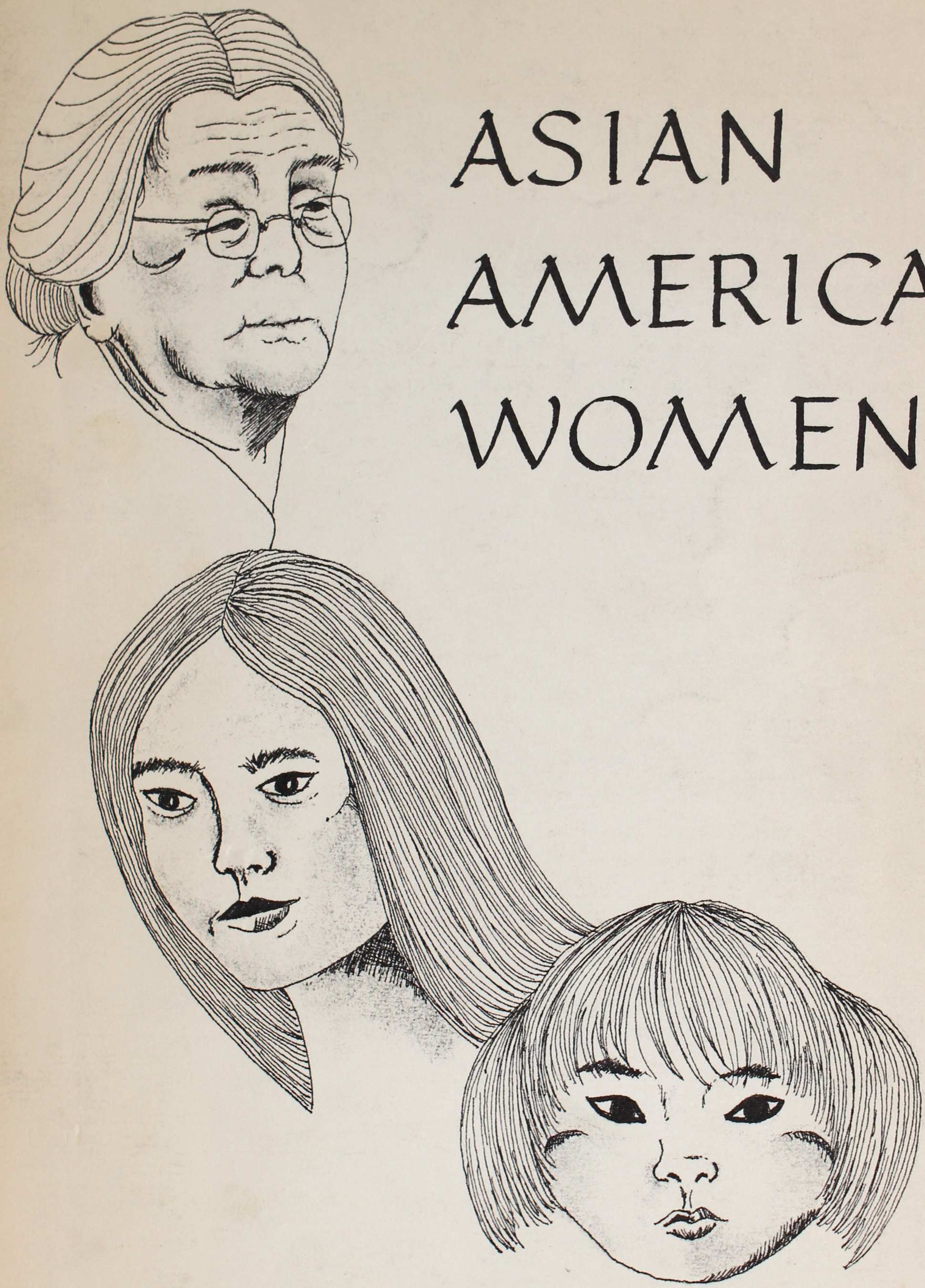
ASIAN AMERICAN WOMEN



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WOMEN

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a journal published at Stanford University, May 1976

STAFF

Verna Abe
Bruce Chan
Julie Hatta
Claire Koga
Leigh-Ann Miyasato
Dorothy Munehiro
Charlene Shimada

GRAPHICS

Marsha Fong
Charlene Shimada

PHOTOGRAPHY

Sandy Doo
Geoffrey Fong
Michael Tim
Jocelyn Wong

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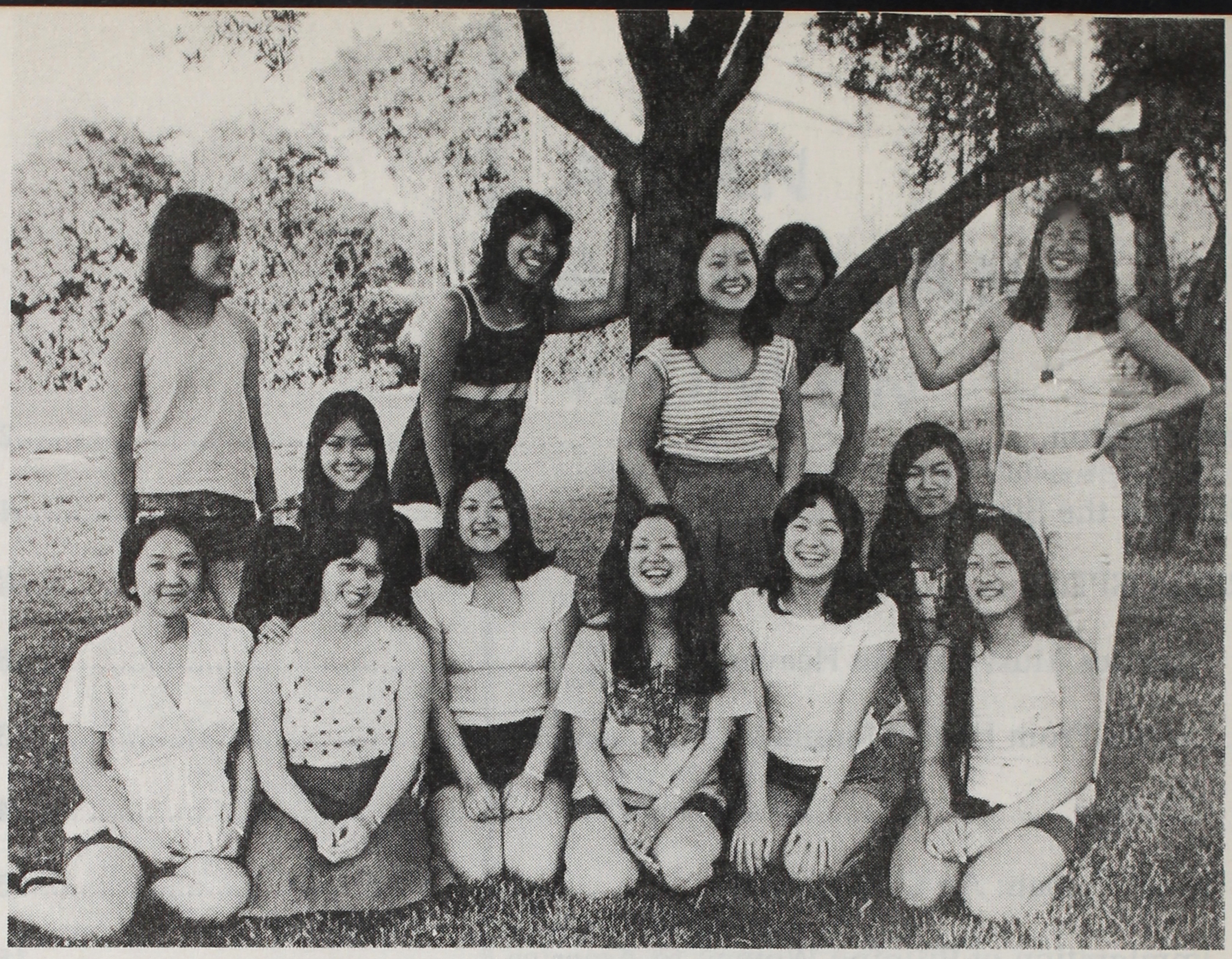
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INTRODUCTION

Why a journal on Asian American women?

I have my own selfish reasons for wanting to publish a journal on Asian American women. I am a senior at Stanford University; before leaving here, I wanted to complete a written project on a topic of significance to me. I felt my own confusion about my knowledge and beliefs about my culture, about feminism and how it relates to me as a woman of color, and about economic and political analyses of American society from an Asian American perspective; I knew that I would learn a great deal from working on an Asian American women's journal. And I felt the support of my Asian American

sisters, who said that yes, they wished there were a new collection of writings on Asian American women and that yes, they would help publish one.

We knew that there were remarkable Asian American women, and important topics having to do with Asian American women, that were being neglected in the mass media and even in the Asian American press. We knew that there were talented Asian American women writers who were not being published. One of our goals in publishing Asian American Women is to move toward correcting these problems: the lack of writing about us as a group and as individuals, and the scarcity of published Asian American women writers. In the process of working on this journal we have discovered much about ourselves and our sisters. We are proud to have discovered that we can write well, edit, and learn how to do layouts from scratch; we are proud to have discovered the strength and beauty of the Asian American women of whom we have written. We want to share our knowledge and our pride with you.

Leigh-Ann Miyasato
for the staff of Asian American Women

Stats on the Sisters

by Verna Abe

In seeking to raise one's own consciousness of being an Asian American woman, it is valuable to know the status of the Asian American woman in today's society. From a 1974 Department of Health, Education and Welfare study of socio-economic characteristics of ethnic minorities based on data from the 1970 Census, some major highlights have been abstracted and summarized in an effort to present relevant information on Asian American women. The facts presented have been selectively extracted from the study, and for complete information, the reader should refer to the source itself: **A Study of Selected Socio-Economic Characteristics of Ethnic Minorities Based on the 1970 Census, Volume II: Asian Americans**, Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Office of Special Concerns, HEW Publication No. (OS) 75-121 (available from the U.S. Government Printing Office).

Population Characteristics

—The Asian female populations in this country are growing at a faster rate than the Asian male populations. In the two most recent census years Japanese women outnumbered Japanese men, comprising 52% of the total Japanese population in 1960, then increasing to 54% in 1970. Several reasons are involved: the high number of "war brides" brought to this country by American servicemen since WW II, the higher percentage of female immigrants and the fact that women tend to outlive men. Although males still outnumber females in the Chinese and Pilipino populations, there is a predominance of women immigrants, such that the gap between numbers of men and women is rapidly closing.

—It seems that Asian Americans are having fewer children than in 1960. In the Japanese American population this may be due to the lower birth rate of the Sansei (third generation) as well as a relatively high intermarriage rate, particularly between Japanese women and non-Japanese men. When the race of an individual is in question, the Census assigns that person the race of his or her father. Therefore, children resulting from these intermarriages may no longer be enumerated racially as Japanese. In 1960, children under 9 years of age were about 23% of the total population in the three subgroups. By 1970, the percentages had diminished to 22% among Pilipinos, 17% among Chinese and 15% among Japanese.

—The median ages of Asian American women are as follows:

34.3 Japanese
25.8 Chinese
24.5 Pilipinos
29.3 U.S. as a whole

The high median age for Japanese women is due to the high percentage of women who fall into the "war bride" category (ages 35-54), combined with a lower Japanese birth rate.

Family Characteristics

—Since 1960 there has been an increase in families headed by Asian American women. The rate of female-headed families went up 1% among the Chinese (6% to 7%), 2% among the Japanese (8% to 10%), and 4% among the Pilipinos (5% to 9%). The U.S. average for this category is 11%.

—Almost 90% of all Chinese families remain in the husband-wife mode, reflecting a remarkable stability as far as lack of divorce is concerned. The percentage of female-headed families (7%) is the lowest of any ethnic subgroup.

Interracial Marriage

—One-third of all married Japanese women have married non-Japanese men. However, the rate of marriage within their own ethnic group is higher in Hawaii (85%) and California (71%) than in the rest of the U.S. (42%).

—The rate of interracial marriages for Japanese women decreases in the age group 45 years and over to 16%, as compared to 43% for ages 25-44 and 46% for ages 16-24, many of these younger women being wives of American servicemen.

—Statistics for Japanese, Chinese and Pilipino groups show that there is an increase in mixed marriages among younger persons.

—For all age groups there is a higher percentage of Japanese women involved in mixed marriages than there are men.

—There is a higher rate of interracial marriage among Chinese in Hawaii (30%) than in California (10%) or New York (6%). In Hawaii this tendency is especially marked in the age 16-24 group, with a rate of 61% interracial marriages.

—The rate of interracial marriages involving Pilipinos is quite high with 33% of the male and 28% of the female population married to non-Pilipinos. Among the men, Pilipinos have the highest rate of intermarriage for any Asian group. Among the women, the rate is second highest (Japanese women have the highest percentage).

—Young Pilipinos (16-24) have the highest rate of mixed marriages (50%) in the group. The percentage for Pilipino men over 45 is also quite high (37%), probably a consequence of there being few Pilipino women in the U.S. until recently.

—Of those Asian women involved in mixed marriages, the majority are married to whites; Japanese women have the highest percentage of intermarriage with whites (81%), followed by Chinese women (59%), then Pilipino women (54%).

Primary Individuals

—In the three major Asian American populations, the proportion of heads of households who live alone as primary individuals is about the same as the national ratio. However, two-thirds of all

elderly Japanese primary individuals are women, due to large numbers of women who have outlived their husbands. For Chinese and Pilipino groups, this ratio is reversed because of the relatively small numbers of women present in the country until recently.

—In Hawaii, the ratio of males to females in the Chinese primary individual population is nearly equal. In contrast, San Francisco's male to female ratio is almost two to one and New York's, almost three to one. These unbalanced ratios are largely due to earlier immigration barriers against wives.

Family Size

—The average family size for whites is smaller (3.5 persons) compared to that for Japanese (3.7), Chinese (4.0) and Pilipino (4.2) families. This may be due to the greater percentage of extended family relationships (presence of adult relatives in the household) among these populations.

Educational Characteristics

(Data for Japanese and Chinese groups refers to second generation only.)

—The median level of educational attainment for Japanese American women is 12.4 years as compared to 12.6 for Japanese American men. For Chinese American men and women, the median years are equal at 12.7. The median level for the U.S. is 12.1 for both males and females.

—In the Pilipino population (in which statistics were not broken down between Pilipino American and foreign born), females had a higher median level, of education (12.6 years) than males (11.9).

—Fewer Japanese females (11%) have graduated from college than Japanese males (19%). Chinese women also lag behind the men in this area with 17% as compared to 25% for Chinese men. However, Pilipino women pull way ahead with 27% having completed 4 or more years of college and only 15% Pilipino males having done the same. These percentages may be compared to U.S. totals of 13% for males and 8% for females. The high percentage of Pilipino women completing college is due to the large number of female immigrants who are highly educated professionals and who greatly outnumber the few elderly, less educated women in the Pilipino population.

—Only 9% of Japanese American females in Hawaii have completed 4 or more years of college as compared to 11% in California. For males, too, the Hawaii figure is lower (11%) than California's (20%).

Employment

—Since the 1960 Census, more Asian women are now in the work force. Only 36% of Pilipino women were employed in 1960, and by 1970, at a 55% level, their participation rate is the highest nationally for any group of women. Likewise, the number of Chinese and Japanese women in the work force increased from 44% to 50% from 1960 to 1970. The change in statistics from 1960 to 1970 for working wives are even more dramatic: Pilipino working wives increased from 9% to 46%, Japanese, from 12% to 51%, and Chinese, from 13% to 48%.

—The unemployment rate for Pilipino women (5%) is almost equal to the national average for women (5%). Unemployment rates for Japanese and Chinese women (3% and 4% respectively) are lower than the U.S. average (5%).

—Of all employed Japanese women, 41% are clerical or sales workers, 21% are in more menial service occupations, and 20% are in professional and managerial occupations. However, outside of Hawaii and California, two out of every five female workers are operatives and service workers. Among foreign-born Japanese women, 64% are craftswomen, operatives and service workers, 19% are clerical and sales workers and only 13% are professionals and administrators.

—Over one-third of all Chinese women (37%) are sales and clerical workers. American-born Chinese women comprise most of these workers, however, with 51% of Chinese American women employed in these occupations.

—Nearly one-fourth of all Chinese women (23%) work as semi-skilled operatives. The majority of these women are recent immigrants who are prevented from entering more lucrative positions because of a language barrier.

—Another 23% of Chinese women are employed in professional and managerial occupations, above the U.S. norm of 19% but well below the percentage for Chinese males (40%).

—In Hawaii, over one-third (34%) of all Pilipino women work in service occupations, while another 33% are in sales and clerical work. However, only 8% of the women in Hawaii are in professional occupations as compared to a high 34% for Pilipino women in the U.S. as a whole.

—In California, 42% of Pilipino women are in clerical and sales jobs, 20% are in professional occupations and 19% are service workers.

—Outside of Hawaii and California, 55% of all Pilipino women are in professional occupations and 22% are in clerical. Most of the Pilipino women in professional occupations have immigrated recently.

—In the U.S. as a whole there are 1.0 women in "higher status" occupations for every woman who has completed at least four years of college. However, for Japanese women, the ratio drops to 0.9, and for Chinese and Pilipino women, to 0.7.

Income Characteristics

—Among all employed Japanese women, 58% are earning less than $4,000 per year. Although less than the average rate for all women (68%), it is a higher rate for low earnings than any for males of any ethnic group.

—5% of all employed Japanese women earn $10,000 or more, above the U.S. norm for women (3%) but way behind the norm for the male population (24%).

—The median family income for Japanese families is $12,515, almost $3,000 higher than the average for the U.S. ($9,590), possibly due to the fact that most Japanese households have more than one wage earner.

—The median family income for Japanese female-headed families is $6,467 compared to the U.S. norm for female-headed families, $4,962.

—65% of all employed Chinese women earn less than $4,000. 5% are earning $10,000 or more, but again, this percentage falls way below that for men in any ethnic group.

—The median family income for the Chinese group is $10,610, with 60% of these families having more than one wage earner. For female-headed families, the median income is $6,627.

—Of all Pilipino women, 56% earn less than $4,000, and again, only 5% make over $10,000. The median family income for Pilipinos is $9,318. However, the female-headed families are much worse off with a median income of $4,708, and 46% of these families are surviving on less than $4,000.


WASHINGTON



RETROSPECT

The study of the history of Asian American women is just beginning. The writings in this section are a contribution to that study. They are not traditional textbook writings, however; a common theme expressed is the intense, personal nature of the experiences of Asian American women.

Jovina Navarro's research paper, Immigration of Pilipino Women to America, describes immigration patterns and the reasons for them without neglecting the actual feelings and experiences of Pilipino immigrants in America.

America Must Be Like Heaven, by Charlene Shimada, is the story of a Pilipina who immigrated to America 29 years ago. Penny Geneviano is the cleaning woman in the Asian American theme house at Stanford. Few of us knew of her life in the Philippines or of the hardships she has faced in this country.

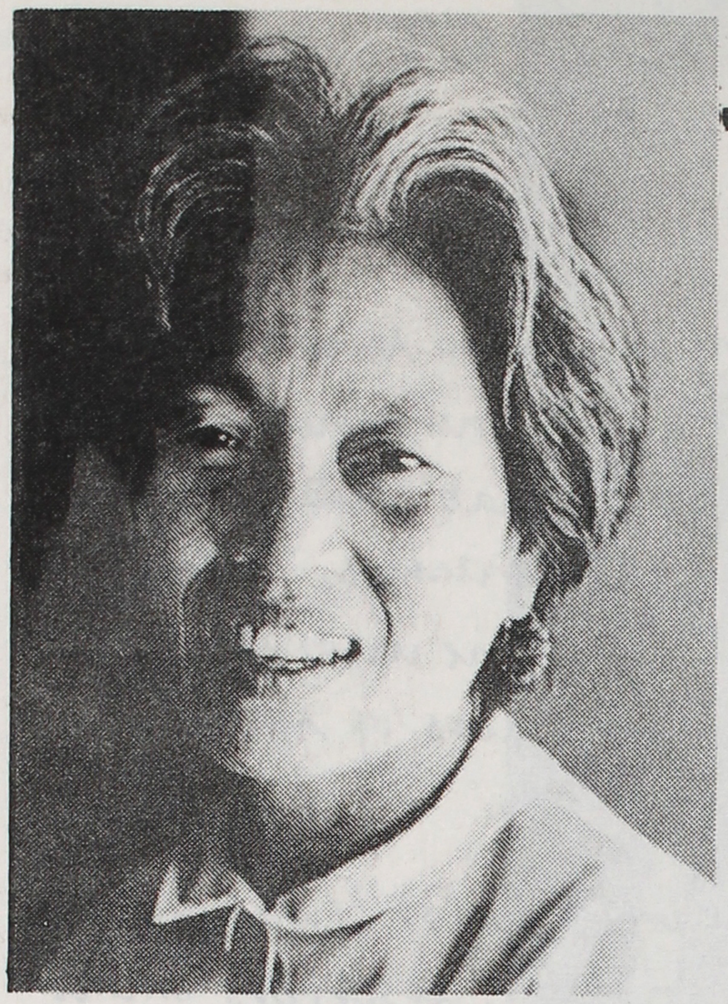


Issei Woman: An Oral History, by Claire Koga, is another personal story of the experiences of an immigrant woman.

Dorothy Muneniro and Lynn Wakatsuki's Letters From Heart Mountain describes hardships of a Japanese American woman in a concentration camp.

Julie Hatta's portrait of her oba-chan is a gentle reminder of the gap between us and our grandparents.

The poems of Rowena Wildin and Grace Morizawa both look at the past from the perspective of an Asian American woman.



America Must Be Like Heaven

Eufemia "Penny" Genetiano is a Pilipina who came to this country 29 years ago. She has been employed at Stanford University as a cleaning woman for the past 16 years. The following is Penny's own story of her experiences as an Asian American woman, wife, mother, and grandmother.

by Charlene Shimada

Life in the Philippines

I came from Luzon, from Zambales. In our family, there were nine children but two passed away. I am the third child — two older brothers and I.

I remember many things about my early life in the Philippines. I remember my brother and I walking a long distance to pick up my father's paycheck because my Mama had to take care of the baby. I remember going to the salt lake to gather crabs and long snails, and going to the river with my mother to pick mangos.

Our family moved to Ibar and there I started school. I was nine years old and the biggest in the class. The teacher made me take care of the other little children — I even gave them baths during school when they were dirty.

In the second grade, I had a classmate whose father was in the U.S. Navy and he brought home cookies for her to bring to school. While eating them, she would show the cookies to the rest of us but she never would share any. One day we were taking a test and she ran out of paper. She begged my friend to give her some paper but my poor friend only had enough for herself. Then this girl began to hurt my friend because my friend was too scared to fight back. But I wasn't afraid. I picked the girl up by her feet and hung her upside-down — it wasn't very hard for me to do because I was standing on a high cabinet. I didn't hurt her, just hung her by her feet. Since then she didn't ask us for anything.

I had to stop school because my mother had a miscarriage and we had to borrow money. We didn't have money to pay back so I was sent to work. I worked as a live-in maid — I was about twelve years old. The lady of the house in which I worked was mean. One day she told me to watch the baby while she went to the market. While she went down the street, the baby turned over and knocked his head on the floor. When she came back, she accused me of dropping the baby and began hitting me and pinching me. I said that I didn't pick him up, that he turned over himself, but she didn't believe me. She called me "liar," I remember.

While I was working there, I couldn't go home — it was far away in a different town. Then this family took a trip to Ibar and took me with them. Oh, I'm glad because I missed my Mama. We arrived there and I hurriedly finished my job and ran home. I said, "I don't want to go back." My mother said to go back. I told my Mama that the woman had been pinching me. So when the lady came to pick me up, my Mama told her that I didn't want to go back because the woman had been pinching me. Then this lady called me a liar. I went back with this family anyway and when we arrived at their house, the woman pushed me behind the door and pinched me all over. Finally I decided to quit. They had to find another lady to take my place because I had been doing everything. They wanted me to stay with them and said that they would put me through school. But I couldn't forget. I wouldn't stay with them any longer.

I went home and my mother was still sick. She needed rest but my brothers and

sisters and I were all young and we didn't realize that we were making noise. My Mama had only the bamboo floor to sleep on. So she went to Candalaria to stay with her family. I stayed home and watched my brothers and sisters.

When I was in Ibar I got into a fight with another youth — he was crazy. He pulled up my skirt. What I did was I tore off his shirt. He went home to his mother and when his mother saw the torn shirt she came to our house to tell my father. My father got a big stick and whipped me and and whipped me. People passing on the street were watching me, but I didn't cry. I don't know why — I couldn't cry because I knew I had the right to fight that guy.

To earn money I followed the political candidates. They hired me to babysit and bought me shoes in return. Oh I was glad — these were the first shoes I ever had! I was about ten years old.

Our family went to Candalaria. This time my mother was really sick and I stayed with her wherever she went. My mother passed away. My sisters and brothers went home to Ibar with my father but I stayed with my aunt. Just me, because I felt bad that my Mama had passed away — I missed my Mama. Wherever my aunty, who looked like my mother, went I followed her. We went to the hills to dig potatoes; we picked blackberries and guavas.

The War Years

When the war started, I was living with my aunt but I soon went back home to Ibar. One day at market, a Japanese soldier who guarded the town stopped me and ordered me to come closer to him and salute. I didn't know how to salute — I had just come from the mountains and I didn't know how to salute. The other people around me said to salute by bowing so I saluted with a bow — three times! I was scared — the soldier had a gun. After I finally saluted he said, "Go!" The people watching me thought he was going to kill me — after all, you know, it's war.

The Japanese let me and a friend of mine wash their clothes. You couldn't refuse, so we washed the clothes. They gave us shoes in return. And what kind of shoes? Big kind. But we took it anyway because if you refuse they're going to cut your neck. The Japanese soldiers came to our house and took our chickens — anything they wanted they could take.

I went to Bulacan. This time I decided to live there with my brother because my Daddy wouldn't give me any money. So I worked in Manila — Bulacan is close to Manila. I worked with a friend in the Japanese soldiers camp cleaning ammunition — big bullets. We sat down with the bullets between our knees and cleaned them. They treated us like soldiers. A Japanese soldier searched us every time we came back to or left the camp. The Japanese caught a man who had taken a piece of jeans cloth to mend a hole in his pants. He was forced to stand in front of the camp people. The Japanese wanted us to watch him being punished — they wanted us to see how they punished those who took things. They begin hitting him with a shovel. That's why I quit — I couldn't stand it. I'd never go back again.

I worked cutting grass on the air field but I didn't like that job. Then, I worked with a friend putting carbon in the wagon train — that was a man's job but we had to do it. We needed money.

Then I got another live-in maid job. This one was a nice job — with a Spanish family. They were wealthy — they were rich like Americans were. I used to think all Americans were wealthy. My job was washing clothes.

"Boy, these white people bruise easily huh?"

The family had a daughter who was always trying to tease me. One afternoon in that house the bosses went to work. Their daughter saw me crawling on the ground while I was pulling weeds in the garden. She said, "I'd like to ride on your back." And I said, "No, you don't ride on my back — you are heavy." She pushed me: "Come on, I like ride on your back." Finally, I didn't like it and stood up. She pulled my long hair. She got a stick from the coconut tree and began whipping me because I wouldn't give her a ride on my back. She yelled, "Horse! Horse! Horse!" I told her, "Don't whip me or I'm going to whip you!" She kept on whipping me so I got a stick. "Do you want to feel how I feel?" I asked her. Then I hit her on her leg and it began to bleed. She got bad bruises but me, I didn't have big bruises because I'm brown. Boy, these white people bruise easily huh? I didn't realize that! Oh she cried. Her father didn't want her to play with us or come close to us.

The Japanese burned the house where I worked. While they were burning it, we lay down in the garage to protect ourselves from the American bombs. A bomb fell near us and shrapnel flew and hit me on my neck. The Americans took it out when they arrived.

We decided not to go back to work in that family — me and the cook. What we did to earn money was to wash the clothes of American soldiers. They paid us silver dollars — we made two dollars and used that to buy some vegetables and fruits at the market to bring to another market to sell.

Meeting Her Husband

Every morning we had to walk to market, and that's when my husband, Marcos, saw me. One morning, Marcos followed my friend and I to market and after that day he started looking for me.

Marcos was born in the Philippines, but he emigrated to America. He came back to the Philippines as an American soldier during the war.

One day Marcos' friend saw me washing clothes.

"Oh, here you are Penny. Marcos wanted me to look for you," he said.

I told him, "Why?"

"Because Marcos wants to see you — he likes you."

I said, "No."

He said, "I'll go home and tell him."

I told him: "Don't go and tell him. We don't live here."

"Where do you live?"

"We live far away from here. I just come and wash clothes."

But he went home anyway and told Marcos. Marcos came back with him. I was ashamed because my clothes were home-made — my dress was too short and



my knees were showing. I was sitting down washing; I didn't want Marcos to see my knees.

I was embarrassed so I told them: "Go home, you go home because I'm washing clothes. It's all right for you because you don't have to earn money, but I have to work."

But that wasn't the real reason. The real reason I drove them away was because I was embarrassed — I was ashamed of myself.

My friend and I started a little store — we sold fruits, and cookies, pudding, and cupcakes that we made. Many of the American soldiers came to our store. We made a little money, enough to live on. My husband kept on coming every day, every day, and asked me if I liked him. But I told him, "No, I cannot like you, I cannot love you, I cannot marry you because I am poor." I was ashamed of myself because I was very poor.

I thought my husband was rich because he came from America so I kept telling him, "I cannot accept you — it's not fair; I am very poor." It wasn't fair. Americans should marry pretty women that could be brought to America. When I saw American ladies they were so beautiful — they're so white. Everytime I saw an Americana I watched until they went because they're so pretty. We all respected them. Whatever they wanted, if we could give we'd give.

"When I saw American ladies they were so beautiful — they're so white."

One night Marcos stayed late and we were alone in the store. He kissed me on the forehead and kissed me on my cheeks. Oh, I felt bad. This was the first time I'd been kissed; I wasn't used to being kissed. I couldn't sleep — I lay down and kept thinking. Finally Marcos came early in the morning — at five o'clock. I hadn't even gotten up yet.

"Why did you come?" I asked him.

"Because I couldn't sleep."

"Why did you kiss me?" I asked him.

"Because I like you. I'm not going to kiss a woman if I didn't like her for I don't want a woman to fall in love with me if I don't love her. So I kiss the woman that I like."

That's when I began to like him. I like him in the first place but I was ashamed of myself. I said, "If you really like me, it's up to you."

Finally, my husband applied for marriage. An army officer came to the house



and asked me questions like why I like Marcos. I didn't answer because I was scared. They let me sign some papers. I signed the papers and they were given to Marcos to be sent to Washington, D.C. Marcos told me: "You keep these papers — we are married already. You signed the papers, keep them as a receipt. I'll come back and sleep here tonight."

So I kept the papers. I thought he was telling me the truth. That night he came to the house. Flore, my friend living with me didn't understand anything either because she didn't go to school at all — not even first grade. Poor me, I'm in love so I didn't say anything. That was the first day that I slept together with my husband.

The papers weren't sent to Washington, D.C.; I kept them. It wasn't long before I got pregnant. Marcos was worried too. He asked me, "Where are those papers I told you to hide?" I told him that I had kept it.

"Give it to me and I'm going to send it to Washington, D.C. so that we can get married," he said.

"What? You're bluffing me!" I said. I was shocked.

I gave it to him and later it was approved. He had told me that the paper was a marriage certificate in the service and that's why I signed. But no, I then understood that it was just an application form.

See what kind of life I had? That's why it's not good without an education for a woman or a man. I didn't understand — I kept the papers. I was lucky that my husband is an honest man, that he asked me for the papers and sent them to Washington. We went to City Hall to get married — it cost only 25 pesos. We didn't

"In 21 years of marriage I wanted a wedding ring. My husband hasn't remembered, but that's all right because we love each other very much. We have our children."

have a wedding party. See how cheap it was to get married? And where is the wedding ring? There is no wedding ring. That's why even today I don't have a ring. In 21 years of marriage I wanted a wedding ring. My husband hasn't remembered, but that's all right because we love each other very much. We have our children.

Going to America

I had a baby girl. My husband had to go back to the States so he left me with his brother. I had problems with my brother-in-law and my husband's nephew. My husband was sending me an allotment of money but my brother-in-law wouldn't give any of it to me — he was so stingy. They drove my baby and I away. I got very sick — I couldn't even walk and had to crawl to my baby when she needed me. I wrote to my husband to come home. Then my baby got sick and died. My husband came back to the Philippines — the baby was gone; he hadn't even seen her. Then my husband got sick, so very sick that he thought of going back to America. As soon as he got better we decided to come to America.

When I was on my way to America I didn't know what America would be like. I thought, America must be like heaven. I thought that there is no dust, no grass, no trees, no more working in America. I think that everything will be beautiful — I wouldn't have to wash clothes any more; I wouldn't even have to cook. It was too much imagination.

Pictures of America and the sound of the name "America" made me think of America in this way. I thought life was going to be easy — no more working, no more hard living. What would I do? I would have nothing to do — it would be glorious! It's heaven! Everyone else thought like I did — those that hadn't yet arrived in America. We didn't find out what America was like until we arrived here.

I came to America in an army transport together with my husband and a group of war brides from the Philippines. We stopped off in Guam and then on our way to America our ship was hit by a typhoon. We all got dizzy and sick.

Our first view of America was the Golden Gate Bridge. It was night and we all went up on deck to see the beautiful bridge. We had arrived in America. It was October 20, 1947.

Life in the States

Our first home was in Webster. We

rented a flat with a black family but I did not get along with the woman in that family. I had Basilio, my second baby, on January 29, 1948. We had moved to a housing project in Hunter's Point. While living there I spent most of my time inside the house because I couldn't speak English very well. My next-door neighbors would take my baby downstairs — so that when I went to get him, I would have to talk to them in English. They would hold on to my baby until I talked English to them. I told them I couldn't speak English and they told me that I wouldn't learn if I didn't try. I tried my best because they were holding my baby. I really tried to talk but they couldn't understand me.

My next child, Segundino, was born in November of the same year. I walked or took the bus when my children had to go to the doctor for checkups or when they were sick.

We finally bought a second-hand car — a 1927 Pontiac coupe. I liked it very much, so much so that even in the middle of the night I would go check to see if it was still parked outside. Then I gave birth to Rudolfo, my next child. He was a sensitive baby and used to get a rash on his face and arms and legs.

We would take all the children to Golden Gate Park. Then we got a bigger car, a 1953 Plymouth, so that we could all go on outings together. Three families rode in that car to go to the beach and the Sacramento State Fair once.

Once we were invited to a wedding party in Sacramento. When we arrived there, we sat around a table and the waitress gave me something to drink. I thought that it was 7-Up so I drank it like 7-Up. The waitress kept on pouring and I kept on drinking. Finally, I felt funny so I asked my husband why I felt light. My husband said that it was because I was drinking my drink like water. "You are not supposed to drink that like water — you're supposed to drink it little by little so that you don't get drunk," he told me. He said that I was drunk. "Why didn't you stop me?" I asked him. I was embarrassed — this was the first time that I had had champagne.



"What's the use of being pretty if it's not paid for?"

I told my husband that from now on I wanted him to take me out so that I would learn these things, but my husband hasn't taken me out much. Sometimes though, we go to dances.

I remember I cried one Christmas because my husband bought me some beautiful clothes. I didn't want him to buy me beautiful clothes when we couldn't afford them. What's the use being pretty if it's not paid for?

I had my fourth baby at Stanford Hospital. When I was there I watched the hospital maid and thought to myself, "I wish I had a job like that."

My baby Segundino got sick one day. After the family had gone to bed one night, Segundino yelled "Cockroach!" and pointed to the ceiling. I didn't see any cockroach so I turned off the light. He yelled it again. He kept acting funny and suddenly became stiff. I called my next door neighbor. She picked him up and put him under the faucet and ran cold water over him until he began to breathe again. We took him to the hospital and the doctor examined him. He said that my baby was all right now and to take him home. We took him home and a few hours later the same thing happened. We had to take him back to the hospital. This time he stayed for observation. I was so scared.

Taking care of all my children was not easy. I had a wringer washing machine and once, while I was hanging clothes, Ruperto climbed on a chair and touched the wringer. His hand went through the wringer but I didn't hear his cries because I was outside. When I saw him it was too late — his arm had gone all the way through. I had to take him to the hospital and the doctors kept him there for a week.

Then we moved again to another apartment that was close to the store and the school because Basilio started going to school. We didn't stay there long because our apartment was upstairs and Basilio fell through the window while playing one day. During this time, Rudy



was put in a convalescent home in Palo Alto and we visited him every week.

Then we decided to buy a house in East Palo Alto. When we moved into East Palo Alto, it was a beautiful place with many white people living there. Now all the white people are moving out; even Pilipinos are very few now in East Palo Alto. It was easy to buy the house because it was at closing cost. This was in October 1956, and my children were attending school in East Palo Alto. That's when I thought of going to work.

A Working Woman

I worked in private houses for a few hours each week. It was nearby so I was happy because my husband wouldn't take me to work. He didn't want me to work but I went anyway.

We needed more money so I worked as a cleaning woman at the Coronet Motel on El Camino. They let us work fast and when we finished in three hours, that's all the pay we got. I quit and began work in a nursery in Podista and worked there for almost a year. While working there, I bought myself a bicycle with my first paycheck. Then the boss told me to stay home for a week because another worker had complained that I had more hours

than her. I told the boss that I needed the money and couldn't stay home — if I didn't have money, I would have to find another job. So I did.

Because my husband didn't want me to work, I couldn't ask him to give me a ride when I was looking for a new job. So, when I applied for this Stanford job, I walked from East Palo Alto. The first day, I couldn't find the place. The second day, I walked to Stanford University.

The lady at the employment office asked me, "What kind of job do you want?"

I said that I could only do maid work. She asked me if I had any experience and I told her. After I filled out the applications, she told me, "I'm sorry, there is no opening; I'll call you when there is an opening."

I said that I needed money to buy my son Rudy asthma medicine. My son was very sick.

"But there is no work here now," she said.

So I went home, but the next day I came back.

She said, "Mrs. Genetiano, there's still no opening."

"But I need a job," I said. She was a friendly woman so I felt free to talk to her. I came again a few days later and that day she put me to work in the nurses dorm. So I started there. I tried my best — I worked, worked, and worked.

The next day, the regular maid came down so I was put to work in Moore Hall. Remember when I was in the hospital having my baby and I watched the hospital maid and envied her for her job? Well, when I got the job at Stanford I was so happy. I swept around the buildings, I cleaned the laundry room, the living room, the bathrooms, sometimes students' rooms, I vacuumed. I kept on sweeping around and around — and Moore Hall is big.

But I liked the job. Sometimes I think, "My Daddy in the Philippines is sweeping all day, and here I am sweeping all day." My Dad was working as a street sweeper in the Philippines. My job wasn't that bad — at least it was a job.

"It's nicer to have women in the dorms — it's like home."

Then I came to Wilbur Hall; I started at Rinconada cleaning rooms. One day my boss told me, "Penny, would you pick up a dead cat?" I said, "Yes sir, I'll do that." I thought that it was a little kitty, but when I went into the room, oh boy, it was a big dead cat. The cat was run over by a car; somebody picked it up and stuck it in a drawer. It stunk — it must have been there for a few days. Oh, I thought I would vomit and I held my breath and hurried. It was heavy. It was awful but I had to do it.



This was when Stanford had only male students and there were all boys in Wilbur Hall. Every June the boys used to leave all their trash in their rooms. I'm glad that they don't do that anymore and we don't have to clean rooms for them. Now there are women at Stanford. It's nicer to have women in the dorms — it's like home.

The Genetianos

After he got out of the army, my husband worked as an extra. Then he worked at Mark Hopkins where he used to be a butcher. Now my husband is a cook there.

All of my children finished high school except for Basilio. He played hooky and we finally put him in Glenwood Camp, a boarding school in La Honda. We paid one hundred dollars a month because we wanted him to get an education. But he kept escaping from Glenwood Camp because he missed home. Every time he escaped they put him in juvenile. Finally he was put in the Youth Training School. Then he was sent home but he didn't stay long: he went into the marines. In the marines he got a dishonorable discharge. That's why now he has a hard time finding a job. He said to me, "That's okay, Mama, it's better this way than to go to Vietnam."

Segundino went into the army. My other son, Rudy, is a painter and a drawer — he's good in drafting. He loves his job but the money isn't good. My other son is already married. After he got discharged from the army he got a good job. But his wife told him to go to school so he quit. He got a good wife. He's now using his G.I. Bill to go to school.

So two of my children are married and two are single. I am also a grandmother now too. I have twin grandchildren — they're almost five now.

The Future

I've been working at Stanford for 16 years now. I have 15 more years to work before I can retire — until 1991. I don't know what I'm going to do when I retire. I'll probably stay home and play with my grandchildren. I don't mind working. My husband doesn't even mind so much anymore because the children are grown up. If I stayed home I would get sick. I'm a busy woman, I don't want to just sit around.

You know, I'm glad I came to America — maybe I wouldn't be alive if I was still in the Philippines. I wish I could write — I would write a book. My children always says to me, "Mama, learning English is hard." But I'm convinced that you can do anything you want if you try hard enough.

Letters From Heart Mountain

by Dorothy Munehiro and Lynn Wakatsuki

(This paper was researched at the Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University.)

Mark and Edith Matsumoto were a young Nisei (second generation) couple from Palo Alto. They both worked to pay for their house; Mark worked as a gardener and Edith did housecleaning. At the time of the World War evacuation, Edith was having rheumatic problems and was constantly ill, but she regained her health at the relocation center in Heart Mountain, Wyoming under the care of the government with Mark at her side.

In Heart Mountain, Mark signed a loyalty oath to the United States. This oath made him eligible for military service, but because the status of Japanese Americans was not clear, he protested by refusing to take the physical examination. For this action, he and eleven other men were sent to prison in Fort Leavenworth.

When freed to leave Heart Mountain Relocation Center, Edith and her son moved to Kansas City to await Mark's release after which the family returned to Palo Alto to resume their previous occupations. Mark and Edith kept correspondence throughout the war and after with Alice Hays, Edith's former employer, who worked at Stanford's Hoover Library.

Edith's letters to Alice depict camp life as very routine. She writes, "In camp our life seems same day after days." (3/19/43) The camp had only the bare necessities for existence.

> *About after week we came here we had first snow storm Oh it sure were cold. I was in hospital then and we have steam heat there but it seem that ice were going through my body.* (9/30/42)

The relocated Japanese Americans were allowed to take with them only what they could carry on their persons. They could send for their other belongings, but often this was just too expensive. For many, there was not enough to live with. They had to "make do."

> *Miss Hays I donnot think we will be able to send for our thing because the freight is so expensive so we will try and get along with what we got and make shelf with scrap of box woods or small piece from orange box from mess hall. We have one small room for three of us.* (9/30/42)

The Matsumotos, like many of the Japanese Americans from California, were not prepared for the icy winter wind and snow storms of Heart Mountain. They had not brought with them the necessary warm clothing and did not have the money to purchase new winter clothes. The Japanese Americans were forced to live with what they brought with them or what could be sent to them from friends at "home."

> *Many thanks for offering to help with warm thing clothing we were not prepared to come to coldest country like this so we didn't bring anything for cold weather so my husband ordered a little from Montgomery Wards for little Jackie to wear but if you have any clothing that you don't wanted from last year or before that I would like to have because we won't be able to buy any clothing and I wear size sixteen so I could fixed your over.* (9/30/42)

The inadequate facilities of the camp and the lack of many necessities caused many of Edith's fellow evacuees to become ill during the cold winter months.

> *Everyone was down with it (cold) that mess hall was filled not even half for a while but I learned that most of them are well now. There was sick person in every barrack for a while.* (12/16/43)

Camp life at Heart Mountain was certainly not pleasurable. The situation at Santa Anita assembly center was even worse. Edith writes,

> *The living quarter here (Heart Mountain) is better too because Santa Anita was horse stable with cement floor. Out here the floor is wood and the walls side is celetex.* (11/10/42)

These substandard conditions often frustrated Edith, but mostly they just made her very sad. ". . . sometimes I wonder what sad world this is but I have to be patient about." (8/29/44) She accepted the situation of encampment, adopted an attitude of patience, and never gave up the hope of returning home to Palo Alto.

> *. . . and we are only waiting for the day we win this war and peace restored to this world and go back to California and nice folks like you, if possible.* (6/3/43)

Mark, unlike Edith, was uneager to accept the situation without fighting for change. He fought for the rights he believed the Japanese Americans were entitled to. He refused to report for the physical examination required for military service. He and eleven other men demanded that the status of the Japanese Americans in the United States be defined.

> *. . . if we are Americans and Citizens of this nation by right of birth and constitutional grant, then let it be reiterated and decided once and for all and without equivocation our position as members of the Nation in such wise that future unconstitutional measures need not be visited upon us or any other Minority group to satisfy the lusts of unbridaled ambition, bigotry, discrimination or race hatred.* (5/44)

The twelve men were sent to Fort Leavenworth.

Edith's feelings on Mark's stand were mixed. On the one hand, she tried to understand his position and its validity. In writing to Alice, she defended him.

> *. . . He was one of those 12 evaders they called in sentinels (Heart Mountain Relocation Center Newsletter). Some people in camp say that Editor of Sentinels should go back to school and study his History back again and read what Mr. Lincoln and other great men said and what for they came to this country. Please donnot think Jack as draft evader and misunderstand for he willing to fight for his country and give his life but first he wanted to find out where he stands.* (3/29/44)

On the other hand, she also missed him very much and secretly wished he hadn't stood up for his rights. Edith received notice late in 1944 that she could leave for California; however, she was going to wait for Mark because she felt his cause was worthy.

> *. . . the only reason he (Mark) went to prison and going through hardships for the only right we lost. Well if I write too long, I will be crying again so I shall say good Bye and thank you for your kindness.* (12/22/44)

Edith always struggled to be grateful but the burdens imposed on her and many other imprisoned Japanese Americans were great. Sadness was omnipresent.

> *. . . We are lucky to have nice friend back home but some of the people here had to sell everything they own like nothin (left) no home to back or states. In a way I too donnot blame these other people (in the camp) for it seems no future for Japanese Americans.*
>
> *Everything they earned in long years are gone and sick and old (have) nothing to depend on. Some cases are sad story if you really know about inside hearts of these Japanese people, what Japan has done was no fault of us innocent people.* (6/4/44)

Edith believed that what was "inside the hearts" of these people was to be hidden and forgotten by the Japanese Americans once their freedom was returned.

> *. . . the government has understood us Japanese citizen and returning us back again to our home in California. Soon as Mark get released if we are able to return we shall and enjoy our Free American life again after coop up in camp for three years without seeing outside life only twice during my three years here but shall be forgotten when we are free again and treated as real American citizen.* (2/14/45)

Conclusions

Edith may have tried to forget but it could not have been easy. In her letters, she revealed the hardships, the pain, and the deep emotions of a Japanese American woman in a relocation camp. As a woman, Edith felt it her duty to accept her husband's actions regardless of whether she agreed with them or not. Because of this attitude towards her role as a wife, she was not assertive enough to outrightly question Mark's sentiments and principles.

The Japanese American relocation experience during World War II could not be quickly forgotten — nor should it be because the deep impressions made in Japanese Americans are still seen today. Many Japanese Americans still feel guilty about Pearl Harbor although they had nothing to do with it, and they feel ashamed for being of Japanese ancestry.

With an understanding of the role of Japanese in American history, the Japanese American can find a sense of belonging that European history cannot give him. Whether one realizes the mentality of the "subordinate Asian housewife" or discovers the great error of equating Asians with Asian Americans, a lesson is learned. The atrocities of camp life should be revealed in order to prevent their reoccurrence. Never again should such a violation of basic human rights occur.

Children

The children of Hiroshima
Wrote angry poems.
If I have children,
I hope that they never see
Bombs in action,
Death and agony,
Or write angry poems
About the wars
They've lived through.
Even so, let me say
That I prefer angry poems
To silent death
Or twisted bodies.

–Rowena Wildin



Issei Woman:

An Oral History

by Claire Koga

Mrs. Imakire is a long-time resident of the Peninsula; of her 83 years, she has spent 60 in this area, minus the temporary disruption brought on by the Relocation.

As she speaks of her past, Mrs. Imakire punctuates her sentences with laughter. It changes with her mood – changes from expressions of amazement at some of the situations she has encountered in America, to the kind of laughter that accompanies old but unforgettable memories. She is bilingual – she speaks in "Issei-English" – sentences sprinkled with words and phrases of Japanese which can be understood either by context or common use.

The strength she possesses is evident not only in the bare facts of her life-story, but in the matter-of-fact way that she tells them to us, adding anecdotes that amuse her even today. Indeed, the source of the warmth and openness of her manner could be the positive way in which she sees her past in America.

Life in Kagoshima-ken

"I came from Kagoshima-ken, Makurazaki-shi — the fourth largest city in Kagoshima prefecture. When I left, it was a town. At that time they used to call it Higashi-Minami-Katamura — East-South Village. Do you know **katsuoboshi** (dried bonita)? They produce it in that city.

"My maiden name is Kukita. I found out just a while ago that we began from the imperial family. My sister-in-law sent me all of our family records. My parents never told me anything about this relationship, so we never knew." Mrs. Imakire brought out a family tree with names and relationships dating back many generations, and proceeded to explain the occupation and location of each successive son in the family line. "My ancestors came to Kagoshima to work for Kiire-san, the mayor. My great-grandfather worked for the bakufu, and my father, who is the tenth relationship (generation), was a school board member. He went to teacher's college and started to teach but the city government asked him to work for them so he had the job of hiring teachers for the new schools."

"My older brother would say to me, 'Come to Taiwan,' but a fortune teller came around and he said, 'Go East,don't go South.' "

Mrs. Imakire lived in Japan for 22 years. When it came time for her to attend college, most of the girls from the area went to Kagoshima city to school because it was the closest. But her father sent her instead to Nagasaki, where she could stay with relatives. "Not all, but maybe half of the people went to Kagoshima city for education. In our childhood, there was no local school, and the closest one was 15 to 16 miles away so we had to live at the school or at some relative's. In college we studied history, because all Meiji people were proud of their past going back many years; and we were taught things like sewing. Schools then were separate — just girls went to my school. At that time, women hardly had any government jobs, although some were teachers. I was there for 18 months but my mother wasn't too well, so my family wrote me to come home."

Her mother passed away soon after her return and Mrs. Imakire assumed the responsibilities of the "woman of the house." Her brothers would ask her to do their mending for them. She also had a job assisting a doctor who was a relative of hers. In Japan everything was done in the doctor's office — operations included, because there were no such things as hospitals. During the time that she was working at the hospital, Mr. Imakire came back to Japan to find a bride. He had been in the U.S. for six years, after being summoned by his brother, who was prospering there. Her husband-to-be was her cousin "so I knew him — he used to teach in a school about two miles away before he went to America. He was much older than I — ten years difference."

Immigration

"When my two brothers went to Taiwan my older brother would say to me, 'Come to Taiwan,' but a fortune-teller came around and he said, 'Go to East, don't go to South.' So I thought maybe I was to go to Tokyo, but then this marriage happened. See," she explained, holding out her hands, palms up, and pointing to the top creases on her palm, "This one goes right across — and he (the fortune-teller) said, 'This is good, but this one kind of runs out!' I guess he really knew my future!"

She recalls her reaction to the idea of going to America, saying, "I was worried halfway, but my aunty said, 'You are the lucky one, there are people who want to go who can't. They have no chance, so you better be happy to go.' " At that time, only students and prospective brides were given permission to leave the country. "My husband explained pretty much how it would be, so the only thing I worried about was the language." So after the third year memorial services for her mother, and after her wedding on December 12, 1919, they left for America.

"I pity my brothers — one of them ran out of the train station to say goodbye to me, and I felt so sorry I cried," and recalling the emotions she felt on that day her voice quavers a bit, and tears begin to form in her eyes. The train took them to Yokohama where America-bound ships boarded passengers. "Quite a few people came over with us and a lot of them were picture brides. One lady had been in America before. She told us quite a bit about it. She was so funny — she was from the city and at first when her husband left her for a few minutes, she said that she would hug the telephone posts on the street, she was so scared! Maybe she heard bad news — that she would be kidnapped — but when we came over we found out it's nothing bad!

"My aunty said: 'You are the lucky one. There are people who want to go who can't. They have no chance, so you better be happy to go.' "

"Some people got seasick on the two week boat trip — they could hardly get up. But I like boat rides and so . . . it was very interesting — the sun coming up over the ocean and going down on the other side. And you could get friends quite easily. We went third-class so we slept in bunk beds. I remember celebrating New Year's Day on the ship with amateur plays, and so forth.

"When we came to this country we had to go to Angel Island, to have a physical. We were examined in Yokohama already, but we had to get examined again. They were very particular about eye disease." However, Mrs. Imakire thought that the immigration procedure was easier for Japanese than for Chinese. Since Mr. Imakire had been in this country, he was released immediately, and he waited for Mrs. Imakire. When the rest of the boatload was released in San Francisco, the Imakires witnessed the picture brides and their prospective husbands meeting for the first time. It was quite a scene, as all of the men and women had only a small black-and-white photograph with which to make the contact.

Everyone stayed at the Bochoo Ryokan, an inn in San Francisco, for a couple of days. During this initial period, they bought Western-style clothing and some of the couples were married. Mr. and Mrs. Imakire then returned to the Daigaku Ryokan (University Inn) at 827 Ramona Street in Palo Alto which was to be their home and job for the next several years. She and her husband were the co-managers for the boardinghouse which provided a residence and home-cooked meals to 12 to 18 Japanese immigrants, most of whom were male workers in the area.

Settling Down — Women's Work

"Mr. Imakire told me what I was to do was 'woman's work — so you don't have to worry about it." Her work days lasted from 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m., seven days a week. She had laundry and linens to wash, housecleaning to do, and a meal to prepare every night. There were several boarders who came only to eat dinner, so she had to cook for quite a few people. "You know, all day I ran around; it's pretty hard, so when I got tired, I would run up to my room and squat down on the large cushions to rest for a minute."

At first, she was one of the few Japanese women in the community. Because of this, when one boarder asked her what he should call her, she answered, "you could probably call me any female name and I would answer — there are so few women in the house!"

"We had a pool table in the front room of the boardinghouse. When people were married, we had the reception on the pool table. In one corner of the Ryokan, a man who also came from Kagoshima had a barbershop. Because of the presence of the pool table, many people were always around. When her friends asked her to go with them on picnics or ball games ("they were crazy about Stanford ball games"), Mrs. Imakire never had a chance to go because she had to mind the inn. "Sometimes everyone felt so sorry for me. They said I was still young — only 23, so when they went to a movie they asked me, 'Nani o miyage ni motte kimasyoo ka nee' — you know — something to bring home, so I always ordered peanut brittle — it was my favorite. And when they came home from the movie, I used to make tea and we had the brittle together."

"Mr. Imakire told me what I was to do was 'woman's work' — so I don't have to worry. I worked hard — from 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m."

Mrs. Imakire worked while she was pregnant up until the time she had her babies. "I think working is good — and cooking for 16 to 18 people is lots of work, especially when I had to run up and down the stairs of the apartment, too! The first baby we didn't have a helper but the second baby, we hired a cook." After her baby, she was back doing full-time work after two weeks. But to her this was nothing compared to a woman she knew in East Palo Alto who went back to work four days after her baby was born. "I was so surprised!"

To add to her responsibilities, the Imakires began to sell fresh fish, too. There was a large icebox in the back of the house in which she stored the fish; and she cut and sold it as sashimi to the Japanese in the area.

Despite her labors, Mrs. Imakire recalls the amusing exchanges she had with her boarders. Several of them were Pilipino. "Around dinner time, they all asked, 'What you have, Mama?' — they all called me 'Mama.' I said, 'Squid,' and Maxwell, one of the guys, replied, 'Oh, spider-fish' — he made me laugh so! But they liked Japanese food. A cooking specialist from Japan came to visit one day and asked me how I learned to cook. I said, 'In this country lots of men are working in the Caucasian homes so they know so much, I have trouble! When I make stew, everybody wants to tell me how to cook — to put on the dumplings!' "

"You could probably call me any female name and I would answer — there are so few women in the house!"



Because she had to communicate with the Pilipino laborers who ate dinner, and with the shopkeepers from whom she ordered meats, Mrs. Imakire felt that she had to learn English. "My husband told me what to say at first because he had learned English as a student, but I just came from Japan and I couldn't remember everything and I couldn't write it down." At first she tried to learn the language by offering house cleaning services in exchange for language lessons. She laughs at the fact that at one house an eleven-year-old girl was supposed to teach her.

"She would point to the green things and say 'green' — but she got tired pretty soon so I did't keep going too long." She also tried to go to the Christian church where tutoring was set up for one hour per day. When she could no longer go, the teacher gave her a book to study at home. "I studied it after I went to bed, after 11:00 p.m. — no time in the daytime!"

After the children were born, Mr. and Mrs. Imakire decided that boardinghouse life was not a good atmosphere in which to raise them so they quit their jobs and moved to Cupertino, into a farm and orchard area, where Mr. Imakire tried his hand at raising tomatoes. Later, they moved to Saratoga, to a hilly area called Arabella Heights, where they had vineyards. Mrs. Imakire would go out into the fields to help with the picking if there was not enough hired labor.

The Peninsula in the 1900's: The Japanese Community

When the bicycle and horse and buggy were still the major means of transportation, Palo Alto was a rural area with apricot, pear, raspberry and flower farms, nurseries, tomato and nut fields, and ranch land. It remained an agricultural area through the twenties and thirties, when Mrs. Imakire's children were growing up. There was field work for Asian American men, especially in the Mountain View area. The Sutter Canning Company employed many Asian immigrants.

Within the 700 to 800 blocks of Ramona Street in Palo Alto, a little Japantown developed. The boardinghouse had about 15 residents and there were about ten families also living in this area. The Sato store as well as the Yamamura store opened there. A sense of community evolved between these residents and the Stanford Japanese students, who sometimes taught at the Japanese school.

The Nichibei (Japanese Society) was a cross-religious organization which sponsored the Japanese school for the children, in addition to other cultural and social activities. Activity was also centered around the Buddhist and the Methodist congregations.

"Stanford University employed many Japanese men as cooks in the fraternities, and women as maids in the dormitories."

Many Japanese immigrants worked as houseboys, chauffeurs, butlers, gardeners and cooks for the affluent in such areas as Atherton. And Stanford University employed many men as cooks in the fraternities, and women as maids in the dormitories.

Blatant prejudice was not present because there were few ethnic minorities in the area, but during the Depression, many Japanese lost their jobs.

Relocation

"When the war broke out, we were in Saratoga. I was going downtown and I stopped in a gasoline station. One lady said, 'We're still friends, we're still friends!' and I didn't know what she was talking about. Then I went downtown and found out about Pearl Harbor.

"I was working at a large estate in Saratoga (it used to be Senator Freedland's estate) on the day before the evacuation, and the lady there told me that I could have a closet and a cabinet with a lock and key in the house. She said, 'Any important things you have, store them here!' We were so lucky! I saved everything. My brother-in-law had to burn many things — any magazines and pictures. I had Emperor Meiji's picture and I said, 'No, I'm not going to burn this because after the war you never will be able to get it again! Even though they (relatives) said that people would kill me, I wouldn't burn this."

When the evacuation order came, some church people helped the Imakires by taking them to the station. Since the Imakires were taking care of three of their niece's children, there were seven altogether in the family. The evacuation order for this area was issued later than in other areas because the crops had to be harvested. At first they were sent to Santa Anita Assembly Center in a huge bus. Everyone was allowed to bring 50 pounds of luggage. Santa Anita was a racetrack — huge, smelly, hot, and sprawling. "The mess hall and laundry room was two miles away, and we didn't expect it to be so hot so we didn't even bring any parosols. But we had to eat! When we got to the places, we had to wait in line — that was the worst part." Since they were relocated fairly late, the office employment within the camp was all taken so the children who wanted jobs had to work weaving camouflage nets for $1.00 per day. As a result of the dusty working conditions, one of Mrs. Imakire's daughters gradually began to lose her hearing in one ear.

In Heart Mountain, where they were finally relocated, Mrs. Imakire remembers the cold winters (-30 degrees) and the problems with food rationing. The threatened dissolution of the family was one of the biggest problems. The children of most families ran off and ate their meals with friends. Mrs. Imakire was very strict and especially worried about their 15-year-old boy. "You know young people, 15 to 16 years old — it's a hard time to raise them! The teenage boys got together in the laundry room and they had fun — but we didn't want him to stay with the gang, so the sisters and I always went to find him and bring him home. He complained, 'Gee, everyone still is in the laundry room." Mrs. Imakire explained, "We didn't bring you up like the other guys — we brought you up very particular. When the other boys were getting long hair, I had to take him to the barber shop and ask them to please do a regular cut. He was still a growing boy and his $3.00 per month clothing allowance was not enough for him so we all had to combine some of our own money to buy him new clothes that fit him.

"I could see people glaring at me and their mouths saying 'Jap'. It was not a very good feeling."

"We were in Heart Mountain for about one year. Then we applied for a permit to be relocated in Des Moines, Iowa. At first, we stayed in the Friend's Hostel, which was set up by the American Friends Service, and then they arranged for a place to stay and for jobs for us." Mrs. Imakire experienced only one anti-Japanese incident. "One lady in a streetcar stared at me with a sharp-eye. She must have lost her son in the war."

When they returned to California, though, the family did feel anti-Japanese sentiments among Caucasians. Mrs. Imakire's daughter said that on buses she would often see people staring at her and see their mouths saying "Jap." "It's not a very good feeling." They both feel that it took quite a while for the prejudice to wear off, but now they think that it has disappeared completely. Mrs. Imakire's family returned to the Bay Area by request of the family she had worked for before the war broke out. She and her husband were offered caretaker jobs.

Post-War

Now that her husband has passed away, Mrs. Imakire lives with her second daughter in Palo Alto. Her close friend lives just down the street and she is within walking distance of other friends. She takes trips all over the country — Chicago, New York, Hawaii — to tour and attend conventions with her church Issei group. She has returned to Japan several times — most recently in 1970, and has been able to see the striking changes and modernization which have occurred in her birthplace. Mrs. Imakire had visited Japan once before, in 1929, so that her father could meet his grandchildren, and see how his daughter had indeed prospered in America.

Immigration of Pilipino Women to America

by Jovina Navarro

Introduction

A dearth of information exists about the history of Pilipinos in America; much more so about the immigration of Pilipino women in this country. Quite repeatedly, writers have commented on the sex ratio imbalance as one of the dominant characteristics of the Pilipino community ever since their presence was recorded. (Block - 1930, Catapusan - 1940, McWilliams - 1964, and Lasker - 1969.) None of them, however, tried to explain why such a phenomenon existed. The central purpose of this article, therefore, is to examine some of the significant variables that might have contributed to the low percentage of Pilipino women immigrating to the United States from 1906 to the 1940's. Additionally, it will attempt to discuss some of the struggles they share with their husbands as both try to deal with the issues of racial and national discrimination, economic exploitation and male supremacy.

Historical Backdrop

Philippine society, prior to the coming of Spanish colonizers, had already established political and social structures. It was basically an agricultural society and the basic unit of government was called the *barangay*. Contrary to the belief of many, class differences already existed. The *datu*, the head of the barangay, and his relatives comprised the ruling class, next were the *maharlikas* (freemen) and the *alipins* (slaves) were at the bottom of the hierarchy. (Agoncillo and Alfonso - 1967.)

Societal codes, usually handed down orally by elders of the barangay dictated that right of succession to the leadership of the barangay be reserved to male heirs. Albeit observation that the Pilipino woman ruled with her husband as noted by Spanish chronicler Laorca (Nakpil - 1963), it was basically a man's world. And it was institutionalized through the Penal Code of Kalantiao that was enforced in the Philippines from 1933 (*ibid.*). It mandated decorous gallantry and chivalry to women. It was noted that datus respected the thoughts and feelings of their wives, even to the point of asking their advice on major decisions (Agoncillo and Alfonso - 1969).

For the **alipin sangigilid,** the slave class who worked in the fields, it was a different story. Like the land they tilled, both males and females, including their children, belonged to the ruling class.

Both worked side by side in the fields. The *aliping mamamahay*, the slave class who worked inside the house of their masters, also labored for their masters for free. The women usually ministered to the needs of the datu and the male members of the family.

With the coming of the "white men" which is usually associated with 1521, major changes occurred in Philippine society. Power and control were transferred from the indigenous nobility to the Spanish colonizers with the aid of the sword in one hand and the cross in the other.

Realizing that they were fewer in number, the Spanish gained control by using the divide and conquer tactic: pitting one barangay against the other and offering assistance to annihilate the other. Once victory was achieved, they proceeded to make demands on the datu of the winning barangay. It is not surprising to note, therefore, that the first converts to the Catholic faith came from the indigenous ruling gentry. It did not take too long for the whole barangay to be Catholicized once their leaders were converted. Note should be made, however, of the continued resistance of the Muslim people in Mindanao — then and now — and other groups in the highlands of Luzon against conquest by foreign powers. To this day they have retained their religion, culture and tradition.

As a consequence of the Pilipino women's baptism into the Catholic faith, the friar indoctrinated her with the knowledge of the good and the evil (Nakpil - 1963). To be chaste, obedient and self-sacrificing were virtues highly aspired to. And so as a growing young girl, obedience to the parish priest or Senor Cura, her father and eldest brother, if she had any, were positively reinforced. Additionally, she was constantly reminded by Mother Superior and her mother to say the rosary, to be pure, to hide her emotions and not look men in the eyes, lest she go to Hell or Purgatory.

Realizing that the Pilipino women might find evidences of the former state in pre-Hispanic Philippines and their roles in it, the colonizers burned existing records and accounts of the country (Nakpil - 1963). Thus, during the Spanish colonial government, the wives and

daughters of the *ilustrado* class (formerly the indigenous nobility) never ventured outside of the house except to go to church, and usually they were chaperoned. Religious teachings and socialization training emphasized passivity, obedience, shyness and feelings of resignation as important qualities to have. So necessary were these traits to be inculcated in the minds of female children that fathers belonging to this class hired a *duenna* (governess) to be in charge of this socialization process. Another alternative was to put their female daughters in *colegios* (colleges) where they stayed for years learning how to read the missal in Latin (which they could not understand), to embroider a little, and to look forward to the joys of heaven (Nakpil - 1963). Most marriages were arranged.

Members of the peasant class were the most exploited in the Philippine feudal society. The Pilipino men 16 to 65 years old were subjected to corvee labor. For several months every year, they were taken away from their family to different parts of the country to build ships for the galleon trade — the economic mainstay of the Spanish friars. It became therefore an economic necessity for the wife to be part of the labor force. She became a tiller of the soil, even if the husband was head of the household, as well as performer of household chores along with her daughters, if she had any. Even upon the return of her husband and sons from their assignments, she toiled side by side with them to eke out a living. This led Nakpil (1963) to comment that women of the peasant background possessed a certain toughness, for they were forced by economic necessity to be aggressive.

Agoncillo in his book **Revolt of the Masses** (1956) mentioned the existence of a woman's chapter of the *Katipunan* — a revolutionary organization aimed at overthrowing the Spanish government. The Pilipino women, he wrote, performed significant roles which they alone could assume and which were important to the success of the revolution. Thus, women like Gabriela de Jesus, Tandang Sora and others were able to break away from the shackles that bound the Pilipino women and be part of "the revolutionary movement" that would have obtained the independence of the Philippines if not for the intervention of the United States government.

The God-inspired imperialism of President McKinley wrested independence away from the Pilipino people and instituted another colonial form of government. The American colonial government tried to finalize conquest by instituting an educational system designed to mis-educate Pilipinos about their true history, mold their minds in conformity with American ideals, suppress the feelings of nationalism, and thus minimize dissent — all these in the guise of benevolent assimilation. American soldiers who killed several thousand Pilipinos — men, women and children in the Pilipino-American War — became the first American teachers. Elementary education was compulsory and the Pilipino women had to go to school. Women members of the ilustrado class went on to finish their high school education; quite a few went on to the university to obtain their degrees. But being part of the ilustrado class, they did not have the economic necessity to work. After marriage, they quietly assumed the role of housewives.

Compulsory mis-education and mass media, i.e., American movies, American-owned newspapers and magazines all combined to effect the Americanization of the Pilipino. And for the Pilipino woman, her standards of



beauty have changed. She traded her *saya* for a skirt, cut her long hair and had it curled and tried to be like the American movie star she saw in a movie. Nakpil (1963) commented about this transformation.

In school, American teachers glorified the United States and her ideals of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity so that Pilipino men dreamed of coming to America.

Pilipino Immigration to Hawaii

In 1898, Hawaii was annexed to the United States. At that time there were 25,654 Japanese and 5,969 Chinese in the island (Lasker - 1969). The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1898 and the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907 were then passed by Congress, thus curtailing Hawaii's chief source of cheap labor, forcing the sugar planters in Hawaii to look for a new supply of labor.

It was in 1899 when the Treaty of Paris, an act ending the Spanish-American War, was ratified by the United States Congress. Among its provisions, was the ceding of the Philippines to the United States and defining the immigration status of Pilipinos as "wards," not "aliens." As such, they needed no visas to travel to the United States.

The Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association started recruiting laborers in the Philippines in 1906 with the aid of the Philippine Government. The right to recruit cost $6,000 annually (Catapusan — 1940). Professor Adams of the University of Hawaii reported that in 1907, a total of 210 Pilipinos — 188 men, 20 women, and 2 children — arrived from the Philippines (Lasker — 1969). It increased to a total of 28,440 of whom 23,418 were men, 3,009 women and the rest children, resulting in an 8:1 ratio of male to female. By the end of 1929, there were 102,079 Pilipinos in Hawaii. Of this total 88,791 were males, 8,655 were women, and 4,633 were children, with the sex ratio being 10:1 (Lasker — 1969).

Who were the recruits? What were their backgrounds? Catapusan (1940) and Lasker (1969) claimed that the group that came in 1907 to 1908 was from the island of Visayas since recruitment efforts were concentrated in the provinces of Bohal, Cefu, Iloilo, Oriental and Occidental Negroes. These are also places where pineapple and sugar cane are grown in the Philippines. Beginning in 1909 recruitment was extended to the Ilocandia: Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur, La Union, Abra and Tarlac.

The Sugar Planters' Association and their agents were successful in their recruitment drive because feudal Philippines practiced what is known as "one crop economy." In the Visayas, sugar was the dominant crop grown for the whole year, while in the North, it was tobacco. Such a practice produced a large pool of surplus labor. While the landed gentry grew rich from this monopolistic practice, the peasants who worked in the fields suffered for alternative employment which was nowhere to be found. With a few exceptions, most of the laborers recruited to Hawaii were from peasant and working class backgrounds, and most were young and single.

Why was the number of Pilipino women comparatively fewer than that of men? First, the Hawaiian Planters' Association explicitly specified that agents should look for strong muscular men; consequently, strength of the hand grip had to be demonstrated in some cases to show muscular strength. This could be

interpreted to mean that plantation owners preferred workers who were strong and hard-working to increase production yield and therefore increase their profit margin. Additionally, it could also mean that because of the extreme physical demands of the jobs available, women were systematically excluded.

Secondly, the feudalistic and moralistic values of the Philippine society did not allow single women to travel to another locality unchaperoned, let alone go to a foreign land by herself. Such a practice was frowned upon.

Thirdly, most of the married men did not bring their wives with them because they did not plan on staying longer than what their labor contract of three years called for. A man viewed this journey as a means of earning dollars to buy a piece of land that he and his wife had been dreaming of owning. Promising never ending love and devotion to one another, the husband boarded a bus to Manila to take him to the ship that would bring him to Hawaii, while his wife and their children, if they had any, moved to the house of his or her parents until the return of her husband, lest she be accused of infidelity by relatives of the husband who kept watchful eyes on her. Needless to say, there were instances where the married Pilipino man completely abandoned his wife and children and never returned to the Philippines.

There were those who brought their wives and children with them. It is safe to conjecture that the statistics on Pilipino women and children cited earlier were dependents of Pilipino laborers.

What did the Pilipino women do while in Hawaii? A source of cheap labor, plantation workers did not earn much. Wages varied from $1.00 to $1.50 a day, necessitating the participation of Pilipino women in the labor force to help meet the needs of the family. In 1929, 53 worked in pineapple plantations and 120 worked in canneries (Lasker - 1969). Others worked with their husbands in the sugar cane fields performing less physically demanding tasks. Others just had to be resourceful. A plantation worker in Camp Ewa described how his wife helped support the family:

> *. . . My wife made as much money as I did every month for she began to think of all the Filipino dishes which she so skillfully cooked in our native country. Nearly all the men in our camp came to our house to eat. Everyone was assessed $15 a month for three meals a day.* (Quinto - 1956, p. 98.)

Some Pilipino women in Hawaii, therefore, were also workers like their husbands; consequently, both were subjected to similar economic exploitation. Others had to resort to sex-linked duties, i.e., cooking and baking to make both ends meet for the family. In addition to the aforementioned tasks, they still had to do household chores like cooking, washing, and ironing, for her feudalistic values and Catholic upbringing called for her to perform such tasks for her husband and children.

Several thousand remained in Hawaii and made it their home. Others went back to the Philippines while the rest went on to the mainland. Figures compiled by Adams showed that from the period of 1907 to 1929, 15,822 Pilipinos left Hawaii for the mainland. Of this total 14,554 were male, 691 were females, and 577 were children. In the same period, a total of 30,485 Pilipinos, of whom 23,285 were men, 3,017 were women, and 4,183 were children, left Hawaii to go back to the Philippines (Lasker - 1969).



Pilipino Immigration to the Continental United States

The first group that came directly from the Philippines to the United States was the student group or the government *Pensionados* (Catapusan - 1940). They were here as early as 1903 in preparation for faculty positions waiting for them in colleges and universities, including the University of Philippines, scheduled to be established in 1908. They were all male and members of the ilustrado class — for they were the only Pilipinos allowed to attend colleges and universities during the Spanish period. Women of this class background were subservient, passive, and compliant. Religious and feudalistic values of society made sure that women of this class background never ventured out of the mold society cast for them.

The pensionados continued to come until 1919. Virtually all returned to the Philippines as planned. Next came the group consisting of self-supporting students and laborers. Who were the self-supporting students? They were those who came to America on their own to pursue higher education. Because of limited financial resources, they usually worked for one year and went to school the following year. Or they worked during the day and went to school at night if they found employment in the city. Others went to Alaska during the canning season, then returned in time for the opening of the spring semester. They were fondly referred to by fellow Pilipinos as "fountain pen boys"; some obtained their degrees and immediately left for the Philippines, others stayed but could not practice their professions because of discrimination in hiring where a professional license was required to obtain a job or to practice. Pilipinos never applied for licenses; it was only in 1946 that citizenship was granted to them. So it was not unusual for Pilipinos with degrees to work in the kitchen, and to operate crops in the rural areas. And of course there were those who never finished their college education. Most of these so-called self-supporting students were males.

What Were the Conditions That Led to the Influx of Pilipinos to America?

The Chinese Exclusion Act and the Gentleman's Agreement curtailed the supply of cheap labor in Hawaii, as in California, the number one agricultural state in the nation. Who would work in the lettuce fields of Salinas, the grape vineyards of Delano and Kern counties? On the Pilipinos they cast their eyes. During the period from 1920 to 1929, 31,092 Pilipinos were admitted into the state of California through the port of Los Angeles (Bloch - 1930). Fifty-six percent came from Hawaii, 35 percent came directly from the Philippines and 9 percent from other parts, principally Hong Kong and Shanghai in China, Kobe and Yokohama in Japan (ibid.).

One of the important characteristics of Pilipino immigration to California, like Hawaii, is the great preponderance of young, single males. From 1920-1929, out of every 100 Pilipinos, 93 were males and 7 were females. That is of a total of 31,092, 29,013 were men and only 2,079 were females. While the ratio of Pilipino males to females was 14:1, the ratio of males to females in the total California population was 1.1:1 (Bloch - 1930). In the state of Washington the ratio of Pilipino males to females was 33.3:1 while in New York it was estimated to be 46.6:1 (Catapusan - 1940).

Among the female Pilipino arrivals, 43

percent were married while 57 percent were single and below 16 years of age; most of them were born in Hawaii (Bloch - 1930). According to the 15th census of the United States released in 1930, there were 1,640 Pilipino women in the continental U.S. Of this total 1,258 or 76.7 percent were married; 830 of them resided in urban areas while 428 were living in the rural areas (Catapusan - 1940).

Analysis of the aforementioned figures reveals that the pattern was similar to that observed in Hawaii — wives of most married Pilipinos stayed behind, and for similar reasons. The women cited in the statistics were dependents of Pilipino laborers who initially went to Hawaii and then proceeded to the continental U.S. Unlike the single men who followed the crops — picking grapes, melon and tomatoes in the Imperial Valley and Kern County, thinning and harvesting lettuce in Monterey and Salinas, cutting asparagus in San Joaquin county — married men residing in the rural areas usually stayed in one place or did not venture far away from their family. This was not without disadvantage. Employment opportunities were curtailed and thus family income was substantiaily decreased. It was therefore an economic necessity for the Pilipino wife to work, often times toiling side by side with her husband in the fields under the blistering heat of the sun and then coming home to do yet other tasks: laundry, cooking, and ironing. Others cooked Pilipino dishes and Pilipino rice cakes for Pilipino farmworkers in the area for minimal price. The same could be said about married women living in the urban areas.

From 1920 to the early 1940's, as in Hawaii, there was still a preponderance of young single Pilipino males. The sex ratio of male to female even in the 1940's was still 9:1 (McWilliams - 1964). Doubtless, it created problems. Subjects of not only economic discrimination, but also social discrimination, Pilipino males could not freely interact with white women. Those who did were targets of racist anger and mob violence. The white women who dared to socialize with Pilipinos were ostracized. The racist white society was so incensed about the social interaction between Pilipino men and white women that by 1929, the Immigration section of the Commonwealth Club of California recommended that Section 60 of the civil code be amended to expressly prohibit marriages between Pilipinos and members of the white race (Foster - 1943). In 1933, the anti-miscegenation law was amended to include Pilipinos as part of the group legally prohibited to intermarry with members of the Caucasian race (Buaken - 1943). Other states such as Arizona, South Dakota, Nevada, Utah, and Georgia followed the lead of California. Thus, Pilipinos continued to remain the objects of economic and social discrimination.

Unable to marry a Pilipina because of their scarcity in number and denied by law to marry a white woman who loved him, the single Pilipino continued to follow the crops. Some Pilipinos intermarried with women of Mexican and Native American descent. Still others lived with the Caucasian women without the benefit of marriage.

Married Pilipinos who had left their wives in the Philippines continued to experience loneliness and homesickness. This is how one person expressed his feelings to his wife:

My Loving Wife,

I was so happy to have received your long awaited letter and to behold lovingly your picture and the children. Looking at all of you in the photo makes me feel homesick. I wish I am already on my way back to all of you.

Thanks to Virgin Mary, I am in good health and working steadily from sunrise to sunset, six days a week. We are in the middle of picking grapes, a fruit that grows in bunches and not grown in our country. It has the shape and taste of lanzones. Here in the valley, near Delano, it is very hot. If I can keep up with the hard work God willing, I should be returning home in two years. Yes, home, close to my loved ones whom I miss very much. Quite true, there is no place like home. If I sound unhappy, it is simply so. Ever since I arrived here, my life has always been in the farm. Seldom do I go to big towns like Los Angeles and San Francisco to have a good time with other fellows. Someday I hope to tell you how we live and are treated. Don't worry I am alright. (From Morales, R., **Makibaka — The Pilipino Struggle**)

Other married Pilipinos completely neglected their families in the Philippines despite repeated unsuccessful attempts on the part of their wives and children to continue to locate them through relatives, friends, and even through the Red Cross.

World War II and the Immigration of Pilipino War Brides

Through the Act of July 2, 1946, signed by Franklin D. Roosevelt, American citizenship was extended to Pilipino residents of the United States who were born in the Philippines and who entered the country prior to 1934 (Avery - 1954). This was introduced after several thousand Pilipinos participated in the arena of war between the imperialistic powers. Germany, Italy and Japan on the one side, the U.S. and her allies on the other (Navarro - 1974).

After the war, quite a few Pilipinos stayed in the army bringing with them their wives and children as they were transferred from one assignment to the other. Others moved to the cities residing in places where most of the Third World people lived. In San Francisco, for example, they could be found living in the Fillmore area, the fringes of Chinatown, and inner as well as outer Mission areas of the city. Others lived in the rural areas. One thing is clear; whatever area they have elected to stay, homelife has evolved for Pilipinos who had their wives with them. In no time, a second generation of Pilipinos was born.



In the early 1950's there were many Pilipino women who were petitioned by their relatives, father, brothers or sisters, to come to the U.S. as students or tourists. Many of them eventually ended up marrying and thus became permanent residents. By 1960 the total Pilipino population in the U.S. including Alaska and Hawaii was 106,426. Of this total, 67,351 were males and 39,075 were females, a ratio of 1.7:1 (U.S. Census - 1960). The women living in the rural areas were engaged in agricultural work while those in the urban areas were highly represented in the service and service- related work. There has been a noticeable increase in the number of Pilipino barbershop owners and beauty shop operators. Some are engaged in clerical work but virtually none are represented in the managerial and entreprenurial work.

By 1970 the Pilipino communities in America began to feel the impact of the liberalized Immigration Act of 1965 which was fully implemented in 1967. The 1970 census showed the presence of 336,731 Pilipinos in America — 183,175 males and 153,556 females — bringing the sex ratio to almost 1.2:1; two-thirds of the additional population were new migrants while the remaining third was due to new births of Pilipinos in the U.S.

Since the census was taken, Urban Associates in 1974 reported that additional 90,000 Pilipinos entered the U.S. The annual report of the Immigration and Naturalization Service indicated that 32,461 Pilipinos were admitted to the U.S. in 1974, thus bringing the total number of Pilipinos to 465,461 as of June 1974.

There is a high percentage of Pilipino families having young children, because of the high percentage of Pilipino husbands and wives of childbearing and child rearing age. Additionally, it was found that many second generation Pilipinos have started their own families and thus have young children. In Hawaii, for example, the proportion of families with children under 18 is 70 percent (HEW - 1974). Young newly arrived Pilipinos are also starting their own families; the 1970 census data from Hawaii and California show that 50 percent of Pilipino households have children under 6.

Also, an analysis of Pilipino female-headed households show that they too have relatively young children. This could be attributed to the increasing number of young widows who married and bore the children of elderly husbands. A much lower percentage could be attributed to instances where Pilipino women are legally separated, widowed, or divorced.

In addition to having young children, the Pilipino families were considered the largest, relative to the two other major Asian sub-groups (Japanese and Chinese), and having the highest proportion containing other adult relatives. The average Pilipino family consists of five people, and 23 percent of all Pilipino families are extended (HEW - 1974). Of these extended Pilipino families, more than 13 percent contain siblings and cousins. This non-linear family arrangement is perhaps formed as recent arrivals move in with relatives. Many of them can be found in the state of Hawaii, where Pilipino families are largest (an average Pilipino family contains five people).

Relative to the educational characteristics of the Pilipino women, a 1974 HEW report revealed that of the total group 64 percent have completed high school, one of the highest of women in any subgroup. The heavy influx of Pilipino women of professional background in the past ten years greatly increased the proportion of Pilipino women of college education. In fact, the proportion of the group with at least four years of college is highest among Pilipino women (HEW - 1974).

An examination of the employment pattern of Pilipino women in the U.S. is very revealing especially in light of the high educational background of this group. In rural areas, nearly half of all Pilipino women work on farms or in service occupations. This is more than double the rate for women in the country who work in low-skilled menial occupations. The remaining employed women are working as clerical workers, machine operators, and professionals.

In Hawaii, 34 percent of all Pilipino women in the labor force work in service occupations, while 33 percent are in sales and clerical jobs; 15 percent are working as semi-skilled machine operators, and only 8 percent are in professional occupations (HEW - 1974).

California figures show that 42 percent of all Pilipino women are in clerical and sales jobs while 19 percent are service workers. Others are represented in professional fields. The gap between the number of persons with college degrees and their representation in professional fields is great among Pilipino women, clearly illustrating the underemployment of Pilipino women.

Despite the fact that more Pilipino women are in the labor force, 55 percent, and their educational attainments are higher (27 percent are college grads) than women in any other group, 56 percent make less than $4000, a very high percentage of low-income earners. Only 5 percent of Pilipinos make over $10,000. In view of the aforementioned discussion, it can be concluded that Pilipino women are underpaid, underemployed, and victims of racial and national discrimination.

The Pilipino female-headed household have greater problems, for they are relatively younger and less likely to have grown children who can help support the family. Furthermore, these households have the second highest percentage of children under six years of age, and child care expenses could be an additional drain on income.

Conclusion

It is clear by now that historically, Pilipino women enter the labor force because of economic necessity, and as they become wage earners, they too have become economically exploited and have become victims of racial and national discrimination as have the Pilipino men and other fragment members of the Third World. As women, they suffer from the special oppression of women called sexism or male supremacy, another tool used by the ruling class to exploit especially the women of working class backgrounds. As such, in order to smash this triple jeopardy — racism, economic exploitation, and male supremacy — it is imperative to understand its root cause. The triple oppression of Pilipino women is systematic in origin, and it is only through the reordering of the economic structure of this society that Pilipino women can be truly liberated from the triple jeopardy of racism, economic exploitation and sexism.

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Oba-chan

by Julie Hatta

Throughout my life, it's been hard for me to really believe that Oba-chan hadn't always been "Oba-chan" — that she was once a young girl, a young woman. Even now, I have to make a conscious effort to convince myself that she was, to put her in that more realistic light, to recognize her as a woman outside of her role as Oba-chan. Yet, every time I think of Oba-chan, certain indelible images and feelings occur to me, and they are the essence of what she means to me; therefore I'm not going to try to rationalize them into anything more or less than that.

Oba-chan was the one who took so much pleasure in fixing us "okai-san" when we were sick, in dressing us up in kimonos she had sewn by hand, and slipping us pennies for the gum-ball machine. She was the one who told such good "obake" stories at bedtime. She would lie down between our beds, on a thin scatter rug and tell us stories — stories which no one had ever heard of: maybe they were stories that her oba-chan had told her when she was a child, maybe she made them up; anyway, they were good and spooky. I was the only one who stayed up long enough to hear the end of her stories. As she concluded, she would ask cautiously, conspiratorily, if anyone was awake yet. And when I whispered back that I was, she would pretend to be surprised — but she knew that I always listened to her till the very end. Then she would roll over on her side and pretend to doze off, and I'd fall asleep soon after. One morning I woke up to find myself next to Oba-chan, in her bed. She asked me when I had come into her room. I couldn't remember; I'd never walked in my sleep before, and haven't since.

In those days, I would struggle to match Oba-chan's steps as we crossed the streets; the lights would always turn red when we were only half-way across — suddenly I would feel an iron grasp around my wrist, and be whisked along in her purposeful strides. It kind of hurt to be grabbed and pulled across like that, but it was always quick and firm — and safe.

I don't ever remember being babied or fondled like my younger sisters, and I never really craved it. Maybe it's because Oba-chan paid special attention to me — she liked to fix my hair for me in tight stiff braids, and stroke my hair with both hands to bring out the gloss. We used to make secret plans to meet a block away from my house to go see Japanese movies — I had to sneak out of the house separately so that my younger sisters wouldn't make a fuss to go along — that was our private conspiracy. I loved the samurai fighting and costumes, but always fell asleep by the end of the film. I knew that Oba-chan would give me "ombu," by hoisting me onto her back, piggy-back style, all the way home. Sometimes she would go on and on about how "joozu" Misora Hibari and Kinnosuke were in the movies, and tell me all the details of the movie that I couldn't understand.

Oba-chan didn't do much scolding either — my parents handled that, and we ran to her to be comforted. Her feeble attempts at disciplining us meant putting on her "mad" face — eyebrows scrunched to a peak at her forehead, and lips pointing downward at the corners, snapping out, "kora!" To scare us even more, she would try to "spank" us with carefully measured whacks at our legs, or gentle taps on our heads.

But that was way back then, and in Hawaii. And somehow, living in New York and growing up has re-defined my relationship to Oba-chan. Of course, time and circumstances will always change things. But I had always believed that my image of Oba-chan would evolve naturally, painlessly, without deliberation. I had never anticipated any significant factors except physical aging which would require a conscious adjustment in my perception of her. It's true that every time I go home, I feel like I'm bending over farther to hug her, that her face seems a little more creased that I had remembered from the last time I saw her. But I keep shoving those facts away as irrelevant; what I really regret is the emotional disorientation I feel each time I see her again.

I guess it's because in high school, I had just begun getting acquainted with Oba-chan as an individual, and she's still a bit of a stranger to me in that sense. Sure, I'd realized that she had "character," — but that was part of her role as "oba-chan" too. Suddenly, in high school, the narrow rift between my relationship to Oba-chan and my involvement in other things widened dramatically. And I was the only one who could reach out to bridge it, if I chose to.

My world revolved around school and friends. I was proud that I could invite Oba-chan to school for flower arrangement and cooking demonstrations. My grandmother liked appreciative audiences, and my friends thought she was "real cool," and "cute." They all called her "Oba-chan" too. On the surface it seemed like a cheery situation. How nice that I could share Oba-chan's charms with so many people, and at the same time alleviate my guilt for not spending enough time with her myself.

Oba-chan still filled her day with constant activity, but now it wasn't centered completely around the lives of my sisters

and I. She'd learned to re-structure her own lifestyle; all her life she had been an early riser; gradually she realized that she had nothing urgent to do so early in the morning. Sometimes I would come down to the kitchen to see breakfast all ready, and see Oban-chan sitting at the table smoking a cigarette, with an empty expression on her face. We could dress ourselves now, we could even make our own breakfasts, or we were in too much of a rush to eat the wholesome one that she had prepared.

She gets up later these days; sometimes she gets up before us, at about five-thirty or six, then goes back to bed, and gets up at about nine to start puttering around the house. Her life is leisurely now, quite an adjustment to make after fussing and bustling over us for over ten years. Now she can occupy herself with patchwork quilts and cushions, reading, and gardening. She's accommodated herself quietly into the background of busy, self-whirling teen-age lives.

"I pulled those nasty weeds out from half of the lawn today — spent the whole morning out there," she'd report to me with satisfaction. And I'd nod with approval, as she continued, laughing, "By the time I finish the other half, this side'll be weeded over again! It's an unending job for me — as long as there are weeds on the ground — 'shikata ga nai' " she remarks. And she'd sigh purposefully, as if she were talking about changing diapers.

I'd glance out the window, and nod my head in acknowledgement, perhaps too enthusiastically. Then maybe I'd have a cup of tea with her, with a magazine or newspaper in one hand, and listen to her relate the events of the day. I'd interject comments here and there; I would tell her something that went on at school, if it wasn't too complicated to explain in Japanese. And then I'd be off to go somewhere, to do something.

I guess that was the trouble — my life was getting too complicated to figure out for myself, much less explain to my family, especially Oba-chan. Our relationship had always been based on the simple tasks of everyday life. When I look back now, she was always there, doing something for us. My childhood memories occur to me in collages of photos, each focused on an event, so many focused on Oba-chan's face — beaming with pride at her grand-daughters — tending to us watchfully — waiting by us, patiently . . . patiently. Even now, when I think of staying home with Oba-chan, I hear clinkings of china bowls and chopsticks; and I detect the salty-soy-saucy smells of miso-shiru and tsukemono cradling the kitchen; and I feel the anticipation of slurping the warmth of green tea and rice — ochazuke with Oba-chan was always so special.

But there were so many other things to do, and growing-up hassles to deal with — it was a mixed-up and erratic time for me — something I could not relate to Oba-chan, even when I did take the time to talk to her. She was not one to get into "deep" discussions. Besides, my Japanese was not good enough for "heavy" talks with my grandmother. Her advice to me was always very grandmotherly, stemming from a strict sensibility, a moral code that she seemed to recite automatically. I felt she said these things because she needed to have some say in matters.

Bit by bit, my frustration with Oba-chan became apparent. Inside, I couldn't handle the irritation I felt with myself for brushing her off in moments when she instinctively tried to pamper me. I pitied the disorientation she must have been going through, and at the same time, I didn't want to pity her; she was such a strong, independent woman. But watching us flit in and out of the house, with some of our loud hakujin friends (she only criticized the "yakamashii" ones), and seeing us stay out late at night, she began mumbling impotent words of criticism. My sisters could pretend not to understand the Japanese words, but I had to pretend I didn't hear them.



In the moments when exasperation and annoyance subsided, however, I felt a strong responsibility and need to be with her more. I wanted to prove to her that we weren't taking her for granted, and make sure that she realized how important she was to us, to let her know that we would always treasure the years she devoted to us — that we hadn't forgotten.

Living in east coast suburbia without knowing any English didn't allow her much liberty to venture far from the house. Besides, her life had always been in and around the home. But she was adventurous and curious and energetic. Her frequent outings consisted of walks around the neighborhood enjoying the gardens, or going into town on an errand, or to window-shop, or people-watch. Sometimes she sat at our kitchen table, staring intently out the screen door watching our neighbor gardening — his techniques, the expressions on his face, the people he stopped to talk to. And she would recount her observations at dinner, chuckling over his "hakujin" ways.

Oba-chan was outgoing and friendly, so once in a while, she and a hakujin neighbor would start "conversing," speaking Japanese and English to each other, gesticulating ardently, nodding en-

thusiastically when an inkling of mutual comprehension seeped through all their efforts. Usually these "conversations" would be about plants or sewing, or cooking. She would smile in appreciation of a neighbor's peony bush, and that was often the beginning of a "conversation." And later she would tell me all that the hakujin lady had told her, concluding that she was real "shinsetsu." And the hakujin lady would see me in the market the next day, and tell me how much she had enjoyed talking with Oba-chan, and say how "adorable," "precious" or "charming" she was.

So this was the closest interaction she had with whites; these instances where she could say from experience that they were nice, kind people; and where they regarded her as a charming old lady. Otherwise, she was indifferent or suspicious of the hakujin; after all, she couldn't speak English. And she couldn't respect those who didn't have good manners — like some of my friends. They had no sense of "enryo." To her, they seemed to be taking advantage of our hospitality.

The home was her world, and she was accustomed to stroll about freely, going about her activities. I didn't notice until later that she started isolating herself in her room every time my friends came visiting. And I remember one almost traumatic experience for her when she wandered head-on into the wall of Micheal's six-foot frame, looking up to booming laughter from a shaggy blond head. It was amusing to everybody except Oba-chan, who retreated, grumbling, to her room.

I realize now that I won't be able to change Oba-chan's attitudes about certain things. She's always devoted her energies to a family; after her own children grew up, grandchildren replaced them as objects of her affection. All her life she's directed her life toward someone else. But for the past few years she's been an almost detached spectator to self-propelled lives which spiraled outward to friends, school, and outside interests. She was able to keep up with us for awhile, but we kept speeding ahead, while she's trailed farther and farther behind — I'm at Stanford now.

And I look back occasionally, when I feel her abandoned gaze on my tracks; she'll always be somewhere in my tracks. So I'll go back and sit with her for awhile, catching my breath, sipping green tea, remembering old times. But it's not long before I have to run along, get along, get ahead. I want to grasp Oba-chan's hands firmly in mine, and pull her along with me — Come on Oba-chan, come with me, I urge her. I promise to slow down a little, I promise .... Tell me more about how things were when you were growing up ... What was Ojii-chan like? Can you teach me how to make your special tsukemono?

I

Cortez called them the hills of Spain.
the golden hills arched and crowned by oaks.
These hills are green now
California Sonoma Hills.
The rain falls slanted.
I imagine ojiisan bent
straw zori fastened to his feet
Woodland peaches heaped on his back
might climb these hills green and wet
climbing the hills of Toyama listening for the Emperor's crow.

The hills are rounded.
The California oaks turn purple against the sky.
He hears the meadowlark cry like a temple bell.

II

The aroma
the aroma
The aroma of peaches surrounds him.
His arms aching, body stretched, bent
reaching
for the ripe, warm fruit.

III

His okusan's dead.
Stomach cancer he said.
She felt the lump 2 years
earlier.
That's when they went to camp.
Bags packed
obutsudan crated,
children tagged
no time
don't know what's happening
never tell us
anything
Jesus christ
too late
they cut it out.

IV

He sits
eating, talking
the peaches are golden round
Juices seep in each bit.
They taste so sweet.

They taste so sweet.

–Grace Morizawa



CONTEMPORARY

In this section images of Asian American women today are presented in a variety of ways.

Wendy Yoshimura tells her own story and describes how she came to some of her conclusions about American society and politics.

There are two interviews of Asian American women prominent in the media: Jan Yanehiro (interviewed by Lori Matsukawa), Public Affairs Director at radio station KFRC in San Francisco, and Connie Young Yu (interviewed by Claire Koga and Julie Hatta), writer and historian.

The research paper by Ann Chao and Elaine Koyama on Asian American women administrators in Santa Clara County deals with the women's backgrounds, opinions, and how they view themselves in their jobs.

Leigh-Ann Miyasato's paper is a report of Sylvia Yanagisako's findings on women-centered kin networks among Japanese Americans in Seattle.

Miss Teenage America 1974 is Lori Matsukawa's account of what it was like to be the first Asian American Miss Teenage America.

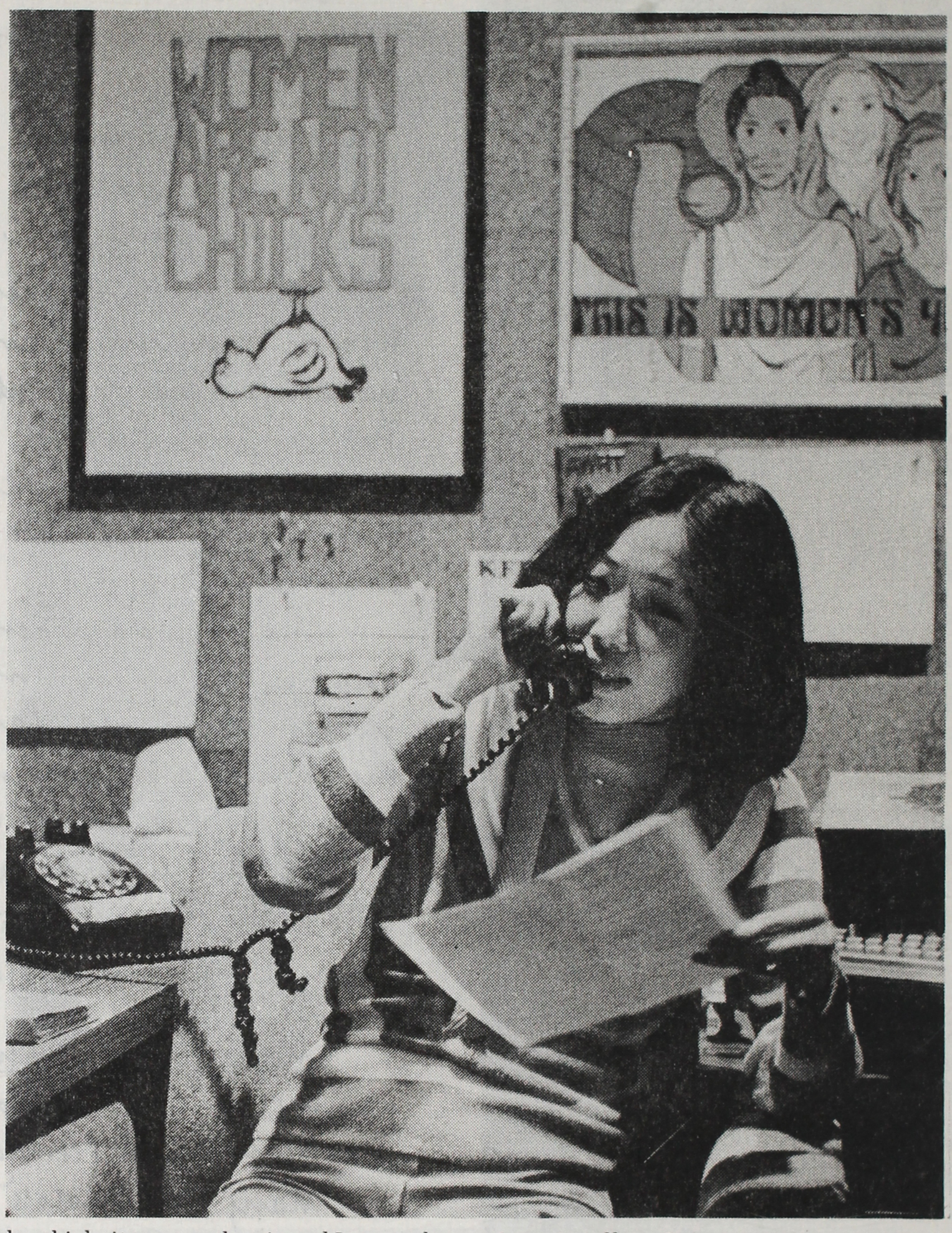
Mary Morimoto's short story, To Be Young, and Gifted, and an Asian American Woman, deals with some of the issues young Asian American women must face: racism, sexism, conservatism inside and outside the Asian American movement.

Lynn Nakayama expresses in "Oh, You're From Ha-wa-yee?" the frustrations of an Asian American from Hawaii who must cope with Mainland Asian Americans and with haoles.

Rounding out the section are two poems, one anonymous and one by Grace Morizawa.

An Interview with Jan Yanehiro

by Lori Matsukawa



— Cal Evans

Jan Yanehiro is KFRC-AM's first female and first minority Public Affairs director; and as of June 8th, she will be one of the hosts on KPIX's new week-night magazine program. Born in Honolulu and graduated from Farrington High School, she attended the University of Hawaii for a year and finished her college education at Fresno State. While a student there, she interned at the **Fresno Bee**, reporting campus affairs. Upon graduating in 1970, she kept the city beat for the **Hayward Daily Review** "reporting fires" and was sent to San Felipe, Baja, Mexico (Hayward's sister city) to write a story. She also lived in Chicago for two years where she was a stewardess for TWA, traveling all around the world. In this April 26, 1976 interview, Ms. Yanehiro expresses definite ideas about her responsibilities as a reporter.

How did you get into broadcasting?

Well, I had been a reporter and had flown and traveled for two years. A couple of things brought me out here. Chicago was too cold. I wanted to get started in a new city, a new place with a new job. I love San Francisco. When I got here, I went to different radio stations knocking on doors. And within that week, I had received two job offers.

Did your being a woman have anything to do with your acquiring a job?

Well, when I came into the market, it was right for women and minorities. I fitted two bills at once, for the price of one! It was a very opportune time to get a job. I liked KFRC. I started from the bottom bottom — the assistant to the assistant to the news and public affairs director. My office hours would start at 6 a.m. where I'd learn the ropes in news reporting. Sometimes I stayed until seven at night just to learn routine matters. I knew absolutely nothing about radio. They would send me out on a story and I wouldn't even know how to run the tape recorder! But . . . you learn. In six months, I was promoted to on-the-street reporter. I covered the Patty Hearst story when she was first kidnapped.

When did you get your present position?

I had been a reporter for one and a half years. I was still a sort of junior member, but the director for public affairs position became available. It was a management level job, it was on the air and I wanted to take a crack at it. I am the first woman and minority department manager at KFRC. I guess you just have to let them know what you want and get after it.

What are your current responsibilities?

I do features every day, at least one a day, every day. I decide my own topics, write my own stories and scripts, edit and voice my own reports, pretty much everything. I just got out of production. (It was about 9:30 a.m.) Today (April 26) I did a feature on job sharing. It's part of a two-month project I'm doing on employment. People keep saying it's a serious problem, so I feel we should look into it and talk about it. I've been up to Sacramento many times to talk to Governor Brown, Lt. Governor Dymally and Speaker of the Assembly Leo McCarthy, people like that.

What are your future goals?

I'd like to take a shot at television. I'm talking with people at KPIX. I will be working with them doing a magazine show every night at about 7:30. I might have to leave radio for that.

Did you think television is the most important medium offered today? Is radio still an important medium?

Television is still relatively new. I think radio is still very important. People listen to it when they're making up, driving in their cars; radio has a lot to offer. It's important, it's there.

Any other projects?

Yes, I just found out that my syndicated feminist program has been taken up by another station. It is syndicated at thirteen stations now, in New York, Boston, LA, Washington, Chicago, Memphis, Fort Lauderdale, San Francisco, the newest one in New Haven, Connecticut. The program's called "Equal Time." It's a 15-minute weekly thing. We've discussed relations between men and women, sexist toys, interviewed Billy Jean King, Joan Baez, talked with househusbands and discussed equal rights for fathers.

At the University of Hawaii last September, Connie Chung, a newsreporter for CBS, said she does not take-up feminist or Asian-American causes in her reporting because she fears she may lose her credibility as a reporter. Do you agree that she would lose her credibility?

Oh, I disagree! Credibility? First and foremost, you are a reporter and as a reporter you could conceivably report on anything. I would be concerned with those issues because I can identify with them. I feel I would be a more qualified person to report on them. For example, I'm also the editorial director here. I wrote the editorial on Tokyo Rose, saying that she was a victim of gross injustice. I feel I can understand the sensitivities and the issues better than say, a white man. I mean, we're all journalists to begin with, but on issues concerning Asian-Americans and women, we (Asian-American women) can offer a different insight . . . and credibility.

How important is it to have different insights? Isn't news reporting simply that, straight news reporting?

My honest opinion is that I fear reporters will be whitewashed. We need to feel different perspectives. Look at the Bay Area, at Stanford! The people at Stanford are not all white, not all males. The community is made up of women, Blacks, Chicanos, Asians. This is our community and this is what we're about. It's just not a true presentation when a few select people tell what everyone else is thinking and feeling. Minorities and women are qualified to discuss the news. We make the news and we should be able to report it.

Would you support an Asian-American cause if certain groups came up and asked for public affairs coverage?

Yes, Asian-Americans are part of the community and I *do* help all groups. I feel if I don't do that much, who will? I advise Asian Horizons, I'm on the Japanese-American Citizens (JACL) League board here in San Francisco and am active in affirmative action.

Does being a Japanese-American raised in Hawaii offer you a different perspective to Asian-American problems compared to those Asian-Americans born on the mainland?

There is a difference between being an Asian-American raised in Hawaii and one raised on the mainland. Here, you are an obvious minority, while in Hawaii, you're part of a majority of minorities. I've tried to look at how the Asians here feel differently from myself. I've been here eight years now and am beginning to understand how and why Asians here don't know what to do. I guess being from Hawaii, (I'm) not afraid to say what (I) believe in and do what (I) believe in.

Employed Asian American Women Officials and Administrators in Santa Clara County

by Ann Chao and Elaine Koyama

In this research project six of the seven Asian American women who are employed as officials and administrators by the County of Santa Clara were interviewed; the seventh woman did not consent to participate in the study. The goal of the interviews was to give us some insight into the perceptions of the employed Asian American women regarding their work and home life and the influence of their ethnic identity and sex. Areas of interest to us included authority on the job, parental influence, integration of family life and career, reasons for pursuing a career, Asian American identity, and any discrimination experienced.

The official description of this job category, "officials and administrators," comes from the Equal Opportunity Commision instruction booklet on affirmative action reporting:

> Occupations in which employees set broad policies, exercise overall responsibility for execution of these policies, or direct individual departments or special phases of the agency's operations, or provide specialized consultation on a regional district, or area basis. Includes: department heads, bureau chiefs, division chiefs, directors, deputy directors, controllers, examiners, wardens, superintendents, sheriffs, police and fire chiefs and inspectors and kindred workers.

Asian American was defined by the instruction booklet as persons of Japanese, Chinese, Korean, or Pilipino descent.

According to the county's Affirmative Action Quarterly Report of July 23, 1975, "Minority women as a group have the lowest percentage of high paying jobs." Minority women are below parity* in several categories, including officials and administrators, professionals, technicians, protective service workers, and skilled craft workers. They are above parity in such categories as paraprofessionals, office and clerical workers, and service and maintenance workers. The report says that Asian American males and females, however, are at or above parity except in the category of protective service workers.

*parity for minority women is reached when the percentage of jobs held by minority women is equivalent to the percentage of minority women in the general population.

Backgrounds

Backgrounds differed much more than we had anticipated. Of the six women, five are of Japanese descent and one is a second-generation Chinese American. Three of the Japanese American women are Nisei (second generation), all of whom grew up on farms in California. One Japanese American is Sansei from Hawaii; the other held dual citizenship in Japan and the United States because her father was in international banking and moved a great deal between England, Japan, and the United States.

Education

All of the women have high school educations. Three have bachelor's degrees, and of these three, one woman has a master's in social work.

Self-characterizations

Self-characterizations cover a wide range, including shy and "not a rah-rah person," "had to work hard at not being shy," not shy but conforming, not quiet and not typically Japanese, outspoken, and strong-willed.

Jobs

The highest-positioned woman directs two branches of a center. Another woman is an assistant to an administrative officer. The other four women supervise small units of about eight persons, which are mostly female.

Work Histories

Three of the women have worked steadily since graduation from high school or college. On the other hand, the other three women began work after they had started families. Of these three, two waited until their children were essentially adults; the other waited until her oldest child was ten years old. The primary reasons for going to work were to support themselves, to prevent boredom in the home, or to gain additional income for the family. One woman states that work has broadened her outlook and has improved her marriage. She says that her eldest daughter had made her feel guilty for starting work, but she did not think that she had neglected her children: "I gave them ten years of my life." Another woman states that she is not the housewife type and that there would be nothing for her to do if she quit her job.

Dating and Marriage

For all of the women, the high school dating game was a definite problem. In most cases, the lack of understanding of the American attitude toward dating on the part of their parents created the greatest barrier. The social stigma which most of their parents had toward interracial dating and marriage also played an important part in making this period more difficult.

The woman themselves do not object to interracial dating and marriage for their children. Some feel that it is inevitable because their children's school friends and social groups are mostly white.

One woman has had an interracial marriage. She feels that there has been some prejudice toward her because of her marriage. On the other hand, she feels that it is an advantage for her daughters to be racially mixed, because they look different.

Children

Of the four women who have children, none has a son. One woman feels that wanting a son is not necessarily a Japanese cultural trait, but a desire of all families regardless of their ethnic backgrounds. The Chinese American woman says that all Chinese want sons. Another woman says that she was the most disappointed person when she learned that her youngest child, like her other children, was a girl. She points out, however, that to bear a son is more important to the Issei (first generation) than to her own generation.

All the women feel, as their own parents had stressed, that it was important for their children to have a good education. In addition, the expectations and ambitions that they have for their children are exemplified by overt actions such as piano lessons and cultural events, and by covert wishes for their children's future occupations. One woman wants her daughter to go into engineering. All the women say that they would be happy for their children to do whatever they wish to do with their lives.

Social Groups

Two of the women's social groups are made up of mostly Asian Americans. The social group of the woman from Hawaii has depended on the neighborhoods she has lived in. The Chinese American woman's friends are mostly white because of the predominantly white, small town in which she and her husband live. Another woman says that her group is half white and half Asian American. The sixth woman thinks that whites make up most of her friends because she lives in a predominantly white neighborhood.

World War II

One of the most interesting points in the life histories of the six women is during World War II. We asked each woman what she was doing during this time and what some of the war's effects were on her. One woman was in Japan attending a private Catholic school; she was in the fifth grade. The woman from Hawaii was 12 years old then, and to her the Japanese were the enemy, without a doubt. One woman was interned with her family in Poston, Arizona; she was in the third grade and remembers the fun and games of camp. Two of the women were at the Amache, Colorado internment camp: one was born there and the other graduated from high school there. The Chinese American woman did not comment much on the war. She was living in a small town with her husband operating a small business.

Discrimination

Three of the women describe incidents of direct but subtle housing discrimination about ten years ago or earlier, when looking for housing. One woman describes the ill feelings she perceived from her neighbors because of her Chinese ancestry. She remembers receiving the following phone call when she and her husband had bought their first house and were moving in:

"I just want you to know, we don't want you."

"Why not? Because I'm Chinese?"

"Yes."

"Are we dirty?"

"No."

"Is my baby dirty?"

"No. We just don't want you here."

Another woman says that she has felt underlying prejudice because of her interracial marriage. All the women, however, seem to take discrimination in stride: "You just have to live with it and understand it"; "If people feel that way, they don't know any better. They're not educated."

Affirmative Action

None of the women had been hired since the affirmative action program had become prevalent in the country, and none view affirmative action as beneficial to Asian Americans alone. They view it, rather, as an asset to womankind and to all minorities, especially to Blacks and Chicanos. Though one woman thinks that affirmative action lowers the standards of quality for hiring, most of the rest hold positive attitudes on the subject. Two women comment that affirmative action is very beneficial to women at the lower levels of employment, but in the upper echelons of the administration, men still occupy more than their share of positions.

Conclusions

There are a number of common responses made by the women which surprised us. We found that the women's authority on the job was much less than what we had expected. The original job category description and the list of positions led us to believe that these women would be heads of offices or such. We found, instead, that they are generally supervisors of a small unit of people, mostly women, and that they all hold relatively low positions within the "officials and administrators" category described above.

All of the women except one are in traditionally female-dominated fields — social services and mental health. (The department of social services has the highest percentage of female employees of any department in the county.) The sixth woman, while not in a woman-dominated field, does mainly secretarial work as an assistant to a male administrator.

None of the women have long-range career goals or the ambition to be promoted to higher jobs. We were surprised by the lack of aspiration common to these

women. They are working to support themselves, to prevent boredom and resentment at home, or because they had always been working and had never thought to quit. Several feel that their advancement to positions as officials and administrators has been due to "luck!" or to "being in the right place at the right time."

We found that most of the women feel that their parents had stressed grades and education, and that there was an increasing level of education from one generation to the next. The women attributed this attitude toward education to the Asian or Japanese tradition.

Regarding family life and career, most of the women who were married had been housewives. These women did not feel that there was active conflict between work and family. One woman tries to separate work and home as much as possible. Two women say that their husbands help out at home, doing housework and taking care of the children. One woman maintains a checking account separate from her husband's, and another says that she and her husband sometimes take separate trips (to go fishng or to Lake Tahoe, for example). She also says that to her there is nothing adverse about a woman maintaining her maiden name after marriage.

The women who were not married or did not have a family thought that integrating a family and a career would be difficult at best and would require a compromise.

None of the women feel that they have been discriminated against in their jobs because of their sex or ethnicity. We feel that the women have little sense of their ethnicity on the job; they seemed a little threatened when put on the spot because of their ethnicity. Because there are, in general, few other Asian Americans around the women in their jobs, we feel that their ethnic identity is "repressed." That is, they have adjusted to the majority white values and have fit into the office context by not emphasizing any differences due to their different cultural backgrounds. That such cultural differences exist is borne out in the interview material regarding childhood, home life, and social life.

The interviews and the generalizations drawn from them have given us an insight into how these six Asian American women view themselves, their work, their families, and their ethnic identity.

"Oh, You're From Ha-*wa*-yee?"

by Lynn Nakayama



How do I see myself as a Hawaiian Asian American? Before I came to Stanford, CALIFORNIA I didn't know the term "Asian American" *existed*.

Why the rift between Hawaiian Asian American and "Mainland" Asian American? Why the words "Buddha head" and "Kotonk?"

I was proud. I am HAWAIIAN I said. Don't mix me up with those Mainland Asians who are so busy trying to be haole they don't know who they are or they know but they're ashamed to admit it. I don't apologize for being what I am. What is this "identity crisis?" Don't they know who they are? Why do they talk like haoles?

"Oh, wow, are *you* from Ha-*wa*-yee? Far out! Do you surf? (No.) Can you hula? (I had to admit, yes.) What kind of houses do you live in? (GRASS houses, of course.) You talk funny. Say something in pidgin, it sounds neat."

Now *I* am the haole here.

"How did it feel to be singled out because you're Japanese? How did it feel to be invisible because you're Japanese? Why don't you like the way you are right now? Why don't you like your name? Why don't you trust me?"

I wanted to ask those questions but I never found the words. Who wants to be bothered by these questions anyway, when they're too busy studying or running around trying not to think?

"Oh, your grandfather was on his way to Brazil when he stopped over in Hawaii," my mother told me. He never left and he died in Hawaii. What if he had made it to Brazil? Would I be me? What if he had gone on to California? *Would I be me?*

"During the war (mom would tell me), Ji-chan almost went crazy because he was afraid the FBI would catch him and send him away." Send him away? What do you mean, send him away?

Listen we don't have to divide ourselves into Hawaiian Asian Americans and Mainland Asian Americans. We are all the same, more than you think.

Oh but I can't identify with Mainland Asians. They're weird.

How can you say that and yet run around with haole friends? What does that make you?

But they're different from us locals.

What you're saying is that you can relate to Mainland haoles better than you can relate to Mainland Asian Americans. Where does that leave you? You say you're proud of being Chinese but by rejecting them you're rejecting yourself. You're rejecting the part of them that you see in yourself. You're rejecting the part that you don't want to be but that you know is there. You disclaim any relationship with them but you know it was all a matter of chance that your grandparents stayed in Hawaii and if not for that accident of birth you'd be *just like* the ones you reject and can you face that?

"Your order will be ready next week. Could I have your name please?"

"Nakayama."

"Could you spell that please?"

"N-A-K-A-Y-A-M-A."

"My, all those A's."

"Yes."

"I'd love to go to Japan. Have you been there?"

"No, I haven't."

"Oh, I thought maybe you were born there."

"No, I'm from Hawaii."

"Oh, you're from Ha-*wa*-yee? . . ."

Women-Centered Kin Networks in the Seattle Japanese American Community

by Leigh-Ann Miyasato
in collaboration with
Sylvia Yanagisako

Dr. Yanagisako, an Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Stanford University, conducted research in the Seattle Japanese American community from 1973 to 1975. She presented her findings on women-centered kin networks in a lecture delivered in February 1976 and in a colloquium given in April 1976, both at Stanford. That lecture and colloquium are summarized below.

A significant feature which differentiates Nisei (second-generation Japanese American) families from the traditional Japanese families of their parents (the first-generation Issei) is the central role women play in binding together related households. Women, by maintaining contact with their mothers and sisters, form the basic links in Japanese American kin networks.

Women-centered kin networks are not unique to Japanese Americans. They exist among the working-class British and to some extent among middle-class British, among people in Finland and in Sweden, among working-class, and, to a lesser extent, middle-class white Americans. All of these groups exist in urban areas of Western, industrialized nations.[1]

Women, by maintaining contact with their mothers and sisters, form the basic links in Japanese American kin networks.

Japanese Americans reside in predominantly nuclear family households: husband, wife, and children form a single household. This household structure differs from that of the traditional Japanese family, in which the eldest son brought his wife into the household of his parents, and in which their children were considered part of that household. By 1973, only 15% of 51 Nisei couples interviewed in Seattle were residing in three-generation households.

Within the Nisei family the husband is not as autocratic as in the traditional Japanese family. Wives have some part in decision-making, although they are expected to defer to their husbands. They have domestic autonomy, while men's activities are focused "outside" the home — in their jobs, the yard, household repairs, and the car. However, couples are also expected to be companions, with shared activities and interests.

In parent-child relationships, too, Nisei families differ from the traditional Japanese family. Communication and expression of feeling are stressed, as well as shared family activities. These are all valued as means of developing close affective ties and family solidarity. Nisei mothers, however, continue to have a more nurturing role while fathers are more distant because of their position of authority.

While nuclear families and separate households predominate in the Seattle Japanese American community, inter-household kin ties are strong. These ties are maintained primarily by women rather than by men. There is much more contact between Nisei female relatives than between male relatives.

[1]While the centrality of women in kin networks has been found primarily in Western, industrialized nations, there is also some data which indicate a trend toward increasing emphasis on female ties in urban populations in Japan and India.

Nisei women spend more time with their mothers and sisters than with their friends. If they all live in the Seattle area, they see or telephone each other two or three times a week, and sometimes daily. The ties between female relatives transcend occupational, income, lifestyle, and personality differences. A Nisei woman and her sister may be married respectively to a professional and blue-collar worker and yet maintain a close interactive and affective relationship.

Women also feel free to make requests of their mothers and sisters that they would not make of their friends or relatives by marriage. They do not hesitate to ask for emotional and social support from each other.

Nisei women are the "kin keepers"; they know the details of kin ties, they make the contacts between families, they plan the family gatherings, and they agree on rules for the different families to follow (such as those governing Christmas gift-giving).

The ties between female relatives transcend occupational, income, lifestyle, and personality differences.

Sisters and mothers draw their children into the kin network. Children are usually closer to their maternal grandmother than to their paternal grandmother. Men are also drawn into the kin network by their wives, thus facilitating the development of close ties between brothers-in-law as opposed to ties between brothers.

In contrast to the strong ties between female kin, Japanese American males have less contact with their male relatives. Many men see their brothers as little as three to four times a year; they phone each other only for specific reasons, rarely visit each other and do not share recreational activities. Moreover, the closeness of the relationship between male relatives is readily affected by occupational, income, lifestyle, and personality differences.

Men play down their contact with male kin in interviews. They feel that they would be indebted to their brothers if they asked for help, whereas sisters feel no hesitancy about asking for aid from each other because of the strong ties between them.

Previous explanations of the emergence of female centrality in kin networks have tended to reduce women's

roles outside the household to their roles as mothers. Because of their role as mothers, it is contended, women have continued to maintain interhousehold and inter-generational ties when industrialization has caused a lack of succession in male occupational roles. It has also been argued that role segregation between husband and wife causes a close tie to form between children and their mother. Yet Japanese Americans have women-centered kin networks without a high degree of husband-wife role segregation.

It has been assumed that women share activities and identities, based on their roles as mothers, which make them more likely than men to form close ties with each other outside their households. Yet Nisei women see themselves as having different interests, goals, and values from their mothers and sisters, and stress these differences in interviews.

The emergence of women-centered kin networks in the Seattle Japanese American community cannot be fully explained by stressing the continuity of the woman's role as mother amidst economic changes or sex-role segregation between husband and wife. An explanation requires the incorporation of the impact of altered social, economic, and cultural factors on the Japanese American family and community.

Nisei sex-role constructs assigned males to the symbolic "outside" sphere (the economic and juro-political domain) and females to the "inside" sphere (the affective domain).

Before World War II, most Issei owned independent family businesses in the Seattle Japanese American community. As a result of the World War II relocation and imprisonment of Japanese Americans, many Issei lost their family businesses. Today, only one-fourth of Nisei males are self-employed businessmen. With increased job opportunities after the war and with greater acceptance of Japanese Americans by the dominant white society, most Nisei males moved into salaried positions, and the economic productive function of the traditional Japanese family was lost.

An additional socioeconomic factor is the economic and social insecurity felt by the Nisei. The Nisei's realistic assessment of their social and economic vulnerability as members of an ethnic minority led them to emphasize community ties and institutions; consequently, they tended to remain in their natal communities. This residential proximity of Nisei siblings made female relatives available to each other. In order to explain the emergence of women-centered kin networks, however, it is first necessary to explain why inter-household ties were retained despite the Nisei commitment to the ideal of separate nuclear family households, and second to explain why these ties were formed by women rather than by men.



The impetus for the formation of inter-household ties came first from the Nisei's felt need for family ties to continue over time. The first son, who had been the traditional successor to his father, lost his position as head of the continuing family corporation, and could not bind together his siblings after they married and set up independent households. Moreover, the Nisei's emerging ideal about the independence of the conjugal (based on the husband-wife unit) family[2] would not allow submission to the first son's traditional authority. At the same time, the economic and social insecurity felt by the Nisei emphasized the need for an informal structure linking households which could provide each other with economic assistance in times of crisis, with mutual aid, and with an all-purpose social network.

These factors encouraged the development of an informal structure linking households. In order to explain the centrality of women in this inter-household network, we need to look at the cultural processes operating at the same time: the cultural ideals and values of the Nisei. The ideal of the independence of the conjugal family from the traditionally larger kinship units of Japanese kinship encouraged the movement toward establishing individual family households and had contributed to the breakdown of the traditional Japanese household corporate continuity. At the same time, Nisei sex-role constructs assigned males to the symbolic "outside" sphere (the economic and juro-political domain) and females to the "inside" sphere (the affective domain).

These informal kin networks do not just meet the affective, social, and economic needs of women; they play an important role in the economic and political integration of the community as a whole.

As jural leaders and economic providers of households, males had to maintain their independence from each other in order to validate the economic and jural autonomy of the conjugal family. Interdependence and solidary ties between males were construed as features of traditional Japanese kinship and were threatening to the independence of the new Nisei households.

The conflict between the ideological need to maintain a stance of independence and the practical need to develop an interhousehold support network was resolved by assigning women the new role of building such a network. Close ties between female relatives were encouraged by the Issei and Nisei, and role expectations were altered so that women could legitimately act to promote inter-household solidarity, resulting in the emergence of women-centered kin networks in the Seattle Japanese American community.

It should be added that these informal kin networks do not just meet the affective, social, and economic needs of women but that they play an important role in the economic and political integration of the community as a whole. An individual's and a family's status, economic resources, and its political alliances within a community are partly shared by their position within these kinship networks.

The above explanation of the emergence of the Japanese American women-centered kin network takes into account cultural factors and people's ideas about kinship as well as socioeconomic factors. It does not reduce women's roles in the family and in the kinship network to that of mother. It may provide a model for the explanation of the emergence of women-centered kin networks in other societies.

[2]The ideal of the independence of the white American conjugal family influenced the Japanese American family. But this was not solely a Nisei phenomenon; and the Nisei were not attempting to assimilate totally into white American culture by adopting the ideal.

TOMAS, WHERE ARE YOU?

I remember shocks
Shocks of black hair
head tossed back laughing
foot stomping
playing a 40 lb. pump organ like a honky-tonk piano.

You were a wild man.
Laughing, laughing, laughing
seeing iridescent colors
luminous against
Saturday night on Hollywood Blvd. Dragging
us to Eagle Rock
Sunday mornings for menudo
Explosion of a flamingo
dancer against
Air, sound and space.

You told me once you were raised by Jesuits
spent your holidays in the mansions of rich people
were you born in a peach
found floating in a river?

You told me once
they sent you to live with your relatives in camp,
Poston, Arizona during World War II
did the chanting of Buddhist
monks scare you?

You told me once
a man could have a good
time with those Japanese ladies
in Yokohama where you made
your blackmarket money
for that Swiss banking
account?

You made women cry.
The sign above your door read,
"Under these portals pass the world's most beautiful women."
Your good woman came over to vacuum your floors
She came to hold your hand
She came to sleep in an armchair.
And you made sculptures.
You went to Italy to study in an iron foundry.

The last I heard she followed you.
You had to hide your hot Italian lady.
You won a fancy European art prize.

Do you remember I met you in Little Tokyo.
Clay potted plants standing on window sills.
The smell of aun, sweet red beans
seeping through a plastic flower strung curtain
Japanese lanterns stretched in street for Obondori.
Do you remember I stood waiting my weight on my right hip
watching manju bake through the window?
Do you remember? Do you remember?
Do you remember who whispered,
"I too am Japanese"?
Do you remember

—**Grace Morizawa**

Wendy Yoshimura

Wendy Yoshimura was arrested on September 18, 1975. She is charged on three counts: possession of explosives; possession of a machine gun; and possession of explosives and destructive devices with the intent to injure persons and wrongfully destroy property. She is pleading innocent to all these charges.

Ms. Yoshimura was held in the Alameda County Sheriff's Detention Facility at Santa Rita, with a bail originally set at $250,000. Through the efforts of various Japanese American community groups based in Fresno, Los Angeles, and the Bay Area, she has since been released on the reduced bail of $25,000.

Her defense trial is set for June 14, 1976. Meanwhile, she has been going through a number of pre-trial motions involving challenges to some of the evidence to be presented, some of the laws by which she was indicted, and the negative publicity which has constantly associated her with the SLA and implicated her in crimes other than those for which she is charged.

The following is an excerpt from an autobiographical statement written by her, describing some of her personal history, and the beginnings of her social and political consciousness.



— Nancy Wong

Concentration Camp

I was born on January 17, 1943 in Manzanar, California (Southern California) in a concentration camp which the U.S. government called a relocation camp. I have little memory of the place other than a few small incidents. My parents didn't tell me much of the place or their experiences in the camp until I was much older and when asked. Since then I've seen museum exhibitions and books of the people and their living conditions in the camps. (The whole set-up was amazingly similar to the jail I now occupy.) At birth I was delivered by a medical student as there were no full-fledged doctors to assist with medical care.

In the year of 1942 the U.S. government threw Japanese and Japanese-Americans into the concentration camps like a herd of animals for being of Japanese heritage. My parents and the others were to be imprisoned for the next four years. When I was three years old, in 1946, my parents, my mother's parents (by this time my father's parents were dead) and my mother's brother were fed up with the treatment received by the Americans and with being considered sub-humans ("Japs") as the Vietnamese are considered today. They renounced their citizenships and left to Japan, taking me with them. Within the camps there were pro-American people who refused to see the unjust treatment by the U.S. government and anti-American people who felt strong indignation towards their treatment. Basically the people like my parents refused to take such injustice and left to Japan. Many of them, like my mother and her brother, had never seen Japan.

Miles and Miles of Rubble

My father's family came from Hiroshima but fortunately his relatives lived outside of the city and had escaped being victims of the atomic bomb. My father went to the city of Hiroshima shortly after his return to Japan. He told me of the shock he experienced seeing the destruction of the atomic bomb. He saw nothing but miles and miles of rubble where once there was a large city. Later in my life I was to hear more gruesome tales of the actual human sufferings of the atomic bomb from the people who survived.

It was while I was in grade school that I heard from different people — teachers and neighboring adults — about their actual experiences of the atomic bomb. When I heard about it from my teachers it was in the form of a classroom lecture. I don't remember hearing about it in the context of politics. I simply remember it as the horror of the atomic bomb, but thinking back I see it was political. Some of the women who told me of their atomic bomb experiences were women who associated with the G.I.s; they were mistresses or kept women. I've gotten to know several of these women because they used to come to my parents to have letters and other matters translated. And they often came just to visit. They were essentially very lonely women as they definitely were the outcasts of the villagers. Unlike the other adults I cannot recall my parents speaking of them badly. I saw later that my parents saw these women as people who had different attitudes in life — one not better than the other. My parents have strong principles about what's right and wrong. I once overheard them speaking about all the black marketing that was taking place at my father's job. From the conversation I knew he had no part in it.



— Nancy Wong

Back to America

When I was 11 the U.S. occupation of Japan was over. My father found himself without a job. He was forced to make a decision to either stay in Japan and start over or go back to America and try it there; it was not easy as he was already 44 years old. It seemed that the set-up in America was easier as in Japan a person employed with a company very often stayed with the same company until retirement. And maybe there was a shortage of employment (I really don't know for sure). Whatever the reasons, the decision was made and we decided to come back to America.

I remember feeling very disappointed seeing America, a city of San Francisco, from a deck. It looked like a land with rolls and rolls of match boxes with hardly any sign of trees to speak of. We first moved to Sanger, California, near Fresno. When I enrolled in grade school I was put back into the second grade because of my lack of understanding of English. I was 12 years old and should have been in the 7th grade. At first I was considered freakish as I towered over all my classmates. My reading class was bearable as I was actually learning something but I remember feeling bored sitting in a class "learning" how to add, subtract and tell time. A year later I skipped 3rd and 4th grades and was put into the 5th grade. I still have problems with my grammar and vocabulary for missing those years and living in Japan for 11 years. In Japan I was an avid reader but it was some years later when I again learned to enjoy reading; it was after graduating from art school. Though the drastic changes in my environment caused me to lose interest in books, my love for art stayed with me.

Racism and Classism

I was seventeen years old when I enrolled in high school. (By this time I felt very self-conscious about being older than my peer group, which, as ridiculous as it seems, stayed with me until very recently.) Previously my friends consisted of many races but beginning with high school and on to college I only socialized with Japanese-American people. I quickly learned the taboos of closely associating with people of any other race; there was an unspoken law. We isolated ourselves and socialized only with each other. At the time I accepted it without any question. As I look back now, I see it as a form of protecting ourselves from racism and classism that exist in this society. From the abuses of racism we protected ourselves by not only disassociating ourselves socially from the whites, who rule the society and think us inferior, but from the Blacks and Chicanos, whom we looked down upon — and even from the Chinese and the Koreans who are of our race. Our class background was basically lower middle class to middle class so by disassociating from the others we were not subjected to the awareness of the acute class differences; thus we shield ourselves from classism.

My life in Fresno was very, very sheltered, to say the least. I don't ever remember discussing politics with anyone. Our goal in life was to find a mate, the more educated and ambitious the better, and have a nice little family. I was too ignorant even to know whether I was for or against the Vietnam war. All I knew was there were demonstrations going on against the war in a far-away place called Berkeley. It could have been on another planet as far as my awareness was concerned. At the time I was already 21 years old.

Art School

Luckily, one of my art teachers at the Fresno State College recommended me to transfer to an art school. Being conditioned as a woman I had no great ambition but since I liked art it appealed to me. In the Spring of 1965 I enrolled in California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland. I had to raise part of the tuition by working at various jobs during the summer vacations and I had to find a family who furnished the free room and board for the labor or baby sitting and light house work. My parents were only able to help me with part of the tuition and art supplies. I found a family with two children, a boy of three and a girl of one. The woman who employed me was involved with some sort of community organizing. She took me to a couple of demonstrations. Today I have no idea what the issues were. I was too ignorant to really care and she was too busy running about to enlighten me. At the time all I enjoyed was the freedom I was experiencing — the freedom of coming and going wherever and whenever my heart desired and of doing whatever I wanted.

For the first three years in the Bay Area my friends mainly consisted of Japanese people — students from Japan — whose main interests, like mine, were art and socializing. After their return to Japan upon graduation, my new boy friend changed my social life. His circle of friends consisted of white, older, struggling, some established (not many) artists and their wives and girlfriends. Their lives consisted of art, art openings, parties and cases of Coors beer, and for a year that was what my life consisted of, until we broke up. All I had going for me at the time was the art I enjoyed and I began questioning the institution of marriage after babysitting for two years, seeing the woman climb walls even with my babysitting, and witnessing her marriage fall apart.

Political Understanding

In 1969 at Merrit City College I took an evening philosophy course in order to graduate. I met a man who opened my eyes to the social injustice. Now that I think back I was aware of it but never stopped to think of the whys. I didn't like what I saw but I simply accepted it. Then I met another man who had the time and patience to help me understand about the Vietnam War, capitalism, colonialism, imperialism, racism, classism, sexism, etc., etc. This was in the Spring of 1969. With my new awareness I found myself less interested in art than with the question of what is art in this society. At the time I was studying graphic art, majoring in illustration as well as in commercial art. My main interests were drawing and water color but I knew better than to major in fine arts. In my junior year I had decided to become an illustrator, naively thinking it was closest to doing what I wanted and getting paid. But my counselor convinced me to major in commercial art as well, as the only place for the illustrator was the East Coast. So you can imagine the confusion I felt about art after I was "enlightened."

After graduation I got a job at U.C. Berkeley as a "senior clerk" doing microfilming. After several months of that I heard of the Venceremos Brigade, a group who recruited people to go to Cuba to help the Cubans attain their goal of harvesting 10 million tons of sugar to fight the U.S. trade boycott. I was very interested as I wanted to see the socialist country and I wanted to support and take part in their struggle. Though my political awareness was very limited and experience almost nil, I was accepted, after an interview, to go to Cuba because I was a third world person. My friend, who also applied, was also accepted for his advanced political awareness and experiences although he

was white. This group was to consist mainly of third world people.

Cuba

We flew from Mexico City (after harrassment by the agents and mug shots being taken) to Cuba. We all worked very hard even though most of us were unaccustomed to hard physical labor. Our attitudes were different only because we were working for the people and not for a boss. During my two-month stay in Cuba I never once saw any sign of racism. I also was impressed with the older people. They were not the forgotten people as in the U.S. but very useful members of the society. Their eyes sparkled and were full of life. I was impressed with what I saw in Cuba. We came back on a boat, battle boat converted for people, to Canada and to the U.S., right back into the Kent State murders.

These incidents — taking part in many anti-Vietnam war demonstrations (and other causes), seeing the People's Park being built by the people and destroyed by the University, being in the demonstration retaliating against the Park's destruction in which a man was murdered, another blinded, and the other lives being threatened, and my experiences in Cuba — strengthened my budding political understanding.

Political Study

After hitchhiking back to the Bay Area from New York City, I joined up with the East Bay Media Collective, who did media work for the many organizations in the Bay Area community. We turned out silk screened posters and leaflets. I was exposed to many politically aware people in the area. I came to a realization that not only had I a long way to go in really understanding political ideas but that I must study. I had to force myself to read theoretical books, which wasn't easy if you consider my difficulty with the English language. (I'm still working on it.) With the suggestion of my friend I began reading feminist books. Reading them (my favorite is **The Dialectic of Sex**) helped me a great deal in understanding the whys of the injustice in this society and the world; it also helped me understand about myself — my strength, my weakness and my sense of self as a person. It made it clear for me that a lot of frustration I felt through my life, which I've always blamed on myself, was due to being a woman in this society.

The Vietnam war probably because of my experiences of being a Japanese-American and the women's struggle were the main issues that helped me shape my subjective, gut-level feelings of the struggle to the more objective political one. And I still have a lot to learn.

Miss Teenage America 1974

by Lori Matsukawa

The Tokyo businessman's eyes widened incredulously as he tried to organize the details in his mind. "You're from Hawaii, but you have a Japanese name and you are Miss Teenage America?" he repeated.

His reaction was typical of many I had received while in Tokyo, one of many cities I visited as the first Asian American Miss Teenage America, 1974. I guess it is still a small wonder.

In August, 1973, Honolulu held its first Miss Teenage Honolulu contest. No one in Hawaii had ever heard of the Miss Teenage America contest, although at the time, it was entering its thirteenth year.

The MTA contest is not a beauty contest. There is no bathing suit or evening gown competition. Instead, a girl is judged on her academic ability, talent and poise and appearance. The factor that encouraged me to enter the contest was the $10,000 scholarship offered to the winner. I thought to myself, "Ten thousand dollars! That can really help a college education!" I filled out an entry blank, not expecting much to come of it. Something did come of it, however.

I was called to take the academic test and to take an interview. A week later, I performed my talent (I played Bach's Preambule on the piano) and answered an impromptu question in front of a small audience. I was surprised to find out I was selected Miss Teenage Honolulu and would be flying to Fort Worth, Texas for the national contest in November.

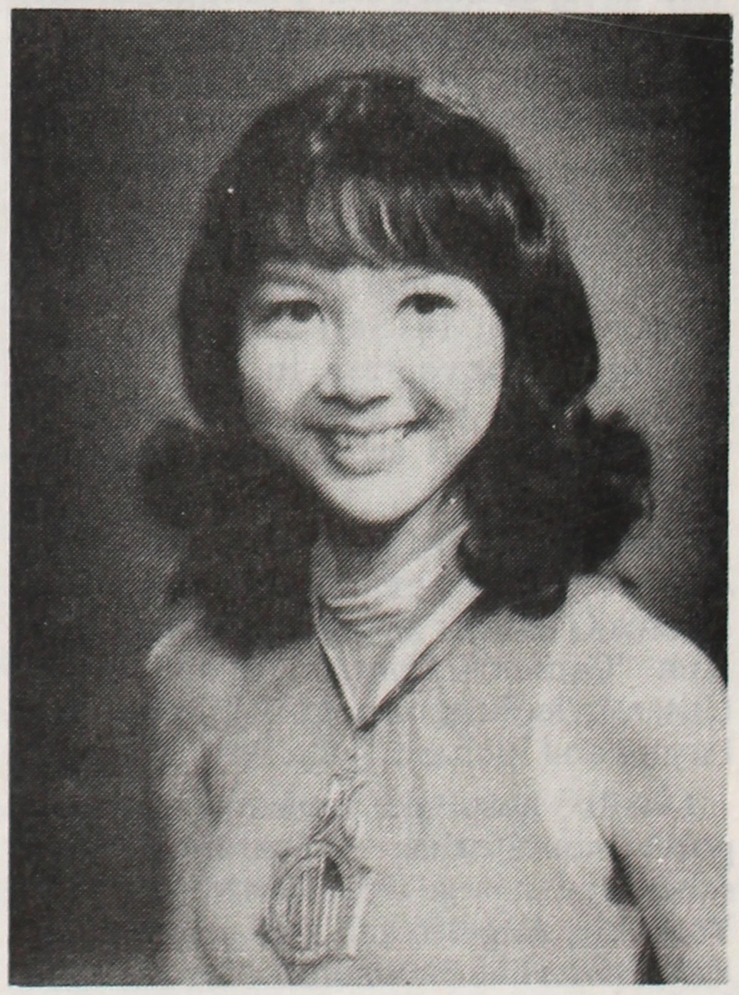
In the two months of preparation prior to the national pageant, I was introduced to my chaperone, a model named Eleanor McDaniel. Ellie was a God-send. She taught me to walk runways, advised me on wardrobe coordination and, with the help of a cosmetic consultant, gave me tips on make-up and grooming. I had never had such training. Most importantly, we became close friends.

I also decided to change my talent act. Playing the piano was too nerve-wracking and I decided to do a Maori Poi-ball dance instead. I made my own costume and recorded the music with some of my school friends.

Ellie and I had a quiet little send-off when we left for Fort Worth. Our philosophy was that being in the Pageant was an honor in itself and we would simply enjoy it to its fullest.

There were forty-four candidates from various cities across the U.S. at the Pageant. We would spend fourteen hours a day learning dance routines and songs for the telecast program. Putting on a top-notch telecast became my main interest even as I was being tested and sent through five rounds of judging interviews.

It never occurred to me that I could win the contest. Even when the four finalists were announced by the master of ceremonies, Ken Berry, I never contemplated being a winner. My parents were not at the pageant. They had decided (and I agreed) that it was too far a trip for a mere contest.



Suddenly, there were only two candidates, Janet and myself, on stage prior to the announcement of the winner. I imagined how I would jump and hug Janet the second my name was announced as the first runner-up to congratulate the new MTA.

But something happened — they called her name as first runner up. My jaw dropped. I was Miss Teenage America! People flurried about congratulating me and snapping pictures; what a tumult!

My parents flew to Fort Worth as soon as they heard the news. During a conference with the president of the contest, Mr. Charles Meeker, Jr., I remember my parents and I were concerned about my ethnic background.

"Will she be accepted?" asked my mother.

Mr. Meeker looked over his glasses matter-of-factly. "We don't know. But remember, you were selected for what you are as a person. The judges feel you can do the job and so do I."

The year that followed will always be a highlight in my life. The ethnic concern was never a problem for me. Everyone we met was friendly, helpful and excited to hear what it was like to be Miss Teenage America.

Persons back home were tickled. Strangers on the street would stop and ask me if I was Miss Teenage America. "Imagine!" they would exclaim, "It's the first time Hawaii ever had a national winner and a Japanese one on top of that!"

I traveled close to 80,000 miles for our national sponsor, the Dr Pepper company. My travels took me to the Orange Bowl, the Cotton Bowl, the Indianapolis 500, the Kentucky Derby, the Football Hall of Fame game in Canton, Ohio as well as Japan and Peru. I rode in numerous parades, did some modeling, helped dedicate new Dr Pepper bottling plants, signed autographs, made television appearances and had many radio and newspaper interviews.

I wrote my own speeches and presented them at the American Academy of Achievement in Salt Lake City, the Explorers Convention in Washington, D.C. and the Key Club Convention in Houston as well as at numerous high schools.

I met then Vice President Gerald Ford, Hubert Humphrey, Sonny and Cher, Donny Osmond, Colonel Sanders, William "Cannon" Conrad, Al and Bobby Unser, Lyle Waggoner, Lloyd (Room 222) Haynes and Richard "John Boy" Thomas.

I visited hospitals, museums and computer laboratories. Appearances were scheduled in large cities like Miami, New York, Los Angeles and Dallas as well as little towns like Scottsbluff, Nebraska and Tullahoma, Tennessee.



An average of two weeks each month was spent on the road. I couldn't attend classes regularly and so received special assignments that I could read while traveling and write about when I returned. When I was home, I would attend classes, do my homework, clean the house, and wash dishes like everyone else.

I appreciated the way my friends back at school treated me as "just plain old Lori." Miss Teenage America might travel the nation, but Lori attended school.

Contrary to popular belief, lines of boyfriends do not appear at a contest winner's door, at least not in Aiea. I dated the same persons I dated before the contest.

Ironically, it was during my trip to Japan that I felt I was really representing America.

I went on promotional tours for the Dr Pepper company, but also visited two high schools in the cities near Tokyo. The students, all in navy blue uniforms, asked me about America. The variety and intensity of their questions surprised me. 'What clothes do students wear? Do students believe in Jesus? Are you aware of the industrial mercury poisoning in Minamata village? What would American companies do if they were found guilty of poisoning villagers with mercury? Do you really have sex education in school?'

The students listened intently as I carefully dictated my answers to an interpreter. I felt it was important not to give erroneous or flippant answers to such a serious and impressionable audience.

They were surprised that public school fifth graders received sex education. I asked how Japanese students learned about sex. "Through magazines," ventured one student, earnestly. I almost fell off my stool.

The Japanese businessmen we dined with told me that although I could not speak Japanese, they felt proud that someone whose grandparents came from Japan held a "title" in the United States. They were delighted to re-introduce me to my own Japanese culture in Japan.

Once in a while, my ethnic difference was actually amusing. A store in Arkansas where I was going to sign autographs that afternoon had placed a half-page ad in the newspaper showing sketches of a Japanese girl in various dresses. "See: The Miss Teenage America Wardrobe" read the caption. I laughed with delight — imagine! A Japanese girl in an Arkansas ad.

The year of travel and responsibility made me realize more than ever that people everywhere are basically the same. We may appear different on the surface, but everyone can appreciate the positive human qualities — a sense of humor, thoughtfulness and sincere concern — that make us all one in the family of man.

To Be Young, and Gifted, and an Asian American Woman

by Mary Morimoto

While I was waiting for Gary in his office, I felt like a school child again, the day we stopped being people, and lined up against the play yard fence in rank of the shade of round-barrelled color crayon we chose for the skin of our kindergarten self-portraits. The faces came back as clear as they looked that day, like terrible malignant cells, multiplying with a madness, and all the faces attached to child bodies, pointed like flame and licking out at the fence where I had stood.

"Where are you from, from, from, little girl?" they had asked.

"I am from Seattle," I said.

"Oh, now hear that? This one here is a real Yankee doodle chopstick."

"Yes, and besides that she's a niggerskin," said a little Asian American girl, who was very popular with the little boys.

The voices had begun to circle silently and secretly and purposefully. "You're from Jap-pan pan pan niggerskin, and you made Pearl Harbor where we got you. Rat-ta-tat-tat!"
RAT A TAT TAT RAT TA TAT TAT

I couldn't remember more. The lobby cigarette smoke built the heat that was stifling the breatheable air, as if in anticipation of the quiet little meeting we were about to have. Pearl Harbor, what the hell did Pearl Harbor have to do with my going to kindergarten? Lately I had been depressed, and then it had come up, or perhaps because it had come up I had been depressed and unable to account for myself.

It had come up last week at college when a cafeteria of apple-cheeked youths including our own had screamed out in rage, and remember Pearl Harbor had been exactly what they screamed, and it was not the sixties where we were all paranoid together, nor was this the south.

We had all of us sat together under a bowing grove of trees, and talked a little, and drank a little, and listened while the dean said we were young, and a little wild, and bright, and very beautiful. I knew when he said that that we didn't need our kindergarten self-portraits because they were in our minds now, and I was sad to think our games hadn't gotten any better since the fence, even though we were all going to be rich and rule the world.

Well so much the better for that. I hated waiting. It filled the mind with bilge, and a dean who believed in equality, and a high school teacher who thinks Asian American girls are cuturally better at math and are better lovers too, and a doorframe at home that rattles of gnawed-in bugs, and things I wanted to love people for but couldn't find.

Anne, Gary Hosokawa's secretary, was trying to catch my attention.

"Midori?" she was moistening her laquered fingertips and counting a stack of papers. "You can go in now, right through those doors on your left."

I walked down the corridor to his office feeling very tense. I had sent him a manuscript that said what I felt had to be said to the people now, and first I had to see it printed. Gary Hosokawa was one of the only publishers of Asian American writing, and anyone with a half-pan-Asian name could bring him a recipe book, or a memoir of concentration camp and the Proving of Americanhood, and he would see if he couldn't help them out.

His office was not at all what I had expected. It had that clean, colonial look that could have been the new Bank of America on Park Avenue, or even the First National or the American Heritage where none of us dared to go even with friends, because we would have been treated like a Real Orientalfrom the Orient and Oh My! Christopher Columbus looked for you and couldn't find you, and here you are and we are so lucky! At that point our friends would get mad for us, and decide to change the world with us, but then we would go to college, and our friends would forget, and the Asian Americans would build a house where they could meet cute Asians, and apologize for all the rest.

Gary was sitting with his back toward me in an out-of-place, provincial 18th century upright chair. "Midori? Hi. Sit down."

"Hello," I said. "I've been looking forward to coming here. This work, as you know, has been important to me."

He smiled almost cynically. "It is to most young writers trying to publish for the first time."

I said nothing.

"Well, look," he said. "I don't want to keep you waiting, so I'll get right to the point. In all fairness to you, I should say I read your material, and I liked what I saw. I think you have an unusual gift for the art, and I hope you'll keep on with it. Now I had to say that. And I mean it."

"Well?" I said, in a cold and sinking feeling.

"Nothing," he said. "Just one and only thing. There are many things I regret. I regret that there might never be a good Asian American football player because of the way many of us are built. I regret that there may never be a top-rate Asian American movie star."

"What are you saying?" I said.

"I can't market this story. People just aren't interested, and there would be too many problems." He tossed it on the desk. "Sorry. Just can't do it. I know the patterns and I know it won't work. That is what I tell you."

"I don't understand. Is it mostly the matter of money then?" "No," he said. "I think you know that, and what I am saying."

"No, I don't," I said. "This is just a story, for a general audience but especially for the Sanseis to read before our culture becomes white culture, and we need it now, and you said the style would be okay. Don't be mysterious — What then?"

"It's not enough. You know what the problem is. Fact. Your own people are the ones that would stop this from getting to the press, they are the ones afraid it will offend someone, even if most people are ready. I can't say I disagree with them. You have no right to do something that they'll be held responsible for in those conditions."

"Gary." I was losing my skin. "There isn't going to be a boiling pot. As they will see."

He smiled and turned his chair. "You've got time. You find out the practical aspects in time. Don't worry, someone will come along. In the meantime write for yourself, and your friends. If I printed it now it wouldn't sell, and chances are the JACL wouldn't let it hit the stands anyway, for fear it would upset someone."

I looked up at the ceiling. "You know that isn't the point. I'm not writing for the JACL. I'm writing as any writer does about the reality some never experience, and most humanitarians will be receptive. Will be, Gary, I promise."

"That's not enough. You're coming to me, and as a publisher I know what sells, and there isn't enough interest in that to sell, and what interest there is is negative and from your own people." He leaned forward. "Now I'd love to help you, but it's all just an idea, a nice thought. You learn as a publisher, that some you sacrifice to be able to stay around and help more in the long run."

I stood up. "I can't answer that. But I can't understand the way you are talking either. I don't mind what you are saying, I've heard it before, and I respect it even if the reasoning is weak, but it's just that I never thought I would hear it from you. You because you had to resolve all of this to get where you are, you because you've come across this before."

The dean said we were young, and a little wild, and bright, and very beautiful.

He smiled that bitter expression. "I'm sorry, but I won't let you leave here under the misguided illusion that you are an anachronistic martyr. No, on second thought, it is best. If you can't take this, you can't take much. How much have you really seen? Poor misguided Asian American girl — did the white boys at high school refuse to ask you out? So you decided to dedicate yourself to race prejudice because you are a social misfit perhaps? When I was your age and writing, I was lucky to get jobs writing on cereal boxes — yes, did you know those were written by hand? By this yellow hand? You can't write, you can only name-call and yell and shout. And now tell me about your dreams for us, your great plans. None of you rebels looking for a cause know what is good for us, and it would make no difference in the end if you did!"

I tried to control my anger. "I don't know what happens to a person to make them want to base themselves to themselves. Some people do surgery on their eyes. Others don't have to — all the educated knife-work could not have done a better job of 'racial-ethical correction' than the operation you have done on your own mind and honor."

He laughed uncontrollably. "No. I can't be mad at you, dear. All Asian women are dear you know, out of their cold appearances. Do you think I'm a Tom then?" He started across the room at his shelf. "All the books I'm selling now are non-fiction, how-to books, or porno. You go and develop your skills there, write your first masterpiece and bring it back to me and we'll both make a fortune." He laughed again and repeated himself in Japanese, speaking like a buffoon to emphasize the humiliation of his point.

I opened the door. "I appreciate the time you spent." I said. "Your treatment was unnecessary. I came here for help. You have no principles. You cannot help."

He stood at the window with his back facing me again. "Stay where you are," he said in a low voice. "I'm not finished yet."

"We've said enough" I said. "There is no more."

He shoved the manuscript over to me. "Damn! You know what it is with you? It's the compliment you can't take, not the rejection or the lofty principles. You think your writing can't be improved, that they'll beg you for it as a token Asian writing." He paused, "You didn't ask me for help, you mouthed off, like your story. Unless you can write without mouthing off, no one will ever read them."

I was curious. "Are you offering to help me then? I'm not sure I. . ."

"I'm giving you my address on campus. Come over on Monday after my classes, say at 7:30, and we'll work on a new manuscript. Don't bring your pride."

I hated him, and doubted him, but I couldn't deny he was a good writer. "I won't water my work down."

He spoke strangely. "Your career is not going to be. Period, without my help. I think you know that. You won't have to water down."

"I don't know."

"It couldn't hurt you — unless you think your writing can't be improved."

"It's not that. . ."

"I don't see why I should be the one asking you," he said. "Unless you are afraid you won't be able to hold your goals without polluting them."

He added, "so to speak."

I ignored his provocation. "Let's keep it indefinite then."

"Good afternoon."

"Thank you." I couldn't add more. "Goodbye." The door closed behind me.

I walked out down the long hall again, through the hot lobby and across the street to the city park I had known well for many years. I had to think about what to do, whether I was wrong about some things. I knew I had acted inexperienced as a writer, and even a little hotheaded. I wondered if I had been unfair to Gary. But my responsibilities to him didn't extend to protecting an irrational opinion being passed off as the essence of the Asian American interest. I couldn't understand him, and what could happen to a person to make him want to stop thinking altogether if he was the type of man that had once had to think to be able to respect himself.

He had made me feel as if I should have looked at my roots of home, and day-to-day conflict with a sense of humor only. I could never laugh at the things he pointed out without making laughter as cruel and bitter a thing as his had been. I could still hear it, like a fatal disease that makes all favorite food taste like stale alcohol. Again I could feel the depression begin to erode me into being desert-like, out of it, nothing.

The city in the afternoon was very artistic, and calm, and orderly. Across the

street where I had been, there was a billboard with a California map and a yellow hand with long clawed fingernails creeping across it. Another hand had grabbed it at the wrist, and then there were the words, "Stop him. Vote for Daniel James in City Council." I thought Gary might disapprove on the grounds of its being bad politics. Things like that made me crazy when I was a kid, but now they just depressed me.

I sat on the bench like a transparency until I noticed that RichardSater was approaching me from across the park lawn. Richard and I had been close throughout the years, even though we disagreed to the final point about the Asian American issues. Richard was working for the paper now, and his powerful emotional-appeal editorial style could easily put the amount of pressure on publishers to keep my work unpublished. The only question was whether his personal friendship for me would alter his sensationalist approach that would, he knew, ruin me for what he sincerely believed to be his principles.

He sat down without a greeting, rather doggedly, and as if he were trying to apologize for what he felt he had to do.

"How did it go?" he said.

I was annoyed, because I was pretty sure he had already been to Hosokawa's. I didn't want to give him words to hurt me, and then I felt it hard to talk when people put me in the position where I had to defend myself. Lately that had been often. "I think you know," I said. "You came from Gary's office."

He looked smug, as if I was martyring him. "Now don't start. You always start."

"I'm sorry," I said. "Sometimes I think you try too hard to be diplomatic by passing things off for what they're not. I'm not asking you to do that. If you have something to say, do that."

He shifted. "Look, you know, or at least I am sure you have a pretty good idea of what we have to talk about. This isn't going to work at all if one of us is stubborn and unyielding, or hassles on words."

I said nothing. It was getting to the point where I knew what he was going to say to everything.

"Well I might as well start," he said. I can't say I expected to see it published, or wanted it. When I read things like your story I feel like I am being attacked as a white, and I think everyone in general will feel more strongly than me. I have to write this story, to convince Gary and others, that no good could possibly come of any manuscripts of this type." "That isn't true, Richard," I said. "The story challenged, but not attacked, frustrated but not discouraged the reader, and not as a white, but as anyone who holds a particular perception . . . Of course that can't be answered rationally."

"This has nothing to do with proving yourself," I said. "A person who sees others getting hassled for race, and reads about minorities till he thinks he knows what our movements are all about, could in fact have a lot less sensitivity and actual understanding than a person who has had no background, except a general love for people."

"Poor misguided Asian American girl — did the white boys at high school refuse to take you out?"

"I disagree!" he said. "I think that's all very well and nice, but this is how I honestly feel. I couldn't respect myself and my principles if I didn't try say to you what I will say in my article — that I think I am sitting next to a reverse racist who does nothing but call whites racist. I think you make up the movement for fashion out of yelling at whites."

I couldn't imagine how he brought things to this point. "Are we choosing sides now?" I asked. "I'm not so sure so many people would side with you. I'm sorry you feel the way you do, but I think it is unfortunate that when you do get called racist, you cannot see it as symptomatic of a deeper problem. Instead of listening to arguments, you react with emotion, and appeal to others' hysteria by trying to discredit us as being unthinking."

He smiled sadly. "I'm sorry. I think the hysteria is there, and should be brought out into the open."

"Then that is where you and I differ," I said. "I think it best to confront people with the truth and appeal to their rational ability and dignity because I think they are ready and can help, and because I sympathize with them as much as with us and don't like to see them debase themselves in ignorance. You feel threatened and you act only out of hate to cause hate."

He turned away. "You leave me no choice but to run this story. I have to for my own principles. I only regret it in that I respect you, and it will do harm to your immediate career, but I believe if you are a really good writer you can come through in other ways. Respect me for what I believe. You'll only intimidate people by this, cause a mass reaction. I think it too a particular mentality of bias to write this, and that it was childish and utopian."

"Personally, do you know what I think?" I said. "I think in a way your pride is hurt worse than anything. Pride in the sense that your educated theories on minorities, or this minority, didn't work — you were rejected by them, and you think it is because of skin? No, because there were so many others of your skin-type who didn't go through as much as you, but were accepted because they were simply ready to pridelessly love people, try to understand them, help them."

He stared angrily. "That finished it! The story goes to the press."

I couldn't believe it. Or perhaps it was that I didn't want to because he was a friend. "Don't try to control information, Richard. You don't have the right to make the judgment for everyone."

"That's what you can't seem to see," he said. "I'm not the one stifling, I'm holding the line——institutionalizing opposition to you so that people will argue with you without you and your followers intimidating them. You control the information, and it is you who are the propagandists."

"Propagandist!" I couldn't take that. "Because I care I find out information about our people, but so can anyone. People unwilling to find things out forfeit much of their say, because if they did act in those conditions, it would be in ignorance. I try to find the crux of people you say support you to inform them, but they hide in a maze of other concerns. That the people who care to make the effort are, in this case, extremists doesn't prove they stop or hurt others. You may be looking for things to interpret as reverse racism, but by the same token, I see nothing to support it or motivate it but your own bias. I'm sorry, but to me there is no other way to take that. In acting unthinkingly, you take away the ability of others by using their hysteria for your own purposes."

He rolled his eyes. "Oh here it comes. Up against the wall white pig! Well, for the record, I am not racist, I know your cause better than the average liberal on your side who doesn't really know what he's attaching himself to. If you think the majority of the world is more understanding, you are mistaken."

I looked at his face. "The sad part is you really believe this, because of your pride and your overconfidence in yourself. It is true what you say that there are many Asian Americans that hurt us worse than any by the same overconfident attitude. No one can dictate what it is to be Asian American, and you shouldn't presume to know, is all I'm saying."

He looked incredulous. "I lived with blacks and when someone called me a supremacist, they would all get up and leave, saying a discussion like that was pointless."

"I'm sorry, you still oversimplify the problem. We've gotten to a point where no progress can be made. In my opinion the greatest causes and leaders can fail if there is no basic humanitarian love behind what they are doing, no matter how sincerely they believe. Nothing good can come of your article. Go print your story," I said.

"Your mentality is just incredible! I

don't believe what I'm hearing!"

"I'm not going to apologize for what I said. This is pointless. We were friends. Can we possibly bring this back to a living situation? I have time for some coffee. You can buy since you know *your* story is going to run. No harm meant."

He smiled. "Sure. I wish this had been settled earlier." We walked back across the lawn. "You know, Midori," he said after a pause. "Two of my last girls split because they couldn't take my talking about all this."

"I have no doubt that you really mean it."

"But you think I'm racist."

"Yes. Not that many whites or people I should say."

"I really think I respect your opinion more than anyone's," he said.

"We are both unyielding; because of our lots we must be. Let's talk about something else."

"All right then," he said.

The coffee tasted bad. I wondered if it might have been better if we had been honest and come right out and said we hated each other, and ended it right there. I thought that my story wasn't going to be read now because of this man who had never known the day on the play yard fence, and yet thought he knew what was best for us and his followers.

Should a child forgive what was done to parents? Yes, but I could more easily forgive the things which happened to me.

I wondered about myself. My father had been the same age as me, 19, and going through dental school when they put him in camp. I wondered what I would do, whether I would just sit and bounce a basketball against the wall every day because there was nothing else to do. But then my mind is not as capable and active as my father's.

Should a child forgive what was done to parents? Yes, but I could more easily forgive the things which happened to me. I thought it was amazing that they could still respect and listen to people like Richard, even though he still hated them without right. And to most, this was just a fairy tale that didn't exist in the seventies anyway. Maybe we are just out of style.

After thinking about Richard's story being put out in the paper, I began to think in the next two days that the possibility of my story being published by anyone other than Gary Hosokawa's press was close to nothing. After several calls, I didn't have to just think it. If I wanted to write now, I would have to go on Monday night. But with sinking depression I knew I had no illusion that it would involve less than editing and style dictation. I had to stop Richard, I had no choice.

The lights were on in Gary's apartment. I rang twice and he came to the door in a robe and let me in.

"Hello," he said in a much warmer tone than his office one. "I'm surprised. I didn't think you would come."

"Neither did I," I said.

"I was thinking about your story," he said. "I think it has possibilities now. You had a part about an Asian male and a white female. I think you might work on that for — suggestive possibilities."

"That was just a minor part, and I never intended. . ."

"Asian American women are good pieces who don't belong to white men."

"Now wait! I think you could get a lot of mileage out of that. People see this as forbidden fruit. Asian men are always seen as effeminate, too, I think we need to hold the line. But enough about this story. That'll give you enough to go on, I have no intention of actually listening to your writing tonight. Later perhaps. . ."

"You've got to listen," I said. "Your reasoning is not understandable and this session is for. . ."

"For you. For one of our women who is going to realize that Asian American women are good pieces who don't belong to white men."

I tried to control my anger. "I came to talk about writing. I don't think you realize what that story in the paper is going to do. You are my last resource, and I am going to pretend like I didn't hear that."

He was staring unfixedly. "You have such eyes. How old are you?"

"Listen to me,"listen to me listen to me, I seemed to mock myself, I had said it so many times lately. "Please," I added miserably.

"I can't sell our women off as easily to whatever you are: an Asian face, an Asian name — but what then?"

He moved toward me. "I am listening. To what is good for your career, to the only way you can help yourself as a writer, as one of the people."

I pushed him off. "A person would have to really hate herself to go along with you. I can't sell our women off as easily to whatever you are: an Asian face, an Asian name — but what then? One more dangerous in the end. Because you're fooling yourself, and for that you must have others to go along with you."

He laughed again — the tasteless unlaugh. "This is the last mistake you'll be able to make as a potential writer. What were you trying to do? Well, never mind. If you decide you still want to be an Asian American writer, you will come back. I will not even need to wait. You will come back as a woman, and I'm afraid I will have to make it harder. We have to thin out the herds, you know."

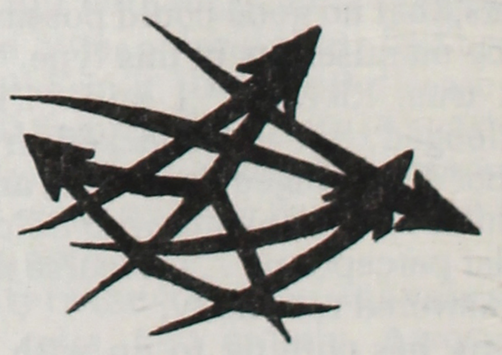
I took up my coat and threw open the door. Halfway down the stairs, I turned to see him laughing again. I paused.

"There it is." I said softly. "I don't even know who between us was the banana, the fool, the pathetic. I was willing to go half with you." I looked up. He was still laughing. "Well, it doesn't matter much now for me if people don't believe my writing anyway because of the prerequisites you all put on us to become known anyway, in this place. We are a fine pair! I stopped. He wasn't listening.

"We're cartoon Asians talking in bubbles written by other people and made of still frames that flick together to make us alive."

"Hey Gary?" I shouted at his window. "Hey Gary! Do you know what we are? We're cartoon Asians talking in bubbles written by other people and made of still frames that flick together to make us alive. Do you hear that? You love to sink through the dark pathetic debasement of our cause, and I hate you and I am like you, in a way. Don't let the cats scratch at our separate temples. You don't want to have what I say come out, but in repressing it, it is always with you. Asian American Women — that's right — do we castrate you? You yourself did that and just you alone. You are the fence ofconcentration now! You and Richard. And we are all to blame!"

I left him and there was nowhere to go here, no more appealing. In the back of my mind the cold winds of oncoming depression swirled in waterless waves. But how could there be any more to say? There would come periods of memory-lapse now, and in consciousness,I would come back as a transparency to the play yard fence where the face-cells were multiplying. Only now the faces were our faces too.



An Interview with Connie Young Yu

by Julie Hatta and Claire Koga



"I do emphasize that the psychological problems are just so different between Third World women and white women."

Connie Young Yu has been active in Asian American affairs for many years in the Bay area. Although she is involved in all facets of the Movement, much of her efforts have centered on eliminating racist stereotypes from the media. She works through organizations such as Chinese for Affirmative Action, Asian Americans for Community Involvement, the Legal Compliance Committee of California, and the Dupont Guy Radio Collective. Her work is completely freelance — she does her own research.

Connie is also a housewife and has three children. For her, as well as many women involved in community and volunteer tasks, working around the children's schedule to fulfill both family and personal needs is a way of life: "I'd like to have my family too; I don't want a full-time job." Nevertheless, she reluctantly admits that her extent of involvement would actually constitute more than a full-time job. So how does she do it? How did she get started? And what keeps her going? How does she perceive herself as an Asian American woman?

As she answered these and other questions in an interview, we were impressed at how warm and sensitive she was, without compromising confidence and determination.

Connie was born in Los Angeles and lived near a small town; then her family moved to a tiny apartment in Chinatown. Hearing the sewing machines running all night in the factory next door made her very aware that this was a ghetto. When her family wanted to move out of Chinatown just twenty years ago, they could not really do it without the help of a white friend who bought the house in his name and then sold it to them. As it was, a petition was circulated in the then all-white neighborhood to keep them out — "You see, it's hard to believe that this was twenty years ago, but now it's an all-Chinese neighborhood."

Connie attended Mills College, which was "very elitist," and received her B.A. in English. "There, I was with whites all the time — the only things I had to identify with were whites. And if I wanted to write, the only thing that would be good to write about was something that the white audience would read. So all the people that I wrote about were white, I even won some literary prizes for these kinds of things — You know, just a total identification with white culture. There was no other outlet for creativity at that time. No one wrote about Chinese, cause you'd never get it published unless you make it really cutesy-wootsy, like 'Flower Drum Song.' It's just amazing how, if you were in a situation where no one ever talks about ethnic studies, no one ever talks about race, and then you have no support. Support is the main thing for movements to get off the ground."

"It's funny how I felt so liberated when I started writing about Asian Americans from the point of view I have now. Just like — free!"

"We never even used the word 'racism' in the Fifties. It was called 'prejudice' or 'discrimination' — 'racism' very hardly."

A New Point of View

"After Mills I went to San Francisco State — to a 'streetcar college.' And then I came into contact with more Third World people and my values started changing. I did start to write about my own experiences. I felt more honest, better. It's funny how I felt so liberated when I started writing about Asian Americans from the point of view I have now. Just like — free! I think discrimination is very subtle for Asian Americans, but they feel just as confined and segregated as blacks.

"The first thing I really got into was this *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* — that was the first thing I did with my new point of view. When I first did Chinese American history, it was not from an Asian woman's point of view — it was curiosity. You know, it had no depth or perspective other than I was proud of my heritage; and the early articles I wrote were research articles on how brave the Chinese pioneers were. As I got deeper and deeper into studying Chinese American history I got into hearing about a lot of racism, a lot of violence, and I was really stunned. You know, I think you can be fairly sheltered from realizing that there were incredible massacres. And then I thought 'My God, there's a lot going on.' "

Racism

"And then I made some associations with other minority groups that had been and were being under attack — Japanese Americans, and Pilipino Americans; you know, no longer could racism be isolated. We never even used the word 'racism' in the Fifties. It was called 'prejudice' or 'discrimination' — 'racism' very hardly. I think there was a lot of fear. We used softer words for everything.

"What really got me into the movement was Vietnam. You see, I just realized that it was a racist war. And again, it was Asians being kicked and again you had Asian women as prostitutes; the good Asians are always the cutesy-wootsy chicks and the lackey men who go and carry the rifles for the whites — I could make the connection. So there's nothing really isolated in U.S. policy. I mean this is very sloganish — the imperialism abroad, and the imperialism at home. Chinatowns are really like colonized areas. It's the same policy — you get the natives and you make them real pacified — just like you had the Vietnamization."

Stereotypes

As part of her work on the media committees, Connie guest lectures on how unjustly the media has portrayed Asians since the beginning of their history in the United States. She points out that the image of Asian as either very exotic, or very sinister, unsympathetic characters have improved almost imperceptibly, and how films, radio, magazines, newspapers, and television still perpetuate them. She contends that Asians are always portrayed as foreign; unless the character is Eurasian, with half Caucasian blood, there is no attempt to create a character with which white audiences can empathize: "America is generally screwed up about basic concepts of its own identity in that it has a very narrow viewpoint, and that ideal is usually WASP." She believes that the problem is deeper than just "weird" views of Asians or Asian Americans.

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Her participation in media also includes membership in the Legal Compliance Committee which was set up by the state in an effort to eliminate racism in textbooks used by California schools. The organization consists of volunteer members from various ethnic groups. Being part of a multi-ethnic organization, she feels very strongly that there are many common things happening with Asian American, Chicano, and Indian women. Interaction with other minorities has emphasized the fact that discrimination is not an "exclusive situation." "It's really exciting being involved with all these Third World projects because we just think, 'God! Look at this — and we just trade off (examples of racism)' — and I think you gather a lot of strength this way. Because then people can't say you're just picky because you're Chinese or Japanese — you can point out that their whole concepts are off!"

Feminism

Concerning her identification with the women's movement, she explains, "Initially, I didn't relate to white women's feminism. Because even if I may live near them, I don't have the same priorities. Their priorities are, essentially, abortion — equal jobs — which I can understand. But the value system is very different (for them): less family-oriented and less poverty-oriented. I mean, like I was a delegate to the Democratic Convention for McGovern in '72, and whenever there were women's caucuses, Third World women just weren't involved at all. 'Cause some Chicano women looked upon abortion as genocide. Like Ying Lee Kelly, a Chinese councilwoman in Berkeley just told Shirley McLaine, 'Look, we just don't have the same priorities. I must say that even if I'm in this caucus, that I identify with Third World women and that the priorities that you enumerate are not my priorities.' I think that what we're more concerned with is survival. And I think that early in the Movement, there was strong support of the male — the male is being oppressed too — so we are against racism first. And of course, that's not the first priority of the Feminist Movement."

But after working with a group of women in the Bay Area on a bicentennial patchwork quilt, she began to gain a broader perspective. Connie did the historical research and writing for the book, **The People's Bicentennial Quilt: A Patchwork History** which is an illustrated account of the project — a concerted effort by a group of women to celebrate some of the "hidden, forgotten, or distorted" events in history "to show how women and men and children fought, suffered and died for rights and privileges we take for granted." The quilt itself was to be "a symbolic, tangible object of our feelings about our 200 years of history" (quotes from introduction of **A Patchwork History**). The women were of various ethnic, racial, and political backgrounds, and had gathered to express the resentment they all felt toward the commercialized and very limited perspectives of the Bicentennial presented in the media.



"Like I could really empathize with how white women were being screwed and exploited, too. Reviewing textbooks, now I look for sexism, too. I don't ever want to put down the Women's Movement because it's won so many things. It's mainly style and priorities so that I don't

feel as akin to it as the Third World movement. I really feel good when I'm involved with Third World women. Like in the convention I was always in the Third World caucus. I mean, I can do stereotypes, too — all these shrill white women yelling and screaming about abortion — and I thought, 'My God!' That's not to say Third World women aren't in favor of it also, it's just not the first thing that comes into our mind. . . . I do emphasize that the psychological problems are just so different between Third World women and white women."

"I felt that here I was — a housewife — and I get to publish something!"

Asian American Women

As a writer and active member of many organizations in the Bay Area, she has had some "interesting experiences as a woman doing these kinds of things," since she was, at times, the only woman involved with a group of men. She realizes that a number of men she works with are chauvinistic, yet admits that her "First feeling was — 'God! I get included!' " At this point, she says with exasperation, "you know, there I was catering again. I felt that here I was — a housewife — and I get to publish something! And you know, I certainly didn't challenge them on any sexist attitudes until much later, till I became more confident.

As for dealing with the sexist attitudes of so-called "brothers," in the movement, Connie suggested that "you need to talk to them and to get other women to talk to them; I think this is such a sexist society, it's very hard." It bothers her, nevertheless, that some of her male co-workers who are so sensitive to racism, are so insensitive to the sexism which she feels strongly. Her tactic is to point this out, to "make analogies about it."

"When I work with the Dupont Guy collective I feel really good because we do things. When you work together a lot of these things can be brought up. I don't think we've had any problems with sexism there. Everyone does what we can. It has been such a good experience that I'm not so cynical." She had worked on a show previously, which was both racist and sexist, where the crew never showed women how to do anything. "It was just intolerable! You just can't fight it — you just have to leave."

Reflecting on her involvement in the Asian American Movement, Connie says, "I came out of my shell, so to speak, with the help of the Movement. So the whole story in this is that I learned what I could do and learned how to manage my own talents — to gain more confidence because I didn't have it for a long time — mainly because I didn't want to go back to graduate school. I hate the constrictions of academia. Therefore, I don't have any title; I can't say I'm working towards my Master's or Ph.D. I have to say, well, I just do research on my own, you know. And there's sort of a stigma against people like that." Working within the Movement, she was able to channel herself into areas she was attracted to, and make meaningful contributions.

Besides radio work, Connie has been involved in film-making. The National Endowment for the Arts funded "Jung Sai," which was co-written by her. It focuses on a young Asian American exploring her historical roots in California. Describing how the film was conceived by an all Asian American crew, Connie recalls, "I loved working with the crew — working with other Asian American women, mainly the younger ones, who have different experiences than mine. They reached puberty during the time of the Movement, and it's very different when everything's happening and then when nothing's happening."

"Growing up in the Fifties was so crazy because there was a lot of this Suzy Wong stuff going on. It was the heyday of exotica for Asian women."

While "Jung Sai" was an attempt to discover and relate the historical experiences of Chinese Americans, the film "Making Up" makes a blatant social statement on Asian American women today. The preoccupation with make-up to achieve certain ideals of beauty was a provocative subject for a film. She remembers that "growing up in the Fifties was so crazy because there was a lot of this Suzy Wong stuff going on. It was the heyday of exotica for Asian women. They had so many series involving slinky women. And a lot of my friends were extras — it was horrible, but there was no other way that they could get into anything. You know, there was nothing else for them to do, except to suit the image. And I was so surprised — I met this woman — she had four kids, you know, and she mentioned she was in a series called 'Hong Kong.' And I asked her, 'What were you?' and she says, 'you know — a prostitute — what else?' . . .And women really emphasized their eyes. I mean as far as make-up, Max Factor really made a wad in those days, on just eye-liner alone." The decision to make the film "Making Up" was spontaneous on the part of Curtis Choy, who picked up on Connie's idea.

An Asian American Women's Movement?

We discussed whether or not an Asian American Women's Movement existed within the Asian American Movement. Connie felt that since both men and women have suffered racial discrimination, for the present, that struggle came before anything else; "You know, priorities." "In the late sixties, there were lots of Asian women's publications — such as *Gidra*'s issue on "Asian Women," bringing out things like the only contact white men have had with Asian women were as prostitutes during the wars. A lot of interesting writing came out — although I thought a lot of it was very artificial and too forced. You know, some people who never had these experiences and had had to assume suddenly that they had them — to be part of the Third World women.

"There was, in the late 60's, a tremendous identification with the Vietnamese woman liberation fighter, etc. — the new image of the Asian American woman. It was the most positive one that we've ever had; you know, it wasn't lotus blossom and all that. And that sort of died out because there was no way we could actually achieve that ourselves. There's resistance and organization, but we do have to get back to our own situation."

If this was true, we wondered if an Asian American who's grown up with white middle-class values could identify with the struggles of poor Asians such as the garment workers in Chinatown; and if so, how does she justify it? Connie replied, "If she is concerned about feminism at all and garment workers are on strike, there's a chance for her to help. She shouldn't assume the role of the oppressed — that would be artificial and false. I think there's a lot of chances for us to show our support, and I think that we should take advantage of them all. I used to feel kind of funny about this,too — but I do think that I can give a better perspective of the Chinese garment worker than, say, a white woman — and if I had to write about it, I'd go ahead and write about it."

We felt that another source of conflict for a middle-class Asian American woman would be her tendency to identify more with the Feminist Movement than the Asian American Movement because its priorities might be more relevant to her. Connie thought that in her own case, she never questioned where her alliances were since her strong family ties were a constant reminder of a Chinese American background. But she says, "I think that it's a conflict that can be resolved, if there were a conflict for some woman. For instance, if she were really well off and lived in an area where they were the only

Asian family, but felt that women were discriminated against because they couldn't get loans and are not on the Supreme Court; but if her relatives started moving to the area and were discriminated again, the distinction between racism and sexism could be bridged."

Free-Lancing

Much of Connie's work revolves around the media committee for Chinese for Affirmative Action, and Asian Americans for Community Involvement. "You see," she explains, "I'm sort of in an interesting situation. Most of the people I know are hustling gigs all the time. So I would feel kind of guilty — I'm sort of in a privileged situation — a lot of them are unemployed who are on the media committee. I can free-lance when I want to, I don't have to depend on wages. I mean, I write articles for money, and I refuse to be exploited anymore. I used to get much less than men, or much less than people with degrees, and I'd write the same amount — and I'd accept it! Because I thought, 'Oh boy! I'm included!'

"And now when I do in-service training, I'd ask for a fee — I expect a fee, I won't do it for free anymore. Not because I need it so much, but because you have to do that, or they'll think, 'Oh, look — Asians'll do it for free.' So they'll ask the next person, maybe a community person who needs the money, to do it for free — I had set a precedent. I used to do it, because I didn't know what I was doing. And once I started getting money, I always got money. Then I could donate it to whomever I wanted, (or) if I did it under the auspices of CAA, they get the money."

By doing free-lance and volunteer work, she can also fulfill her duties as a housewife and mother. "Many community worker friends of mine, work around the children's schedules — but that's because we want a traditional home, too— we want the best of both worlds. What I consider important to me is — I'd like to have a family too — I don't want a full-time job. Like men I know, who are involved with affirmative action — they're just like bureaucrats — they do it full-time, but that doesn't mean that they're any better at it."

Frustrations and Aspirations

"It really gets boring talking about stereotypes and I hate writing these letters to radio stations in answer to editorials, racist advertising, etc. (As part of her media-monitoring responsibilities.) I know it has to be done — somebody has to do it. It would be nice to share the workload; to get more people — housewives can be consumer watches, and there are many programs for volunteers. In the late '60's and early '70's, women got into it because it was the 'thing' to do, just as much as any other movement. Those who really stayed with it are the ones who really understand what it's all about."

Her personal ambitions since the eighth grade has been to be a writer, but "everything I have written is non-fiction, mainly because I've been political. I mean, I haven't even written anything that I really want to write — fiction. You see, I mainly wanted to be a story writer .... What I'd like to do, eventually — I would not like to talk about stereotypes any more. I'd like to talk about novels — the new writing, that really breaks the stereotyping, that talks about real Asian experiences."

But for now, she feels compelled to channel her energies in a different direction, and consoles herself, shrugging, "Oh well, fiction — that's for later, when you have more time and more fun." And she concludes, with determination, "I'd like to write a novel someday — as soon as I get done with all this other junk!"



YELLOW

Yellow is the warmth on your back
on a cold winter windy day as
you sit very still feeling it grow
right through

Yellow is the daisy pushing up to the sky
only to be stopped short, you *think*
but it has *really touched that sky, but*

Yellow can be running scared, or
just tainted with dust and age, or
sour lemons, or gilded bananas, but

Yellow is the cream of the crop
as wheat fields sway in time, or
as ripened corn waits to drop, and

Yellow is the flashing light that brightens
a room, or a night, or
a mind, or a life, and

Yellow is you and me, not traces
always yellow, not always knowing
but proud we are together, yellow faces.

–Anonymous



About the Authors

Verna Abe is a senior from Gardena, California, and is majoring in music. She has been co-coordinator of the Asian American Minority Admissions Committee for the past year.

Ann Chao is from Anchorage, Alaska. She is a junior planning to design a pre-med and inter-personal communication major. Currently, Ann is "stopping out" for a few quarters, and living in Colorado Springs. Being in the southwest, with no family support structure, and hardly any Asian community to speak of, she is experiencing for the first time what it's like to be "one yellow face in a crowd." She plans to return to Stanford in the fall of 1977.

Julie Hatta, from Hartsdale, New York, is a sophomore majoring in Japanese and humanities. She will be a staff member of the Asian American Theme House at Stanford next year.

Claire Koga, from Pasadena, California, is a senior in biology. This year she has been a staff member of the Asian American Theme House at Stanford. She will be at U.S.C. med school this fall.

Elaine Koyama graduated from Stanford in winter quarter as a political science major. She is originally from Montana, and is now considering a career in marketing.

Lori Matsukawa is a sophomore from Aiea, Hawaii, majoring in communication and American Studies. She is a reporter for **The Stanford Daily** and a broadcaster-news engineer for KZSU; Lori is aspiring toward a future in broadcast journalism.

Leigh-Ann Miyasato, from Honolulu, Hawaii, is a senior majoring in Japanese. She has been active throughout her years at Stanford in University committees and Asian American affairs. For the past two years she has been a staff member of the Asian American Theme House. This fall she will be attending law school.

Mary Morimoto is a freshman this year. Her special interests are philosophy, ethnic literature, music, and speech. For Mary, literature is a better means of change for Asian Americans since it appeals to individuals on a more personal level than political propaganda.

Grace Morizawa lives in Berkeley and teaches preschool in Oakland. Her psychic energy as a poet comes from her work in the community. She comes from Ontario, Oregon, where many Japanese Americans settled during World War II in order to avoid internment in the relocation camps.

Dorothy Munehiro is a freshman from Palo Alto. She looks forward to being a staff member of the Asian American Theme House at Stanford next year.

Lynn Nakayama is from Honolulu, Hawaii. She is a senior majoring in anthropology. She has always tried to apply "broad theories of racism to Asian Americans, since so often they are neglected."

Jovina Navarro has been active in developing Asian American Studies at San Francisco State and at the University of California at Davis, where she is now an instructor. She recently earned a Ph.D. in psychology, has taught courses on Asian American women, and is involved in community activities in San Francisco.

Charlene Shimada is a senior in political science. She is originally from Honolulu, Hawaii, and will be attending Boalt Hall School of Law this fall. She has been active in the Stanford Asian Students Coordinating Committee as co-chairperson, and has planned Asian American events as part of the staff at the Asian American Theme House.

Lynn Wakatsuki from Honolulu, Hawaii, is a sophomore transfer student from Pomona College. She is majoring in political science.

Rowena Wildin, from Algona, Iowa, is a sophomore majoring in Japanese. She hopes someday for a career involving translation.









