present husband. (We just celebrated our 10th wedding anniversary.)

Some of the work IWK did among women included the Hsin Hua School (New China School), which was a full daytime childcare and after-school program; the Asian Women's Health Team that provided free community health services such as TB testing; and we started a Women's Group in the Chinese Progressive Association to promote support and discussion among the women. In addition to these programs, the women were also very active in the different community issues that we took up around housing, police brutality, education in the schools, and immigration cases.

One big area of our work was in supporting People's China as the real representative of the Chinese people, not the Taiwan regime. We actively fought for the normalization of state-to-state relations between the U.S. and China and conducted mass educational work about People's China, including the role of women in New China.

In August 1974, a significant struggle broke out in San Francisco Chinatown involving 135 Chinese women garment workers — the Jung Sai garment strike. These women, against numerous odds, organized themselves and went out on strike for the right to unionize

and for decent wages, benefits and working conditions. The Jung Sai garment sweatshop was a typical Chinatown sweatshop with the exploitative conditions: low-pay piecework, long hours, bad lighting, fire hazards, etc. The women even had to bring their own toilet paper to work! The strength and power of the strike rested in the fact that the women saw their fight as an important part of the struggle for all Chinese people to be treated justly. The workers' demand for the basic right of unionization has been historically denied to Chinese workers in this country, as have many of their basic rights.

IWK was actively involved in the direct support work for the strike. The Jung Sai workers were determined to get their demands. Even when the boss closed down the shop and the union dragged its feet, the workers were not disheartened. They kept up the picket lines and their optimism. The majority of the women were married and mothers. For them to have sustained the strike for over eight months was no easy thing. This determination and strength of Chinese working women has been documented many times before and since then, such as the 1939 strike by Chinese women garment workers at the San Francisco National Dollar Department Store for unionization to the recent walkout of over 10,000 Chinese women garment workers who demanded and won a union contract in New York Chinatown in July 1982.

UNITY Newspaper

Jung Sai garment workers' rally, 1974

Doing the political work was much more difficult for the women than for the men. There were both very practical problems limiting the participation of women as well as mental and emotional pressures on us.

For the women who were working full-time and raising a family, doing community and political work was very difficult. Whether we had children or not, we paid a lot of attention to trying, where possible, to collectivize home responsibilities. For instance, we would do food shopping for each other, help pick up the different children and watch them, help cook dinner, and help wash the clothes. We offered each other a lot of practical support and help.

A common problem that kept coming up was the bad attitudes of husbands/boyfriends towards the women doing political work. Some husbands would absolutely prohibit it and would demand that the woman stay home. In some of these cases, we would organize the meetings and discussions at the woman's house and organize the work for the weekends when it was easier for her to get out of the house. Sadly, in some cases, the pressure of the men forced the women to drop out of political work and they, while interested and wanting to be active, would give it up to keep peace in the home. In one case, a woman in her late-40's decided that she wanted to continue her political work even after her husband threatened a divorce if she didn't stop. She kept up her work and tried to talk him out of it, but he filed for divorce anyway. At the divorce hearing, he sat on the stand and went on and on about how he was leaving her because she was a communist. She got custody of all seven children, and he got most of the money and property. But, she never regretted the decision. She taught me a lot about the importance and value of your own life and that we all had the right and the duty, to ourselves, to make our lives what we want them to be and to be happy. Especially when we know that to be a revolutionary is right and important. Her strength helped all of us to deal with the pressures, guilt feelings and conflicts that we all went through at some time or another.

Some other common things were: the more active political women were labelled as not being "feminine" and guys would make jokes about us and not want to go out with

us; and that to be bold in taking up the work and to have strong opinions and state them, we were seen as "nags" and "bitches." These were just ploys by some of the men to try to undermine the validity of our political ideas, to discredit us and limit our political impact. What they didn't even realize, was that their *backward* attitudes hurt all of us in our common struggle.

Thus, in order to ensure the women's contributions to the work, we had to develop a clear perspective on how we were going to handle the question of fighting male chauvinism. We had to develop a situation where the women could fully participate with ease of mind.

From our experiences we knew that a daily struggle against women's oppression in its most concrete forms had to take place. For women to stand up and be politically active was an integral part of the actual struggle against our oppression — it was a step toward our own liberation. We established the principle and firm belief that women can and should strive to do anything a man can do. That, as women, we should struggle to be active in the political movements and to take up political leadership, even when in leadership over men. We should not define limitations for ourselves just because we are women.

It was this outlook that guided us in handling, very successfully, the questions and situations facing women in our daily lives as political and revolutionary women. With this perspective, we were able to maintain and develop a high level of participation by women at all levels of the work, including many of the main leadership roles.

That tradition has carried forth with us over the years. In all the political and revolutionary work that the League is involved in, there is a high level of women's participation in all different kinds of political work and at all levels of work, including the most demanding and difficult work.

UNITY Newspaper

Demonstration demanding normalization of U.S.-China relations — S.F., 1978

For myself, my life is grounded in the fact that I am a communist. I believe that an important responsibility as a woman and a mother is to be a communist — for the good of my children and for mankind. I do believe communism is our future. I also believe that as a communist I am a better mother. The understanding I have of life, of society, enables me to raise my children in a far-sighted, objective way. It gives me a way to understand them — the social influences and pressures on them; it gives me the understanding that I alone cannot determine all their views and attitudes; and it enables me to build friendships with them because I can understand and respect them as independent people, seeing all sides of them. I want to continue to build a good marriage and raise my daughters to be good people and prepare them for their futures. I also want to have the ability to continue to carry out my political work, make the contributions and take up the responsibilities that I feel are very important to do, and that I want to do. My family and political work are part of the fabric of my life, and in turn my family takes pride in my political work and beliefs.

Many of us came into the peoples' struggles and into the revolutionary movement because of our oppression as Asians, as women, and for many of us, as workers. For me to be able to live my life in the way I do has only been possible through a lot of conscious work to promote and pay special attention to the participation and contributions of women. This is an important tradition and precedent to promote and continue in all our lives and in our work. And, without us women, where would our movement be? □

Sadie Lum *is a longtime activist in the Chinese National Movement and a member of the LRS (M-L).*

Rehire Ming-sheng Pai!

By Lori and Tracy Hatta

Mike Gonzales/*Stanford Daily*

Ming-sheng Pai

Mike Gonzales/*Stanford Daily*

Demonstration in support of Ming-sheng Pai, Stanford University

Ming-sheng Pai is a very outspoken woman . . . an outspoken *Asian* woman. And many of her supporters believe that this is what cost her her job. Her suit against her former employer Stanford University goes to trial in federal court on June 13 and has become a rallying point for many in the Asian American communities across the country, particularly in the northern California area.

Ming, 49, who emigrated here from Taiwan in 1966, was Associate Librarian of Stanford's Hoover Institute East Asian Collection (EAC) and is considered an expert in her fields of translation and cataloguing. On December 31, 1981, Ming was laid off after 16 years with the EAC, the only person to lose her position in a reorganization process instigated by Ramon Myers, curator and Hoover Research Fellow. Shortly after he dismissed Ming, Myers presented her with a letter of recommendation which stated that her work " . . . *has been of excellent quality. Her working habits are excellent, and she has demonstrated a strong commitment to work . . . I strongly recommend Mrs. Pai as a hard working energetic woman who would be a strong asset in any library.*"

What the letter did not mention, however, was Ming's long history of speaking out against such touchy issues as unfair management practices, sexual harassment of co-workers, and particularly, unionization. Between 1975 and 1980, Ming was active in trying to get the library unionized under the United Stanford Employees Union Local 715, an affiliate of the Services Employees International Union (SEIU). After a petition by the EAC's non-academic staff, an election was held in March 1981 to decide whether or not they would be represented by Local 715. The union lost. Two months later, the library was reorganized and Ming-sheng Pai's position was the only one phased out by the administration. Instead, Ming was told to apply for a new position which was non-professional and 50% lower in pay.

For the past 1½ years, Ming and the Ming-sheng Pai Support Committee have decried the reorganization procedure as a move calculated to single Ming out for her strong stances on controversial issues. After a series of failed appeals to Stanford authorities and then directly to Stanford President Donald Kennedy, Ming filed a civil suit in federal court to have her reinstated to her original position, with punitive damages.

The Support Committee commented that reorganization has been used at Stanford before "to punish those who stand up for their rights. Stanford has to be put on notice that this tactic fools no one and that they can expect a fight every time they try to do this."

Public pressure on Stanford continues to mount as the facts of Ming's case become more widely known. President Kennedy's office was picketed by students and employees on May 18, 1982, and a large number of concerned librarians and professors from across the country, as well as Asian community members, have sent letters of protest to his office. Over 500 signatures were collected in a petition drive by the Support Committee, who emphasize that continued active support of Ming's case is crucial.

Ming-sheng Pai sees her case as more than just a fight for personal job security and peace of mind. Showing the kind of spirit which seems to fuel the efforts of her supporters, she states, "Myers and Stanford think that Asians should be seen and not heard . . . easy to push around. I want them to know that they cannot treat an Asian woman this way and get away with it."

Questions or letters of support may be addressed to: Ming-sheng Pai Support Committee, c/o AASA, P.O. Box 9546, Stanford, CA 94305. □

Lori Hatta *is the administrative assistant at the Stanford University Business Library and a member of the Nihonmachi Outreach Committee in San Jose.* **Tracy Hatta** *is a student at Oberlin College.*

Teacher, Mother,

A Profile of Mrs. Lee

By Yvonne Wong Nishio

UNITY Newspaper

Little Friends demonstration against 1978 public service cutback.

When I first met Mrs. Ko Kit Lee eight years ago, she was in her early sixties. She had come to Los Angeles from Hong Kong in 1973 and was working in one of Chinatown's sewing factories. Mrs. Lee was introduced to me because she was once a kindergarten teacher in Hong Kong. I was working with a group of young women in Chinatown in beginning to establish the Little Friends Community Childcare Center. Our vision was to establish a bilingual/bicultural day-care center for working parents in Chinatown. We needed someone like Mrs. Lee who had a background in the Chinese approach to early childhood education.

Initially, we thought that Mrs. Lee would be with us for only a short time in teaching us a few Chinese children's songs and folktales. We were struggling to build the child care center and were having a difficult time in finding a facility and obtaining funding. We had meetings after work and on weekends, and we all were busy organizing community support to demand low-cost affordable childcare for working parents from City Hall.

Well, Mrs. Lee soon became one of the staunchest fighters for Little Friends and still works with us today. She has remained as a part of the backbone of the center and is the old "auntie" that makes the center like a traditional extended family. She makes the bilingual program practical and real by contributing her own teaching experience from China and Hong Kong.

Mrs. Lee has become the center's historian as she has provided a perspective and continuity through successive groups of children and parents, teaching staffs, and community supporters. During each yearly funding crisis, she reminds everyone of how we've always faced difficulties and how we can win again if we stay and work together and not be intimidated by officials who say there is no more money for child care services. Mrs. Lee is one of the most consistent community organizers as she goes to the sewing factories in Chinatown to inform parents about Little Friends and get their support for the center by signing petitions and attending community meetings.

Mrs. Lee's work in education spans some 40 years and two very different cultures. Her insights on education help us to understand and appreciate a part of our cultural heritage. She also helps us to think about what kind of educational experience we might want for our children.

* * *

EAST WIND: What is your general background?

Mrs. Lee: When I was a child, I lived with aunts and uncles in China while my parents worked at various jobs in the United States hoping to return with a fortune from "Gold Mountain." My parents never made much money to send back to China so I was poor and dependent on relatives. As we were poor, I was not able to go to school. I really wanted an education, so I taught myself how to read and write from hand-me-down books from my cousins. At 17, I married a secondary school teacher who helped me to raise my education to a high school level.

EAST WIND: What made you decide to be a teacher?

Mrs. Lee: My eight children were born during the 1930's when Japan invaded China. All of Chinese society was uprooted and the people suffered greatly. Four of my children died in early childhood from poor nutrition and lack of medical care. After our family had managed to flee the war and return to our village in Canton, another daughter died at the age of eleven. Before she

UNITY Newspaper

1979 Children's Day.

Friend:

died, she said, "Mother, it's not fair that I struggled so bitterly to survive childhood only to die at the threshold of adulthood. It's not fair that I struggled to escape the war, only to die in the safety of our peaceful village." The death of my daughter affected me deeply. I decided to devote myself to children so I became a teacher. Children are made to suffer the most from the problems of the world, and I wanted to help them in their development.

EAST WIND: Why did you become interested in a pre-school like Little Friends?

Mrs. Lee: Most people in Chinatown work in restaurants, garment factories, or small shops. Because the wages are low, everyone must work long hours. The children need to be taken care of in a way that parents don't have to worry and at a cost that parents can afford. At the same time, the children need to learn some English and the basic skills required for regular school.

I became interested in Little Friends because it is the only bilingual Chinese pre-school in Los Angeles that serves working people. I felt that I could contribute my teaching experience in making Little Friends successful.

EAST WIND: What do you feel are some important aspects of education?

Mrs. Lee: There's a Chinese saying that a child's life begins as clear water. As the child grows, the water can be dyed red with good upbringing and good education, or it can be dyed black with random bad influences. Either way, once the dye is cast, it's very difficult to change the color of the child's life. For me, education in the school is like a training ground for adult life. The teachers should make the school as much like the outside world as possible. Children must learn to work in a disciplined manner because in the real world there are rewards for achievement. Children must learn to cooperate and work together because in the real world people need to learn to work with different kinds of people. Life is full of responsibilities so a child must learn to assume responsibility in their own development.

EAST WIND: What do you think of bilingual education?

Mrs. Lee: I think it is very important. That's why I support Little Friends. Why can't American-born Chinese speak any Chinese? All my American-born nephews and nieces can't speak any Chinese. At family dinners, the American-born relatives act like they're from another planet, not at all from the same family. They all say they don't need to know Chinese. Only in the United States do second generation Chinese say they don't "need" their parents' language and culture. Everywhere else in the world children of immigrants speak their parents' language, and very often, the native language continues for many generations.

My nephews and nieces did not have a chance to obtain a bilingual/bicultural education because they didn't live in Chinatown and there were not any programs like Little Friends. When they went to high school and college they preferred to study a dead language like Latin to their own native tongue!

EAST WIND: Why do you think Chinese Americans should know Chinese?

Mrs. Lee: No matter how American our clothes or how beautiful our cars and houses, Americans see our Chinese faces first. Since we can't change our faces, we may as well try to learn the language and culture that goes with the face. When we know our background, we can know who we are and can accept ourselves and all the others like us. This comes back to the importance of bilingual/bicultural education. Children absorb other people's racial attitude about them if they don't have knowledge of their own heritage.

However, in the end, it's not our children's fault that they only know things American. We parents in the Chinese community keep telling our kids to speak Chinese, but we haven't gotten together to ask the public schools to actually teach Chinese.

EAST WIND: Why are you still working at age 70?

Mrs. Lee: I've worked hard all my life to have some comforts and a little security, but all I've achieved is $165 a month in social security. That just covers the rent. My 94-year-old mother lives with me so I need to work to take care of both of us. If I had more education, I could have had a better life, but I really can't complain. I like my job teaching children. I have the unique opportunity to watch two cultures blend. I'm watching what it is to grow up Chinese American. Our children have the opportunity to gain the best of both cultures if we provide it to them.

Working with children keeps me young. I take pride in watching my students grow up. For example, years ago I taught your two children at Little Friends, and now they're taller than I am. But they still call me "teacher," and they turned out pretty good, didn't they? □

The Chinese Women of America 1848–1982

Eddie Wong

Project Director Judy Yung.

The Chinese Women of America 1848–1982 is a pioneering effort which seeks to uncover a legacy of strength, determination and achievement. For the past two years, librarian Judy Yung, historian Vincente Tang, and writer Genny Lim have been researching the history of Chinese women in America under a grant from the Women's Educational Equity Act Program. The project is completing work on a pictorial exhibit which will open at the San Francisco Chinese Culture Center in August. The exhibit is slated to travel to New York, Boston, Los Angeles, Chicago, Seattle, Houston and Honolulu in the next few years. Accompanying the exhibit will be a catalog on the history of Chinese women in America, followed hopefully by a book next year.

In this interview conducted by Betty Gee and Carol Eng in February 1983, Judy Yung describes some of the project's goals and activities.

* * *

EAST WIND: Who are you trying to reach with this project?

Judy Yung: We're trying to reach a cross section of people . . . Chinese American women obviously because it's about their experience, and we want them to better understand their mothers and grandmothers. We're trying to reach young Chinese American women who at this point in their lives might be affected by this kind of exhibit, because they will see what Chinese American women have done before them. We hope to present role models to them so that it gives some guidance and assurance that being a Chinese American woman in particular is a positive thing. We're trying to reach Chinese Americans in general because this is part of their history in this country. We don't want to say this project is just for women.

I think the misunderstandings that have cause discrimination for Chinese Americans and other minorities can be dispelled by some of the things we hope to present in the exhibit. We want to reach teachers and business as well as government administrators who make decisions on who to hire and who have employees who are Chinese American women. We want them to have a good understanding and to provide the necessary opportunities for minority women.

EAST WIND: Will the catalog be bilingual?

Judy Yung: To some extent it will be. We're hoping to have captions in English and Chinese. There's no way we can get the book bilingual at this late date. It's unfortunate because many of the people we have interviewed are people who don't speak, read and write English. I hope that visually they will get a sense of what we're trying to say. With the introduction and captions in Chinese, that is a start. And if there's a demand, we could possibly do a Chinese edition.

EAST WIND: How did you go about doing the research?

Judy Yung: We have primarily been able to uncover secondary source materials, locate some important historical photographs of Chinese American women, study the treatment of Chinese immigrant women through immigration legislation and cases, and begin to explore primary materials such as English language news clippings of the pre-1900 period and Chinese literature involving Chinese women. As we began to see how little material there is on Chinese American women and of these materials, how racist and sexist the writings are, we were more convinced than ever that oral history must play a major role in telling the story of Chinese women in America. There were five categories of women to be interviewed: first generation, second/third generation, recent immigrants, prominent women, and Chinese women of interracial marriages. These groups are based on women who are still alive so we cannot interview the women who came in the 1800's: prostitutes, wives of merchants, the slave girls, the pioneer women.

1834 was the date of the first recorded arrival of a Chinese woman in America. Her name was Afong Moy

and she came with a group of entertainers from China. She was part of the circus where cultural curiosities from China were exhibited in New York. Her use of chopsticks and her Chinese speech were highlights of the circus. In 1850, Pwan Yekoo was featured with Barnum Circus for her tiny, bound feet. I think that reflects the kind of images of Chinese women that the American public had. The first record of a Chinese woman arriving and staying in the United States was a servant who came with the household of a Charles Van Morgan Guillispie to California in 1848. Then in 1882, there was the Chinese Exclusion Act and women were not allowed to come unless they belonged to the exempt classes of merchant, derivatives of U.S. citizens, diplomats and students. If they were related to laborers, they could not come.

Now the question of prostitutes is very important to our study, especially for the pre-1900 period. The women who came as prostitutes did not come willingly. They did not come as professional prostitutes and this we can document. Many of them were kidnapped and tricked into prostitution and found that they had been sold into prostitution after they arrived. Prostitutes filled a need in the community at that time because it was a bachelor society. Because of the Exclusion Act, men could not bring their wives or didn't want to bring their wives. They planned to make enough money to go back and settle in China. So we plan to present the whole question of Chinese women prostitutes as an effect of the immigration law.

Another category of women in this period were the pioneer women like Polly Bemis written about in Ruthanne Lum McCunn's *A Thousand Pieces of Gold*. She came as a prostitute but ended up marrying a white man in Idaho and settling there as a homesteader. We recently discovered a woman by the name of China Mary in Alaska who became a fisherwoman, and she also started a fox farm. The idea that she lived in Alaska in the 1800's and was able to work was very unusual. A lot of the women who came as wives of merchants were not able to work and lived a very secluded life. The women immigrants of the 1800's and early 1900's continued their role as wives and mothers in America. Many of them had large families and children to raise. There's a myth that there were no children here prior to 1940 but we have pictures to show that there were many children here.

Wives of Chinese merchants enjoying an outing in Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, 1890's

Into the second and third generation, we see American-born Chinese women . . . who were exposed to a different environment than their mothers and grandmothers. They were educated in the public schools and therefore influenced by Western ideas. In many cases, they went to church and participated in group activities in the communities which further alienated them from the traditional Chinese values and upbringing. Being Chinese, yet also being American, they had to make choices as to who they would identify with, how to act, and how to develop their careers. Jade Snow Wong's *Fifth Chinese Daughter* and even Maxine Hong Kingston in *Woman Warrior*, who grew up in a later period, are very good examples of what I think second generation Chinese American women went through. Second and third generation women have also been given more educational opportunities because of the civil rights and Third World movements. They have proven that they can go beyond their mothers and grandmothers and be proficient in different fields of work. They can go beyond the traditional roles and stereotypes of Chinese women as being secretaries, sex symbols and the dragon lady.

The recent generation of immigrants were able to come because of the relaxation of the immigration laws. Many of them come from urban areas like Hong Kong so they are already exposed to a Western style of living to some degree. Their adjustment is very different from the first generation and second or third generations. They have their difficulties in that they come without the neces-

sary language and employment skills. They also have to adjust in terms of being not only a mother and wife but also a breadwinner. They have to work when they get here; economics forces them into that situation. We plan to highlight some of these differences in terms of their adaptation and their contributions. Many immigrant women in the last 20 years have been able to get beyond the language and employment barriers and have been able to make a name for themselves. So when we talk about prominent women, we're not just talking about American-born women.

We also wanted to indicate that miscegenated women are Chinese American women too. Because they are interracial and intercultural, their assimilation problems and cultural problems are different from the other categories of women we have interviewed. We asked them how they were treated as miscegenated women, how they felt about being miscegenated, and how they resolved their own identity. And again, we will point out how some of these women have been able to make a name for themselves. One person is Ruth Ann Koesun, was the first Chinese American woman to join the American Ballet Company in the 1950's. Her father is Chinese and her mother is Caucasian.

EAST WIND: There seems to be an emphasis on prominent women. How do you balance that with the stories of other women?

Judy Yung: The prominent women are actually a minority in terms of the immigrants and the rest of the women we plan to include so we don't want to make it seem like all Chinese American women have been able to achieve or that we're all March Fong Eu's, because we are not and there are reasons for that. In the process of telling the experiences of all these women, we can say that there was a lack of role models for all of us. But there were women doing things that we didn't know about. For example, Sieh King King was a feminist in the early 1900's. She got up before an audience in Chinatown to advocate for Chinese women's rights at a time when even the women's movement was not formed. She could have been a role model but no one knew about her. And it's people like her who we want to highlight in the book and exhibit. We don't want to have them over-represented but to indicate that they did exist. This breaks the stereotype of women as being passive, because Chinese women were involved in the community way before the men in the sense that they were the link from the Chinese community into Western society. They were the ones who went out to the churches, the PTA, the "Y," and to a lot of social activities because the men were too busy with being breadwinners and too busy with their role in the Chinatown communities.

In the 1930's and 1940's during the war between China and Japan, women did a lot of fund raising and volunteer activities. That was the first time we saw big numbers of Chinese women coming out to organized activities and actually being more than housewives or a helper to their husbands.

We don't want to indicate that we're all successful because that would be a myth. And even when we get into statistics in the 1970's and 1980's, we will indicate that despite the educational attainment, Chinese women are not able to make as much money and rise as high in positions as other white women. And there are reasons for that discrimination and we will point out cases.

EAST WIND: What do you foresee in the future of Chinese women in America? How has the project changed you?

Judy Yung: We haven't written the conclusion yet, but I think the future of Chinese women in the communities is very bright, much brighter than it could have been for first generation women or women who lived before 1950. And that is because the opportunities are there and women are becoming more involved in the political process in America. I think that there are a lot of good indications even among the women who we have interviewed that the sky's the limit at this point, although I do admit that immigrant women do not feel this way. And if there are difficulties along the way that would hinder them from fulfilling their potential, they will not stand by idly and let those barriers stop them and in that sense I think Chinese American women have found their place as Chinese American women and that they will continue to make contributions to society.

As far as how I've changed with the project, I didn't realize before I started this project how strong Chinese American women are. It took a lot of guts for them to come; it took a lot of strength for them to adapt, contribute and make a place for themselves here and to play the roles that were expected of them and to deal with the kinds of discrimination they faced. It amazed me also to know the strength of many of the American-born Chinese women, how much spunk they had to go beyond what their mothers and grandmothers had been able to do in America. I think it makes you feel good to be a Chinese American woman. It gives you that sense of self-esteem that I think we ought to share with other people who'll see our exhibit and read our book.

EAST WIND: You said earlier that the project is funded under the Women's Educational Equity Act. Is there any danger of cutbacks because of the Reagan Administration?

Judy Yung: We were initially funded for two years under the Carter Administration. There had been fears that the present administration will cut out funding beginning October of this year. That doesn't affect us because we'd be finished by then but $5.76 million is recommended for rescission. Reagan is out to cut out the complete program. I'm trying to let people know that this recommendation has been made and to ask people to write to their congressmen to impress on them how important it is that these funds continue to support projects such as ours and other research projects on minority women. □

ART CULTURE

Leon Sun

Once, when I was reading stories of the Monkey King to Matthew, my six-year-old son, I told him how the Chinese people really loved Monkey. Typically, he asked, "Why, daddy? How come?"

"Well," I said, "Because he's real smart in figuring out the bad guys like the White Bone Demon."

"Yeah," Matthew replied.

"And Chinese people like him because Monkey's courageous, resolute, and defiant."

"Huh . . . ?"

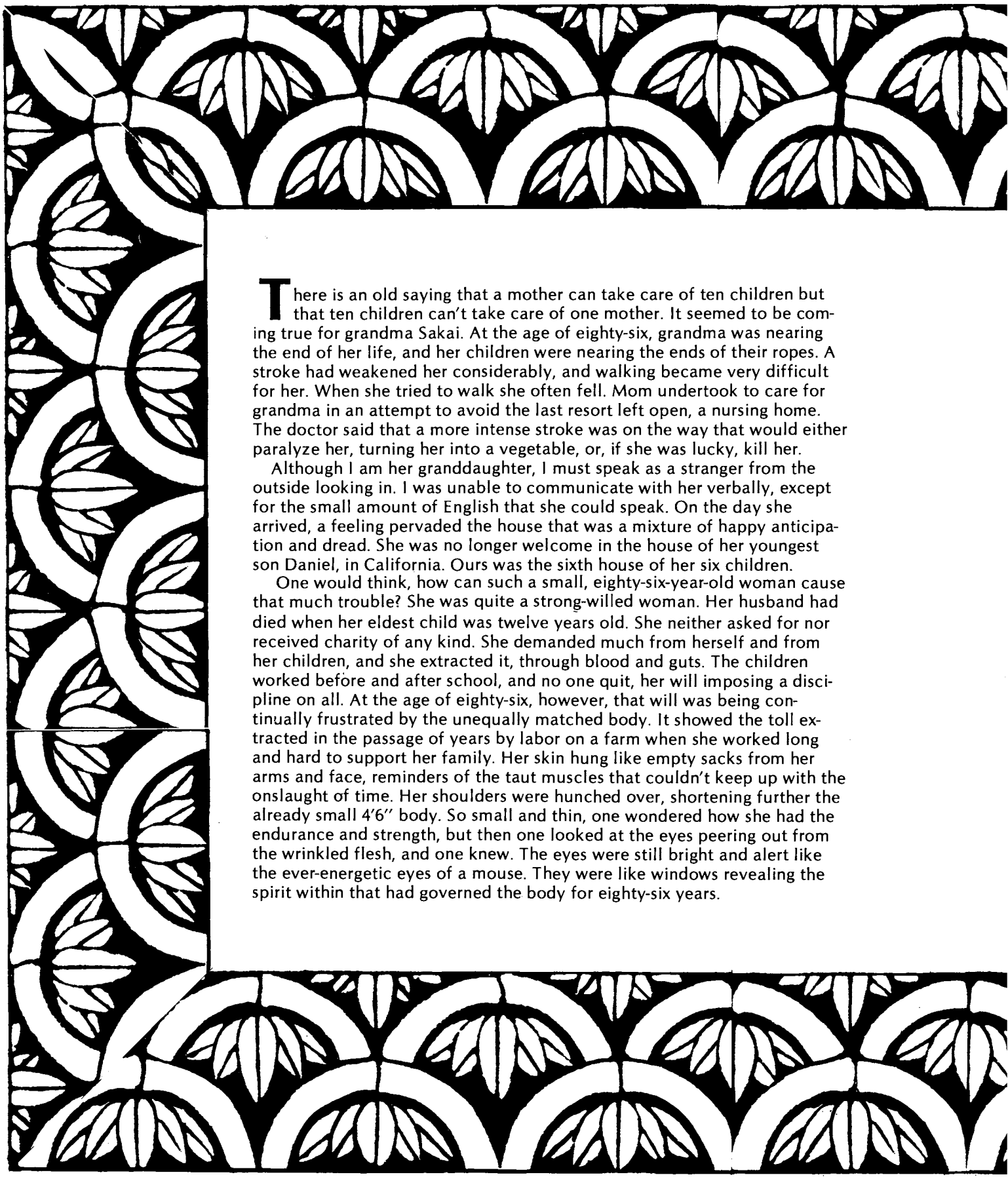
"Courageous means he's not afraid to tell the truth. Resolute means nothing's going to stop him from doing what's right. And defiant means he's not scared of kings and queens just because they're the big shots.

Monkey is full of fun and tricks. He's a real good martial artist. And he uses all of his magic and strength for the good of the people, for what's right and just. He's on the side of the people against bad rulers."

And as I was breaking it down for him, I realized that Asian American artists should be like Monkey too — using their skills to fight for truth and justice. We need an art that is full of life like Monkey, ready to criticize what is wrong in our society.

The art and literature in the next few pages are examples of how progressive Asian American artists are moving ahead towards the development of a new culture, capturing what is the best within our traditional arts and music and incorporating it with a distinct Asian American experience grounded in our conditions here in America. □

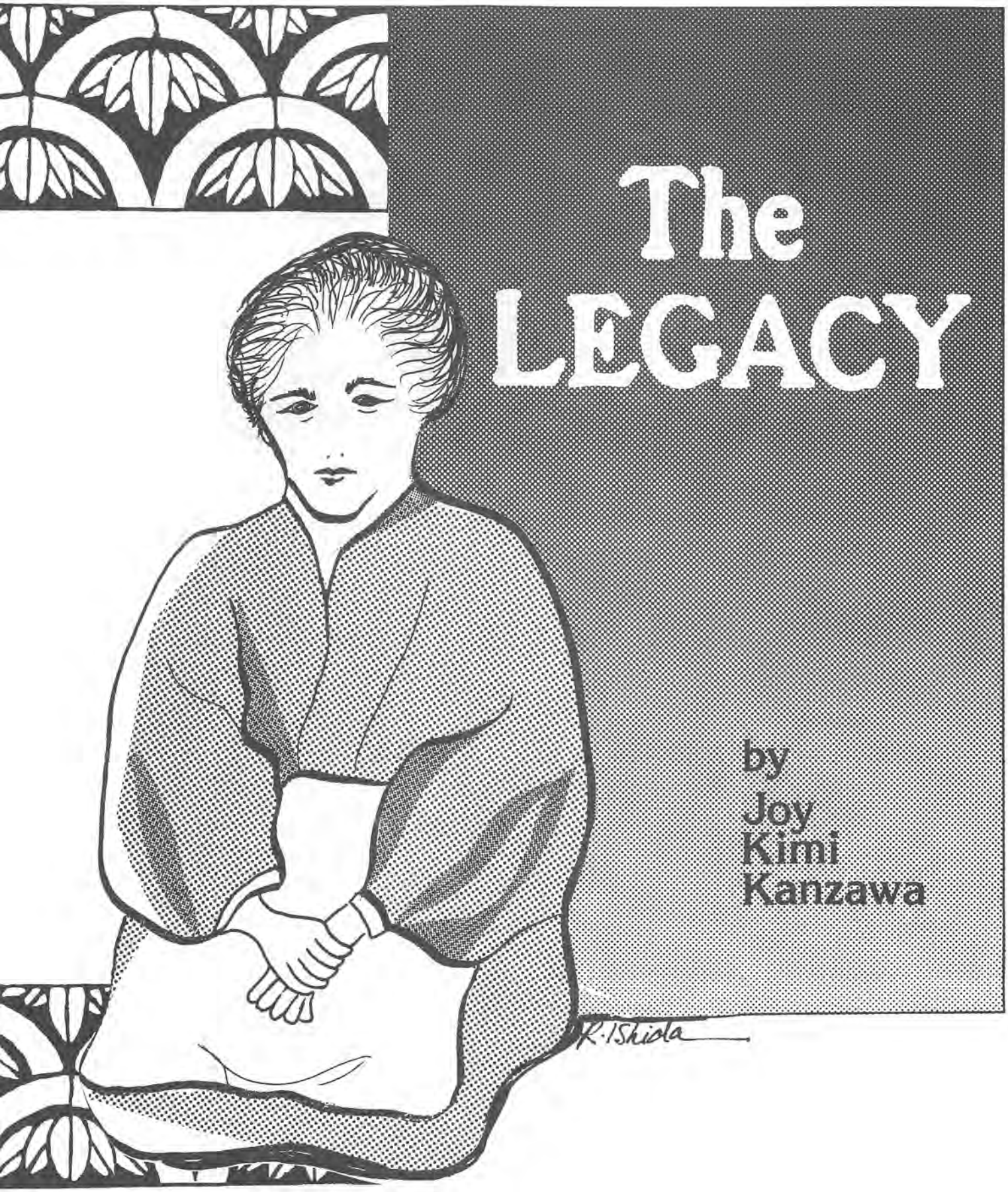
Leon Sun



There is an old saying that a mother can take care of ten children but that ten children can't take care of one mother. It seemed to be coming true for grandma Sakai. At the age of eighty-six, grandma was nearing the end of her life, and her children were nearing the ends of their ropes. A stroke had weakened her considerably, and walking became very difficult for her. When she tried to walk she often fell. Mom undertook to care for grandma in an attempt to avoid the last resort left open, a nursing home. The doctor said that a more intense stroke was on the way that would either paralyze her, turning her into a vegetable, or, if she was lucky, kill her.

Although I am her granddaughter, I must speak as a stranger from the outside looking in. I was unable to communicate with her verbally, except for the small amount of English that she could speak. On the day she arrived, a feeling pervaded the house that was a mixture of happy anticipation and dread. She was no longer welcome in the house of her youngest son Daniel, in California. Ours was the sixth house of her six children.

One would think, how can such a small, eighty-six-year-old woman cause that much trouble? She was quite a strong-willed woman. Her husband had died when her eldest child was twelve years old. She neither asked for nor received charity of any kind. She demanded much from herself and from her children, and she extracted it, through blood and guts. The children worked before and after school, and no one quit, her will imposing a discipline on all. At the age of eighty-six, however, that will was being continually frustrated by the unequally matched body. It showed the toll extracted in the passage of years by labor on a farm when she worked long and hard to support her family. Her skin hung like empty sacks from her arms and face, reminders of the taut muscles that couldn't keep up with the onslaught of time. Her shoulders were hunched over, shortening further the already small 4'6" body. So small and thin, one wondered how she had the endurance and strength, but then one looked at the eyes peering out from the wrinkled flesh, and one knew. The eyes were still bright and alert like the ever-energetic eyes of a mouse. They were like windows revealing the spirit within that had governed the body for eighty-six years.


The
LEGACY
by
Joy
Kimi
Kanzawa
R. Ishida

Her children all reached high levels of achievement, both materially and spiritually. She had every reason to be proud. My sister and brother were also following in that line, and then there was me. I was drawn towards and yet intimidated by grandma.

At eighteen, I was undergoing the traumas of an adolescent identity crisis. The future seemed at best a bland mixture of tepid tea and rice. I had a strong dislike for my comfortable, middle-class home and family that seemed to be just like every other middle-class unit that was known as a part of the masses. And I used extreme measures of orneriness to rebel against the indifference of the universe, my parents as targets. Once I slashed my wrists so I wouldn't have to wash the dishes. I guess it was *then* my parents decided I was rather unstable, and stopped trying to force a discipline on me. I had been out of high school for two years and was going nowhere fast. My attention span was very short. To grandma I was *non-ki*, or disgracefully unmotivated, and my parents (jokingly, mind you) always referred to me as *mik-ka bozu*, or three day wonder. Actually, it was a challenge: how many jobs could I be fired from in one year? One month? How long would it take me to be fired? One week? Six hours was my record. How little could I make on a job that could have supported other people? Let's see: as a hot dog vendor I earned five dollars commission for ten hours work. Not to forget the summons I received for selling without a license. Actually, I prided myself on my nonconformity: I was the only stationary object in an ever-changing, ever-growing world. It must take talent to stay still when everyone else is moving. My brother was an intern at a city hospital. My sister had earned a masters in English, and was working to help the mentally disturbed. I was going to be a truck driver without knowing how to drive. I was going to be an Olympic track star without being able to run a mile. I was going to be rich and famous, or dead. And everyone listened. And kept silent.

Except grandma. There was nothing wrong with me as far as she could see, and she complained about it. These were the times I was lucky we didn't speak the same language. When I heard the words *non-ki* and *baka-tare* (stupid), I knew I was being bawled out. I learned those two words because I heard them so often. It didn't bother me too much, because I had a shield. I spent hours in my room reading and dreaming about romances and adventures in which I was ruled by the absolutes of passion. Mush and mayhem was my reincarnation from reality. I was paralyzed by hopes of excellence and excitement, and this was how I retreated from her anger. But, I guess she also felt sorry for me, because after one of her tirades she summoned me away from my dreams with a gruff:

"Vicky-chan!"

"What?" I called from my room.

"Come on."

"Oh, boy," I thought to myself. "Here goes another hour's worth of scolding," and I walked to my punishment. However, there on the kitchen table

I found little rice cakes, called mochi. She had been working in the kitchen to make me my favorite Japanese dessert. This was our only means of communication. It showed me she cared.

"Thank you, grandma. Thank you so much."

"All right."

I always vowed to return the favor one day with an extravagant gift.

But the gift grandma needed was beyond bounds. She needed a strong body with which she could do whatever she wanted. She didn't expect a total rejuvenation, but just to be strong enough to be self-dependent. I guess it was this frustration that made her ornery at times. Little things became major problems. A button missing on her bathrobe for years had to be found and sewed on when grandma realized it was gone; at the moment, no later. And she kept talking about that button until the demand was obeyed. One night she had to be escorted to the bathroom at least ten times. Each time she wore a different bathrobe. The last time, at four in the morning, she decided it was time to get up. She wanted to go back to California. She had unfinished business with her neighbors there. She owed Mr. Suzuki ten dollars, and Mrs. Fujiwara two dollars, and Mr. Takami still hadn't returned her pen. And she had to help Mrs. Okada with her sewing. It was three thousand miles away. She started to get up.

"Mom, it's four o'clock in the morning, it's not time to get up," her daughter said in pidgin Japanese.

"Oh? Alright," she replied. And she started to get up again.

"Mom, it's too early, everyone's asleep, wait, okay?"

"Mrs. Okada is going to use the red thread, and that's not right," my grandmother said in Japanese. "I have to remind her, or she'll forget. She's so absent-minded." And she grabbed for her bathrobe.

"Mom, she knows. I told her," my mother lied. "Don't worry."

"You don't realize how long it takes me to get ready," my grandmother replied.

"Ready for what? You're not going out, today. It's snowing."

"I have to wash, brush my teeth, get dressed — I just know she's going to use the red thread. She doesn't know about colors."

"Mom, it's FOUR O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING!"

Grandma won. My mother bathed her and then dozed off on the edge of the bathtub while grandma took half an hour to brush the single tooth that was left in her mouth. She was quite fastidious. I guess it was her only form of entertainment.

But she also went through periods of repentance for her demanding ways, for I know that this dependence on people was a curse to grandma. At these times she would strive to regain her independence, and would do things by herself. Once I watched her as she rose from the easy chair on which she had been sitting. I watched as she pulled herself to her feet, her hunched back beginning the roll that propelled her to her feet. She slowly shuffled across the living room floor, and I didn't offer to help her, for I had seen when my mother would enter and grab hold of grandma, hardly letting her help herself, and grandma would smile, but I would see an expression on her face that looked like shame. She used the coffee table for support. She had the will, and I really believed she would soon be able to move around without any help. Then her foot caught in the carpet, and in trying to regain her balance, she clutched for support before I could get to her. Her forearm hit the piano and bounced off like rubber. The crash to the floor brought my mother into the room and, needless to say, I was bawled out. But grandma said she was unhurt and ignored the bruise the size of a tennis ball that formed on her arm. She was quite a spunky woman. She never gave up.

But what she wanted was impossible. It was at one of our family conferences (actually it was a party), when most of her children were present.

"I have to go back to California," my grandmother said in Japanese.

"Mom, how can you go back? What will you do? There's no one to take care of you. We're all here in New York," my uncle replied.

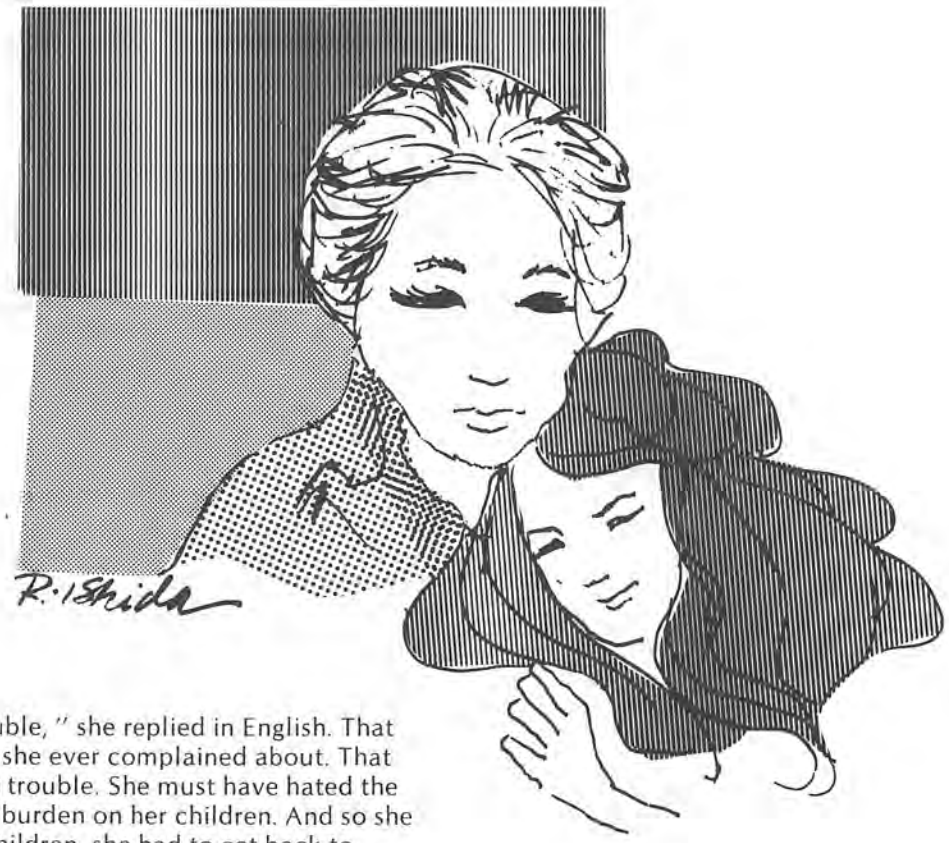
"I have to go back," she said. "Better that way."

"Okay, fine. When you get much stronger, *then* you can go back on your own."

And grandma said that she could get on the plane alone, and she would find someone to take care of her. And she had gone on and on, repeating herself, that she would find someone to take care of her, for I think she had felt too often the exasperation of her children, and it shamed her. Once I was sitting with her as she talked on and on in Japanese pretending that I was avidly interested in her every word. I sat there looking at her, nodded every so often, smiled when she smiled, laughed when her eyes sparkled (for all I knew she could have been scolding me). Then she said, in English,

"Pain, much pain."

"You hurt, grandma? Where hurt?"



"Too much trouble," she replied in English. That was the only pain she ever complained about. That she was too much trouble. She must have hated the feeling of being a burden on her children. And so she argued with her children, she had to get back to California, she could do it alone, and find someone who could take care of her. (But Danny would have nothing more to do with his mother), and my mother retorted, hitting home, that grandma had no money for the plane ride. Judging from the faces that glared at her, grandma knew there would be no money forthcoming for this journey, and remained silent.

However, grandma was getting much stronger. There was no longer a need for twenty-four hour service. At night, when she should have been sleeping, she was left to her own resources. My mother would give her a sleeping pill, and we would all go to sleep. At around three o'clock one night, I heard grandma calling my mother. I heard my mother go in to see what was the matter, and rolled over to go back to sleep. We were all up on our feet and running towards the bathroom upon hearing an "Oh God!" escape from my mother's mouth. Grandma was lying contorted on the floor, the back of her neck against the hot radiator pipe. We pulled her away, and her skin stuck to the pipe. She had called so nonchalantly. How long had she been stuck to that pipe, that it could incur such a burn? Visions of her struggling to get up by herself, to prove to herself that she didn't need help, visions of her clutching hands grasping for support, pervaded my mind. She must have at first been knocked unconscious, the heat sizzling against her neck. It left a scar on her neck the size of a six-inch knife blade, and turned completely black.

The hospital was just another setback for her. It must have been discomforting for her, for she couldn't communicate with the hospital staff. They were always sticking needles into her, tubes everywhere. When we went to visit her, I saw that her arms were bound to the steel of the hospital bed. Undoubtedly she had tried to remove the needles and tubes by herself. All she said when we came to see her was that she wanted to leave. She had never trusted doctors and their concoctions.

"Itai, itai," she exclaimed, the pain must have wracked her body, for she had never complained about physical pain before in her entire life. The stench of her gangrenous burn smelled of death.

She saw no chance of escape from the hospital, for her children pleaded with her, explaining that the hospital and doctors would make her better. Her spirit died, and so did she. But I think it was in her death that I found life. There was something in her will to live that shamed me. Alone she had raised six children who had risen above poverty, herself as their pillar of strength. I realized that my contempt for my middle-class upbringing was solely a contempt for my own mediocrity. She had suffered and survived and never stopped struggling. Even to the end she had to be bound, her hands helpless to attack the wound that was draining her life, her spirit. I will never forget the example you set for me, grandma. You gave me quite an inheritance. It seems that when the elements of the will are non-material, the legacy becomes that much more important. I love you, grandma. And this is my apology. □

"WELCOME, BIENVENIDO!"*

Before that night of terror came
You must have been happily preparing for a
celebration:
All the food to cook, invitations
(Especially for your new neighbors),
The coins that will be showered for the kids to catch
(For good luck, they say)
And, yes, you have to call the priest for the blessing.

It's really called for. Celebrate you must.
How many years have you worked so hard for all
this?
Two, three, four, five years?
That is not to mention all the overtime
And working two jobs at a time.
And, yes, that is not to mention your wife's job.
It's really but proper to see where the fruits of your
labor went.
This really calls for a celebration!

For you, San Leandro is an ideal place.
What were the other places you considered?
Daly City? A, it's already crowded with Filipinos.
Vallejo? A, it's too far.
Hillsborough? A, it's too expensive. Later, perhaps.
Piedmont? A, it's the same as Hillsborough.
You said, San Leandro is quiet and peaceful.
And you prefer a "suburban lifestyle."
You called your new house your dream house.
Your neighbors are mostly whites.
It looks like there are no robbers.
Not like East Oakland
(There are too many Blacks)
Or the South of Market
(Too many poor Filipinos living in ghettos)
Or the Mission District
(Too many Mexicans).
For the kids, your new place is close to white schools
(White schools have a higher teaching standard).

Goodbye to apartment life.
Goodbye to the rats of San Francisco.
Goodbye to the bums.
Goodbye, poverty, goodbye.

The longed-for event was already playing in your
mind:
Full of envy are your friends who were left in
apartments.
"Oh, you have a beautiful house!"
"Your neighborhood is nice!"
"What are your neighbors, whites *ba*?"
"Oh, *dats gud*; it must be peaceful!"
"Uy, you have a big backyard, you can grow your
own vegetables!"
"You can even build an extension!"

And you'll modestly say, "It's okay. We're just lucky.
It took us a long time to find one like it, you know."
Once again you'll take a good look at your house's
surroundings
With brimming pride and then say· "I guess it's okay."
Inside you, you are tickled with joy: At last,
At last! You are now "above" your own peers.
Or shall we say, you have just "joined" the
middle class.
You are now a proud home owner
(Even if it's bought on credit), no longer a poor
tenant.

That night you were visited by strangers,
When you were opening your door,
You must have put on a grand smile
Thinking they were just your new neighbors
Who will greet you "Welcome, Bienvenido!"
But you were not greeted thus, Bienvenido;
You were confronted instead by a giant cross!
A big burning cross crackling like crazy!
It wasn't a mirage, Bienvenido; it was real!

What does this ceremony all mean?
Why, Bienvenido, didn't you know?
You have already read about this in some newspaper.
You must have already seen this in some show.
You must have already heard this in some talk
But you just didn't bother to take notice
Because you were not affected — yet.
(Yet!) Or so you thought.

These strangers, who are they? Aren't they . . .
The Ku Klux Klan!
The Ku Klux Klan! Oh, my God!
The Klans are burning a cross in your yard!

Yes, Bienvenido, you were not mistaken.
They who killed and lynched hundreds of Blacks in
history
Are alive, very much alive — today!
But, but, but . . . haven't they just mistaken you for
the Blacks?
No, it can't be. Their sharp blues eyes can't be wrong.
Their eagle eyes can't be wrong, brother.
Black, brown, red, yellow — they do not discriminate
As long as you are not white!

So what does this ceremony all mean?
What does this mean?
This is their "welcome" for you, Bienvenido.
This is their "welcome" for you!

written and translated from the Pilipino original by K.SE

*(The Bienvenido family — a Filipino family — was a victim of a racist cross-burning by the Ku Klux Klan in San Leandro, CA late 1982. This poem is the first part of an intended 2-part poem although the poet thinks it can stand as a separate poem by itself.)

Tomorrow's Asian Women

Onie, Asia, Portia, and Jessica..
Joy of their fathers
Are tomorrow's Asian Women
Different
From many of their grandmothers, mothers
and aunts —
Not a burden, endured
But of an union's rejoice.
Watch them play.
Watch their fathers watching.
See the pride.
The wondering glow
"This is my daughter!"
"Look at what she does."
"Gosh, she knows a lot!"
She's strong, confident.
Growing and feeling *good.*
She explores, creates,
Becoming, beyond,
And doesn't stop at
Looking pretty,
Acting sweet,
Fulfilling duties,
Following roles . . .
The Young Asian Women
WILL BE MORE!

Evelyn Yee
March 1983

Needs

Among the masses
I am no different from sufferers
wishing to gain back rights which should be ours,
wishing for sunshine to break through foggy twilight.

All my life,
filled with sadness and melancholy,
I staggered along crooked paths,
suppressed.
I am impoverished, I wander on . . . .

Give me clothes, give me food,
give me music, give me fragrance
give me rich friendship,
give me fresh wishes, hopes.

I need a reasonable society.
I need happiness for everyone.
Please, when you are on the road,
generously strengthen the power to unite struggles.

Lovely wishes are rippling in my heart,
but,
I show boundless hatred to this world.
I can't stand this barren existence.
I need the joy of rebirth, the ease of soul and flesh.
Though I suffered much poverty,
Still, I can not abandon my ideals.
Though I suffered heavily from suppression,
still, I would not alter my pursuit.

Whenever I may, I breathe with good-hearted
working people,
whenever I may, I push forward the wave of progress
with them,
whenever I may, I write a poem,
with beautiful phrases, fluent rhythm,
praise for the force of progress.

Happy Lim (translated from Chinese)

Contributing Editor **Happy Lim** *was secretary of the Chinese Workers Mutual Aid Association in the 1930's. He wrote this poem upon recovering from a serious illness and operation. Let his life and words be an inspiration to us.*

China Cove

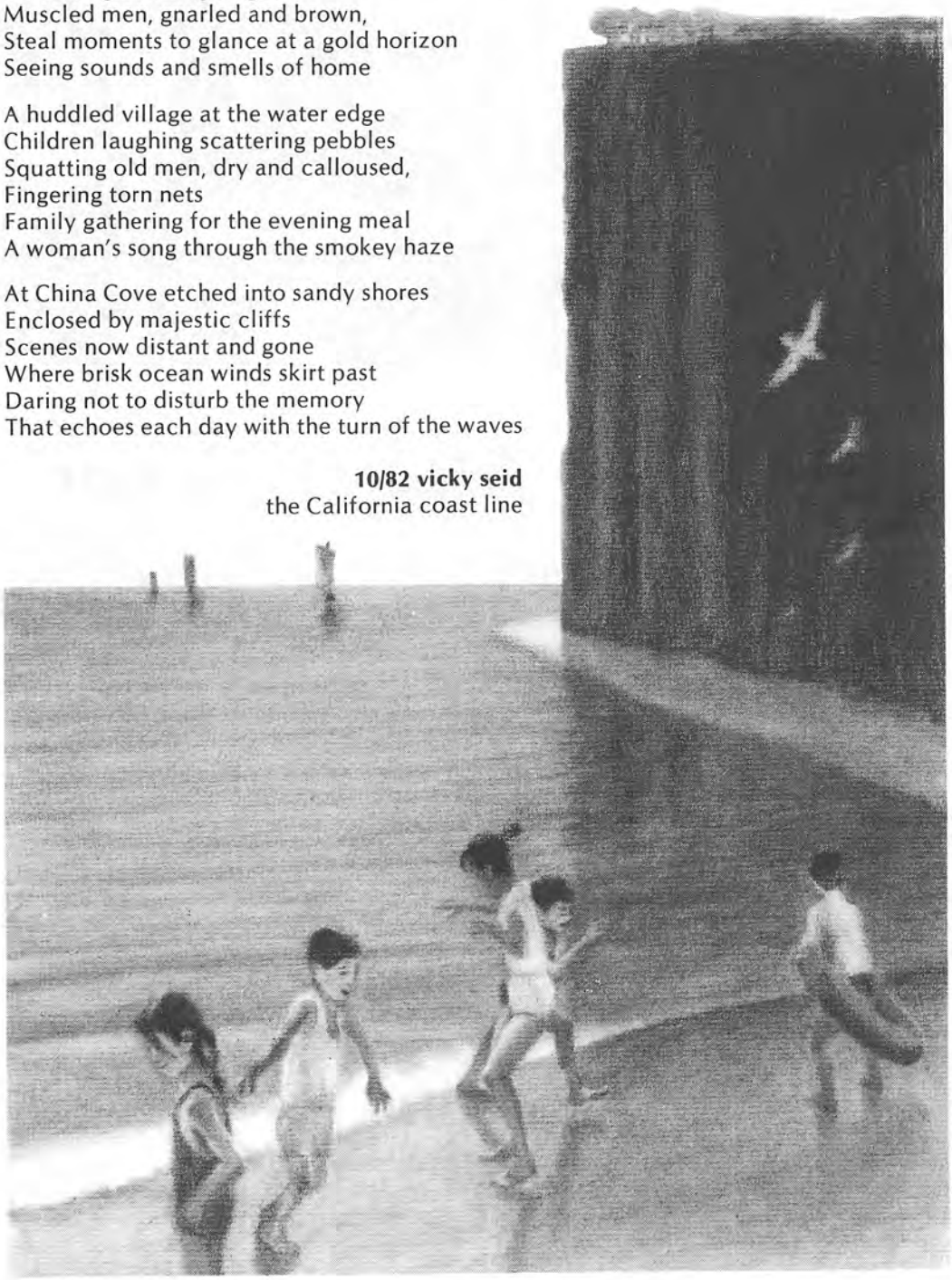
Beneath a clear layer of calm water
Witches hair drape over mossy boulders
Each strand whispering a life of its own
Clouds of sand billow out and shape
A shadow play from memories past

Silent fishermen cast woven nets
Catch drops from early dawn
Scattered junks bob with the waves
Reflecting morning's light
Muscled men, gnarled and brown,
Steal moments to glance at a gold horizon
Seeing sounds and smells of home

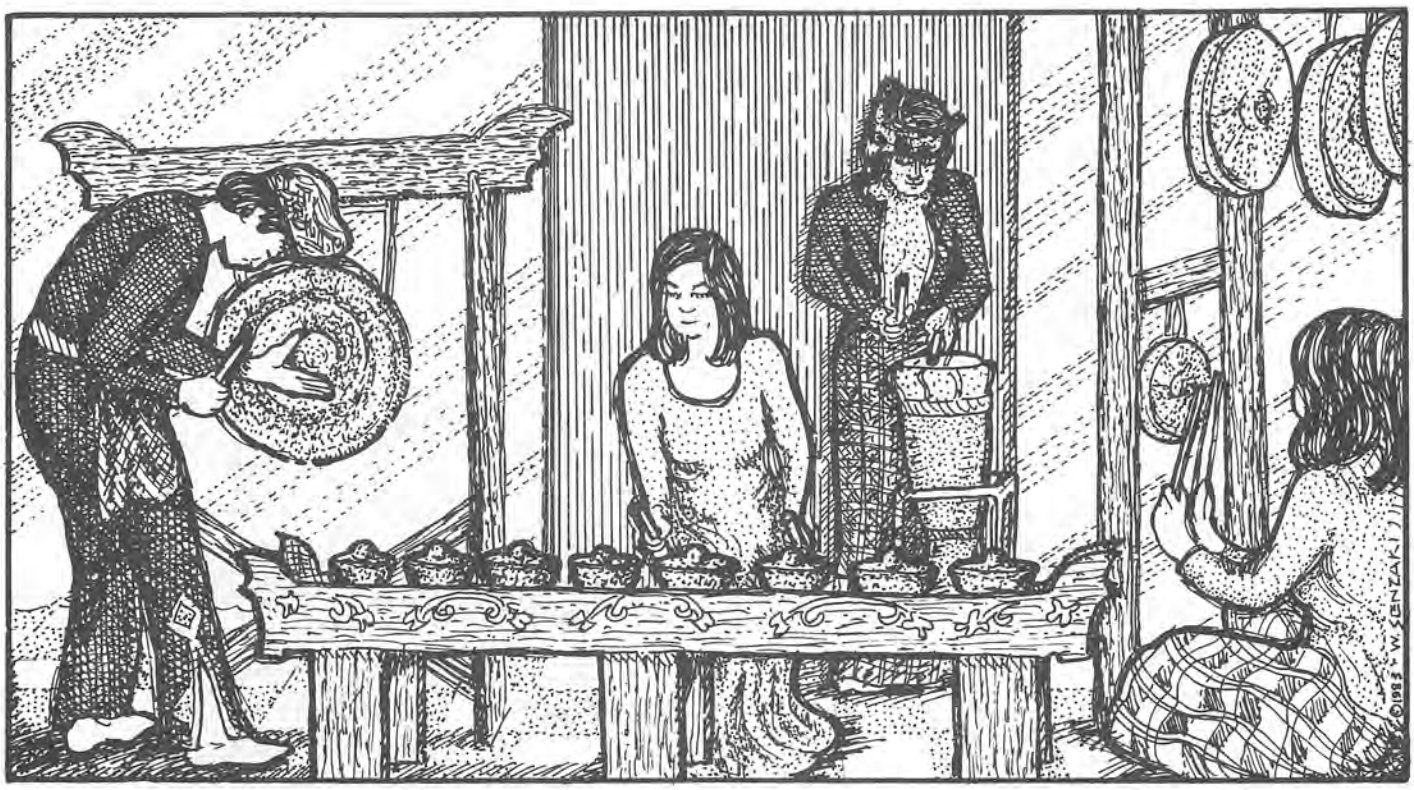
A huddled village at the water edge
Children laughing scattering pebbles
Squatting old men, dry and calloused,
Fingering torn nets
Family gathering for the evening meal
A woman's song through the smokey haze

At China Cove etched into sandy shores
Enclosed by majestic cliffs
Scenes now distant and gone
Where brisk ocean winds skirt past
Daring not to disturb the memory
That echoes each day with the turn of the waves

10/82 vicky seid
the California coast line



Rich Tokeshi



Profile: Mutya Gener

Bringing Kulintang to Asian Americans

By Greg Morozumi

In a wide arc stretching across the stage floor, five musicians, including a dancer, sway in rhythmic motion to an unfamiliar but almost spiritually resonant mixture of various-sized gongs, drums, and two- and four-stringed instruments. Kneeling in the center over a row of several weathered brass gongs is the group's leader, an energetic woman who is as completely immersed in the music as she is in her determination to expand the audience's cultural appreciation of the indigenous sounds of the Philippine traditional music.

Mutya Gener has always had a deep interest in music, having been raised near a Conservatory of Music in a small university town in the Philippines where she started playing the piano at the age of six. However, the university was American — an import of Western colonialism, and the classical European music taught in its halls reflected just that. Ironically, it wasn't until Mutya moved to the United States several years later that she rediscovered her native culture.

Pursuing a career in music was hardly considered lucrative (her mother thought she would starve in that field), so her most obvious talents were discouraged. She turned down a music scholarship to the University of Hawai'i and, like many other educated Pilipina women, she was instead propelled into the nursing profession. As Mutya succinctly put it, "In the Philippines, like in other societies, women are not really respected and are pushed into particular roles. You have to get married, have children, or like myself — I had to become a nurse. You aren't encouraged to go into other occupations like the arts. It doesn't pan out, although now I think there are more women musicians in the Philippines and many of them are writing music . . ."

Along with her late husband Nestor, Mutya moved to New York City where they became acutely aware and concerned about the state of martial law in the Philippines. They helped form *Sambayanan* which is a collective of Pilipino activists in New York City striving to make the Philippine struggle known to the American public. At the same time, the United States was becoming their permanent residence. Nestor became a serious printmaker and together with other Pilipino artists, founded *Amauan Workshop*, a grass-

roots Pilipino American arts organization in the East Village. Also actively involved in the Annual Asian/Pacific American Heritage Week Festival, their artistic interests became a cultural expression of their growing political sentiments.

When Mutya heard a lecture-performance of Pilipino traditional music at the American Museum of Natural History, she was convinced that this music should be performed more widely for the American public. The lecturer, Priscilla Magdamo, an ethnomusicologist and a gifted musician herself, happened to come from her home town. Ms. Magdamo owned a full set of instruments and she encouraged the formation of *Tahavika* in 1980. Training in the unique assemblage of instruments such as the unheard-of *kulintang* ensemble from Muslim Philippines and the *saluray, kubing, kudyapi* and other instruments of the non-Muslim tribes of Southern Philippines, was an education in itself as it was a radical departure from the American pop and European classical orientation of most of the group's members. Mutya actively sought interested Pilipinos with a musical ear capable of adapting to the traditional rhythms.

In colorful tribal dress, *Tahavika* began playing before diverse audiences, particularly for Asian American events. It unfolded not only a new art form, but the undiscovered lifestyle of the Muslim and tribal Pilipinos. Mutya says that the group plays not only to entertain but also to educate and inform the public reminding them that the Pilipinos, however Spanish- and American-influenced, have their own historic culture and traditions reaching back more than 400 years before colonial times.

She feels that traditional and indigenous music is an oppressed people's music threatened by the current military dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos which has forced many of the Muslims and tribal peoples to relocate because of the regime's aggressive seizure of land. This has caused a severe disruption of family life with the eventual disintegration of tribal cultures.

She argues then, that the music of the Muslim and tribal peoples has undergone change when performed by the regime's "cultural" Center because it has been transformed into a stagy and theatricalized entertainment and therefore is no longer relevant to the cultures from which it originated. Mutya believes that performing the music of the Muslim and tribal peoples in their correct setting will help reinforce Pilipino identity and pride for Pilipinos in the United States as well as restore cultural and political independence for Pilipinos in the Philippines.

Serious as she is about her political and musical commitments, Mutya still must make a living as a registered nurse. She still struggles to maintain the national spirit of an oppressed culture. As an Asian woman stepping into the uncommonly seen position of leading a musical ensemble, Mutya Gener still challenges the backward "traditional" roles of women with the new. □

Greg Morozumi *is an* EAST WIND *representative in New York City.*

Nestor Gener

Mutya Gener

Seeing in the Dark

By Paul Yamazaki

"The task of an alternative photography is to incorporate photography into social and political memory, instead of using it as a substitute which encourages the atrophy of any such memory."

— John Berger

"I'm using my images and the things I photograph not just to make pretty pictures to look at, but something that has relevance, something that will provoke ideas or reactions."

— Zand Gee

The work of Zand Gee seen on these pages is a small but revealing example of her commitment to the development of a radical visual aesthetic. Her commitment to the creation of images that will "enter so deeply into the particular that they reveal to us the stream of a culture or a history which is flowing through that particular subject like blood." (John Berger, *About Looking*)

The images are of everyday life, the objects and institutions that are so much of our day-to-day existence that we fail to take note of them. Beneath the seemingly simple exteriors of these images lie a dense texture of relationships that the artist has revealed. This revelation that the artist arranges allows the subject to tell its story to us the viewer. Zand's work is the antithesis of the slick glossies that perpetuate and advertise our death and call it freedom. It is clear that her work is the result of careful consideration of the aesthetic and social dimensions of art. Zand says quite succinctly, "The artist should be aware of all the ramifications of their art. It is the artist's responsibility to think of their work and how it is going to be used, how it is going to be seen, and how it is going to be processed." Zand considers the Kearny Street Workshop as an influential role in her development as an artist. Although she holds a Master of Fine Arts from the San Francisco Art Institute, it was as a member of the Kearny Street Workshop that she shaped her vision of an ". . . active artist not the stereotypical role of the artist as isolated and aloof from society but an active participant."

This sense of involvement and participation and how it shapes an artist's work is clearly demonstrated in *TEXAS LONG GRAIN*, a book of photographs by members of Kearny Street Workshop. These photos are in the words of poet Doug Yamamoto "visual poems." Zand's "visual poems" of Freddy de los Reyes are extraordinary. The intimacy of these photos gives us a portrait of Freddy that is neither sentimental nor romanticized. Freddy is allowed to speak for himself. The image caresses you.

Zand's posters present another aspect of her work. The first thing we notice is the explosion of color and the feeling of celebration. The posters are more than announcements of contemporary events. They are infused with such a joyous spirit that we feel we have had a glimpse at the horizon of a possible future.

The images and photos created by culturally critical artists such as Zand give us a way of seeing through the darkness of capitalism. Zand's art is an accusation and antidote to the layer of obfuscation that contemporary capitalism attempts to enthrall us with. Her images of the oppressive present reveal the potential for liberation that lies smoldering in our daily lives.

Freddy del los Reyes: These images are from a series I had taken of him in his home - a small room in the Casa Playa hotel, Chinatown. I intend to do a short film of all of this. He's a wonderful and loving man, who always

warms everyone's heart. Recently, I heard there may be plans to convert the hotel into offices... thus making it more imperative I finish this piece - about the pathos of a man and his place called home.

These 4 photographs on the left, are part of a larger body I am currently working on. It deals with my anger against the mental + physical oppression in our environment that continually surrounds us. This constant reinforcement, therefore, perpetuates a system conditioning people in maintaining the existing power structure in our society. - Zand

PROFILE: GERALD

Zand Gee

By Richard Oyama

Gerald Oshita performed one of the more compelling sets at the Asian American Jazz Festival on Saturday, October 9 at Lone Mountain College. Originally born in Iowa, Oshita was eight years old when his family moved to San Francisco, where he has lived most of his life. While in high school, he worked as a saxophone player. He was befriended by and studied with sax and flute player

OSHITA

James Moody whom he considers "a musical father." In the 1960's, Oshita recorded and performed with Janis Joplin, Taj Mahal and Michael Bloomfield, among others, and was introduced to the Japanese jazz scene by Sadao Watanabe. Selected as an artist-in-residence at the Creative Music Foundation in Woodstock, New York, he conducted seminars on composition with Anthony Braxton, Joseph Jarman and George Lewis. In 1981, his solo piano piece, performed by Rae Imamura, was premiered in New York City. In the following year, Oshita conducted the premiere of his chamber orchestra piece in New York City.

Currently, Oshita is a member of the trio, Space, with Roscoe Mitchell of the Art Ensemble of Chicago and Tom Buckner, musical director of the Arch Ensemble. *New Music for Woodwinds and Voice* was their last album for 1750 Arch Records. Oshita is presently completing a solo album which will be on the 1750 Arch label.

One of Oshita's most unusual interests is the restoration of archaic and extinct saxophones and woodwinds. He is composing a cycle called the "Extinct Series" that will showcase these instruments. "It was during a period in the creative music area when everybody was searching for new colors and textures, and these instruments gave that," Oshita said in a previous interview I conducted with him.

At the Asian American Jazz Festival, Oshita opened his set with "Solo Piece for Alto," a composition deeply rooted in the blues, as Ornette Coleman's music is, marked by sustained notes, variations in pitch and volume, and performed mostly in the middle register at medium tempo. His long, reflective solo was generally free of much standard improvisational pyrotechnics which often emphasize speed, loudness, upper register screaming, or honking on the bottom. Oshita's statement was both varied and eloquent. "This solo piece was part of the current repertoire of solo works," he said in a conversation at his Threshold studio in Japantown. "The nature of the solo piece frees you from the necessity of keeping time. But then, nowadays, economics almost requires you to do solo works."

In "Piece for E Flat Saxophone and Gong," Oshita seemed almost to be having a dialogue with the gong, alternately striking or rubbing its surface, then, facing the gong, improvising on the saxophone. At times, one could hear the saxophone setting off faint reverberations from the gong. "There were technical problems with that piece, because of the acoustics of the large hall," he said. "When I emphasized certain notes on the sax, it set off certain harmonics on the gong. I could hear them, but probably I was the only one who could. I should have amplified the gong from behind."

The final untitled piece featured a stark performance by dancer Koichi Tamano accompanied by Oshita on baritone saxophone. Tamano stood naked on a pedestal with his back to the audience, his body partly in shadow, while light played across his body, forming abstract patterns on his torso, as though the musculature of the body had become an abstraction. Later, the dancer reappeared on stage in a red loincloth, his face painted like a ghost mask, writhing and contorting his body into grotesque postures, arms extended at odd angles, suggesting a soul in torment. Accompanied by Oshita's fluctuating drone throughout, the dance had almost a ritual quality about it. For some viewers, the dance evoked images of crucifixion (particularly when Tamano stood on the pedestal), horrible images of the hibakusha (atomic bomb survivors) or, less specifically, representations of the dead or demonic in Japanese film or theatre in which ghosts exist as real presences. "The dance piece was a general statement on the human condition. The urban art *has been* suffering. Tamano is from Tokyo and I don't think he would dance like that if he didn't mean it," Oshita said. "Tamano choreographed the piece and I mapped it out musically." According to Oshita, he has been engaged in live music/dance pieces for 15 years.

Taken as a whole, Oshita's set at the Asian American Jazz Festival was quite dramatic in its impact; that is, highly theatrical, but, at the same time, austere and subdued in presentation and spirit. In the first piece, for instance, there was the intense drama of witnessing a man simply picking up a saxophone and saying his piece through the horn.

Oshita's past involvement with the jazz-rock scene of the 1960's, performing with Japanese jazz musicians and his current relationship with the foremost creators of new music make him one of the principal Asian American figures in jazz and one particularly knowledgeable as to where the music has been and where it might be going. One of his most recent projects is the formation of his own recording company, called "Gerald Oshita Acoustic Recordings," which has been in existence for a year. In an era of mind-boggling high technology, he hopes to restore the natural purity of sound to the whole process of recording.

About the philosophy underlying his music, Gerald Oshita said, "My music is an organic statement, doing naturally without the use of electronic devices. For instance, my use of circular breathing in the dance piece . . . I wanted to take that piece out of the realms of normality, to make a supernatural effort and hopefully inspire others to make such an effort themselves." □

Richard Oyama *is a poet and writer who lives in San Francisco.*

I Am A Woman of Asian Persuasion

I am a woman
    of Asian persuasion
Born of samurai, judges, and peasant stock:
Fighting spirit, pride, and endurance
Gambare and *gaman*
A symbiotic means of survival/in a land of
    Miscegenation acts
    Alien land laws
    Immigration pacts
    Detention without cause
I am an Asian woman . . .

Yellow peril
Dangerously close to the truth
The spiritual epicenter of the movement
Leading an internal upheaval amidst
Quaking chauvinism:
    Fissures in our foundations
    Registering shock and indignation
    Peppered with all the "right" explanations
    About understanding how it is . . .

To be an Asian woman
Subject of appraisal and approval
Now, at long last, voicing our refusal
    To be battered
    To be shattered
        Into a hundred pieces
Of lost dreams and bittersweet memories
And an attic full of "If I coulda woulda shoulda's"
And other forms of wishful thinking.
Is this what it means . . .
To be an Asian woman
    A repertoire of *ohhh, so desu ne* and
    Hai, doitàshimashite
    Receptive and responsive to the 'T' (as in tough
        shit)
    Almond-eyed courtesans silently screaming
Their resistance . . .

At being an Asian woman
Enduring
American pasts ridden with
Suzy Wongs and Saigon Mamas,
Victims of circumstance
    And world dominance.

Enduring
Pretty platitudes and the 'cutest demeanor'
Sweet and sour stereotypes served on barbed wire.
Enduring
The hindrance of knowing too little
The pain of knowing too much
(One hurts the career and
    The other scares men away).

Enduring
The lack of confidence
And the everpresent sense of guilt
"Enduring, and yet enduring
The color of our skin."

But I am a woman
    Of Asian persuasion
A midnight sun casting rays of bronze
    And silver rain
To create a golden race
    Of ghost warriors.

Asian woman
Mother of invention
    Not to mention
    All of us here.
Sisters in struggle (at last)
Breaking through an oppressive past
And into a future
    Of self-determination.

I am a woman
    Of Asian persuasion
Physically small in stature
Hair soft like silk
Skin like satin
Will like iron
No longer a victim of circumstance
You can look, but you can't touch
(Without permission)
I am an Asian woman.

Miya Iwataki
© 1983

manong benny

his gentle heart shows through
sunlight eyes
his bamboo bones
knobbed at every joint
he sways laughing
flute-songs at every breeze.
he writes letters laced with thankyous
"i appreciate your very kind hearted visited me
while i am a sickly poor man as you've seen me"
his camera hold helicopters
n hot air balloons in constant flight
with his eyes closed he bends his body
into the wind riding waves of air
like a kite flying always flying
over kearny st rice terraces
circling manilatown n the pyramid
forecasting spring rains
n the children laughing in his wake

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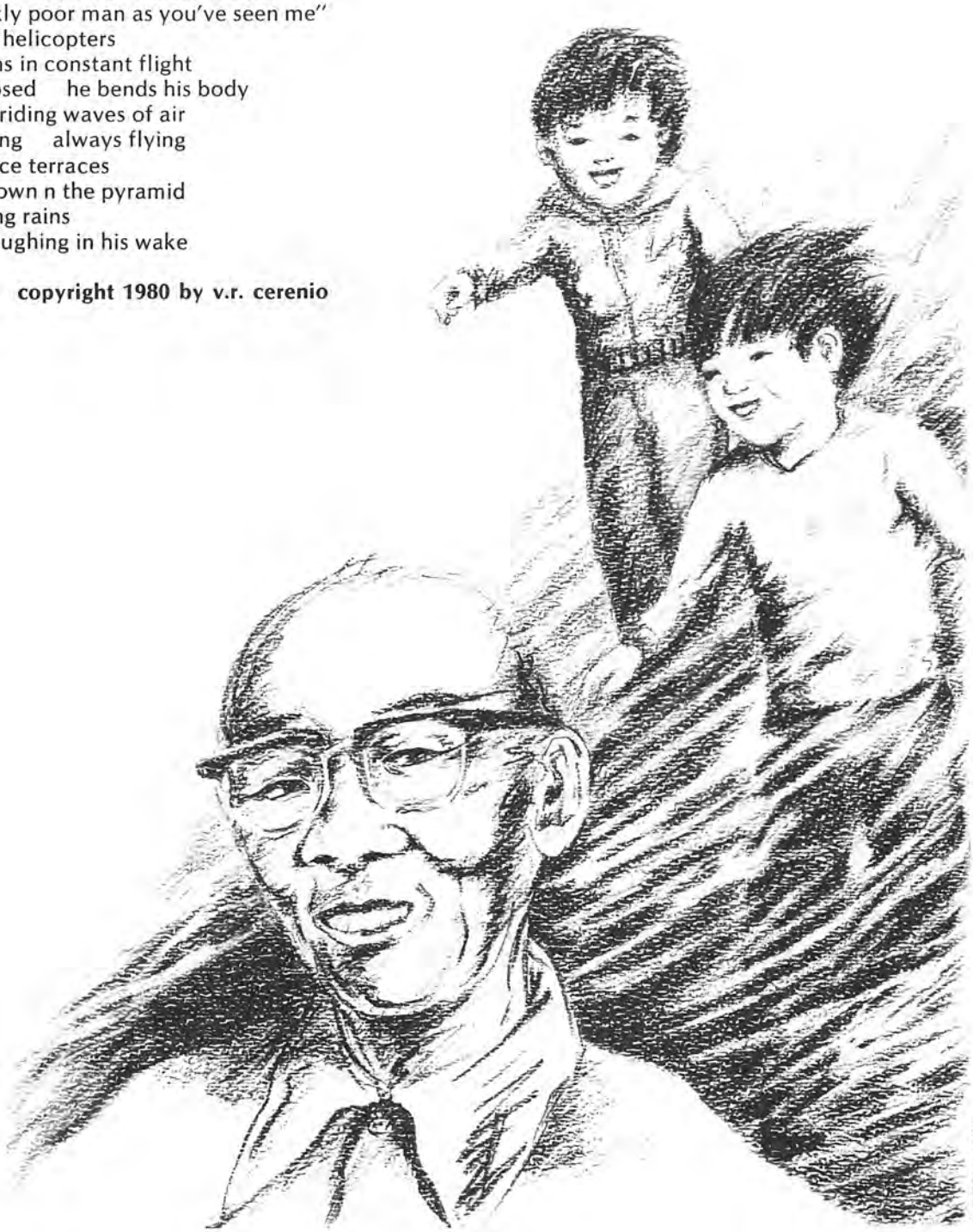

Stephanie Lowe

Armies of the Night

Shadows glide
so slowly
imperceptible
like recurring
whispers calling
calling out to you
in the velvet-smooth
darkness
like one
solitary seagull
soaring over a
midnight ocean
the moon
one clear spotlight
in the evening sky
and in the distance
you hear a foreboding rumble
vast divisions of storm clouds
gathering over the horizon and
you hear the low rumble
of the thunder-drum, beating
rumbling in the sky-chambers above
and you hear
the sounds of Muslim
bolos and you hear
the sounds of spanish
swords -crashing against
each other -piercing the air
are the screams
the curses
the fury & fighting
now -the silence of
slowly moving
armies of
the night

Lou Syquia

Virginia Cerenio *is a classroom teacher, curriculum writer and researcher. She is a member of the Kearny Street Workshop. Her poetry will be published in the* Asian American Anthology *by the Greenfield Review Press in 1983.*

Marcelo Estrada: *"I have worked as a clerk-typist, translator, carpenter, boiler-maker-pipefitter-welder, insurance agent, activist, etc. in the last six years as an immigrant in the U.S. I used to earn my living in the Philippines as a freelance writer-journalist. My ongoing project (which I do during my 'free' hours) is writing poems about the various facets of immigrant life, and I intend to compile a small selection probably by the end of this year. I am an activist and a writer (inseparably both!) involved in supporting the Philippine movement for national liberation."*

Miya Iwataki *is the Development Director at KPFK Radio in Los Angeles. She is also a member of the Pacific Asian American Writers West.*

Evelyn Yee *is an art therapist (private practice), visual artist, and an assistant professor at Long Island University. She has been a longtime community activist and poet. This is her first published piece.*

Happy Lim *is a poet and journalist. He was Secretary of the Chinese Workers Mutual Aid Association in the 1940's in San Francisco.*

Stephanie Lowe *is the Co-ordinator of Graphic Services at the Japantown Art and Media Workshop.*

Lou Syquia: *"Born and died in San Francisco — reborn when I visited the Philippines in 1978–79 where I discovered creative wellsprings of ancestral and contemporary thought and vision — experienced jungle — barrio — city imagination and multi-layered wonder. Currently unemployed — a fairly recent victim of Reaganomics. Trying to survive — grow and prosper . . . Someday, soon, I wish to go back to the islands to experience and uncover deeper layers of thought and feeling and to hopefully, rediscover the wonder of it all."*

Vicky Seid *began writing in 1982 through a class sponsored by the Kearny Street Workshop, an Asian American community arts collective in San Francisco. Currently, she is a graduate student in community health education at U.C. Berkeley.*

Richard Tokeshi *is a graphic artist at the Japantown Art and Media Workshop in San Francisco.*

Kalinga/Apayao, Northern Luzon, 1981. Kalinga elder and child, members of one of the most independent of the tribal Filipino Igorots of the north, during a bodong, *a meeting of several tribes to renew their solidarity in the Igorots' long struggle against a government dam project which would put their ancestral lands under water to benefit multinational companies with factories in the area. The Kalingas and Bontocs have pledged they would rather drown than give up their land which they have toiled in all their lives.*

Fighting for Freedom

Photographs by Lenny Limjoco

By Ernestine Tayabas

When asked what made him take photos of the Philippines, Lenny Limjoco admits that in the beginning his pictures weren't intended for other people. "No one asked me to do it," recalls Limjoco, "I was on no great mission. I did it for my own gratification and I was the one benefitting from taking pictures."

Since that time Limjoco has not been the only one to benefit from his photographs. The public has also had an opportunity to view his work in an

Dadiangas, South Cotabato, Mindanao, 1979. Muslim refugee children, from the Badjao tribe in the Sulu islands, who escaped with their families on long narrow boats from bombings and massacres perpetrated by the Philippine military on the Muslim population in war-torn Mindanao. The brutality of the military in the murder of Muslim babies and elders is well-documented. Mindanao, parts of which the Muslims would like to secede from the country, contains fields run and operated by such firms as Del Monte, Dole and Firestone.

"And when people trust you they let you know."

exhibit entitled "Fighting For Freedom." First shown last year in San Francisco and scheduled for viewing in Los Angeles in August, this exhibit includes photographs taken during two-and-a-half years of traveling back and forth to the Philippines. Limjoco lived, ate, slept, and struggled to survive with the Pilipino people. "I immersed myself into the countryside," recalls Limjoco, "I wanted to make sure for myself what was going on, and when people trust you, they let you know."

Although a writer and journalist himself, Limjoco is critical of the media's portrayal of the Philippines. He believes that in order to learn the truth people need to see for themselves, or if that's not possible, to see the Philippines through the eyes (or camera) of someone who's been there. Hence, his decision to share his photos with the public.

"My primary interest is in documentation. There's not much documentation in the Philippines but through pictures and stories other people can learn what's really going on. No one can dispute it," says Limjoco.

"Through pictures and stories other people can learn what's really going on. No one can dispute it."

Born in the Philippines, Limjoco has spent half of his life in the United States and graduated from San Francisco State University with a degree in Journalism. His interest in photography started ten years ago with a concentration on structural and landscape photography. Later, after studying photography on his own, he was influenced by experimentalists in multi-exposure photography. Limjoco's works then progressed to portraits of people reflecting an influence of purist photographers whose works Limjoco views as simple and straightforward. His photos of the Pilipino people capture that kind of quality. With very little cropping or touch-ups, Limjoco's prints speak for themselves. □

Ernestine Tayabas *is a graduate from the University of Oregon School of Journalism and a member of the Committee to Free Chol Soo Lee.*

Northern Luzon, 1981. Ka Benji, an engineering student from the University of the Philippines, joined the New People's Army in 1971. A commander in the guerrilla army which started with a few dozen members in 1969, Ka Benji witnessed the numbers of the outlawed group grow to over 10,000. After a decade of countless skirmishes with the enemy, the Philippine military, he still professed a determination to fight on and predicted an eventual and inevitable victory.

New Images of Asian Women

By Sun Hoong Ow

"Four Women."
"On New Ground."
"Frankly Speaking."

Produced by Elaine H. Kim, Asian Women United of California, and Loni Ding. Funded by Women's Educational Equity Act Program of the U.S. Department of Education, 1983.

Very few films have been made about Asian American women — let alone Asian American working women. Recently, however, three videotapes have been finished which talk about women on the job in a positive light. A fourth videotape is in the process.

Asian Women United began by finding out more about Asian American women and what they thought about work. They did this by sending out a questionnaire and doing a survey. They found out that even Asian women with high levels of educational achievement simply did not have better jobs or earn higher incomes. Many factors contributed to this, such as discrimination, occupational category, families and lack of role models. Because of these factors, Asian Women United wanted to present to young Asian women and adults positive role models and options that had never been provided before.

The three videotapes are documentaries, with interviews of individual women. The interviews take place — at their jobs, at home or in a group. The women speak very frankly and openly about their process in obtaining their jobs, their experiences and their struggles.

The videotape, "On New Ground," opens with Julie Tang speaking about Asian women in the working world. In the backdrop are photos of working women. She begins by discussing what are traditional and non-traditional jobs held by Asian American women. Non-traditional jobs are those traditionally held by men. She also makes comparisons of traditional fields for Asian American women compared to traditional fields for white women. Once more she emphasizes the importance of role models of Asian American women in non-traditional jobs.

Then the tape moves to the scene of an Asian woman in a rowing shell in the water yelling commands to a crew of men. As a female coxswain for a college rowing team, she said it's difficult to be a coxswain. There are the early hours, the commitment, the questions by friends and family, and the expectations from the men crew, but it is all worth it.

The interviews move on to a shipwelder, a pharmacist, a policewoman, a T.V. reporter and a stockbroker. The stockbroker states that her career has given her "independence, flexibility, and opportunity" and "you know how good you are." She said that she learned how to be good in her field "in spite of the way I was raised." As I watched the tape I wondered how she felt about maintaining the cultural aspects of her background.

Then the scene shifts to a bar, where an Asian woman is the bartender. She talks about her family and the difficult decision to stay at her job.

The next interviews are with a park ranger, a dress designer and a judge. The judge said "becoming a judge was something that happened, not something I planned," ... "support from the Asian American and women's communities has been important to me, and I won't forget where I came from and how I got there."

The videotape "Four Women" is more of the same type of interviews except more in-depth interviews. The women are a Chinese American union organizer, a Filipino American physician, a Japanese American architect, and a Korean American social worker. They talk about combining career goals with community service and family life.

The third videotape titled "Frankly Speaking" are interviews and interactions of middle school, high school, and college students. They talk about school, career, family and personal concerns. The young women talk about their feelings and how their family has influenced their choices in life.

Though Asian Women United deliberately wanted to present Asian women in non-traditional jobs, I find that some of the jobs are still in traditional arenas, such as teaching, dress designing and social work. These women have careers and ambitions, but what about women in regular jobs — such as sewing, domestic work, electronic assembly and other blue collar jobs. The real issues are not discussed. What are the options for Asian women these days with unemployment at 11.7% and higher? Take a look at the budget cutbacks in social services and affirmative action. The conclusion that one draws from these videotapes is that anyone can become one of these women if one works hard enough.

Indeed, many women work very hard as tomato pickers, agricultural workers, cannery workers and waitresses for very low wages. Asian women have challenged unfavorable conditions and wages, which have resulted in gains for other workers as well. In 1980, Asian women working in hotels in San Francisco joined with the hotel workers' strike that won a pay increase. In 1982, Chinese garment workers in New York organized a strike and won a union contract.

However, the videotapes break new ground about Asian women at work and are worth seeing. The tapes are to be used in schools and to be viewed by women and men of all ages. Unfortunately, the promotional funds for the videotapes were cut early this year and the group is looking for other ways to get the tapes out to the public. □

Sun Hoong Ow *is a counselor with the San Francisco Chinatown Youth Center and a member of Bay Area Asians for Nuclear Disarmament.*

Obasan

Obasan by Joy Kogawa. David R. Godine, Publisher, Boston.

Reviewed by Suzi Wong

"I would like to drop the lid of the trunk, go downstairs and back to bed. But we're trapped, Obasan and I, by our memories of the dead — all our dead — those who refuse to bury themselves."
Joy Kogawa, *Obasan*

Although Joy Kogawa's novel may be categorized as a history of the "camps" and the World War II evacuation of Japanese-Canadians from their homes into government-designated labor camps and ghost towns, *Obasan* does not take place in the past. Naomi Nakane is only five years old when her mother leaves for an ill-fated trip to Japan. Soon, international events forever separate mother and daughter, before and after. Constant uprooting, hardship and hostility, and the deaths of grandparents and father mark the war and post-war years; moreover, the present is haunted by the unexplained absence, the unanswered questions. The story really begins in 1972 when Naomi opens the Pandora's box of memories and breaks out of the tomb of silence and inertia which has been her living death.

Freeing oneself from the confinement of a prolonged childhood and its repressive "innocence" requires courage and clarity of vision. To remember or to forget? To tell or not to tell? For Naomi, the choice determines the future. The alternatives are personified by Naomi's aunts. "One lives in sound, the other in stone. Obasan's (aunt) language remains deeply underground but Aunt Emily, BA, MA, is a word warrior." Gentle, dignified Obasan is Naomi's surrogate mother; it was her strength to endure, her deliberate silence which provided a protective nest of security for the family in years of turmoil and displacement. But implicit in the silence is the command to an equal silence. "The greater my urgency to know, the thicker her silences have always been." Questions are invasions; probing into the past is unseemly. For Obasan, it was "better to forget."

Aunt Emily, on the other hand, says, "You have to remember. You are your history. If you cut any of it off, you're an amputee." An explosive, fast-talking contrast to Obasan, Aunt Emily prods Naomi into the recovery of her wholeness through a recovery of the past. She deposits a bundle of old letters, a youthful diary, and wartime documents into Naomi's trust, adding the charge, "Write the vision and make it plain." At first, reluctant to stir up the forgotten pain, Naomi resists,

> "Why not leave the dead to bury the dead?"
>
> "Dead?" she asked. "I'm not dead. You're not dead. Who's dead?"
>
> "But you can't fight the whole country," I said.
>
> "We are the country," she answered.

Sifting through the time-worn pages brings forth memories, fresh pain, and facts. The fact of racism evidenced by bureaucratic messages of rejection, disfranchisement, and diffidence. The fact of genocide amply expressed in Grandmother's letter from Nagasaki, "In the heat of the August sun, however much the effort to forget, there is not forgetfulness." And, finally, the fact of her mother's request to spare the children from the truth: that she witnessed and suffered the horror of nuclear war.

The new knowledge takes Naomi out of her unfinished childhood and "sleep-walk years" of adolescence into a sudden maturity. She is released from Obasan's stone-like, protective shell; and in the book's final scene, she is wearing Aunt Emily's coat for warmth. Although she casts no blame, she addresses her mother (and Obasan), "You wish to protect us with lies, but the camouflage does not hide your cries . . . . our wordlessness was our mutual destruction."

But whereas Aunt Emily is didactic and analytic in her insistence that, "it matters to get the facts straight; reconciliation can't begin without mutual recognition of the facts," Naomi (Kogawa) is intuitively aware that facts of political affairs and international history do not tell the whole truth. The fact is life can be so relentlessly harsh that flutes crack and people no longer sing, that tear glands burn out, and that a kind, *yasashi-kokoro* woman can turn her softness to stone. Silence is not necessarily cowardice or resignation. In Obasan, "the language of her grief is silence. Over the years silence within her small body has grown large and powerful." At the core, the profound silence is a reservoir, a resource.

Dedicated to the Issei, *Obasan* honors the power of their silence and

reconciles it with the urgent necessity to speak, to hear the message beneath the wordlessness and make it plain. *Obasan* is a book of rare beauty and virtual force; more than any other telling of the internment, it bonds the facts of history with the facts of deeply personal insight and commitment. It articulates the impingement of the past upon the present and calls attention to the momentous issues of the present, reparations and nuclear disarmament. Though Kogawa's reliance on government documents and overtly-symbolic dreams is, at times, awkward, the integrity of the work far overshadows such minor flaws. Without the usual recourse to nostalgia or sophomoric generalizations, *Obasan* engages the reader emotionally and intellectually. Above all, Kogawa's skill as a poet gives poignancy and passion to this work of catharsis and affirmation. □

Suzi Wong *is a teacher in the L.A. Unified School District and has taught Asian American literature at UCLA and at UCSB.*

With Silk Wings

With Silk Wings by Elaine Kim with Janice Otani, Asian Women United, San Francisco, 1983.

Reviewed by Denise Imura

How many times have you wanted to tell off those people who insist Asian women are only capable of entry-level positions or at best, behind-the-scenes clinical jobs?

Bob Hsiang

Artist Nancy Hom

Now, you don't have to feel a fool for saying, "I don't want to be what you want me to be. Seamstress, maid, secretary, kindergarten teacher, lab tech." Here's a book that gives you confidence to say, "Look, there are Asian sisters who've broken the proscribed bounds."

Elaine Kim and Janice Otani's *With Silk Wings* showcases Asian sisters who've chosen to explore territories of non-traditional jobs. But as Kim writes, these aren't conventional success stories. For the most part, these women haven't climbed over others during their ascent. Besides their determination to break down walls, what propels them is social consciousness and identification with their peoples. The premise of *With Silk Wings*: upgrade the image of Asian women; give us role models to identify with, be inspired by.

There is Shirley Cachola, Executive Director and Chief Physician of the S.F. South of Market Clinic. Finding a favorite *manong* paralyzed by a stroke convinced her to become a doctor.

Or there are immigrant women like Sook Nam Choo. Neither the agonies of U.S. imperialism in Korea nor the brutal feudal customs could break her spirit. Today, she is an attorney and member of the Committee to Free Chol Soo Lee. Her life is spent improving the conditions of Koreans in the U.S.

Or Merry Omori, who experienced and never forgot the injustices of the racist incarceration of Japanese Americans. Today she organizes for redress and reparations.

In addition to the 12 photo essays highlighted in the book, there are shorter profiles of women working in non-traditional fields: steelworker, produce shipper, park ranger, jazz promoter, union organizer, and taxi driver. The final chapter is a brief history of Asian women in the U.S. It gives you a sense of just how far these particular women have come. How much they've had to overcome.

But while *With Silk Wings* shows the potential of what we could be were ample opportunities really available, hard questions remain. The concluding statement infers that greater access and placement in influential places are the paths to advancement. But if we seek true equality, then is becoming a role model enough? What about women, who, for whatever reasons, won't be able to fill those shoes? Women who'll remain invisible in low-visibility jobs? How do we get liberated, find self-esteem? We'd all like to feel as if we have control over our lives; that our lives have purpose. So, the question is — what is our image of strong-minded, independent, sensitive Asian women?

Encouraging women to follow the lead of these role models could give the impression that more traditional jobs are demeaning and contribute less to society. Who's to say that being a stock market analyst is more honorable than being a waitress? Just as we should have the right to be a physician, we should be able to feel good about being a traditional worker. Those are honest jobs. In and

of themselves they are not second-rate. What makes them less appealing is that they are materially unrewarding, dead-end jobs in this society. The system's psychology downplays the social necessity and power they actually have. So how can we make these "lower strata" jobs more meaningful?

Is it our fault that we are locked in? What keeps us from maximizing our potential? Sisters in the book point to the system. But the conclusion of *With Silk Wings* leads to the assumption that if we work hard, sacrifice, remain principled, we too can make it. But for too many this formula places dreams in the hands of the *with*-holder. Capitalism and its racist ideology find it profitable and necessary to keep Asian women in subordinate positions. While it may appear that these women have risen based on their own merits, from what I can remember, these advances could not have happened were it not for the powerful Civil Rights, Black Liberation, Asian and other Third World movements. Involvement taught us how high the stakes are, how hard it is to win even a little equal opportunity and political influence.

So, given all that had to be combatted, these women should be applauded for their courage; their gains chisel away the systematic oppression — national oppression. But the gains are so tenuous. Successes are muted by the onslaught of right wing politics. In days of Reaganomics, these role models can build false expectations if we are not clear about the realities of national oppression/women's oppression.

I have a lot of praise for *With Silk Wings*. It is a very professional presentation thanks to Wes Senzaki's always-thoughtful design (and barring some of the maudlin captions which unfortunately detract fom the assertiveness of the book.) I wish I'd had a copy when I was tongue-tied and seething after being assaulted with racist pre/misconceptions. *With Silk Wings* builds a sense of Asian sisterhood and the responsibility. It demonstrates that social concern/job satisfaction can commingle compatibly.

And we do need role models of women who've pioneered into uncharted areas.

But before undertaking a sequel, I'd like to see a book to balance this one. One that celebrates the unsung heroines — those who've labored in the sweaty laundries, borne the speedups of the canneries, maids who've cleaned up others' messes, and who've conducted struggles for better conditions and respect, even more than those women who've grabbed the spotlight. We need role models. We also need to instill pride in the work and contributions that Asian women have made.

Asian women have held up the sky in America along with other Third World and working women. We should feel no shame . . . □

Denise Imura *is an* EAST WIND *representative in San Francisco and a member of the Committee to Free Chol Soo Lee.*

A Talk with Arthur Dong, Filmmaker

By James Yee

Sewing Woman is a unique and compelling 14 minute film. It focuses on the life of Zem Ping Dong, a garment factory worker in San Francisco's Chinatown. Filmed in black and white, the story of *Sewing Woman* is evocatively told through historical footage and old photographs, woven together with a very intimate, personal narration.

Arthur Dong

Photograph from Sewing Woman, *a film by Arthur Dong*

Arthur Dong's treatment and portrayal of garment workers is quite different from most documentaries on this subject. Dong commented that *Sewing Woman* is about the life of his mother but is biographic of all sewing women, their struggles and hardships in "making it" in America. The film has been well received by Asian American audiences and critics alike.

To get some insight behind the film, I talked to Dong about *Sewing Woman*. According to Dong, the film started out as an accident. He was starting film school at San Francisco State University and getting involved in the use of 16mm film. He picked up an old Bell & Howell camera and started to look for a subject to shoot. The sewing factory was a natural subject for Dong, since he spent much of his childhood growing up in the sewing factory where his mother works. Dong commented, "I was a sewing factory baby and it was my playground. My mother worked there and all the women knew me. They were used to having me there as a kid."

Dong shot all the footage before he really developed the story line. He cut the film in the order of events, but it was his sister who provided much of the words. The two of them worked closely agreeing this is a story they wanted to make universal, that the issues inherent in this sewing woman's life are issues that are a part of many people, regardless of color or background.

Given how difficult it is sometimes to get information from our parents about their past, and their reticence about anything dealing with coming to America, I asked Dong if he had trouble researching the story. Dong felt his work at the state employment office for four years helped him considerably. In the course of his work, he met and dealt with countless sewing women. He interviewed them and became familiar with their backgrounds. He also credits the research he did for the Angel Island project with Felicia Lowe where he heard countless stories of the immigration process from China to America. Dong stated, "I wanted to have people understand these women's stories. These sometimes pushy, crabby women we see on the bus have something to say. I wanted to show the story behind the push. It is not just trying to get a seat on the bus, but it is a push for life and people of our generation. And often we don't see that . . . or hear our parents talking about it."

Deepfocus Productions

Mrs. Zem Ping Dong

Commenting on why he treated the issue differently, Dong explained, "My sisters and I realized from the beginning that we did not cover the hard social, labor issues, like work conditions, long hours, low pay, though they are in the film. We felt there were enough research papers, exposé reports, dealing with these issues, but no one really dealt with the emotional aspects of these sewing women. What motivates them to sit there 14 hours a day, 6 days a week, sometimes 7 days a week? What thoughts are in their heads while they sit there and sew . . .?"

I asked Dong about the way he ended the film. What was he trying to say? Dong felt he wanted this woman's life to end on film, at least with the question, where do I go next? "She is a little ambiguous in her feelings," says Dong, "but I think we can relate to that. She has gone through the immigration process and somewhat, the assimilation in the U.S. What is the next step?" I told Dong that the film concludes with a feeling that she has endured and "made it." Dong explained that it depends on the viewer's background. "Different viewers have different reactions. Some view that it is an all-out cry for the American dream. Some feel this woman is now at a stage where she has done all that she was supposed to do — what her duties were in society — and now, she is looking at herself as an individual and questioning her role as a woman."

Lastly, I asked Arthur about his father's reaction to the film. His father thought the film was "terrific." He feels the film will serve as a reminder to this present immigrant generation of the struggles and heartbreaks in coming over to this country.

Sewing Woman will be seen this summer on public television as part of a series called "Silk Screen" produced by the National Asian American Telecommunications Association. Don't miss it. You're in for a very special film. □

James Yee is the Director of the National Asian American Telecommunications Association.

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Asian Women United, a New York-based women's organization, is commencing production of an East Coast Asian Women's Journal. Through the journal we seek to:

* affirm our identities as Asians and as women
* define our relationship to the broader women's movement
* develop understanding between Asian American communities and the broader women's movement.

In this spirit, we extend to our Asian sisters an invitation to submit their works fictional and non-fictional. To obtain the original call letter which expands on the themes to be included in the journal, send a SASE to: AWU Journal Submission, c/o S. Hom, 37-64 63rd St., Woodside, NY 11377. All submissions must be postmarked no later than August 31, 1983.

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Texas Long Grain

Photographs by the Kearny St. Workshop

Texas Long Grain is an anthology of Asian American photographers from all over America, from New York City to Little Rock to the San Francisco Bay Area. This book highlights the photographers' involvement with people in their own environments. These photographs reflect the artists' concern for the Asian American community and the social conditions under which they live and work.

We hope that *Texas Long Grain* will encourage other Asian American artists to participate collectively to evolve an expression of their experiences as Asian Americans in this country.

—The Editors
Jim Dong, Zand Gee,
and Crystal K.D. Huie

Send me _____ copies of *Texas Long Grain* @ $7.00. Please add applicable tax* and $1.00 for handling and shipping. Make check or money order payable to Kearny Street Workshop. Mail to Kearny St. Workshop, 1550 Lombard St., San Francisco, CA 94123. *BART AND LOS ANGELES counties—6½%. OTHER CALIFORNIA counties—6%. OUT OF STATE—No tax.

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See review in this issue

SEWING WOMAN

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