



Asian/Pacific Islander Student Union

Education is a Right!

Spring Action '89

SACRAMENTO, APRIL 10

March and Rally on Capitol Steps, Noon



We, the Asian/Pacific Islander Student Union, would like you to join us on April 10th at our **Spring Action '89**. Since our founding in 1978, APSU's commitment to improving education in California has been very firm. We know that **together we can make a difference** for the lives of Asian and Pacific Islander students! So come check it out!!

- For more information, contact our APSU representatives to the Spring Action '89 Statewide Steering Committee* or call the Spring Action '89 Communications Center at [redacted]
- For more information about APSU and our 11th annual statewide conference on April 22nd, contact any of our Statewide Coordinating Committee members.

Partial List of Endorsers: Martha Acevedo, School Board Member, Berkeley • Richard Alatorre, Los Angeles City Councilman • Ed Apodaca, Director of UC Admissions and Outreach • Keith Archuleta, Assistant Dean, Stanford University • Rudy Aros, Chair of the Democratic Party Hispanic Caucus • Carlos Barron, Dir of the Mexican American Ed. Commission • Willie Brown, Speaker of the California State Assembly • Jerry Brown, Chair of the California Democratic Party • Pete Chacon, State Assemblyman • Chuong Chung, Professor SFSU • Grace Montenez-Davis, Deputy Mayor, City of LA • Henry Der, Exec Dir of Chinese for Affirmative Action, SF • Jack Fujimoto, LA Community College District • Mas Fukai, Councilman City of Gardena • Warren Furutani, Los Angeles School Board • John Gamboa, Chair of the Latino Issues Forum • Dr. Cynthia Hamilton, Pan African Studies Dept, CSULA • Elisha Harris, State Assemblyman • Patrick Hayashi, Assistant Vice Chancellor, UC Berkeley • Gerald Home, Chair of Black Studies, UC Santa Barbara • Teresa Hughes, State Assemblywoman • Georgette Imura, Office of Asian Affairs • Wayne Johnson, Pres United Teachers of Los Angeles • Willie B. Kennedy, Member of SF Board of Supervisors • Russell Leong, Editor, Amerasia Journal • Dr. Francisco Lomeli, Acting Chr of Chic. Studies, UCSB • Carmen Luna, Natl Pres of Commission Feminil Chicana • Robert Matsui, US Congressman • Norman Mineta, US Congressman • Derek Miyahara, Asst to the VP for Stu. Affairs, CSULA • Gwen Moore, State Assemblywoman • Deborah Moy, Chair, Cal Dem Party Asian Pacific Caucus • Miles Myers, Pres California Federation of Teachers • Bert Nakano, National Spokesperson for NCRR • National Coalition for Redress and Reparations • Audrey Noda, Asian/Pacific Women's Network • Pedro Noguera, Asst to the Vice Chancellor, UC Berkeley • Audrey Yamagata-Noji, Santa Ana School Board • Frank Ogawa, Oakland City Councilman • Dr. Carlos Ornelas, Prof of Pol Science, Ventura College • Debra Ortiz, Head of Chicano Capitol Staff • Arturo Pacheco, Director SAA/EOP, UCSC • Monte Perez, Chair of the Educational Issues Network • Filipino Retention Education Project, UCLA • Frank Quintano, Pres of La Raza Fcly and Staff, Fresno CC • Ada Sosa-Riddell, Dir of Chicano Studies at UC Davis • Guillermo Rodriguez, UC Student Regent • Judy Sakaki, Assoc. Dir. of Stu. Acad. Servs. CSUH • Randy Senzaki, Director of EOP/SAA, SFSU • Dale Shimazaki, Aide to Speaker Willie Brown • Jackie Speier, State Assemblywoman • Sumi Tanabe, Asst to the Pres, Mission Community College • Julie Tang, President of SF Community College Board • Mabel Teng, SF Chinese Progressive Association • Meg Thornton, Dir of Search to Involve Filipino Americans • Maeley Tom, Aide to David Roberti • Art Torres, State Senator • John Vasconcellos, State Assemblyman • Tomas Vasquez, Director SAA, CSULA • Yori Wada, UC Regent • Allan Wong, Exec Dir of SF YMCA, Chinatown Branch • George Woo, Chair Asian American Stu. Dept., SFSU • Mike Woo, Los Angeles City Councilman • Jane Yokoyama, Santa Cruz City Councilwoman - All Titles are for identification purposes only

The Crisis in Education

We hear constantly about the Asian "success story" in higher education and about our overwhelming numbers at California colleges like UC Berkeley and UCLA. The implication is that somehow our culture or genetic makeup makes us smarter. Asian "success" is used to argue that the current education system works and that opportunities are there—you just have to work hard enough. Unfortunately, the facts do not paint such a rosy picture...

Education is not working in California, at least not for the majority of Californians. Asian/Pacific Islanders, just like Blacks and Chicanos, have been forgotten, buried under by the illusion of the "Asian success story."

"So what about this 'success story'?" you ask. "Is there any truth to it?" Although there are higher numbers of Asian/Pacific Islanders at UC Berkeley and UCLA, it is because these UC campuses are in areas with large Asian communities. For example, at UC Berkeley, the population of the surrounding Bay Area is approximately 25% Asian/Pacific Islander. It is natural that their numbers are reflective of their region. In addition, foreign student enrollment accounted for approximately 31% of the Asian population at these

schools. It is not to say that foreign student enrollment, per se, is bad. However, since most foreign students return to their own countries, their numbers should not be combined with the Asian/Pacific Islander population numbers.

Not only is the success story false, but it carries with it many negative consequences. Because of this myth that Asians are "overrepresented," highly qualified Asian/Pacific Islanders are now locked out of institutions of higher learning, like at UCB. When Pilipinos were dropped from Affirmative Action in 1987, the Pilipino first-year enrollment at UCLA dropped 40%. Because we lack the status of "minori-

ties," our communities are refused adequate funding for courses, professors and programs. Many go through their "education" without really learning about themselves or their communities.

The majority of Asian/Pacific Islander students, however, are in community colleges. Here the situation is even worse. Less than one-third the amount spent for a UC student is spent on a student at a community college. Community

colleges were meant to help students from disadvantaged families eventually raise themselves to state or UC colleges. Instead, they are blocking them out of education altogether. Out of 121,985 Asian/Pacific Islander students in the community colleges, only 3,470 transferred to CSUs

and only 762 transferred to the UCs within a given year. For the majority of Asian/Pacific Islander students who are not able to get to the better universities, they must suffer through library hours that are only from 9-5 on weekdays (too bad if you have a day job), re-used chemicals in labs that can't afford new ones, and alienating campus environments.

But let's go a few generations further into the future. By the year 2000, Asian/Pacific Islanders will constitute 13% percent of California's population. A large percentage of these will be immigrants with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). Currently, 35% of Asians in K-12 are

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Limited English Proficient (LEP); however, there are only 353 bilingual Asian Pacific Islander language teachers in 1987 for all of California. This results in an outrageous ratio of 351 LEP Asian/Pacific Islander students to one bilingual Asian/Pacific Islander teacher. How can these children learn? Is it fair to punish them because English is not their first language? To make matters worse, Proposition 63 and the general anti-bilingual education atmosphere in the state has meant an overall attack on bilingual programs, between 85-87 there was an 8% decrease in Asian Pacific Islander (AP) language teachers while the A/P LEP student population increased 24%. In Berkeley schools, a dangerous court precedent removes the necessity of speaking a foreign language in order to be a bilingual teacher. Drop out rates for Pilipinos and South East Asians are, like Blacks and Chicanos, over 50%. It is ridiculous to say that these students are dropping out because they are not trying hard enough or that they don't want a better life. They are pushed out by a public school system that is failing them.

Education is important to us and our families. It gives us the opportunity to learn, broaden horizons, get a chance to better our lives and those of our families. These are the dreams that Asian/Pacific Islander children bring with them when they first enter the educational system in

K-12. But the sad reality is that by the time their generation graduates from the four-year universities, the vast majority of them would have already been pushed out.

We believe that education is a right, not a privilege. We believe that it is the mark of a just and democratic society to educate its members. We do not believe it is right that only the elite and those with all the advantages to start with are the only ones who benefit from the educational system.

We also believe that we do not have to accept this crisis in education. We **can** change things. We **must** change things. Those of us who are fortunate enough to be in college have a responsibility to ourselves, to our younger brothers and sisters and to our communities to work for a more equal and democratic educational system, not just for Asian and Pacific Islanders, but for everyone. Because when we fight for equality, everyone benefits.

For eleven years, APSU has stood for this. Over the past several years, together with MEChA and ABSSA we have had a tremendous impact on educational policy in the state. This Spring, we will continue this work. We are now in the position to translate our concerns into state law.

ON TO SACRAMENTO ON APRIL 10TH!

APSU '89

MOVING AHEAD WITH OUR DIVERSITY

the Asian/Pacific Islander Student Union's 11th annual conference

University of California at Santa Cruz

April 22, 1989

Conference to include: • an Educational Rights Session! • a Redress & Reparations Victory Celebration! • a Cultural Night and workshops on the History of Pilipino farm workers and immigration • the Vietnamese Community • Chinatown Sweatshops • the Redress & Reparations issue • the Korean Community • Asian/Pacific Islander Community and Youth • Ethnic Studies • Pilipino Affirmative Action • Building Asian/Pacific Islander Student Organizations and Careers after College • Asian American Art and Culture

For more information call one of the Statewide Coordinating Committee members.

An Immigrant's Vision

by *Phuong Le*

Before coming to America, I had heard a lot about it—its beautiful land, its opportunity to be the best that you can be, and its wonderful educational opportunities. In coming over, I looked forward to the opportunity to achieve.

For the first few years, I tried to master the English language and did everything to fit into the social mold of the society. I was quite naive and wanted so badly to be accepted by my peers and by the society. Even when people mimicked me and my accent, I thought they were being kind by pointing out to me that those words were incorrectly said. I loved it when people invited me to parties because I thought that they considered me their friend, not realizing that I was the object of their fun. One of them told me that they had more fun with me because they could mimic me or make "Oriental" jokes just to get a good laugh out of it.

In school, I tried my hardest to be an A-student. Because I couldn't articulate well, I was put into classes well below my level. This went on for a couple of years until I asked my counselor why I was put into the regular classes. Since I didn't speak up in class, the teacher assumed I

didn't understand the subject - he recommended I stay back while others went ahead to a higher class level. I had to actually ask to be tested for qualification, and I passed.

The same thing happened in college. I have business professors who told me, "If you can't write and speak proper English, I advise you to take another class, preferably English, before taking this one. And, if you want to take this class, you'll have to actively participate in the discussions and to write coherently." I also have some professors that talk so fast that I can't understand them, let alone take notes. Have you ever tried to take notes in another language (that you are not fluent in) while the professors talked rapidly? Trust me. It can't be done. Or have you ever tried to take a class in which the teacher refuses to go by the book? How do you expect to do well in class? On top of that, there is little or no tutorial services where you can get help in basic skills, especially on campuses like mine.

I tried hard to fit in but could never do so. I kept thinking to myself that there must be something wrong with me. Why can't I be just like any other student, who is smart, likeable, and popular? What is wrong with me? I used to get so upset at myself for not being able to achieve academically and socially because I always thought that it

was up to me to take advantage of education opportunities. Then I checked out Asian American Studies classes. This is when I learned about the history of Asians in the United States, about the contribution that Asians have made to society, and about our rich heritage here in the United States. This is where I learned that I wasn't to blame for not achieving. I used to think that this is not my country, and that I should be thankful that I'm here. I shouldn't go around and start demanding for or changing things but should be happy with what I have. But, Asian American Studies classes have helped me to understand that, as an immigrant, we too can make contributions to this country and that I don't have to accept things the way they are.

And that 80 years ago when the first Chinese immigrant came over as "coolies" they themselves didn't know that they were making contributions. Yet, in reality, they helped build the foundation of this society, from constructing the railroad to reclaiming the swamp land in the Delta.

Therefore, I feel that I don't have to accept things the way they are.

There is a major problem with the educational system. When the whole educational environment has not motivated a student to learn but has actually discouraged that person, there is a problem. When I work hard to support myself in college and at the same time have to deal with racist professors and a language that is not my own, there is a problem.

Educational institutions exist to help educate people, to train people to serve society, and to build up people's confidence and awareness. Just because I'm an immigrant doesn't mean that I'm different. Just because I can't speak fluent English or articulate myself perfectly doesn't mean that I'm stupid or that I have to accept things the way they are. I have as much right as anybody for a better education.

Ex-president Ronald Reagan has said that the United States is a competitive country and that its citizens have to be so. Well, I want to do it, to learn, to achieve, to serve, and to be a better citizen, but I can't do it when there is no bilingual education, no tutorial services, no funding, and no Asian American Studies.

In conclusion, I may not be able to articulate my views perfectly, hold a banner, or scream in a rally, but as an Asian, whether immigrant or American-born, I feel that we do need to come together to voice our opinions and to demand our basic rights.

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