

“Image”-ing Otherwise: the Ambivalent Politics of
Asian American Visual Self-Representation in the post-1965 Era

Sunny Zheng
Senior Thesis, Department of History
Haverford College
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Readers:
Professor Andrew Friedman
Professor Bethel Saler
Professor Alexander Kitroeff

Abstract

The post-1965 period was a time of growing Asian American visibility alongside massive sociopolitical unrest, both of which threatened the stability of the U.S. racist capitalist system. During this time, U.S. national culture and Asian Americans contended over the visual forms that would lend Asian visibility political coherence; the “model minority,” the “Asian American,” and the Asian suburbanite were three manifestations of these visual politics. Focusing on Los Angeles as an Asian American population center, this thesis will examine visual evidence from the early model minority press (1966), the Asian American Movement's L.A.-based press (1969-1974), and visual representations of built spaces in L.A.'s San Gabriel Valley Asian-majority suburb to synthesize an Asian American visual critique that unsettles the fixity of U.S. national racial imaging and rethinks the history of the politics of how Asian American visibility took form.

In piecing together a history of three unstable, intersecting visual narratives surrounding a highly volatile American subject, this thesis hopes to recuperate the urgent ambivalence of the radical '60s “Asian American” identity, locating roots of contemporary theoretical interventions in the archives of the movements/counter-movements of the mid-1960s. The ambiguous and ambivalent ways Asian Americans visually self re-present constitute a “politics of refusal” that embraces Asian America's “coherent incoherence” and denies the American mainstream the ability to regulate (and narrate) Asian immigrant presence in America. The inability to define Asian America allows it a continual liminality that imperils static racial formations that serve to uphold U.S. national culture. Within these visual archives, the lack of a fixed Asian American visual subject lends the identity its power and needs to be seen as crucial to the struggle over the public presence of Asian Americans in the U.S. post-1965 era.

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Introduction

I. Ambivalent Imaging: A Tale of Three Asian American Subjects

In the mid-1960s, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Hart-Cellar Act of 1965, and the Berkeley Free Speech Movement of 1964-65 catalyzed a series of radical power movements under the New Left that called for social and political changes to the existing structures of racism, sexism, and imperialism in America. While the New Left is often historically framed as a primarily white counterculture operation, people of color were central to the movement's radical politics. By 1966, the Civil Rights Movement had largely transitioned into the Black Power Movement under the Black Panther Party. The Panthers, recognizing that the legislative changes gained by civil rights activists did not secure the end of institutionalized racism, stressed Black nationalism and self-determination as a means of attaining lasting sociopolitical agency. Spurred by the rise of Black Power, Latin@s, American Indians, and Asian Americans also rallied under banners of brown, red, and yellow power in the late '60s.¹

During this turbulent period, Asian subjects entered the national American public in three new forms: the model minority, the radical "Asian American," and the Asian suburbanite. These three parallel entities were birthed from a series of U.S. national racial imagings and radical Asian American counter-imagings, both reflecting and delineating greater pan-Asian visibility in the U.S. following 1965. All three Asian "images" in America engaged the visual as a central terrain of struggle.

After the 1965 Immigration Act selectively increased professional/skilled Asian immigration to the U.S and saw the end of anti-Asian quotas that had blocked Asian migration in the first half of the 20th century, major national publications such as the *New York Times* coined the "model minority" theory in 1966 to regulate the perceived threat of Asian American

¹ Laura Pulido, *Black, Brown, Yellow, and Left: Radical Activism in Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 2-6

economic success. The American mainstream – what Lisa Lowe terms “U.S. national culture” – is grounded in the perceived norms and values that historically defined U.S. citizenship as white and male, while politically, socially, economically, and culturally excluding nonwhites and women from the American national body.² This national culture, embodied in the (white) popular press, used photographs of Asian figures within the first model minority articles to piece together an inherently contradictory narrative of a “model” American who was also a “minority” and thus, would never enter the American mainstream for which it served as prototype. The “model minority” image presented the Asian subject as a benevolent menace who could “out-white” white Americans in their pursuit of the American dream, reifying the capitalist ideals of the U.S. nation while invalidating the socioeconomic protests of other racial minorities at the start of the New Left movement – actively isolating Asians from those minorities. Depicting only Asian American subjects who succeeded along conservative capitalist standards to the American public, this myth visually obscured a history of U.S. anti-Asian labor exploitation and legal exclusion while subsuming ethnic, socioeconomic, and regional differences between Asian immigrant communities into a singular racialization of Asians in America.

In 1968, the Asian American Movement began on college campuses across California, partnering with Black and Brown Power movements to rally for changes to the existing American sociopolitical system. Before 1968, Asian immigrant communities splintered along ethnic, class, and generational lines, living in separate urban enclaves concentrated in San Francisco and Los Angeles. In order to achieve greater sociopolitical impact through increased visibility, the Asian American Movement created an “Asian American” radical identity based on ethnic, class, and generational difference, piecing together disparate Asian subjectivities into a

² Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant acts: on Asian American cultural politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 27

subversively unstable political entity. It did so through the visual technique of collage: from the Movement's inception, the Asian American radical press cut and pasted sketches and photographs of different Asian subjects into an ambivalent whole whose radical power rested on its inability to be consistently imaged and defined.

At the same time, Asians began to move into the suburbs, following freeway construction and the development of new and affordable housing tracts from the 1950s to early 1960s. The Asian suburbanite materialized in the first model minority press articles, but did not gain visual prominence until the 1970s-80s Reagan era. As the model minority image and radical Asian American activists converged in the suburbs after the radical '60s, the Asian suburbanite became the central figure that carried both visual narratives into the contemporary era. In suburbia, the visual terrain of Asian American visibility became three-dimensional as the American mainstream and Asian American media attempted to respectively fix and unsettle Asian identity through re-presentations of built commercial space.

The post-1965 period was a time of growing Asian American visibility alongside sociopolitical unrest, both of which had the potential to socially, politically, and economically challenge the stability of the U.S. racist capitalist system. During this time, U.S. national culture and Asian Americans contended over the visual forms that would lend Asian visibility political coherence, and thus, would define the nature of Asian American politics. The "model minority," the "Asian American," and the Asian suburbanite were three arenas of this visual politics; all three are crucial to Asian American history because in imaging the Asian subject, they seek to define Asian American identity in the post-65 moment. Focusing on Los Angeles as an Asian American population center, this thesis will examine visual evidence from the early model minority press (1966), the Asian American Movement's L.A.-based press (1969-1974), and

visual representations of built spaces in L.A.'s San Gabriel Valley Asian-majority suburb to synthesize an Asian American visual critique that unsettles the fixity of U.S. national racial imaging and rethinks the history of the politics of how Asian American visibility took form.

The ambivalent ways Asian Americans visually self re-present constitute a “politics of refusal” that embraces what Jodi Kim calls Asian America’s “coherent incoherence”³ and denies the American mainstream both a totalizing knowledge of the Asian American experience and the ability to regulate (and narrate) Asian immigrant presence in America. The inability to define Asian America allows it a continual liminality that imperils static racial formations that serve to uphold U.S. national culture. Within these visual archives, the lack of a fixed Asian American visual subject lends the identity its power and needs to be seen as crucial to the struggle over the public presence of Asian Americans in the U.S. after 1965.

II. Writing Obscurity: Histories of Transient Asian American Subjects

This thesis works across three parallel histories of Asian American subjectivity that emerged in the ‘60s: the model minority myth, the Asian American Movement, and Asian suburbanization. Though they arose in the same period, the scholarship of these three new subjectivities differ in chronology: histories of the model minority began in the late 1970s/early 1980s, Asian American Movement histories started in the early 1990s, and studies of Asian suburbanization began in the late 1990s/early 2000s. Though sometimes slipping into one another as peripheral information, these histories are largely treated as independent phenomenon.

Histories of the model minority myth reflect its ambiguous nature. Early model minority scholars, such as Bob Suzuki (1977) and Roger Daniels (1988), began citing William Petersen’s

³ Jodi Kim, *Ends of empire: Asian American critique and the Cold War* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 6

1966 *New York Times* article as the birthplace of the “model minority.” Though Petersen does first articulate the myth’s basic premise: the stereotype that Asian Americans (namely, Japanese Americans shortly after WWII internment) have “succeeded” in the “rags-to-riches” American Dream more than any other racial minority group in the U.S, he never uses the term “model minority.” While the term became wildly cycled in major U.S. magazines/newspapers by the 1980s – the first possible use of “model minority” as a term, at least in a publication’s title, was *Newsweek*’s 1982 “Asian Americans: a ‘Model Minority’”⁴ – the genesis of “model minority” remains unclear as historians continue to inaccurately point to Petersen as the original author.⁵ This historic uncertainty illustrates the nature of a myth: lacking clear origin yet continually re-presented to the American national imaginary. Even for the first historians in the field who largely upheld the myth, the model minority appeared as a ghostly tale.

Model minority scholarship arose in the late 1970s/early 1980s Reagan era, a time of capitalist neo-conservative backlash against the radical politics of the 1960s. This state of American politics, combined with a global recession and rising Asian influence on the international market, spurred a new wave of anti-Asian sentiment in the U.S. and encouraged the return of the model minority myth to rationalize and contain the Asian “threat.” In response, Asian American historians attempted to critique the model minority theory through revisionist history. In 1976, Legan Wong framed the myth as an act of scapegoating Asian Americans for the failure of the U.S. sociopolitical system.⁶ Bob Suzuki attempted to complicate the model minority “thesis” by pointing towards the history of socioeconomic barriers against Asian

⁴ “Asian Americans: a ‘Model Minority,’” *Newsweek* (December 6, 1982)

⁵ Edith Wen-Chu Chen and Grace J. Yoo, *Encyclopedia of Asian American Issues Today, Volume 1* (ABC-CLIO, December 23, 2009), 222–223.

⁶ Legan Wong, “The Chinese experience: From yellow peril to model minority” in *Civil Rights Digest* 9:1 (1976), 35

Americans that continued to relegate them to “lower-echelon white collar workers” despite their apparent movement towards the middle-class white mainstream.⁷

The largest body of model minority work, however, spans from the late 1990s to the present: with the rise of Asian American studies, the increased visibility of Asian suburbanization, and the Immigration Act of 1990, which helped to reinforce the model minority myth by encouraging immigration of skilled Asian professionals to the United States. These recent histories critique the myth as a harmful narrative created by the national mainstream as a means of attacking other racial minorities, while isolating Asian Americans, during a time of rising minority-based sociopolitical protest in the mid-1960s. Historians like Okihiro (1994) and Lee (1999) helped to reveal how the myth perpetuates the illusory ideals of national assimilation in the immigrant’s “American Dream” and is a permutation of the more blatantly sinister “Yellow Peril” image employed against Chinese immigrants in the 1800s – using the same language of threat and call for containment. Current historians agree that this myth continues to situate Asian Americans as perpetual outsiders defined against both blackness and whiteness in the American landscape – “a part but apart”⁸

Historical model minority myth scholarship has largely reached a stasis. The most recent study, Ellen Wu’s *The Color of Success* (2014), recycles earlier historical critique within a larger framework of Chinese and Japanese immigration history. The majority of current model minority scholars are sociologists concerned with disproving the myth through qualitative studies instead of seeking to unsettle the narrative by reimagining its historical narrative. To reach greater transformative historical dialogue within the field, the model minority narrative must be visually

⁷ Bob Suzuki, “Education and the Socialization of Asian Americans: A Revisionist Analysis of the ‘Model Minority’ Thesis” in *Amerasia Journal* 4:2 (1977): 44-45

⁸ Nazli Kibria, *Becoming Asian American: second-generation Chinese and Korean American identities* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 157

deconstructed alongside parallel narratives of Asian identity in the post-1965 period: the radical “Asian American” and the Asian suburbanite.

Asian American Movement scholarship provides a more dynamic dialogue surrounding the invisibility of the movement’s history, the multiplicity of “Asian American” identity, and the Asian American relationship to other racial minorities. Even though historians wrote on power movements in the radical ‘60s well beforehand, William Wei’s *The Asian American Movement* in 1993 was the movement’s first significant history – appearing at the same time as major histories critiquing the model minority myth. Wei paints a sweeping narrative from the movement’s inception among SF State and UC Berkeley college students in the 1968 anti-Vietnam War protests and TWLF (Third World Liberation Front) strikes to its ebb into reformist electoral politics in the ‘80s “yuppie” era. He characterizes the movement as “largely invisible,” which, unlike its main influence, the Black Panther party, addressed local socioeconomic injustice without larger national aims or a central leader. Wei ambiguously defines “Asian American” identity as a new “communal consciousness,” a “unique culture,” and a new category of racial belonging which validated “ethnic pluralism” and helped to unite and mobilize Asian ethnic communities to achieve political visibility. He maintains that the Asian American Movement is “invisible” to the mainstream American public, despite birthing this new collective idea and creating the field of Asian American studies.⁹

Reifying Wei’s claim of “invisibility,” subsequent histories have literally written the Asian American Movement’s continued obscurity as a radical minority movement that was part of the ‘60s’ New Left (Gosse, 2005), international Maoism (Elbaum, 2002), and multiracial feminism (Thompson, 2002). Gosse, for instance, devotes several chapters to Black Power,

⁹ William Wei, *The Asian American movement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 1, 3-4, 274

collapses “Red, Brown, and Yellow Power” into one chapter, and within that chapter, crowds Asian Americans and Puerto Ricans into a single-page section because both were “less visible” – Asian Americans particularly “hard[er] to locate” – than Chican@s and Native Americans.¹⁰ To justify the length of a movement’s narrative by the invisibility of its existing history is to unintentionally perpetuate the U.S. national project of obscuring the roots of Asian American radical identity. Liu et al (2008) have tried to address this historiographical invisibility by locating the movement within a longer 19th-21st century history of Asian ethnic-specific protest against anti-Asian U.S. policies – such as Asian American organizing to abolish Asian student university quotas in the 1980s. However, in seeking to render the Asian American movement visible by emphasizing its continuity, Liu and his co-authors sink the full complexity of the movement into further obscurity by linking its radical ‘60s politics to the reform-based protests and electoral politics of the Reagan era.

Recent histories return to critique and nuance Wei, focusing on the relationship of “Asian America” to the model minority myth and to black subjectivity. In “Black Panthers, Red Guards...” (2005), Daryl Maeda argues that Asian Americans “performed Blackness” as a “calculated rejection” of the model-minority myth and as a means of creating an “Asian American” racial subjectivity. Laura Pulido (2006) claims that Asian Americans organized multi-racially more often than Black and Brown subjects to “prove” their racial minority status, because the model minority myth placed them at the top of Los Angeles’ “racial hierarchy” – closer to whites than to other racial minorities. This claim attempts to critique the model minority myth but incidentally upholds it by assuming that there is a “racial hierarchy” of which Asian Americans are the model and that Asian Americans have to “earn” their right to identify as a

¹⁰ Van Gosse, *Rethinking the New Left: an interpretative history* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2005), 133-134

radical racial subject. More recently, Chan (2010) places the movement within a larger narrative of shared Afro-Asian racial oppression in the U.S., and Prashad (2010) critiques “Asian America” as a “racist” idea that excludes South Asians in its narrow pro-Chinese/Japanese definition. While both scholars reflexively demonstrate the racial dimension of the “Yellow Power” Asian American movement, Prashad in particular fails to recognize the ambivalence of “Asian American” identity that allows it to extend beyond ethnic-specific subjectivities.

Maeda’s *Rethinking the Asian American Movement* (2012) is the most recent narrative of the movement and paints it as “interethnic, inter-racial, and international.”¹¹ This move towards understanding the Asian American Movement and “Asian America” as a series of intersecting (“inter-”/ “multi:-”/ “pan-”) identities reflects existing dialogue within the field of Asian American studies that seeks to re-center “Asian America” around difference as the basis of a new kind of unity and visibility. Scholars such as Kandice Chuh, Lisa Lowe, Jodi Kim and Dina Okamoto lead this turn towards alternate plural imagings of “Asian America.”

In Wei’s narrative, the Asian American college students who catalyzed the radical ‘60s movement and imagined a new pan-ethnic identity gradually shifted from radical to reformist politics during the 70s/80s as they became white-collar workers and moved into the suburbs. Traditional narratives of Asian ethnic movement into the suburbs follow the classic assimilation theory: nonwhite immigrant groups first concentrate in urban ethnic enclaves such as Little Tokyo or Chinatown, higher-achieving groups move into majority-white suburbs due to lack of resources in the inner city, said minority groups eventually integrate into the gendered white national mainstream.¹² In 1997, at the height of the Chinese-American suburbanization outside

¹¹ Daryl Maeda, *Rethinking the Asian American movement*, (New York: Routledge, 2012), 17

¹² Min Zhou et al, “Rethinking Residential Assimilation: the Case of a Chinese Ethnoburb in the San Gabriel Valley, California” in *Amerasia Journal* 34:3 (2008), 55

Los Angeles, Wei Li introduced the idea of the “ethnoburb,” a rising field in urban studies that merits further inquiry within Asian American scholarship.

Histories of Asian American suburbanization coalesce over its ambivalent relationship to classic assimilation theory and, therefore, its ambivalent relationship to U.S. national culture. Wei Li defines the “ethnoburb” as a suburban district that is “multiracial/multi-ethnic, multicultural, multilingual, and often multinational,” where one ethnic minority group has a significant (often visual) presence.¹³ Li divides the history of the San Gabriel Valley (SGV), Los Angeles’ Chinese-American ethnoburb, into three fragments: 1) 1965-1970s, Chinese movement from urban Chinatown to suburban Monterey Park catalyzed by American suburbanization and the 1965 Immigration Act; 2) 1975-1990, emergence of the SGV as L.A.’s Chinese-American population center, after the end of the Vietnam War in 1975 encouraged the immigration of socioeconomically diverse Southeast Asian refugees into the suburbs; and 3) 1990-present, expansion of the SGV as a “racialized place” with an increasingly visible Chinese-American presence in architectural style, Chinese signage, and commercial/business districts.¹⁴ Living in a distinctly Asian American suburban space, Li’s ethnoburban subjects can maintain their “multifaceted” identities while integrating into the U.S. mainstream through business, politics, and the adaptation of suburban community life. Unlike the politics of the radical identity created by the Asian American Movement, the hope of transforming American society comes only after, and not outside of, partial assimilation.¹⁵ Li frames her argument as a reformist assimilation model that incidentally reifies the model minority myth within the built spaces of the suburbs.

¹³ Wei Li, *Ethnoburb: the new ethnic community in urban America*, (Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press 2009), 4, 12

¹⁴ Li, 80-92

¹⁵ Li, 2, 4

As the Asian American “ethnoburb” transformed and expanded after 1997 to encompass more diverse ethnic and socioeconomic Asian immigrant groups across several regions in the U.S., scholars developed Li’s “ethnoburb” model. Saito (1998) highlights white anti-Asian backlash in Monterey Park and advances Li’s existing model by depicting the ethnoburb as a “transnational business enclave” that transcends national boundaries and continues to physically and economically link Asian immigrants/immigrant descendants to Asian countries. In 2002, geographer Emily Skop coined the “invisiburb” model as an alternative to the “ethnoburb,” in which the dispersal of racial minority/immigrant groups into white suburbia renders their ethnicity spatially invisible due to lack of population concentration.¹⁶ Returning to Li, Zhou et al. (2008) paint the ethnoburbs as a stage for assimilation, redefining assimilation as participation in the “multi-faceted ethnic milieu that is America” rather than entrance into Anglo-Saxon Protestant core culture.¹⁷ Zhou et al emphasize that the ethnoburbs provided new sociopolitical organizational stability to a “visibly non-English-speaking and non-white presence.”¹⁸

By delineating ethnoburban Asian Americans as distinctly “non-white,” Zhou et al signal a fundamental break from Li’s reformist assimilation theory. In *Relocations* (2011), Karen Tongson expands Li’s narrow definition of the L.A. ethnoburb as a primarily white-collar Chinese-American space by exploring the “suburban imaginaries” of “queers, immigrants, ‘gangstas,’ minimum-wagers, Others”¹⁹ in the SGV and nearby Orange County. Similarly, Wendy Cheng (2013) presents the SGV suburbs as a “bi-ethnic” development of Chican@ and Chinese-American subjects, claiming that existing ethnoburb scholarship historically erases the

¹⁶ Emily Skop and Wei Li, “From the Ghetto to the Invisiburb: Shifting Patterns of Immigrant Settlement in Contemporary America” in *Multicultural Geographies: Persistence and Change in U.S. Racial/Ethnic Patterns*, (Binghamton, NY, 2003), 113-24

¹⁷ Zhou et al, 76, 78

¹⁸ Zhou et al, 58

¹⁹ Karen Tongson, *Relocations: queer suburban imaginaries* (New York University Press, 2011), 1-2

significant Chican@ presence in the region.²⁰ Cheng acknowledges socioeconomic stratification within the SGV area and, echoing Pulido's history of the Asian American Movement, argues that Asian Americans enjoy "racialized privilege" in relation to Latin@s, which gives them greater socioeconomic opportunities as a nonwhite minority.²¹ Becky Nicolaides' latest 2015 study of Asian American suburbanization along the East/West U.S. coast and western Canada stresses that immigrant populations are "highly volatile moving targets" and notes that the L.A. ethnoburb story is "finally moving from the peculiar to the everyday" as immigrant suburbanization becomes increasingly common in the U.S.²² Nicolaides describes Asian Americans as the "most suburban" of all ethnic groups, a common narrative in ethnoburb studies that echoes the model minority myth²³ Asian American suburbanization, then, is simultaneously "everyday" and volatile. The seemingly logical story of highly skilled Asian professionals moving into the suburbs and establishing physical and social community in once-white spaces remains transgressive and hard to model.

In essence, histories of the model minority myth, the Asian American Movement, and Asian suburbanization seek to capture a specific "Asian American" visibility arising in the '60s that is, quoting Gosse, "hard to locate." Model minority scholarship struggles with the myth's spectral nature and uncertain origins, highlighting the fundamental contradiction of a "universal" American citizenship that images the Asian immigrant as both integrated labor and alien threat. Histories of the Asian American Movement reveal and even perpetuate the movement's continued historiographical and identity-based ambivalence, almost to the exclusion of the

²⁰ Wendy Cheng, *The Changs Next Door to the Diazes: Remapping Race in Suburban California* (University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 14

²¹ Cheng, 17

²² Becky Nicolaides, "Introduction: Asian American Suburban History," *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 34:2 (2015), 5, 13

²³ Nicolaides, 5-6

movement's achievements. Studies of the Asian American "ethnoburb" render Asian Americans as diverse, "queer," and primarily suburban subjects that simultaneously reach for and reject whiteness in an equivocal relationship with the U.S. nation's fiction of assimilation. Read alongside the other two bodies of work, the suburban Asian figure becomes a spatial permutation of both the model minority myth and Asian American radical identity, moving beyond the issue of assimilation to engage a more complex historical dialectic relationship between U.S. mainstream narrative and radical Asian American counter-narrative.

This thesis will place all three bodies of work in greater dialogue and seek to explore the invisibility and visibility of the transient Asian American subject through visual evidence. Though some Asian American Movement and ethnoburb scholars have referenced the model minority myth in their works, there has been little crossover in the three fields and many scholars reflexively sustain the myth even when trying to critique it. Furthermore, historians do not read the three histories as intersecting parallel narratives originating in the same moment, and few have considered the visual evidence in these three fields. In piecing together a history of three unstable, intersecting visual narratives surrounding a "highly volatile" American subject, this thesis hopes to recuperate the urgent ambivalence of the radical '60s "Asian American" identity within the 21st century, locating roots of contemporary theoretical interventions in the archives of the movements/counter-movements of the mid-1960s.

III. Embracing Subjectivity: the Multiplicity of the Visual Terrain

This thesis will examine the visual evidence of the early model minority press (1966), the marginal art of the L.A.-based Asian American Movement press (1969-1972), and newspaper and video representations of built commercial spaces within the San Gabriel Valley from the

1990s to the present. To explore the political autonomy found in the “coherent incoherence” of Asian American visual self-representation, one must engage with the visual as a primary source. While the visual relies more on interpretation than textual evidence – and thus, may leave more room for apparent fallacy – it invites the viewer to engage the ambiguity of the visual terrain in a way that parallels Asian American performances of self. The visual embraces the multiplicity of its own subjectivity, allowing Asian Americans to do the same.

The first “model minority” images were published in the *New York Times*’ “Success Story, Japanese-American Style” and *U.S. News & World Report*’s “Success Story of One Minority Group in U.S.” in 1966.²⁴ The images in these two articles set the format for later publications by visually replicating a narrative of Asian exaltation/isolation – focusing on Japanese and Chinese Americans as the two largest (and therefore, visible) Asian immigrant groups in the ‘60s. The photographs and illustrations in these publications picture the quiet, passive, and generalized “Horatio Alger” Asian American hero, living out his rags-to-riches “American” success in isolated Oriental settings (Little Tokyo, vague farmland, Oriental gardens, Chinatown, all-Asian Ivy League student groups) without markers of ethnic/class difference between Asian immigrant groups. Since many of these images were created before each article was written, they potentially offer subversive readings that unground their accompanying text. This study will examine model minority press images as both a hegemonic U.S. national visual “fixing” of the Asian subject as well as a counter-narrative that illuminates the insidious nature of the myth itself. Within the visual narrative of these texts, the “model minority” approaches, but never reaches, the white American landscape – the place of U.S. citizenship.

²⁴ William Petersen, “Success Story, Japanese-American Style,” *New York Times*, (Jan. 9, 1966); “Success Story of One Minority Group in U.S.,” *US News & World Report* (Dec. 26, 1966)

Simultaneously mimicking and rejecting the model minority image, the Asian American Movement also created a "subsuming" identity that incorporated rather than collapsed ethnic, socio-economic, and regional differences. At the start of the movement, "Asian America" did not exist as a political body. The movement's main radical press – the UCLA-based student-led publication, *Gidra* (1969-1974) – sought to visually fashion an "Asian American" identity that would politically mobilize different Asian ethnic communities.²⁵ This thesis will analyze the marginal art – the artwork along the margins – in this publication as a means of tracing the creation and nature of this new identity. Marginal art, placed along the edges of underground text publications by an emerging racial minority, is the art of a marginalized people – the art of a new marginal culture. Unlike the model minority publications of the American mainstream press, which placed images of the racialized "yellow" body at the forefront of printed material in a disjointed attempt to portray a dominant and domineering anti-Asian narrative, the marginal art of the Asian American movement created a counter pan-ethnic narrative of Asian American identity from the periphery of its printed works, repudiating the physical format of U.S. national discourse by presenting an opposing print culture.

Marginal art allowed Asian Americans in the movement to engage in a "politics of refusal"²⁶ that posited "Asian American" as an illusory and transient identity. Analysis of *Gidra*'s marginal art yields an unstable collage of "Asian American" that emerges from the edges of each text and cannot be permanently fixed by race. Here, a Japanese samurai slashing a traditional sword is seen with an Asian American woman dressed in Black Panther costume: both are Asian American self-representations. This visualization of "Asian American" appears at once unifying and inconsistent; the collaging of different Asian American subjectivities into one

²⁵ The *Gidra* Collection (1969-1974), Densho Digital Repository (<http://ddr.densho.org/ddr/densho/297/>), accessed April 20, 2016.

²⁶ Kim, 6

visual frame embodies the ambivalent “collage” nature of Asian American identity and visually re-presents the history of containment, displacement, and colonial occupation marking Asian subjects in America. Yet, quoting Lisa Lowe, Asian America is more than a “critical negation” of the racist U.S. national state. In its plurality, Asian American culture offers a radical “alternative” to the U.S. national culture that “give[s] rise to new forms of subjectivity” and “other narratives of self and community” in America.²⁷

Lastly, this project will examine the visual representations of built spaces in the San Gabriel Valley suburb. Using textual imagery and photographs from several *Los Angeles Times* articles in the 1990s to situate the model minority and Asian American image in the post-65 suburb period, it traces how a new suburban permutation of the model minority myth was mapped onto Asian bodies – the children and grandchildren of the Asian American Movement student activists – during the late 70s-early 90s Reagan era. The thesis will conclude by examining how scenes of suburban Asian American youth culture in “626,” a Youtube music-parody video by the Fung Brothers, engage the visual-spatial dimensions of the L.A. suburbs to re-imagine once-white spaces as stages for the performance of Asian American plurality against a totalizing suburban model minority image.²⁸ Once again visually collaging spaces to assemble a transient and unsettled Asian American identity, modern Asian Americans seek to recuperate the radical ambivalence of the ‘60s in order to reclaim Asian America’s dual acts of negation/marketing alternatives against a U.S. nation that continues to regulate Asian American success and define Asian-ness against blackness.

²⁷ Lowe, 29

²⁸ FungBrosComedy, “626 (Music Video),” Youtube video, 5:55. Posted [February 19 2012] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3n3HQ9uge0g>

Writing a Strange Origin Story: Imaging Incoherence in the Model Minority Myth

In 1965, the Hart-Cellar Act abolished the existing immigration quota system and selectively opened U.S. doors to refugees and skilled workers from Asian countries. This influx of new Asian immigrants came at a period of heightened social and political tension in the United States, at the peak of both the Civil Rights Movement and the Berkeley Free Speech Movement. During a time when minority groups were calling for radical changes to the existing American national system, the mass entrance of Asian bodies into the nation met considerable racist antagonism, exemplified in the mainstream press. In 1966, two newspaper articles: *The New York Times*' "Success Story, Japanese-American Style" and *U.S. News & World Report*'s "Success Story of One Minority Group in U.S.," catalyzed the creation of the model minority myth. The myth simultaneously exalted Asians as a "model" of American immigrant success while containing Asians within the category of "minority," denying them a permanent place in the U.S. national body. The images in these two articles visually act out the narrative of Asian exaltation/isolation, setting the format for later model minority publications. Their photographs and illustrations picture the quiet, passive, and generalized "Horatio Alger" Asian American hero, living out his rags-to-riches "American" success in a solitary Oriental landscape.

Yet, because the visual entails ambiguity in presentation and interpretation, the images in these texts are vulnerable to both a subversive subject and a subversive reading. While historians have analyzed the textual portions of both articles, examination of the images dominating almost half of each publication yields a more disrupted and disrupting narrative. Even as the images of both pieces attempt to visually "fix" the Asian subject as "model minority" by creating their own "origins" story of Japanese and Chinese Americans, the unsettled nature of the images subvert their own text – revealing the illusory nature of the "model minority." As the U.S. national

public attempted to dictate the terms of an Asian presence for the post-1965 moment, the visual re-presentations of Asian subjects within these publications destabilized the fixed narrative of singular Asian success/separation they were meant to support.

I. Success Story, Japanese-American Style

“Present.” “Past.” “Uprooted.” “G.I.’s.” “Generations,” read the combined image captions of William Petersen’s *New York Times* article, “Success Story, Japanese-American Style.”²⁹ The photographs and illustration of “Success Story” trace the maturation of Japanese Americans from tragic past to present happiness within the formulaic confines of the Horatio Alger hero story: born in the fictive internment camp, the (male) Japanese American G.I. hero thrives in a singular land, the threat of his achievement staged and contained within a visually separate and groundless “America.” In a strange origin myth, the Japanese American “hero” is birthed in the imaginary past and moves constantly towards an America he never quite reaches.

A conventional rags-to-riches Horatio Alger hero narrative emerges from the images read in sequence, beginning in the internment camp. On the first page, four images – marked by the caption “Present” – depict Japanese Americans living a “highly Americanized life,” while the following spread portrays a kindergarten class in an internment camp – labeled, “Past.” The first group are photographs presented directly to the viewer with no surrounding border while the “Past” image is an illustration outlined in black, reminiscent of a framed child’s drawing. This exaggerated performance of “past-ness” distances the harrowing experience of Japanese internment from both the surrounding text and from the “Present” moment and casts it into the realm of fictive rendering. To augment this departure from the “real,” the figures in the “Present”

²⁹ Petersen, “Success Story...” *New York Times*, (Jan. 9, 1966); see appendix, 91

images are adults in movement or mid-action – strolling down the sidewalk or operating a tractor – while the children and elderly teacher in the internment sketch stand in a circle surrounded by a barbed wire fence: double markers of stasis. Here, the Japanese American past is fixed in the imaginary realm – a drawing of figures contained in a circle contained in an internment camp – unable to touch the present. The article uses the power of the sketch to both acknowledge and disavow the history of internment, employing a different mode of visual representation in a political act of separating the U.S. nation from the evidence of its anti-Asian atrocities.

From this fictive circle of containment, the “child” of the internment camp moves through each subsequent image in a disjointed *bildungsroman*. The next group of photographs, titled “Uprooted,” includes an image of a family dinner in an unknown internment camp. There are little details providing physical context for this dinner: no mention of setting in the caption, no markers indicating standard of living, and the main figure in the foreground sits turned away from the viewer. Here, the Japanese American family adopts the visual form and ritual of traditional (white) America within the permanently separate setting of internment; they sit down to eat dinner together in a performance of normalcy even as the signifiers of their unique identities have been historically and literally effaced. The viewer is thus invited to project imaginary faces onto the bodies of the family members, folding a generalized “family of the internment camp” into the narrative of the imaginary child pictured in the kindergarten class illustration. Next to the family image, the *Times* features a poster announcing the forced evacuation of Japanese Americans in San Francisco rather than a photograph of families being evacuated. This move visually obscures the brutal violence enacted upon Asian bodies during WWII, opting to portray internment as a logistical procedure rather than an intimately felt reality. The poster separates the past life of Japanese Americans before internment from the origin story

of the fictive Horatio Alger hero, whose birth is staged within barbed wire fences. The paper denies the reader any visual marker of American life prior to internment; the first “historical” photograph in the article depicts a family staging life in an unspecified camp landscape. For this Japanese American archetype, life truly begins in containment.

In a warped time sequence, the generalized Japanese American exclusively-male *nisei* hero “grows up” in a matter of two or three years with his family in the internment camp and then – pictured in the photographs labeled “G.I.’s” – joins the U.S. army to fight for “his” country before returning safely “home.” The heroism of the *nisei* G.I. lies in his willingness to sacrifice his body for the U.S. and in re-enacting immigration: by going abroad and re-entering America. Though Petersen lists other distinctions awarded to the Japanese American 442nd Infantry in the text, the image he selects shows seven *nisei* veterans beaming upon receiving Purple Hearts for sustaining bodily injuries in combat. The caption provides a single detail of the “much-decorated” combat team: they were “wounded in France and Italy.” The top image of the WWII veteran, “home safely...welcomed by his father,” highlights this transformation-via-physical-suffering of the “enemy alien” internment child into the proud and patriotic G.I.; staring directly at the reader as he is welcomed “home” to America.

However, once the young hero returns from fighting abroad, he must be domesticated and re-molded into the strictures of “American life,” to shed his scars of suffering and move away from his internment history. The last two photographs, marked “Generations,” are the only images in “Success Story” with names; Roy Tanabe and Mrs. George T. Aratani establish the fictive internment-child-turned-G.I.-hero in the present domestic moment, allowing the Horatio Alger figure to assume a solid identity as a reward for his bodily sacrifice. Now a third generation *sansei*, our hero re-emerges on the home front as an older male holding his violin,

pictured alongside a maternal figure sitting demurely in her garden. Mrs. George T. Aratani is defined by her relationship to the male Japanese American hero: Brownie leader and “wife of a prosperous businessman,” her own identity is collapsed into the “Mrs.” in front of her husband’s name. Curiously, George T. Aratani – the actual subject of the photograph, whose financial success supports the model minority myth – is not pictured and appears only in the form of his female counterpart. As a female figure, Mrs. George T. Aratani serves as a safe “filler,” visually distancing the viewer from the underlying threat of George Aratani’s economic autonomy. Instead, the fictive Horatio Alger hero assumes the more tractable identity of Roy Tanabe, musician: a third generation Japanese American who, in another warped time progression, is the “First Japanese” to be in a major “American” symphony. “Generations” ends the “rags to riches” tale of the internment child become G.I. soldier with a domiciliary image of replicable American success, where mothers like “Mrs.” birth generations of Japanese Americans like “Roy Tanabe.” Their docile achievements as Brownie leaders and symphony musicians uphold Western culture and tradition and do not disrupt the dominant white American grain.

Originating from a sketch of internment camp containment, Petersen’s Horatio Alger hero occupies a fictive landscape that lacks signs of American geography. Published in the *New York Times* to an audience largely unfamiliar with California’s landmarks and physical terrain, every image of present-day Japanese American affluence is set in the Los Angeles area. Photographs titled “Present” feature distinctly Asian markers in “Little Tokyo” – a woman in kimono, a sign with Chinese characters, an “Oriental-styled” theatre roof – or obscure farmland lacking signs of Californian geography. There are no other racial minorities or white Americans in these photographs. Los Angeles’ “Little Tokyo” and California’s farmland – the “American”

landscape for Japanese descendants – are easily transplanted from the U.S. landscape to generalized “Oriental” symbolic representations.

Upon this ungrounded land, Petersen casts his own exotic imaginations of Oriental success, stating that “through one or another subterfuge [Japanese Americans] helped convert the California desert into a fabulous agricultural land.”³⁰ “Subterfuge” connotes the deceptive and the illusory, echoing racist American discourse of Japanese Americans as enemy spies for Japan during WWII and recycling that same racist language into the mid-1960s period. The romantic visual language of their “Shangri-la-esque” cultivation neutralizes the socioeconomic threat of Japanese American productivity on American farmland in the ‘60s. In this visual narrative, Japanese Americans create their own flourishing fictional land reminiscent of the Oriental tropical paradise, starkly removed from Southern California’s extreme desert climate. Asian presence in America was thus visually and physically interned in an “orientalized” California, American – but not quite.

Times editors undergirded the Petersen hero’s “placeless-ness” by positioning the images in perpetual divergence from the text. The illustration of Japanese internment under “Past” appears alongside a history of Japanese immigration to the U.S. The *nisei* G.I. hero is pictured after his entrance in the text, on a different page, and becomes subsumed in a discussion on Japanese American educational achievement. The violinist and businessman’s wife are shown at the top of a two-page exposé on Japanese Americans’ low crime rate and lack of involvement in radical student politics. Here, only select portions of Japanese American life can be visualized: the G.I. hero and domesticated Western violinist appear in lieu of images portraying Asian educational success or youth delinquency, which may have carried more subversive power.

³⁰ Petersen, 33

Moreover, Japanese American subjects cannot appear at the same time as the text that describes them. The images' chronological inconsistency exposes the article's careful fashioning of the model minority body: selecting images of "safe" Japanese American subjects that did not always correlate with Petersen's account of their (threatening) success. The article's disjointed image-text relationship also reveals the difficulty of creating a fixed Asian visual subject, showing the inherent contradiction of imaging a singular "model" for a plural minority. The inconsistent flow of text alongside image narrative points to the "ungrounded" nature of Japanese American experience within the U.S. national imaginary and further illuminates the unstable image of Asian subjectivity in America.

The model minority myth is a Horatio Alger "rags to riches" tale that begins and ends in a fictive landscape. "Present, past, uprooted, G.I.'s, generations" – the images in Petersen's "Success Story" uproot the Japanese American past and present, erasing all signs of their existence in the American landscape prior to internment and transplanting them within an imaginary enemy-child/G.I./American-"success" progress narrative that originates from and continues to occupy the illusory realm of containment. Rendered in simple lines, children and elderly teacher form a ring behind a barbed wire fence in the Japanese American "Past." Within this double ring of containment, the Japanese American past (elder) and future (children) stand in paralysis because the Japanese American present (adult intermediary) has been cast into a "placeless land" by the white gaze. The images in Petersen's text work in a circle because the model minority myth is a narrative that begins and ends in a fictional landscape removed from "America" even as it acts as America's "model."

II. Success Story of One Minority Group in U.S.

Published in December of the same year, *US News & World Report* 's "Success Story of One Minority Group in U.S." offered a similar Chinese American *bildungsroman* within an ambivalent "American-but-not" landscape. While the images in the article largely portray New York City's Chinatown, the story is set in an urban "Chinatown" that, defying geographical boundaries, collapses "San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York" into a single amorphous Chinese metropolis.³¹ Contained in this generalized Chinatown, the Chinese American grows up in a standardized American family, becomes a model pupil in public school, emerges as a docile urban teenager, and finally enters "traditional" Chinese working spaces as an adult, working in apothecary shops or grocery stores. Photographs of Chinese Americans allow the national mainstream to fit its subjects into the contrived lines of another origin story. At the same time, the photographs underwrite a particular Chinese American agency that circumvents the white gaze in its attempt to "fix" the imagined other, visually asserting a counter reality that breaks up the normalizing flow of the model minority *bildungsroman*.

The article opens with an image of Chinese Americans sitting in lecture hall desks, listening attentively to an invisible teacher with eyes cast downwards to the side and hands folded. This image appears alongside text that casts Chinese Americans directly against other racial minorities: "still being taught in Chinatown is the old idea that people should depend on their own efforts – not a welfare check – in order to reach America's 'promise land.'" The photograph's caption simply reads: "Schooling is important to Chinese Americans." Notably, the teacher is not pictured, just as hegemonic U.S. national culture remains an invisible, omnipresent entity within its narratives of the racial other. Bodies sitting in docile positions, in desk units

³¹ The opening subheading of the article reads "Reporting from San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York," 73; see appendix, 97

denoting discipline and productivity, Chinese Americans learn how to achieve the American dream. The lesson is simple: “by their own efforts;” Chinese America’s “coming-of-age” story is framed as a classroom lesson wherein which Chinese subjects are re-told their own “success story” by the racist-capitalist American state. “Success Story” was thus a re-education project in which the popular press taught Chinese Americans their origin, their progress, and their natural (separate) place in America.

Re-education began by entering standardizing American national norms into the packed and frenzied spaces of the urban ethnic enclave. On its second page, “Success Story” begins with two photographs of New York City’s Chinatown showing an aerial and street view of its unique “way of life.” Both images display the urban infrastructure of Chinatown, whose store signs (“Joy Garden,” “Chop Suey” “Rice”) signify its “Chineseness.” Moving steadily closer to the Chinese subject’s way of life in order to investigate “how the Chinese get ahead,”³² the images transition from aerial to street view to two photographs showing the Chinese American family at home. Attempting to peer into the origin of Chinese American success as an act of admiration and surveillance, the photographer finds a family performing traditional American (white suburban) norms. The 1950s/60s period saw a dramatic increase in white American suburbanization; by the time “Success Story” was published, the suburbs were becoming the new stage for the American Dream and for American national norms.³³ As upholders – “models” – of the allegedly American values of “family ties...self-reliance, and self-discipline,”³⁴ the Chinese American family followed the strictures of the white suburban family, congregating in the home and enacting the “American” rituals of family dinner and watching TV. The main subjects of the “success story” – the three Chinese American children – grow up according to the forms of white

³² See: side subheading to the left of the images on 74

³³ Li, 1-3, 14

³⁴ See: caption under image of family dinner, 74

America without actually entering its white suburban spaces. Gazing at a television in a house in urban Chinatown, the children visually learn the social norms of mainstream American media while removed from its built spaces.

In the following page, the Chinese American child enters into the urban public school as an exemplary student whose “obedience” and “hard work” allow her to thrive in disadvantaged education systems.³⁵ Mirroring the docile postures of their older selves that appear in the article’s first image, Chinese American students gaze upwards at a looming authority figure whose face is not pictured, representing the dominant national discourse on “model minority” as well as the invisible reader. The absence of other students of color in the photographs points to the unspoken message: if Chinese American children can excel in segregated, non-private (non-white) institutions with their strong “American” values, so can other racial minorities who, in the mid ‘60s, were protesting for equal education.

Even as Chinese American students exemplified American “success” in the public school, they achieved their success as a “minority” group who remained removed from the national American educational system. The accompanying caption for the two classroom photos notes that Chinese American youths “study Chinese history, language and culture” after hours. Succeeding in the traditional American classroom is not enough: the Chinese student must put in extra hours learning her own “history, language and culture” as a schooling in difference. Chinese American education thus involves learning both “American” and “Chinese” systems of knowing – one during normal school hours, the other one “after.” The same dualism is not required of the white student who appears in the left corner of the first photograph. His “history,

³⁵ See: caption under top right image, 75

language, and culture” is the mainstay of public education in the U.S. and entails no separate supplements.

Indoctrinated by capitalist/exclusionary U.S. national standards alongside traditional “Chinese” identity, the Chinese American is ready to emerge into the urban landscape as an adolescent. The photograph of Chinese youths congregating in the street is the spread’s only image picturing Chinese American bodies outside of the domesticating spaces of the home and classroom. Finally appearing in broad daylight, Chinese youths “still cause far less trouble than others do”³⁶ as they stand in passive positions, in a circle facing inwards. By portraying Chinese American teens loitering on the streets of Chinatown, *U.S. News* renders their lack of activity in stark contrast to the delinquent behavior of other young people of color. Shoulders hunched and arms folded, the Chinese youth takes up minimal physical space in his own neighborhood, still assuming the same stances of obedience they exhibited in the classroom.

From his passive role as urban adolescent, the Chinese American assumes a humble, definitively “Chinese,” vocation as he enters adult life. Operating grocery stores, newsstands, and apothecary shops, the Chinese Americans use and sell “American” consumer objects within designated “Chinese” spaces. Reading the captions under each of the three bottom photographs, Chinese grocery stores “still” carry Oriental spices for “traditional” Chinese meals, Chinatown newsstands sell “major” newspapers “but” Chinese-language publications remain the biggest attraction, and apothecary shops fill Western prescriptions “but...also offers traditional Chinese herbs.” These photographs of “Chinese American” adult aspirations exclusively feature Chinese subjects, signs, and objects. Each image shows an interior scene that appears almost cut-and-

³⁶ Caption next to middle image, 75

pasted from an urban center in China; their only geographic grounding lies in the captions specifying “Chinatown” in New York City.

Within the specified lines of Chinese existence in America, Chinese Americans are shown in their old working-class roles – a visual contradiction to the article’s claim of rising Chinese American economic affluence that attempts to force Chinese subjects back into their traditional immigrant spaces, separated from the U.S. nation. Though the text examines Chinese entrance into the middle and upper class as bearers of American values, Chinese Americans can only materialize as small-scale independent vendors within the crowded scenes of urban Chinatown in its photographs. By visually fixing the Chinese subject within separate (Oriental), working-class spheres, the popular press attempted to laud and subdue the model minority’s socioeconomic success even as it crafted the model minority myth. The Chinese American “success story” operated on both the textual and visual level to first form a model minority narrative and then restrict and subdue the model minority’s advancements.

The Chinese American *bildungsroman*, like its Japanese American counterpart, operates in a closed circle. From “suburban” family, to model student, to passive adolescent, to hard-working adult, the Chinese American follows the strictures and values of suburban white American life within the confines of urban Chinatown. Both a model of American ideals and separated from mainstream America, Chinese Americans live in “Chinese spaces” that are “islands of peace and stability.”³⁷ Like Japanese Americans, Chinese American subjects exemplify but never arrive in the land of their American dreams.

“Success Story” chooses to close its re-education narrative with a photograph of Chinese American jazz musicians performing onstage as evidence of the “‘Americanizing’ influences

³⁷ Text on first column, 73

being felt in Chinatown.”³⁸ Included almost as an afterthought, the image provides a startling break from the contained narrative of “American” life within designated Chinese spaces. The classroom students of the first image emerge at the end of their lesson not as outstanding Chinese working-class vendors but as young adult producers of American musical culture. Included in the article to show the totalizing force of U.S. national culture, the last photo reveals a rupture in the “success story’s” streamlined narrative. Here, it is jazz – once marginalized for its roots in black musical culture – that now represents America within Oriental urban spaces. While the article attempted to textually and visually define the Chinese American “model” minority against its African American antithesis, the image of Chinese American youths engaging in black musical culture disrupts its narrative logic. Here, the Chinese subject bypasses the filter of the white national gaze to confront the reader with a counter reality of minority solidarity against the isolating model minority narrative.

Returning to the article’s images of seemingly docile subjects, a different story of Chinese American agency emerges within the frame of racialized visual fixing. The photograph of the “suburban” family dinner appears to replicate the form of the white American nuclear family – except for the presence of the Chinese grandfather, who sits at the head of the table in the traditional place of the head male figure. The grandfather’s entrance into the frame shows the multi-generational nature of many Chinese American families, unsettling the “normal” parent-child American nuclear family structure. Similarly, the first image depicting Chinese American children in the classroom includes two children in the foreground looking out the window. The children thus deny the classroom teacher and the viewer – both figures of the (white) U.S. nation – their direct gaze. Even as the American mainstream attempts to indoctrinate Chinese

³⁸ Caption of photograph, 76

Americans in the model minority narrative, Chinese American subjects look past the dominant discourse towards an alternate reality outside the spaces of their re-education.

On the streets of Chinatown, teenagers who stand in a circle with their backs to the photographer subversively re-present the closed circle of the model minority myth. Their appearance as passive figures in designated Chinese spaces separate from the urban American landscape replicates the popular press' narrative of containment. Yet, the Chinese American subjects also assume the "closed circle" as a means of denying the white-national gaze the ability to truly peer inside their way of life. Unable to scrutinize the obscurity of Chinese American educational and economic success, the American mainstream is itself relegated to the groundless land of fiction as it scrambles to assemble an imaginary narrative to control an imaginary threat.

During a period of heightened racial/social unrest and transformative change in Asian immigrant communities in the U.S., the *New York Times* and *U.S. News & World Report* published articles that attempted to contain the new "peril" of increased Asian immigration and reassert the validity of the American dream. The model minority myth visually attempted to fix the Asian subject within the fictive realm of the Orient – distinctly separate from the national American landscape – yet served to unsettle the stability of their own "fixing." Japanese and Chinese American actors in the photographs often visually asserted a different social reality that countered the totalizing myth and denied the white gaze its attempt to racially define the Asian subject. The visual material of each article revealed a disjointed story that proved unable to define and encompass its own subject. Peering into the mysterious success of the Asian model minority, U.S. national culture found only the remains of its own unsettled self-image.

The classic model minority publications of 1966 entered the visual as a primary terrain of struggle in delineating the modes of Asian visibility in America following the 1965 Immigration

Act. Subsequent model minority publications, such as *Newsweek*'s "Outwhiting the Whites" in 1971, *New Republic*'s "The Triumph of Asian Americans" in 1985, and *Fortune Magazine*'s "America's Super Minority" in 1986,³⁹ followed the narrative and visual form of these formative texts – imaging Asian Americans in singular, elite spaces that isolated them from the white America they appeared to model and from the socioeconomic hardships of other racial minorities. Starting in 1968, the Asian American Movement countered the model minority myth by recuperating the visual terrain through marginal art, creating a radical Asian American political identity that was founded upon visual ambivalence. Within the circular spaces of U.S. national containment and racist socioeconomic regulation, Asian subjects "looked out the window" upon an alternate vision of Asians in America.

³⁹ "Outwhiting the Whites," *Newsweek* (June 21, 1971); "The Triumph of Asian Americans," *New Republic* (July 1985); "America's Super Minority," *Fortune Magazine* (November 24, 1986)

Of Monsters and Butterflies: Collaging “Asian American” Visuality in the Radical ‘60s

Gidra, an underground newspaper founded by UCLA students in 1969, spearheaded the rise of the Asian American press during the Asian American Movement. The newspaper derived its name from “King Ghidorah,” a three-headed dragon-like monster that appears as a recurring villain in the *Godzilla* film series starting in 1964.⁴⁰ While “Gidra” refers to the three-headed monster, the newspaper’s “mascot,” termed “Mr. Gidra,” was a small caterpillar drawn with slanted eyes, a confused expression, and wearing stereotypically “Asian” clothes. “Mr. Gidra,” as his nature connotes, undergoes several sporadic transformations over the course of *Gidra*’s five-year lifespan. However, in the paper’s final 5th anniversary edition, “Mr. Gidra” emerges as a Godzilla-like monster – not a butterfly. “Gidra” is thus manifested as a series of converging, conflicting images b: derived from a three-headed dragon that is Godzilla’s nemesis, depicted as a disgruntled caterpillar, and finally appearing as Godzilla himself.

The blurring of “creature” categories within *Gidra* points to the turbulent and amorphous emergence of “Asian American” as a new identity in the radical ‘60s. The marginal art of Asian American publications such as *Gidra* helped to “collage” together a seeable Asian American body, community, and political visibility at the beginning of the movement. In *Gidra*’s October 1971 issue, two anonymous authors from an Asian American L.A.-based collective write: “Revolution [is] a process through which, in which we change ourselves and the reality around us...”⁴¹ Asian American identity emerged primarily as a “collage” identity – cutting, transplanting, and re-forming individual “Asian American” attributes to create a conglomerate,

⁴⁰ “Gidra, the Voice of the Asian American Movement,” Discover Nikkei, last modified January 12, 2012, accessed March 12, 2016, <http://www.discovernikkei.org/en/journal/2012/1/12/gidra/>.

⁴¹ *Gidra* (October 1971), accessed March 10, 2016

often amorphous, whole, whose totality is composed of separate, sometimes contradictory truths, and cannot be captured in a single frame.

Starting in late-1968, college students catalyzed the Asian American Movement in campuses on the West Coast – namely, San Francisco State, UC Berkeley, and UC Los Angeles (UCLA).⁴² The convergence of Asian-descended college students with the rise of Black, Brown, and Red power movements, anti-Vietnam War protests, and increasing poverty within Asian urban enclaves, spurred the conceptualization of “Asian America” as a necessary basis of identity. However, in seeking to address and serve an “Asian American” community, young radicals faced the problem of visibility and definition.

In May 1968, Japanese American graduate student Yuji Ichioka coined the term “Asian America” when he founded the AAPA (Asian American Political Alliance) at UC Berkeley. Since the Free Speech Movement in 1964, Berkeley was a hotbed for New Left student political activism, where radical groups such as SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) and the Black Panthers organized around racial equality, socio-political reform, and anti-imperialism. Prior to 1968, Asian students at Berkeley formed ethnic-specific cultural clubs (e.g. the Chinese Student Organization and Nisei Student Club) or joined local organizations, such as Leeways and IWK (I Wor Kuen), to address poverty-related social issues in San Francisco’s ethnic-specific urban immigrant enclaves. While many Asians were involved in radical politics and even founded chapters of SNCC (The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee) and UFW (United Farm Workers) across California campuses, they participated as individuals without a group identity and were thus, “lost in the larger rally.” In order to “have an effect on the larger public,” Ichioka

⁴² Wei, 1

conceived of a pan-ethnic Asian political body: “Asian America.”⁴³

To gather attendees for the first meeting of AAPA, Ichioka and his wife, political activist Emma Gee, picked out Asian surnames from the membership lists of radical student groups. Notably, Gee and Ichioka did not differentiate between ethnic Asian surnames. Though many of its members were 2nd or 3rd generation Japanese or Chinese Americans – the majority of Asian-descended college students at the time – AAPA membership encompassed a diverse set of geographic, national, socioeconomic, and immigrant-generational origins.⁴⁴

AAPA’s intentional diversity did not simply stem from a desire to be inclusive; its pan-Asian scope was integral to its effectiveness as a political organization. The lack of an Asian political visibility at UC Berkeley was experienced on a macro level within the larger United States. Including first generation immigrants, Asian descendants in the 1960s composed less than 0.5 percent of the total American population. While the consolidation of Asians in urban centers on the West Coast (i.e. San Francisco and Los Angeles) allowed for increased felt visibility within those centers, each independent ethnic group did not possess enough numbers to vie for political and social change on a national scale.⁴⁵ Alongside paucity in numbers, the U.S. historically divided or rewarded the division of Asian immigrant communities. Liu et. al. note the phenomenon of Asian “ethnic disidentification,” the act of distancing one’s group from another to avoid suffering for the perceived misdeeds of that group,⁴⁶ particularly between Japanese and Chinese Americans. The 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, Japanese internment during WWII, and Chinese demonization during the anti-Communist hysteria of the Cold War era all

⁴³ Maeda, 10

⁴⁴ Maeda, 10-12

⁴⁵ Dina Okamoto, *Redefining race: Asian American panethnicity and shifting ethnic boundaries*, (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2014), 30

⁴⁶ Liu, 18, 20-21, 24

contributed to this “ethnic disidentification.” Japan’s military aggressions in China and Korea only strengthened the gap between Asian communities in the States.

Furthermore, the Immigration Act of 1965 dramatically altered the ethnic and domestic/foreign-born ratio of the Asian population by opening U.S. doors to a new group of war refugees and immigrants, largely from China, Vietnam, and Cambodia. Whereas the Asian population in 1960s California was majority-Japanese or Chinese descended and English speaking,⁴⁷ the new influx of immigrants increasingly diversified the Asian community in the States and revealed the fragility of the existing socioeconomic infrastructure within traditional urban enclaves such as San Francisco and Los Angeles. By 1968, Asian-ethnic activists such as Yuji Ichioka recognized a need to consolidate the Asian community to achieve political visibility, bridge ethnic, national, and socioeconomic divisions, and leave space for the continued demographic flux and ethnic differences of the U.S. Asian population.

The creation of AAPA, or rather, the conception of a unified “Asian American” political entity, paved the way for Asian cultural clubs and ethnic-specific organizations to jointly begin articulating a new pan-ethnic Asian identity. In January 1969, several Asian cultural clubs hosted “The Asian Experience in America/Yellow Identity” conference at UC Berkeley in January 1969. At the same time, they and their counterparts at San Francisco State College staged the TWLF (Their World Liberation Front) strikes alongside other people of color, protesting for fundamental changes in the white school administration so that students of color could produce their “own history” and socio-political “consciousness.”⁴⁸ The TWLF was a multiracial coalition of radical Black, Latin@, and Asian student groups that formed at San Francisco State and began striking in November 1968, demanding special admissions for students of color, the

⁴⁷ Gloria Chun, *Of orphans and warriors: inventing Chinese American culture and identity* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 125

⁴⁸ Wei, 15

establishment of Ethnic Studies, and the hiring of faculty to meet those needs. The strikes spread to every University of California campus as well as Cal State L.A., Loyola, the Claremont Colleges and Pepperdine University;⁴⁹ they saw the establishment of Ethnic Studies, first at SF State in March 1969, and then throughout the Cal State and University of California systems.⁵⁰

The TWLF strikes reflect the fluid and rapidly transmitted nature of Asian student activism across college campuses in California; closely tied to radical politics in San Francisco, UCLA emerged as Los Angeles' cradle for Asian American student activism. At the beginning of the TWLF strikes, activists from SF State would visit L.A. campuses to organize Asian students and speak at student meetings to foster Asian American "political awareness."⁵¹ Like Berkeley, UCLA already had Asian ethnic-specific clubs and local community-service organizations, but the inception of "Asian America" birthed new Asian American radical groups, such as the Asian American Hardcore and Asian Sisters, while prompting existing organizations to conceive of themselves as part of a larger movement. Sansei Concern, a primarily Japanese American student group formed in April 1968 – a month before Ichioka coined "Asian America" – soon changed their name to Oriental Concern in pursuit of a wider, pan-ethnic membership. Before Berkeley's pan-Asian conference in January 1969, Oriental Concern's "I am Yellow, Curious" meeting in September 1968 helped to develop the notion of a unified Asian "Yellow" consciousness.⁵² Though AAPA's Berkeley chapter disbanded soon after the TWLF strikes, chapters quickly spread to schools throughout the state, including UCLA. Yuji Ichioka himself

⁴⁹ Maeda, 29, 34; Wei, 17-19; Mike Murase, "Ethnic Studies and Higher Education for Asian Americans," in *Counterpoint: Perspectives on Asian America*, (Los Angeles: UCLA Asian American Studies Center, 1976), 205-23

⁵⁰ Maeda, 38, 43

⁵¹ Pulido, 83

⁵² Xiaojian Zhao and Edward Park, *Asian Americans: an encyclopedia of social, cultural, economic, and political history* (Santa Barbara, California : Greenwood, 2014), 85-86

moved to UCLA in 1969 to become its first instructor in Asian American studies, only a year after founding the AAPA at Berkeley in 1968.

Los Angeles, like San Francisco, was a metropolitan center for Asian communities in California. For the most part, Asian populations in both cities shared the same issues of urban poverty, housing inequality, poor healthcare, gang violence, and drug use. Demographics and population concentration, however, varied between the two. In the 1960s, San Francisco had roughly proportional Latin@, Black, and Asian populations (each around 10 percent of the total population), more firmly established ethnic enclaves, and more Chinese than Japanese Americans. Los Angeles had a significantly smaller and less-concentrated Asian population that was majority-Japanese American. Asians made up only 2-3 percent of the total population while Latin@ and Black demographics each averaged 10 percent. LA's Asian communities lived in dispersed neighborhoods due to continual encroachment by city planners. Chinatown, for instance, was moved several times since its inception in 1870 and splintered into three smaller communities by the 1940s.⁵³ L.A. historian Lauren Pulido claims that Japanese American populations in the '60s were "located in the interstices of [LA's] nonwhite spaces" (54), between historically Black and Latin@ neighborhoods. This phenomenon points to the forced confiscation of Japanese American property by the State – a literal un-grounding – during the WWII internment period.

Los Angeles' targeted dissemination of Asian communities heightened the need for a solidified Asian political body that was not bound to a particular ethnic or spatial marker. The six primary organizations of the TWLF featured three Asian student groups: ICSA (Inter-collegiate Chinese for Social Action), PACE (Pilipino-American College Endeavor), and AAPA.⁵⁴ Both

⁵³ Li, 62-67

⁵⁴ Maeda, 36-37, 29

established in 1967, ICSA and PACE drew on ethnic-specific community support from San Francisco's Chinatown and Manilatown, respectively. Only AAPA entered the TWLF as an explicitly "Asian American" organization and while it was the most radical and militant of the three, historian William Wei described it as the "least visible." The AAPA's lack of visibility during the late 1968-mid 1969 TWLF strikes reflects the amorphous nature of "Asian America" in its beginning stages. ICSA and PACE, though only a year older than AAPA, were composed of known Asian bodies: Chinese and Pilipino American. These ethnic-specific identities were already articulated before the TWLF strikes and provided an ethnic-specific visibility during the protests. On the other hand, "Asian America," like LA's splintered Asian community, lacked a body. And it is here that *Gidra* enters.

Gidra, which became the "journalistic arm" of the Asian American Movement, was founded by five Japanese American UCLA students in February 1969 after the school administration turned down their proposal for a "community newspaper."⁵⁵ At the time, Los Angeles had several Asian ethnic newspapers that circulated within small, often-1st generation, immigrant communities. *Gidra*, however, was conceived as an alternative volunteer-based paper that emphasized the "value of collectivism" alongside pan-Asian social action and would serve as a "forum" for different Asian American perspectives.⁵⁶ *Gidra* was not simply a local newspaper: at the height of its six year span, *Gidra* ran a 4000-copy national spread that was distributed as far as New York City and Hawaii and only one fourth of its subscribers were based in LA. Though the newspaper mainly circulated within college Asian student circles and was largely written by Japanese American students, the scope of its imagined audience was much

⁵⁵ Wei, 102-103

⁵⁶ Wei, 104

more broad.⁵⁷ *Gidra* sought to be an “Asian American” community paper, and the “Asian American” community was extremely diverse and stretched across the United States.

Yet, in 1969, *Gidra* was a “community” newspaper without a community to address. During the initial Asian American Movement, there was no pre-existing “Asian America.” In order to exist as a paper, *Gidra* had to articulate an “Asian American” individual and communal body; it had to construct its own audience. It did so through marginal art.

Marginal art – literally the artwork (both illustration and photography) along the margins – provided a means to fashion “Asian America” as a unique entity that could solidify the “Asian American” body while leaving space for the identity’s own ambivalence and continual transformations in light of new immigration, inter-ethnic differences, and the developing social movement itself. Placed along the edges of underground text publications by an emerging pan-Asian minority, marginal art was the art of a marginalized people, the art of a new marginal culture. It allowed Asian Americans early in the movement to engage in a “politics of refusal”⁵⁸ that posited “Asian American” as an illusory and transient identity even as it established a specific Asian American political visibility. One could not simply show one “Asian American” body because there was no standard Asian American. The unstable image of “Asian American” which emerges from the edges of texts such as *Gidra*, and its related publications, assumes a solid materiality that cannot be permanently fixed and is constantly subject to transformation.

This section explores three key aspects of *Gidra*’s visual strategy across its 1969-1974 lifespan: the transition from sketch to photograph, the underlying use of collage as a visual and political technique, and the inclusion of stereotypical “Oriental” images to both fashion and unsettle “Asian America.” During its first year, *Gidra* strategically transitioned from sketches of

⁵⁷ Wei, 105

⁵⁸ Kim, 6

Asian American bodies, conceived in the boundless realm of the visual imaginary, to photographs presenting a more solid Asian American reality. It also presented, even capitalized upon, various Oriental visual markers that drew from the “yellow peril” myth: the racial casting of the yellow body as a pervasive and sinister threat to U.S. national culture. The visual contradictions between Orient signifiers and emerging Asian American bodies were placed in intentional juxtaposition within Asian America’s larger collage identity, represented by the prominent use of that technique. The very nature of collage – selectively cutting, reshuffling, and regrafting – performed the act of forming “Asian America” as a conglomerate body that remained ambivalent, and therefore, subversive.

I. Emerging Body: From Sketch to Photograph

In the paper’s first April 1969 issue, the top left image on the first page features a drawing of five boys peering in an internment camp, out towards the left from behind a barbed wire fence with the caption: “What is my crime?” (Fig.1). The sketch erases all markers of the camp environment. There is no roof, no back wall; the children materialize from the shadows of their obscure past to gaze past barbed wire at a future into which they cannot enter. The accompanying caption seems similarly paralyzed. At the birth of the Asian American press in 1969, *Gidra* asks “what is my crime?” in a tone that is at once pleading and subversively incredulous. The children appear to address a rights-bearing white U.S. national body – which had the power to define American racialized crime, yet largely denied the atrocity of Japanese internment in the decades following WWII. The stereotype of the “silent” Asian – particularly Japanese American silence surrounding the injustice of internment – plagued the Asian



Figure 1: Sketch from *Gidra 1:1* (April 1969), artist unknown;

Photograph from *Gidra 2:10* (Nov 1970), photographer unknown

IS THIS
WHAT YOU
WANT?

**THINK
ABOUT IT.**

Read GIDRA.

I have enclosed \$2.50 for one year of mind liberation. Check or money order.

Name *(Please print clearly)*

Street

City State Zip Code

Address to GIDRA, Subscription Department PO Box 18466 Los Angeles, Calif. 90018

Figure 2: Full page of *Gidra 2:10* (back cover)

American Movement from its inception, as the U.S. state denied the existence of an active Asian voice within America's social and political landscape.⁵⁹ *Gidra* uses the silence of illustration to present Japanese internment as an abstracted pan-Asian experience, stripped of markers of space/time, in a loud and isolated frame (the accompanying article covers anti-Asian job policies and the TWLF student strikes, with no mention of internment). The harsh marks and high contrast level dramatizes Asian suffering and aggressively claims an alternate reality in which Japanese internment is part of American history, just as the new Asian American generation, kept behind barbed wire, threatens to enter into the page as breathing entity. At a time when Asian Americans were vying for the establishment of ethnic studies in universities, alongside other people of color, the retelling of American history through the visual intervention of marginal art was a subversive form of radical protest.

A year later, *Gidra* published the photograph on which the drawing was based with the words: "Is this what you want? Think about it." The phrase "Think about it" is accompanied by a dotted box at the bottom offering a \$2.50 yearlong subscription, or, "one year of mind liberation" (Fig.2). Although the history of Japanese internment could only materialize as a place-less illustration of Japanese American boys behind barbed wire in 1969, by late 1970, it solidified into a more tangible photograph with clear markers of camp setting. The caption signals the existence of a new "Asian American" collective body, which the paper now addresses as its audience. "Is this what you want?" is a call to action to an Asian American "you"; *Gidra* no longer directly addresses the white majority. Instead, it invites Asian Americans, who now identify as such, to financially support the paper and "liberate" their minds, to "think" and "want." Here, "mind liberation" is not simply freedom from white hegemonic ways of knowing

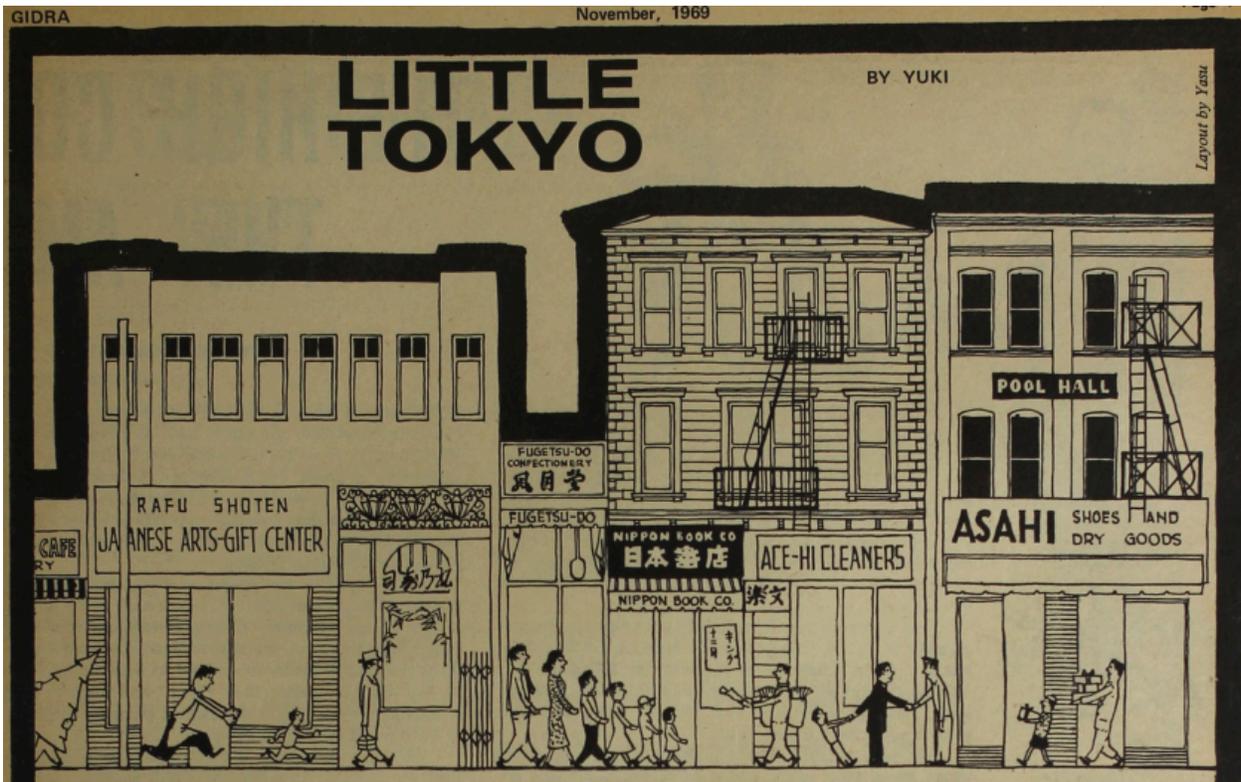
⁵⁹ Pulido, 157-158

but freedom to enter into a particular Asian American ethical and political reality that subverts traditionally white/male national structures. By 1970, Asian Americans as a corporate identity could make decisions and present a political visibility that would not, in the words of Ichioka, be “lost in the larger rally” of the radical ‘60s.

This “materialization” of Asian Americans into sociopolitical and print reality can be traced throughout many of *Gidra*’s illustration-to-photograph sequences. In November 1969, *Gidra* published an article on the redevelopment of LA’s Little Tokyo; instead of using a photograph of the ethnic enclave, the paper chose to provide an illustration (Fig.3). By the 1960s, many of the scattered Asian neighborhoods in Los Angeles were in disrepair and experienced high levels of poverty, gang violence, and drug use.⁶⁰ *Gidra*’s use of the illustration to depict of Little Tokyo imagined the neighborhood as it could be, after its proposed redevelopment. Here, Asian figures engage in classic “American” activities: someone carries a Christmas tree off the frame, a baker chases a young boy down the street, a family strolls in an orderly fashion, a man delivers the morning paper, a father and son carry home the holiday presents. These Asian bodies perform “America” routines and appear to move naturally on a street lined with organized storefronts. The signs running along the buildings help to create this idyllic “Asian American” landscape, where traditional Japanese characters exist alongside English lettering and Japanese surnames can be written in large font – claiming ownership of their American space. This staged claiming of “American” by Asian bodies was rendered possible only within the expansive space of marginal art. The illustration allowed *Gidra* readers to imagine a small ethnic-specific community, historically crowded into dilapidated buildings and connected with high levels of

⁶⁰ Maeda, 68

Figure 3: "Street Scene '55 of Little Tokyo," *Gidra* 1:8 (Nov. 1969)



Figures 4: two images from "Nisei Week Community Drug Offensive," *Gidra* 3:9 (Sept 1971)



poverty, as an ideal “Asian American” space, where Asian working-class bodies could engage in “American” rituals while remaining visible as uniquely “Asian American.”

Two years later, in September 1971, *Gidra* showed its first two photographs of Little Tokyo in a spread on the “Nisei Week Community Drug Offensive” (Fig.4). The two images depict young Japanese Americans walking along crowded streets, holding up signs to raise awareness for drug-related issues in the neighborhood while dressed in kimonos or loose-fitting silk shirts and pants. Asian figures dressed in Westernized clothing are featured in the background. The store signs – though of the same nature (“dress shop” and other service-related businesses) as those in the older illustration – depict only English lettering. In 1971, Asian Americans could appear in photographs donning ethnic-specific traditional garb while walking through visibly American spaces. Though these figures are still engaged in newer “American” routines such as raising drug awareness, their actions are less self-consciously mainstream “American” than, say, the (white) tradition of buying a Christmas tree for the holidays. These two photographs show Asian Americans staging sociopolitical protest in the urban American landscape, publically displaying their “Oriental” roots through clothing that is at once cultural and political. Two years after *Gidra*’s Little Tokyo drawing claimed an idyllic “Asian American” urban space within the lines of white mainstream tradition, Asian American subjects could emerge from their illustrated cocoons as solid figures in photographs displaying a different “Asian America” – one fraught with visual, cultural, and sociopolitical ambivalence.

It is clear, then, that something fundamental shifted within the first year of *Gidra* that allowed for the transition from sketch to photograph of the Asian American figure. Whereas in 1969, Japanese American children in internment and Little Tokyo residents could only appear in illustrations claiming a new Asian American reality, these Asian American subjects could be

shown in photographs starting in 1970. By initially imaging the not-yet-existent Asian American in its marginal art, *Gidra* did the work of making an Asian American body that coalesced in the visual terrain of photograph.

Not only did *Gidra* aim to fashion the Asian American body, it sought to create and then engage a new readership that together formed an Asian American collective consciousness. For its first seven issues, *Gidra*'s nebulous structure reflected the similar state of "Asian American" identity: there was no headline, no set organization in its spreads, and "Gidra" was drawn in different styles. At its inception, *Gidra* simply inserted its title ("Gidra") within the first page of text without an accompanying phrase. Starting with its 8th issue in November 1969, "Gidra" appeared in the headlines in black letters, over the phrase "The News Magazine of the Asian American Community." Then, in May 1970, the underlining phrase changed to "Monthly News of the Asian American Community." By late 1969, *Gidra* was able to address an "Asian American Community." Its move into "monthly news" marked its place within the now-materialized Asian American collective body. In 1970, "Asian American" was an established community, with regular news that formed imaginary connections between disparate groups of Asian Americans across differences in geography, ethnicity, and social class. The Asian American Movement's use of marginal art in its publications fashioned a new Asian American individual and collective body, which could now be selectively visualized within the "real" frame of a photograph. As photographed subjects, Asian Americans could engage the photography-dominated visual field of the U.S. national press and assert themselves as a visible political entity in America, whose existence could be evidenced and documented.

The movement from margin illustration to margin photograph during the first two years of the movement can be traced across Asian American publications. *Roots: an Asian American*

Reader was published by the UCLA Asian American Studies Center in June 1971 as a collection of Asian American publications meant to consolidate the “‘roots’ of the issues facing Asians in America.”⁶¹ Many of *Roots’* publications were reprints of earlier *Gidra* articles, including Uyematsu’s “The Emergence of Yellow Power” and Ron Tanaka’s “I Hate My Wife...” These reprints followed “Asian America’s” progression from drawing to photograph. In 1969, *Gidra’s* marginal art were largely illustrations that both reflected and addressed the unformed nature of “Asian America.” By 1971, *Roots* was produced as the first Asian American studies textbook, presupposing the existence of an Asian American audience. Its sole use of photographs to construct its marginal art indicated this fundamental shift. In a symbiotic relationship, as publications moved progressively from marginal illustrations to marginal photographs, “Asian America” became increasingly more legible as a unified body.

However, the “Asian American” entrance into more tangible photographic visual representation does not denote a stabilization of “Asian American” identity, nor does it resolve “Asian America’s” inherent ambivalence. Even when pictured in a “real” frame, Asian Americans appear as volatile figures denying the viewer any sense of visual “fixity.” Once again comparing the internment camp sketch and photograph, one sees that while the photograph appears to delineate the transition from abstract thought to visible body, the five boys within its frame all look away from the viewer in a denial of direct contact. By contrast, the illustration – the more inchoate representation – intentionally moves the hand of the boy on the far right so that it does not obstruct the second boy’s face: who looks straight at the audience with an expression of disapproving challenge. Thus, even as Asian American publications like *Gidra* vied for a greater visibility, they sought to maintain Asian America’s ambiguous nature from the

⁶¹ Franklin Odo, preface of *Roots: An Asian American Reader* (Los Angeles: Asian American Studies Center, 1971), vii

very beginning, and throughout the progression of the movement. Photography's documentary nature did not neutralize Asian America's political ambivalence: instead it served to selectively display certain aspects of Asian American subjectivity through the medium of collage that rendered Asian America simultaneously more "real" and more volatile than its initial illustrated form. From illustration to photograph, "Asian American" was an indirect visibility, comprised of many opposing truths – a "collage" identity.

II. Disparate Images: Collaging Asian America

Gidra's 2nd issue included an article on "Title II," a provision in the 1950 Internal Security Act that allowed the U.S. government to apprehend and detain any person suspected of anti-U.S. activity. The article tied "Title II" to Japanese internment and termed it "the Concentration Camp Act" (Fig.5). A collage on the bottom right depicted newspaper headlines proclaiming disparate events: "U.S. Concentration Camp Reopens," "Presidential Order Places Black People in Camps," "McCarran Act Repealed!" All these events ostensibly took place – in the future. Set in 1970 or 1972 (notably 30 years after the start of internment), this "collage" of "Title II's" imagined outcomes cut and pasted pieces of the future to form a particular political reality in the present: that of Black-Asian connection and alliance, racist white American military aggression, and a unified Asian American call to the U.S. government to repeal such an act. This collage, which was constructed by the unorthodox means of overlapping fragments of the future, allowed Asian Americans in *Gidra* to visually piece together an alternate political reality that stressed inter-minority cooperation against a racist-imperialist political system late in the radical '60s. The total image, while not stable in its dependence on future-figments, held social and political power in the present moment despite, or perhaps within, its own volatility.



Figure 7: “THE PEOPLE,” photograph, *Gidra* 1:5 (August 1969)

This “piecing together” of imagined parts to form a subversive whole also applies to the formation of Asian American visibility within *Gidra*. Starting from its second issue, *Gidra* included an image titled “The People” in its free forum section in almost every publication. These photographs largely showed young Asian Americans relaxing in idyllic nature scenes, interspersed with more “concrete” academic or political settings. The first three images in “The People” series, however, began as collage images. In its May-July 1969 issues, *Gidra* created three separate collages of young male Asians, elderly female and male Asians, and female and male Asian children (Fig.6). Gathered as individual photographs, cut, transplanted and re-grouped to form a conglomerate whole, each image of “The People” helped to fashion the diverse “people” it claimed to re-present. In its first issues, “Asian American” was still a

nebulous entity emerging from the corners of its publications as sketches and illustrations. To fashion “The People,” *Gidra* literally took Asians of all generations – young activists, elderly 1st generation immigrants, and children – out of their ethnic-specific community contexts and placed them into a new pan-Asian community, that stitched together difference rather than writing over it. Every figure in the three collages is caught in mid-action, eyes looking away from the frame, as if in their “natural” environment. To collage Asian American identity was to fabricate the natural, mechanically piecing together separate parts to create an organic whole. The “the” in “The People,” denotes the normal and presents a common mass existence imbued with political power.

By the fourth edition of “The People” series, *Gidra* moved from collage to a jumping shot of young Asian American women holding up a “The People” sign in a sunlit park (Fig.7). In this bucolic frame, there are no urban structures or specific signs of place: the women together claim their “natural” identity as “The People” within an abstracted American landscape. For the first time in the photo series, the Asian American subjects look directly at the viewer in their new “normal” identity, within a land that is their own. Historically denied a place in America – through anti-Asian immigration laws and racist permutations of the yellow peril image, such as the model minority myth – Asian Americans in the radical ‘60s movement asserted their right to occupy America through the medium of marginal art.

Gidra continued to publish collages throughout its six-year run, again disrupting the easy “fixing” of Asian American visibility as a linear progression from marginal art to photographic reality. For its February 1971 cover, *Gidra* created a collage of three female Asian figures imposed over a photo cutout of a young white man who appears to be screaming (Fig.8). The two bottom figures are generic drawings of an East Asian and a Southeast Asian woman, each

dressed in the typical garb of their respective origins and both colored yellow (though the second figure might also be an Asian American in counterculture “hippie” dress, demonstrating the ambivalence of Asian American self-imaging). Overhead, two photograph cutouts spliced together depict a young Asian girl with an uncertain expression, wearing silk robes while either flying down towards or away from the bottom figures on a large crane. The bottom two figures can be read as visual representations of existing Oriental female archetypes within the national imaginary (fixed, exotic, quiet, bearers of tradition) that have been mapped upon the Asian woman’s body by a loud (screaming) racist American public. Though the two drawn figures wear different location-specific Oriental markers – embodying the false separation, or ethnic disidentification, between older East Asian immigrant communities and newer Southeast Asian refugees post-1965 Immigration Act – they are both rendered “yellow” in U.S. national culture.

The two photograph-based figures in the collage are the white man and the young Asian girl: the two real actors on the American sociopolitical stage. From the late ‘60s to early ‘70s, the Asian American radical press was responding to a history of U.S. orientalist racialization of Asian immigrants – particularly the creation of the model minority myth in 1966. These stereotypes acted violently on Asian bodies, inciting physical violence and acts of containment against immigrant communities. Yet here in *Gidra*, while the white man (the hegemonic U.S. nation) incessantly screams out America’s stereotypes of Asian women, the young girl embodies the rising “Asian American,” who hovers between departing from her old Oriental visibility and coming down to take her place over its remnants. The break between photograph and illustration in this collage delineates what is illusory (sketch) and what is emerging reality (photo). “Asian America” can decide whether or not to build upon its Oriental shells because it now exists

independent of those stereotypes, reclaiming and redirecting the force of racialized anti-Asian images to offer alternate immigrant selfhoods against the national grain.

Figure 8: Cover of *Gidra* 3:2 (February 1971)



III. The Gidra Monster: Use of Oriental Stereotypes

Recognizing “yellow” stereotypes as illusory fragments, *Gidra* often used unstable “Oriental” markers to collage a larger, still ephemeral, whole. In its first issue, *Gidra* placed an illustration of a male samurai in traditional robes striking his sword towards the reader in the center margin of an article titled: “Necessary But Not Sufficient; Yellow Power!” (Fig.9) To image “yellow power” as a traditional samurai appears to re-embody standard stereotypes surrounding “Oriental” Asian roots. Yet, drawn by a publication rooted in ambivalent visuality, the samurai’s frontal stance and forward gaze indicates the deceptive nature of this image. His downward slashing sword is aimed at two audiences in 1969: the white American majority and the still-unformed Asian American community. Through re-presenting Asian stereotype, *Gidra* claims and then uses the power of existing Asian visual categories in America to form a subversive entity who comes back to cut down the very racist sociopolitical system that created it. “Yellow Power!” is embodied in the stereotypical samurai as a direct challenge to white constructions of U.S. citizenship, violently emerging from the margins of the amorphous visual realm.

At the same time, the samurai “cuts” at the Asian reader, whose ethnic-specific identity thus far has been “necessary but not sufficient.” The subheadings on the left and right of the illustration read: “Asian pride” and “White-washed Asians.” Before 1968, Asians in America had to choose between embracing their nation and culture of origin – “Asia” – and adopting the (white) norms and customs of U.S. national culture in its totality – “America.” From the central margin, the samurai illustration launches a critique of such an “Asia”/“America” binary by cutting through the space separating the two subheadings while also serving to join the two together into “Asian America.” To be “Asian American” is not to be “white-washed.” At the

same time, the traditional Asian culture the samurai embodies cannot form the whole of Asian American identity. While ethnic-specific roots were celebrated by the movement and were an integral part of the Asian American experience, the identity itself materializes through multiple layerings of different – and sometimes contradicting – Asian subjectivities within America.



Figure 9: “Yellow Power” Samurai Illustration, *Gidra* 1:1 (April 1969)

The samurai’s sword, caught in mid-swing, arcs back towards himself; what he represents is “necessary but not sufficient” to creating Asian American identity.

Within the lines of old anti-Asian visual stereotypes, *Gidra* found ways to claim and to make an alternate “Asian American” identity. For its first four issues, *Gidra* published a small comic panel of “Stereotypes” surrounding Japanese, Chinese, Koreans, and Filipinos (Fig.10).

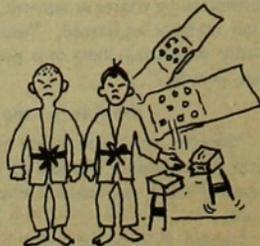
These comics depicted the racist implications of having increasing numbers (“one, two, three,

and four”) of each Asian ethnicity. Labels become progressively more threatening, reflecting the U.S. nation’s unspoken fears, as the number of each group increases. Japanese are “gardener, karate match, sneak attack, [and] relocation camp,” Chinese constitute “laundry, restaurant, immigration quota, [and] population explosion,” Koreans are “orphan, border struggle, kimchee factory, [and] unheard of,” and Filipin@s make “ram quarterback, nurses’ shift, bamboo dance, [and] grape strike.” The caricatures portray the physical and spatial markers of difference attached to each Asian immigrant group: Japanese and Filipinos are associated with agriculture (“gardener, grape strike”) whereas Chinese and Koreans reside in “Oriental” food production places (restaurant, “kim chee” factory). The four immigrant groups do not intersect in vocation or physical place, kept separate by historical U.S. domestic policies such as internment, urban zoning, and immigration quotas. By re-presenting markers of essential difference between Asian ethnic groups as silly caricatures, the artist denies the validity and permanence of these imagined separations. The form of caricature carries a double critique: the drawings articulate-without-articulating problematic Oriental stereotypes while unsettling the existence of those distinctions by placing them in the realm of the “comic” and illusory. Growing Asian numerical presence in the U.S., translated as a series of comic panels, reveals the shifting and ambiguous nature of these stereotypes and points to the history of a diverse, plural Asian American presence.

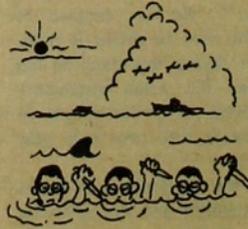
Stereotypes....



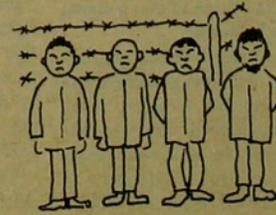
ONE JAPANESE
IS A
GARDENER



TWO JAPANESE
IS A
KARATE MATCH



THREE JAPANESE
IS A
SNEAK ATTACK



FOUR JAPANESE
IS A
RELOCATION CAMP

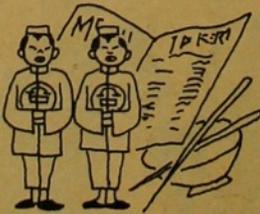
Shark

2-GIDRA - April, 1969

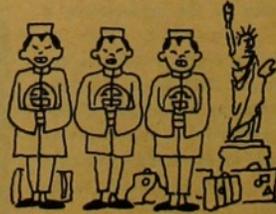
Stereotypes....



ONE CHINESE
IS A
LAUNDRY



TWO CHINESE
IS A
RESTAURANT



THREE CHINESE
IS AN
IMMIGRATION QUOTA



FOUR CHINESE
IS A
POPULATION EXPLOSION

Shark

2-GIDRA - MAY, 1969

Stereotypes....



ONE KOREAN
IS AN
ORPHAN



TWO KOREANS
IS A
BORDER STRUGGLE



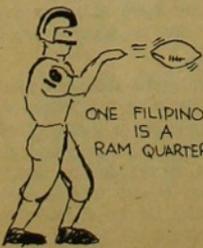
THREE KOREANS
IS A
KIM CHEE FACTORY

?

FOUR KOREANS
IS
UNHEARD OF

2-GIDRA - JUNE 1969

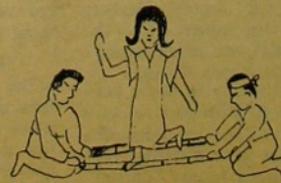
Stereotypes....



ONE FILIPINO
IS A
RAM QUARTERBACK



TWO FILIPINOS
IS A
NURSES' SHIFT



THREE FILIPINOS
IS A
BAMBOO DANCE



FOUR FILIPINOS
IS A
GRAPE STRIKE

2-GIDRA - JULY 1969.

Figure 10: "Stereotypes" strips from *Gidra* 1:1-4 (April-July 1969); by "Shark" (recurring artist in *Gidra*)

However, the comic panels do not altogether reject white Oriental stereotypes. Read closely, the format of the illustrations – moving successively in “one, two, three, and four” – physically traces *Gidra*’s larger call to gather and form as an “Asian American” corporal body. Only when each Asian group gathers in the final “four” do they become politically visible and challenging as ghosts of America’s anti-Asian past or figments of the nation’s uneasy radical-60s present. Confronting U.S. national culture with its own anxieties over Asians in America, *Gidra* assembles Asians to show “relocation camp” history, the threat of “population explosion” following the 1965 Immigration Act, and the force of radical workers’ protests (“grape strikes”), that all have the power to alter the U.S.’ sociopolitical status quo. Perhaps most terrifying of all is the question mark over “four Koreans is unheard of.” The mark, denoting the impossibility of visualizing a larger number of Koreans in America, also maps onto the developing Asian American community. One does not know how to visualize “Asian America”: for the white national body, the terror lies in the uncertainty of its final form after materialization.

Perhaps the most striking appropriation of the Oriental image to collage “Asian American” identity was the figure of “Mr. *Gidra*” himself. The paper’s mascot debuts in the initial April 1969 paper as a caterpillar donning an Oriental “farmer’s” hat with a sword/pen strapped to his back (Fig.11). He wears a perpetually puzzled expression on his face, with stereotypically squinted eyes. Mr. *Gidra* can be read as “Asian America” itself: donning the vestiges of his “Asian” visual stereotypes while preparing for his transformation into something larger than the sum of his parts (the individual constituents of the collage identity). The sheathed sword-pen he carries embodies his still-latent potential to speak and be heard in the American public; he must first be transfigured into a unified body that carries political visibility before he can wield his voice and use it to tear down the U.S.’ existing strictures. His perplexed grimace,

which seems more pained or confused than triumphant, gestures towards the uncertainty of his transformation.

Indeed, Mr. Gidra – like “Asian America” – does not follow a linear progression towards a stable visible body as a butterfly. In *Gidra*’s one-year anniversary edition, a spread on Gidra’s formation was titled “Stages of Mr. Gidra” (Fig.12). The six-page piece showed “Mr. Gidra” from his “birth” at the typing desk, to his youthful years crying for “changes now!” to his apparent final metamorphosis as a butterfly. Yet, “Mr. Gidra” appears even more confused as a butterfly than as a caterpillar, scratching his head under the sign “epilogue.” The “epilogue” image, rather than signaling the conclusion of *Gidra* (which would publish for five more years), instead functions much like the question mark in the “four Koreans” comic strip. In the ‘60s, the model minority stressed assimilation into the white mainstream as the natural, if unattainable, endpoint for Asian immigrants. The butterfly is “Mr. Gidra’s” most obvious destination: by presenting the viewer with “Asian America’s” standard conclusion with a visual “question mark,” *Gidra* reveals the elusiveness of assimilation into a racist national state, whose citizenship was historically defined against Asian “aliens,” and unsettles the finality of “Asian American” identity to cast it continually back into the realm of ambivalence. The final image in the anniversary sequence pictures Mr. Gidra walking away into a blank space while a *Gidra* staff member sleeps.

“Asian America’s” constant departure into the ambiguous realm of transformation receives visual substance in *Gidra*’s final issue. After his first visual exodus in the April 1970 issue, Mr. Gidra occasionally reappeared in select editions of *Gidra* throughout 1972-1974, but did not return as a constant entity placed next to the headlines. Finally, in April 1974, he was featured on the last page of the paper’s final publication. But he did not appear as a butterfly.

Rather, “Mr. Gidra” assumed the form of Godzilla himself: a large dinosaur-like monster that crouches behind the *Gidra* office as the staff faces the combined armed forces of the military, whose tanks are poised to fire. “Gidra” is at once intimidated by the threat of U.S. national violence and intimidating in his very form and nature. While there is a multitude of U.S. troops aimed against him – just as there is a multitude of sociopolitical structures in the U.S. that aggressively target Asian bodies – “Gidra” looms over the military forces in stature and crouches as if both ready to hide and ready to step from behind the borders of the newspaper office.

The butterfly, then, is the monster. “Asian America,” now a solid unified body, is terrifying in its abnormal, non-linear, growth into a misshapen body rife with ambivalences. By 1974, *Gidra* had helped to fashion an “Asian American” collage identity that was now ready to emerge as a constantly transforming entity that would go beyond the confines of the ‘60s/70s movement to encompass an ever-expanding pan-Asian community. Jeffrey Cohen, author of *Monster Theory*, claims: “the monster is the harbinger of category crisis.”⁶² A monster poses a threat to a culture’s existing boundaries and traditional forms of social and political order because it “refuses easy categorization” by existing as a hybrid that does not conform to existing systems of distinction. Asian American identity, as evidenced in the ambivalent and sometimes contradicting characteristics of its visual manifestations during Asian America’s early press history, was conceived as a monster identity that unsettled existing structures of racial categorization. As such, its very existence posed a radical political challenge to a U.S. national system that upheld white/male citizenship at the expense of women and minorities. Asian America’s “monster” identity “image”-ed America, otherwise.

⁶² Jeffrey Cohen, *Monster theory: reading culture* (Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 6



Figure 11: first page, *Gidra* 1:1 (April 1969)

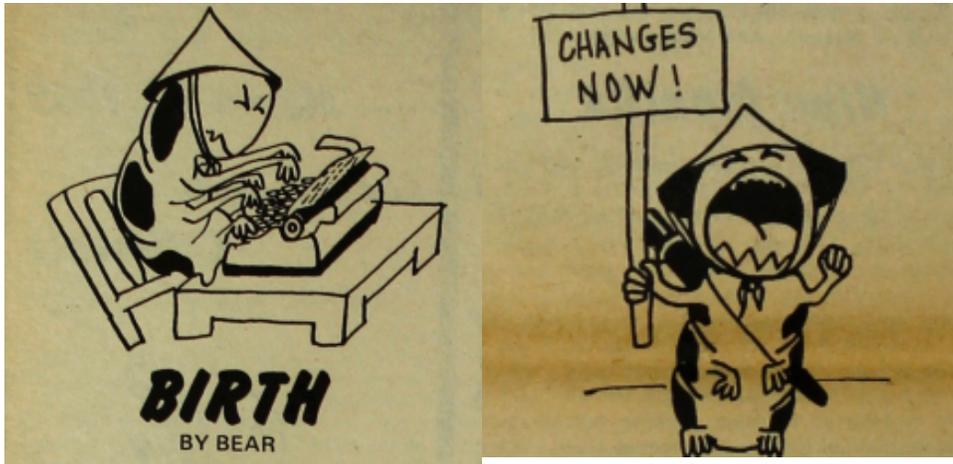


Figure 12:
Stages of "Mr. Gidra" from 1-
year anniversary edition, *Gidra*
2:4 (April 1970)

- (from left to right)
1. Birth
 2. Activism
 3. Metamorphosis?
 4. Walking away

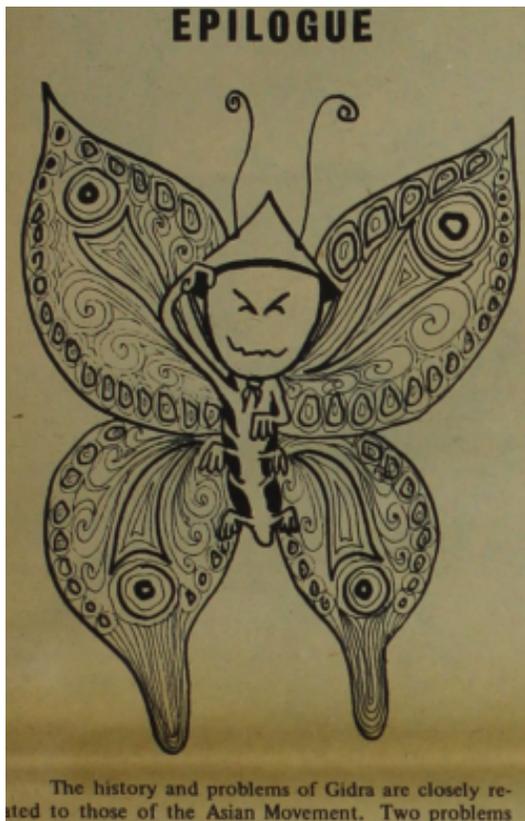
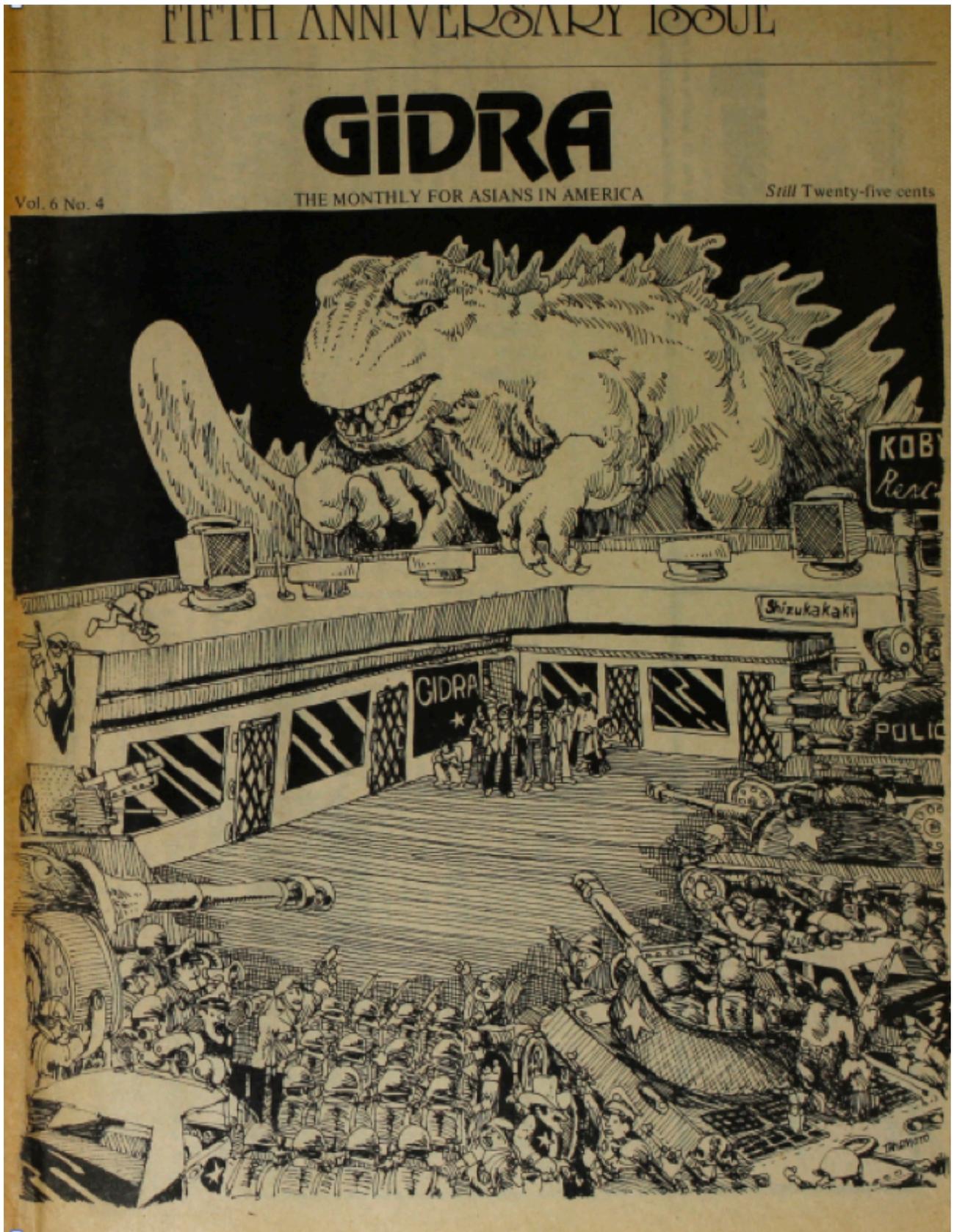


Figure 13: cover of final issue, *Gidra* 6:4 (April 1974)



***Gidra* and Model Minority “Grown up”:
Re-Imaging Radical Asian American Ambiguity in the post-60s Suburban Era**

William Wei narrates *Gidra*'s disbanding in 1974, claiming that its “core staff members were getting older...concerned [with] making a living and raising families...working for *Gidra* was never meant to be a career, they had to look elsewhere.”⁶³ According to Wei, the same Asian American college students who created a new “monster” identity during the radical ‘60s became white-collar workers who moved into the suburbs and shifted from radical to reformist politics by the mid’70s/early 80s.⁶⁴ During the 1970s-90s “winter of civil rights” period, Asian American identity was reduced in U.S. national culture to a new neo-conservative permutation of the model minority myth emerging from the Asian suburbs. In Los Angeles, the once-white suburbs of San Gabriel Valley (SGV) became the physical framework for a new Asian American visual “fixing” and un-grounding. As Asian immigrants moved to the L.A. suburbs, the white American press – namely, the *Los Angeles Times* – mapped out their presence along the lines of the model minority myth; the SGV became a space where, for a different era, the model minority myth was naturalized and made manifest. At the same time, the “626” (area code) suburbs provided physical, economic, and social room for the development of a diverse and substantial Asian American community, birthing a new generation of Asian Americans whose plural identity was grounded in the suburban experience. The twin dynamics at the core of mid-60s Asian American visibility – the model minority and *Gidra*'s radical “Asian American” collage identity – continued their struggle in the new suburban landscape during the latter half of the 20th century.

With the rise of the New Right and Reaganomics in the mid-1970s to 1980s, many radical movements of the late 1960s appeared to “disintegrate” into sectarianism and reformist

⁶³ Wei, 112

⁶⁴ Wei, 243-246

politics, including the Asian American movement. Glenn Omatsu attributes this shift to the “corporate offensive” launched by big businesses during the economic recession of the 1970s. Blaming higher working wages and the “too much democracy” ‘60s era for the country’s financial crisis, corporations called for national privatization and deployed an “intensive ideological assault” on the different radical groups attempting to challenge the U.S. economic and political system. Namely, big business targeted the working class – which was largely composed of racial minorities and immigrants – weakening their social/political gains in the ‘60s through mass layoffs, wage and benefit cuts, and transfer of capital/production overseas. The Reagan administration (1981-1989) served to institutionalize these changes, adopting a *laissez-faire* economic policy, reducing taxation of the rich, and cutting many of the social programs won by minority groups in the ‘60s.⁶⁵ The “winter of civil rights” 1970s-90s period saw the reassertion of a conservative capitalist/imperialist system in the U.S. that was dependent on the exploitation of racialized labor, at home and abroad; the period’s new political-economic system actively attacked the radical politics of the ‘60s and the minority groups that upheld them.⁶⁶

During this period, Asian Americans largely faded from the radical political stage as the Movement shifted towards electoral politics and student activists “grew up” to assume professional careers and buy new homes in majority-white suburbs. From 1970 to 1990, the Asian American population dramatically increased from 1.4 million to 7.3 million; yet, by 1990, Asian Americans still constituted less than 3 percent of the total U.S. population.⁶⁷ Rather than radical grassroots efforts, Asian Americans turned to local electoral politics to achieve social and

⁶⁵ Glenn Omatsu, “The ‘Four Prisons’ and the Movements of Liberation: Asian American Activism from the 1960s to the 1990s” in *The State of Asian America: Activism and Resistance in the 1990s*, (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1994), 33-36

⁶⁶ Omatsu, 37

⁶⁷ Wei, 150

political gains, establishing voting blocs and coalitions to increase Asian representation.⁶⁸ A new generation of Asian Americans – both Asian immigrants and the children and grandchildren of radical Asian American ‘60s activists – moved from traditional immigrant-heavy service sectors to white-collar jobs in law, medicine, business, social work, and politics.⁶⁹ The social and political aims of this new generation starkly contrasted with that of its 1960s predecessor.

Largely born within the American suburbs, neo-conservative Asian Americans of the late ‘70s/early ‘80s period were a product of both the radical ‘60s Asian American Movement and the model minority myth. The joint radical activism of Asian Americans and other people of color in the previous decade saw the establishment of ethnic studies, the accelerated desegregation of the suburbs (including the 1968 Fair Housing Act), and the creation of “Asian American” identity. Many children of the ‘60s Asian American activists grew up in upper-middle class white-majority suburbs, attended elite universities, and proudly identified as “Asian American.” This 1970s/80s generation matured within the Reagan era of stark racial and class polarization and emphasis on individual advancement. Their experience of racism was generally removed from poverty and physical violence, manifesting as micro-aggressions or “glass ceilings” blocking career advancement.⁷⁰

The neo-conservative Asian American platform focused on abolishing Asian college admission quotas and revoking affirmative-action policies in both education and employment, at the expense of other people of color.⁷¹ As Asian American college attendance rose by 126 percent from the 1970s to 1990s, the Reagan generation became visible in the American mainstream as the model minority – a symbol of the success of racist, conservative American

⁶⁸ Wei, 243-245

⁶⁹ Omatsu, 41-42

⁷⁰ Omatsu, 42

⁷¹ Omatsu, 43-44

capitalism.⁷² Prominent Asian American neo-conservatives framed their politics by taking ownership of a fixed Asian American image first drawn by the mainstream press in the mid-60s. For instance, MIT-graduate Arthur Hu's 1989 *Asian Week* article, "Hu's on First," claimed that affirmative action admitted "less-qualified" minority applicants at the cost of "more qualified European Americans and Asian Americans."⁷³ A decade after *Gidra*, the children of its student activists rallied proudly under Asian American identity while ironically denouncing the Movement as "destructive,"⁷⁴ dismantling many of its social and political gains, and emerging as the very model minority image the Asian American Movement sought to subvert.

It is important to note that Asian American reformist politics and neo-conservatism were not the only forms of Asian American politics during the period; Asian Americans continued to launch radical grassroots movements in the U.S. after 1965. Throughout the 1970s-80s, Filipin@, Chinese, and Korean Americans rallied to protest U.S. imperialist encroachments in Asian nations, Samoan Americans campaigned against racist police brutality in LA, and Pacific Islanders called for the removal of U.S. nuclear weapons and nuclear waste from the Pacific. During the 1984 and 1988 presidential elections, Asian American groups helped form the Rainbow Coalition with other minority groups to back Jesse Jackson on a liberal campaign that promoted the reversal of Reaganomics and increased social welfare.⁷⁵ The "winter of civil rights" did not see the death of the Asian American Movement; the "Asian American" monster identity continued its subversive and amorphous growth, encompassing neo-conservatives and radicals alike as both strains of Asian American post-1965 politics moved into the suburbs. Yet it remains

⁷² Li, 151, 157; Omatsu, 65

⁷³ Arthur Hu, "Hu's on First," *Asian Week*, (28 April 1989)

⁷⁴ Omatsu, 38

⁷⁵ Omatsu, 38-39

true that, despite these countertrends, the model minority myth became the primary form of Asian American visibility in the American mainstream from the late 1970s to 1990s.

I. The Emergence of Asian American Suburbanization in the SGV

The development of the Asian American suburb, the space where *Gidra*'s radical "Asian American" identity and the model minority myth converged, is central to tracing new Asian American visual fixity following the '60s movement. In LA, many Asian Americans chose to move to the San Gabriel Valley (SGV), a suburban area consisting of 45 municipalities stretching from East L.A. to the western edge of the Inland Empire. During the post-war 1950s period, freeway construction around Los Angeles and a national trend of white American suburbanization saw small groups of middle-class Asian (often Chinese) Americans moving into the SGV. The city of Monterey Park was particularly attractive to these "upwardly mobile Asian Americans" because of its affordable housing, good school districts, growing network and infrastructure of transnational business, and proximity to Chinatown via freeway.⁷⁶ However, Asian Americans in the area numbered only 346 in 1960; movement to the suburbs remained negligible until the 1965. The Hart-Cellar Act admitted many Asian immigrants who possessed the socioeconomic capital to skip the traditional urban ethnic enclave – which lacked the social, economic, and physical infrastructure to accommodate them – and move into Monterey Park and its surrounding municipalities of Alhambra, San Gabriel, Rosemead, and Temple City. The 1968 Fair Housing Act legally prohibited racial discrimination in housing and allowed Asian Americans to purchase homes in neighborhoods where they were once excluded.⁷⁷ By 1970, the Asian population in Monterey Park rose to over 40,000, going from less than 0.04 percent of the

⁷⁶ Leland Saito, *Race and politics: Asian Americans, Latinos, and whites in a Los Angeles suburb* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 20

⁷⁷ Li, 34

total resident population to over 15 percent.⁷⁸

Asian presence within the area remained largely inconspicuous until the 1970s, when a new wave of former-student activist/young professional Asian Americans and Southeast Asian refugees entered the SGV. The entrance of former *Gidra* members and Asian American radicals into the suburbs coincided with the end of the Vietnam War in 1975, which brought a large wave of refugees from Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia – diverse in language, culture, and socioeconomic class – into the L.A. area. These demographic changes dramatically altered the physical contours of the growing Asian American SGV suburbs. The 626 area became increasingly stratified along class lines, as wealthy, largely-white Americans occupied the northern municipalities (Pasadena, Arcadia, Monrovia), middle-class Asian Americans (such as former *Gidra* staff) lived in the southeast (Monterey Park, Alhambra, San Gabriel), and lower-working class Asian and Latin@ populations spread into the southwest (El Monte, Rosemead).⁷⁹ Multi-generational families and multi-family homes broke up the white suburban nuclear family model.⁸⁰ At the same time, the rush of diverse Asian immigrant groups into the area stimulated the establishment of Asian American social and food centers in the suburbs.

As Asian American families grew up in the suburbs in the following decade, they staked a wider claim on spatial visibility in the SGV area. Before the late '70s/early 80s, most suburban families commuted to Chinatown for food and social activities because there were few Asian businesses in the SGV.⁸¹ In 1978, DiHo Supermarket was established as the first Chinese supermarket in Monterey Park. Built in a shopping center alongside several Chinese eateries on S. Atlantic Blvd (which later became a major commercial artery in the city), DiHo Supermarket

⁷⁸ Li, "Table 4: Population Composition in Monterey Park," 81

⁷⁹ Nicolaidis, 8; Cheng, 142; Zhou et al., 64

⁸⁰ Cheng, 25

⁸¹ Li, 101

attracted many Asian families, diverting business from Chinatown.⁸² Soon after, various Chinese grocery stores, restaurants, barber shops/beauty salons, and strip malls sprang up throughout the Asian population center of the SGV (namely, Alhambra, Monterey Park, Rosemead, and San Gabriel).⁸³ Starting in 1979, Chinese American banks began planting branches in the SGV while real estate firms multiplied as Asian immigrants continued to purchase homes in the area. Doctors' offices, law firms, and travel agencies also became prominent in the 1980s.⁸⁴ In 1985, DiHo Supermarket incorporated "DiHo Service Center," where Asian immigrants could receive translation services, help with immigration papers, and general aid in "adjusting" to the States.⁸⁵ Spiritual and cultural sites – such as the 1988 Hsi Lai Temple – senior community centers, and Chinese-language newspapers allowed the local community to engage in uniquely Asian social/cultural practices within once-white suburban spaces.⁸⁶

II. Alien, anti-Black, and Model Minority: U.S. National Imaging of the Suburban Asian Subject

Historically, the suburb was a normative space where the values of U.S. national culture – white, patriarchal, racist, capitalist – were formed and reproduced. Asian Americans – culturally, linguistically, and racially cast outside of the national polity since the 19th century anti-Asian exclusion laws⁸⁷ – threatened to unsettle the de facto terms of American citizenship by inhabiting suburban spaces and refusing to follow the traditional lines of assimilation. By the 1990s, Asian Americans composed nearly 60 percent of the population in Monterey Park and

⁸² Mike Ward, "New Arrivals Find Aid in Struggle to Adjust," *L.A. Times* (June 16, 1985)

⁸³ Cheng, 2-3

⁸⁴ Li, 100-101

⁸⁵ Ward, "New Arrivals..."

⁸⁶ Zhou et al., 70-71; Li, 91.

⁸⁷ Lowe, 8

Latin@s grew to 31 percent, while white Americans decreased to 11 percent.⁸⁸ This dramatic influx was partly due to the 1990 Immigration Act, which further expanded the immigration allowances set by the 1965 Hart-Cellar Act, and the waning of the Cold War, which allowed for increased migration from mainland China.⁸⁹ Responding to this perceived challenge to the American nation, the local mainstream press – the *Los Angeles Times* – attempted to regulate Asian American suburban presence by portraying it as alien, anti-Black, and desirable only when expressed as the docile model minority. Unlike the model minority myth and *Gidra* papers of the 1960s, these new texts used three-dimensional space rather than print images to stage their visual politics. The 1992 L.A. Riots provided prime terrain for this racialized imaging.

A year before the riots, a piece titled “The Chinese Connection: who are these ‘spacemen?’”⁹⁰ displaced U.S. national anxiety over Asian global economic dominance onto the domestic Asian subject. Contrasting the trend of Western economic recession against the “enviable” Asian “horde of capital,” the article painted the threat of Japanese and Chinese “giants” as “logos...emblazoned on skylines from Irvine to San Francisco.” A “new breed” of Asian Americans, businessmen who “shuttle[d] between” Californian suburbs and Asian financial capitals, such as Taiwan and Hong Kong, were termed the “spacemen.” Manifested in Asian company names, store signs, billboards, “Oriental” architecture, and commercial strip malls, new Asian immigrant groups and older Asian descendants – both constituents of “Asian America” – were condensed into one hyper-visible ominous threat to American national sovereignty. The article employed yellow peril rhetoric – “horde,” “giants,” “breed” – to separate the Asian American from the U.S. national body as a noncitizen, and in so doing, to distance the

⁸⁸ Li, 81

⁸⁹ Li, 150

⁹⁰ Joel Kotkin, “The Chinese Connection: Who are these 'spacemen?' They regularly shuttle between Taiwan and California, bringing money,” *L.A. Times* (Dec. 22, 1991)

geopolitical challenge posed by rising Asian influence in the global market from the U.S. imperialist/capitalist system. By rendering the new Asian American a “spaceman,” the paper further cast the Asian American subject outside of the American landscape as a literal alien whose home, neither in Asia nor America, was out in space.

The 1992 L.A. Riots – a six-day long series of lootings, arsons, beatings, and shootings – was primarily incited by the Rodney King trial, a case of anti-black violence that demonstrated the injustice of a racist political system that would not incarcerate white police brutality.⁹¹ Yet *the L.A. Times* framed the uproar as a racial war between Korean American storeowners and African American “rioters,” noting that “tensions between black and Korean communities have been at high pitch...the goal was to punish Korean-Americans.”⁹² The *Times*’ dramatization of Black-Korean racial conflict (alongside other national mainstream publications and TV broadcasting) served to further incite Black-Korean violence, as recognized by local Korean newspapers.⁹³ While many Latin@ and Black storeowners defended their property with weapons during the riots, their actions were not sensationalized in the press as an example of racial tension.⁹⁴ In contrast, Korean male bodies were shown defending their stores as a vigilante Asian network stretching from city to suburb, consolidated to fight a racial war.

LA Times staff writer, Ashley Dunn, described the “largest armed camp in Koreatown”:

In the shadow of a flaming mini-mall near the corner of 5th and Western, behind a barricade of luxury sedans and battered grocery trucks, they built Firebase Koreatown...From the rooftop...a group of Koreans armed with shotguns and automatic weapons peered onto the smoky streets. Scores of others...paced through the darkened

⁹¹ Nancy Abelmann and John Lie, *Blue dreams: Korean Americans and the Los Angeles riots*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1995), 3

⁹² Greg Braxton and Jim Newton, “Looting and Fires Ravage L.A.: 25 Dead, 572 Injured; 1,000 Blazes Reported: Unrest: Troops begin deployment and a dusk-to-dawn curfew is clamped into place in the second day of violence.” *L.A. Times*, (May 01, 1992)

⁹³ “Media Bias Aggravated Riot Damage,” *Korean Journal* (June 1992)

⁹⁴ Braxton, “Looting and fires...”

parking lot in anticipation of an assault by looters.⁹⁵

Dunn's heavy use of military language framed Korean Americans as uniquely militarized subjects in a visual war zone of barricades and firebases, recalling U.S. imperialist aggressions in Asian nations (Philippines, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia) throughout the 20th century. The unusual detail of "luxury sedans and battered grocery trucks" signals the dual role of the model minority as affluent upper-class success and humble working-class hero. In Dunn's warzone, Asian Americans were not only militarized against blackness, but on behalf of the U.S. capitalist system. Picking up a gun against black looters in the name of property rights, Asian Americans fought to defend the social norms and values of U.S. national culture. Yet, even as their actions served to uphold the national body, Asian Americans were textually pictured in shadow, smoke, and darkness: "scores" (many materializing in Koreatown from the nearby SGV suburbs) defending their fortress in isolation from the rest of L.A. – separated from the U.S. nation in their self-imposed military internment camp.

Here, the mainstream press narrates the "race war" as an impartial bystander, diverting African and Asian American frustration against a racist national system – whose police force regularly violence black bodies and failed to defend minority-owned capital – onto each other. The press depicted African Americans as savage and destructive and framed riot violence as punishment for unbridled Asian development. This allowed the U.S. nation to assault both Black and Asian subjects while evading much of the violent effects of minority protest. Having grown unchecked following the 1965 and 1990 Immigration Acts, Asian American presence in the U.S. encountered seemingly inevitable repercussions mediated not by white, but black, subjects. This

⁹⁵ Ashley Dunn, "King Case Aftermath: a City in Crisis: Looters, Merchants Put Koreatown Under the Gun," *L.A. Times*, (May 02, 1992)

backlash required them to retreat into their existing socioeconomic places (the prescribed “Korean” areas of Los Angeles) to defend their hard-won earnings rather than aspiring to claim more wealth and space in the city and suburbs. During the riots, the American press figured Asian Americans against blackness as a form of socioeconomic regulation, denying solidarity between peoples of color and attempting to avert the possibility of multi-racially staged opposition to the racist U.S. national system.

On May 5th 1992, the last day of the riots, the *LA Times* published the headline “City Returns to Work, School” featuring a photograph of an Asian American businessman walking past two National Guardsmen on his way to work.⁹⁶ Following the riots, the national press scrambled to assemble an image of normalcy, turning to depict the Asian subject – construed as a deviant anti-black target of riot violence only days earlier – as a new symbol of model American socioeconomic recovery and business as usual. After the riots, the volume of *LA Times*’ normal “lifestyle” stories involving Korean Americans increased to 85 percent while the number of articles on Korean-Black racial tension decreased from 73 to 14.5 percent.⁹⁷ Having been adequately disciplined by black aggression during the riots, Asian Americans could be refitted into the obedient model minority mold. However, their success as the model minority could only emerge under national scrutiny: the Asian American businessman walks the streets of L.A. under the gaze of two figures representing the normalizing U.S. national project – “on watch.

Returning to life as normal, the Asian American businessman left the fraught Black-Asian racial intimacies of urban L.A. and stepped back into the standardizing strictures of the suburban landscape. Published a year after the L.A. Riots, “Breathing Life into Southland,”⁹⁸

⁹⁶ “City Returns to Work, School,” *L.A. Times*, (May 05, 1992); see appendix, 101

⁹⁷ Hyun Ban and R.C. Adams, “L.A. Times Coverage of Korean Americans before, after 1992 Riots”. *Newspaper Research Journal*, 18:3-4 (1997), 64-78

⁹⁸ Karl Schoenberger, “Breathing Life Into Southland: From mainland millionaires to grad students, a 'new wave' of

dictated the terms of a model Asian American suburban visibility, instructing suburbanites to “blend into California’s economic landscape” by assuming “lowkey professional careers” in STEM fields. The piece includes three photographs depicting an affluent Asian American businessman and businesswoman on either side of a San Gabriel Square night scene, whose neon lights and Chinese store signs are described as “garish” and “flashy.” The two prototypes of model minority success are captured through close-up interior portraiture, in a tight frame that leaves no room for markers denoting location, time, and space. Here, the mainstream press physically fences in rampant Asian suburban growth through images of the model minority that emerge from visually ungrounded, fabricated realms. In its photographs, the *LA Times* narrates another closed-circle model minority myth that appears to welcome Asian intellectual and financial capital while attempting to contain it within inconspicuous, stereotypically “Asian” economic sectors, separate from the visible suburban spaces of the SGV. The Asian subject was encouraged by U.S. national culture to live and invest in the suburbs, but to stay within a fixed “lowkey” visibility that lacked any real spatial dimension. The SGV suburbs were imagined as a spatial container for the new technology-oriented model minority, a place that outlined the boundaries of Asian American existence while discouraging any visual manifestation that appeared outside of nationally drawn lines.

III. Baffling the Eye: the Plurality of Asian American Built Suburban Space

In truth, suburban Asian America was socially complex – composed of different ethnic backgrounds, immigrant generations, socioeconomic classes, and political goals that defied the totalizing racial-spatial constructions of the U.S. state. Asian American plurality was physically inscribed on the streets and neighborhoods of the SGV in a myriad of visual markers that

Chinese immigrants is invigorating the economy,” *L.A. Times* (Oct. 04, 1993); see appendix, 102

evidenced Asian tradition (i.e. pagoda-styled roofs) and Spanish-influence (adobe-style homes), service-sector jobs (restaurants, grocery stores) and white-collar (doctors' firms) workplaces, first-generation immigrant service centers and third-generation youth afterschool programs.⁹⁹ The visually jumbled and diverse nature of present-day SGV's commercial spaces disrupt the portrayal of Asian Americans as alien, anti-black, and model minority by physically asserting Asian America's ambivalent subjectivities and refusing to be easily "read."

A strip mall (Fig.14) along the intersection of Huntington Drive and San Gabriel Boulevard contains (from top left to bottom right), a dental office, a nail salon, Starbucks, B-Man's Teriyaki & Burgers, Subway, and Half & Half Tea House. Seen in isolation, the "American Dental Implant Center" functions as a normative space for the "low-key" white-collar model minority, an emblem of U.S. national culture proudly displaying the American flag. Yet, in this strip mall, the dental office is placed next to a nail salon: a space for working-class, often-first generation, Asian labor. Furthermore, the lower-level businesses feature large multi-national American chains (Starbucks and Subway) next to local food stores (B-Man's and Half & Half) that sell "Asian" products of consumption, such as teriyaki and milk tea. Strikingly, B-Man's Teriyaki & Burgers presents traditional Japanese cuisine alongside iconic American food. "B-Man" stands for its owner, Bob Takeuchi¹⁰⁰; Takeuchi's abstracted self ("B"), placed in bold red/black letters on the storefront, visually claims an American manhood that encompasses both Japan and America. As a variegated whole, this commercial space breaks down fictive distinctions between "model minority" and immigrant working-class labor, between American mainstream and Asian commercial consumption, between national norms and local ethnic

⁹⁹ "Rethinking..." 71-72

¹⁰⁰ <http://www.bmans.com/about-us.html>

particularities. In the L.A. suburbs, both the dentist and nail artist, Subway and Half & Half, teriyaki and burger, constitute Asian America.



Figure 14: Photograph of strip mall along intersection of Huntington Drive and San Gabriel Boulevard, taken by Sunny Zheng (January 14, 2016)

Through commercial infrastructure, Asian America spatially re-presented multiracial connections within the SGV, resisting the nation's attempt to define the Asian subject against blackness and imaging the inherent slippages of race in America. Alhambra's Main Street is a conglomerate area of American mainstream restaurant chains and 626-specific Asian eateries. Notably, Attic is the only clothing shop along the strip and specializes in hip-hop fashion; Figure 15 shows the store's window display of black/gray backpacks, hoodies, and snapbacks. Just as *Gidra* collaged elements of Black Panther attire (black leather jackets, shades) onto Asian

American bodies in the late 1960s,¹⁰¹ so Asian American suburban developers in the 21st century stitched a hip hop clothing store – a retail space for black youth culture – into the visual-spatial fabric of one of its primary commercial streets. Additionally, places such as Factory Tea Bar, a café located on Mission Drive across from the San Gabriel Mission Playhouse, mark Asian-Latin@ intersections in the SGV. The popular Asian American hangout space features Spanish colonial revival architecture with adobe-esque earth tones and palm trees lining the street (Fig.16). The café’s bright Spanish-tradition façade and proximity to the Spanish mission advances a divergent history of joint Asian-Latin@ development in the L.A. suburbs and unsettles the national narrative of the isolated and singularly “Oriental” Asian suburban presence.



Figure 15: Photograph of Alhambra’s Main Street, taken by Sunny Zheng (January 14, 2016)

¹⁰¹ See Amy Uyematsu’s “The Emergence of Yellow Power,” images in *Roots* (June 1971), 9-13; *Gidra* 1:7 (Oct 1969)



Figure 16: Photograph of Factory Tea Bar, next to San Gabriel Missions Playhouse, taken by Sunny Zheng (January 15, 2016)

Recovering the Asian American “spaceman” from mainstream exclusionary rhetoric, Asian American suburbanites staked a place in the American landscape by celebrating their transnational networks. Many commercial strips in the SGV contain international Asian franchises, banks, and restaurant chains. Figure 17 pictures a strip mall in San Gabriel featuring Quickly (a Taiwanese milk tea franchise store with over 2,000 locations in “Africa, Europe, and North America”), Fanta Tours (a local Chinese travel company that offers trips to different Asian countries), T-Mobile (a German international phone company), and Mobil gas station (part of ExxonMobil, a U.S.-based international gas company).¹⁰² Condensing Asian, European, and American international businesses into one spatial frame, the strip mall ruptures the *LA Times*’ narrative of Asian suburbanization as singularly “alien.” Such suburban commercial spaces present Asian suburban transnationalism alongside European and American global business networks, physically grounding the Asian American “spaceman” as a figure intimately tied to the economic relations of 21st century America. At the same time, the SGV spatially reverses national anti-Asian racist critique to highlight America’s neo-liberal corporations – whose

¹⁰² <http://www.quicklyboba.com/about-quickly-boba/>; <http://fantatours.com/>; <http://www.telekom.de/>; <http://corporate.exxonmobil.com/en/company/about-us/history/overview>

international encroachments mark them as the real “spacemen,” even as their policies form the foundations of the capitalist U.S. imperial system.

From the 1970s to the 1990s, a national conservative economic and political assault on the aims and gains of minority groups in the radical ‘60s served to splinter Movement momentum and render enduring radical campaigns invisible to the American public. In LA, the model minority myth and Asian American identity from the ‘60s “grew up” together in the suburbs, where their intersections produced a new generation of neo-conservative Asian Americans alongside a plurality of other Asian American subjects. At a time of massive Asian population and economic growth in the 1990s, the *L.A. Times* used physical spaces to fix the Asian American suburbanite as alien, anti-black, and model minority – an attempt to regulate Asian presence in America while upholding the racist, capitalist norms of U.S. national culture. Present-day commercial infrastructure in the SGV unsettle these racial national constructions by offering disjointed readings of suburban Asian America; these spaces claim alternate subjectivities and carve out a conglomerate Asian American identity based on intersections of ethnicity, class, immigrant generation, race, and international connection. Using Youtube as a mainstream media platform, 21st century Asian American youths engaged the suburban visual terrain of the SGV to forge a counter-narrative of modern Asian American ambivalence: reaching back to the cultural-historical echoes of the late 1960s’ radical “monster” identity.

Figure 17: Photograph of strip mall along San Gabriel Blvd, taken by Sunny Zheng (January 14, 2016)



Hand in Hand: Towards Asian American Ambivalence in the 21st Century

So what we hang out?
So what we drink tea?
We just eating good
In the SGV
So what we eat late?
That's how it's spose' to be
6-2-6 young wild and free

The Fung brothers belt out their “626” anthem-parody as they effortlessly cruise down Valley Blvd in a convertible, top-down.¹⁰³ Made in 2012 to the tune of Snoop Dogg and Wiz Khalifa’s “Young, Wild, and Free,” “626” is a Youtube video that simultaneously adopts the narrative structure of the model minority myth and the collaging elements of the radical *Gidra* moment to fashion an imaginary map of Asian American suburban identity in the SGV (area code “626”) suburbs. Using the format of the moving picture, the Fung Bros visually distort space/distance to paste together an image of present “Asian America” that rises from the diverse spaces of Asian American suburban consumption across ethnic and socioeconomic class lines. The video casts the frivolity of Asian American suburban life as central to Asian American identity. Featuring restaurants, cafés, and clothing shops as key spaces of Asian consumption and socialization, the Fung Bros’ video uses the superficial commercial to engage in an urgent act of recuperation. As a modern permutation of *Gidra*’s marginal art, the video images “marginal” Asian suburban spaces in the form of musical-visual parody, playfully engaging the viewer in rapid frames of “Asian American” youth identity built upon intersections without resolving towards a totalizing visual definition. At a time when Asian American suburban subjects were (and are) cast as the new model minority – visually contained within the “ethnoburb” – Asian

¹⁰³ FungBrosComedy, “626 (Music Video)”

American suburban youths used the language of hip-hop and popular culture to “counter-brand” themselves as a fusion identity built upon multiplicity and ambivalence.

The video opens at a music school in the future, where an Asian American woman teaches a younger Asian American girl – one of the brothers’ “granddaughter” – how to play the piano, counting “three, two, one...” with her adult hands placed over the girl’s hands. Their music lesson is disrupted when the Fung Bros enter as their elderly future selves, carrying boba tea drinks in the guises of Asian American grandfathers with stereotypically “Asian” English accents and exaggerated facial hair. The piano song turns out to be a refrain of their old “626” hip-hop anthem and causes them to visually return to their golden days as youths rapping in hip-hop slang (without “Asian” accents) through the streets of the 626. This scene mimics the disjointed visual cycle of the classic 1966 model minority myth in the *US News & World Report* article: where university-age Chinese Americans sat in a classroom to learn the origin story of their “American” success, before transitioning to photographs of their own childhood growing up in Chinatown.¹⁰⁴ Here, Asian Americans enter the future, simultaneously carrying markers of present-day Asian “oriental” stereotypes and radical Asian American youth culture (boba drink), to teach their next generation an alternate “origin story.” In the future “626,” the Fung Bros’ granddaughter learns the anthem of an “Asian America” rooted, not only in the hard work of piano lessons, but in unstable images of youth hip-hop culture and intersecting subjectivities.

As the brothers reminisce, the video transitions to two back-to-back film collages of popular “626” Asian American food images, placed next to shots of street signs that do not correlate with their restaurant locations. The first collage features two shots of Hong Kong “dim-sum” dishes from NBC Seafood on the left, Taiwanese boba from Half & Half Teahouse and

¹⁰⁴ “Success Story of One Minority,” *US News & World Report* (Dec. 26, 1966)

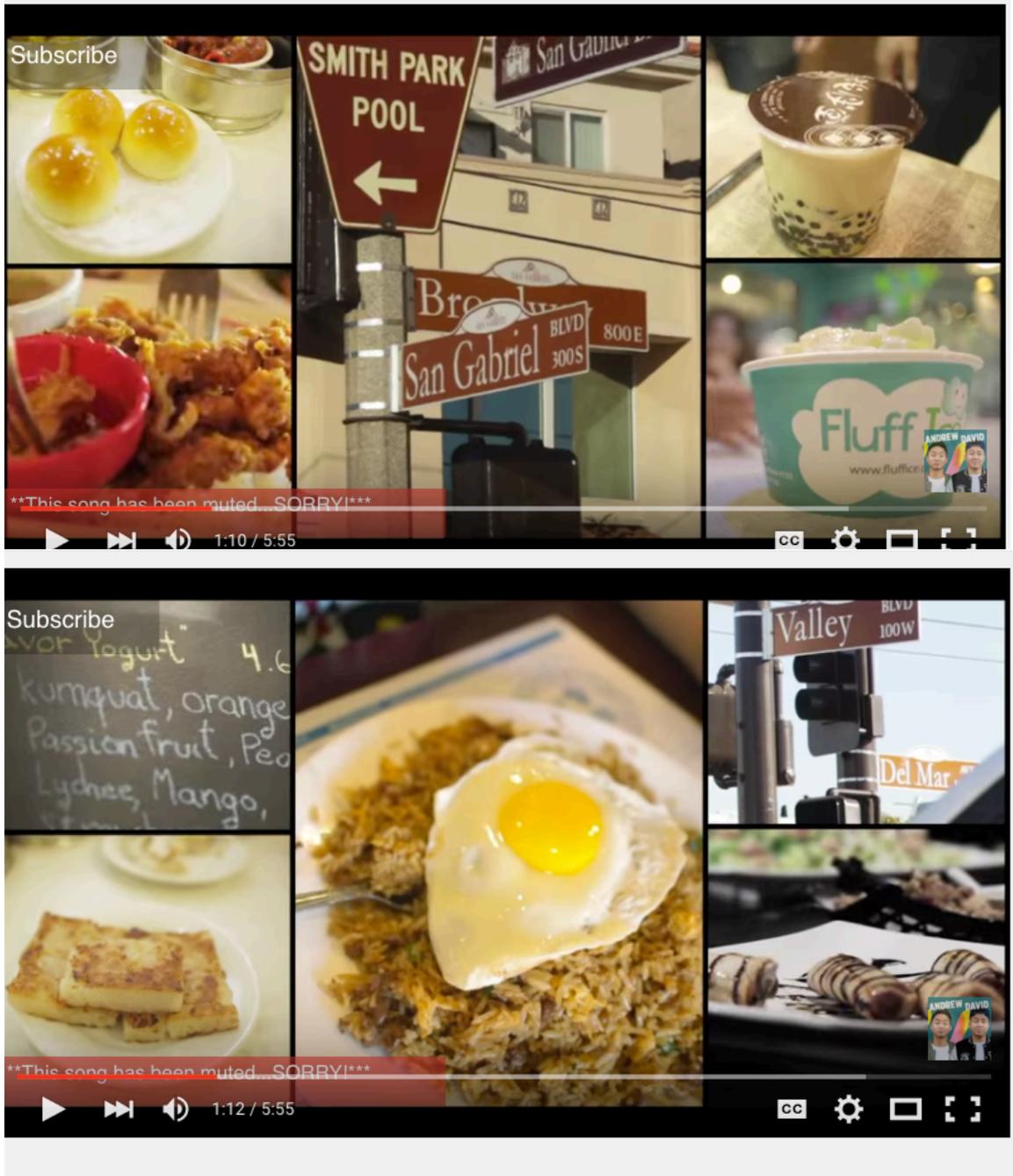
dessert from Fluff Ice on the right (Fig.18). In the middle, an image depicting the intersection between Broadway and San Gabriel Boulevard appears to situate the photographs spatially – yet, none of the restaurants are located near the intersection or on either of those streets.¹⁰⁵ The second collage provides a similarly disjointed image: a close-up photograph of an Indonesian fried rice dish takes center-stage, displacing the only grounding image of the Valley/Del Mar intersection which, again, does not correspond to the restaurants pictured. These collages lay out the visual work of the subsequent video; the Fung Bros spatially “edit” the different locales of popular Asian American hangout spaces, “cutting” distances and piecing together disparate addresses to frame a new conglomerate image of Asian America that emerges from sites of marginal youth culture and is literally ungrounded in its presentation.

The video then alternates between panoramic frames of the various streets and strip malls that line the unique “626 route” and scenes of the brothers entering different consumer-food spaces to eat with their wide network of Asian American friends (with cameo appearances from several different Asian Youtube stars). These figures of contemporary entertainment perform a new kind of social/political gathering in the video, appearing onscreen only in places of leisure, at all hours of the day. While some workers in different restaurants and cafés are pictured – reasserting the existence of working-class Asian Americans and rendering them visible to the American mainstream via the Youtube platform – there are no scenes of the Asian American subject at work in “lowkey” professions or in traditional “Asian” heritage sites such as the Hsi Lai Temple. None of the commercial places feature archetypal “Oriental” architecture. Instead, the scenes focus extensively on the interior social scene of each eatery, where Asian Americans

¹⁰⁵ Fluff Ice, Half&Half, and NBC Seafood are all located along Atlantic Blvd. in Monterey Park, miles from the Broadway/San Gabriel intersection in the city of San Gabriel, see Figure 19.

appear to simply have a good time. In “626,” the Fung Brothers cast the social as the central visual stage for performances of Asian American fusion identity.

Figure 18: Screenshots of collage scenes from “626” Music Video, (1:08-1:12)



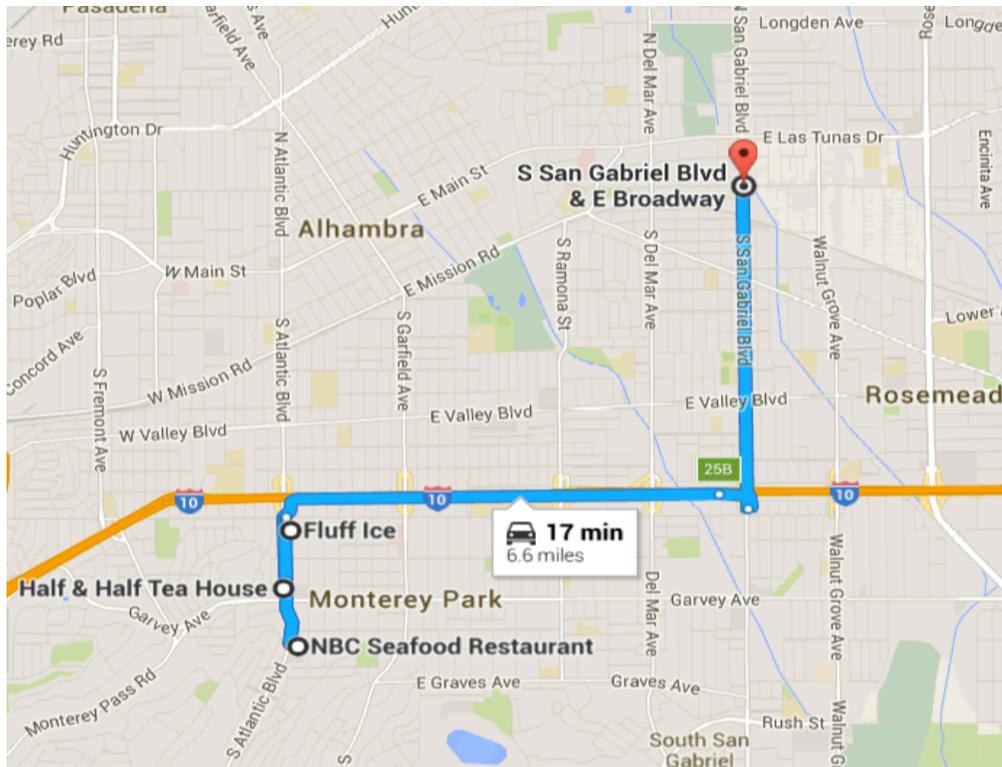


Figure 19: Map of Half&Half, Fluff Ice, NBC Seafood, and intersection of San Gabriel Blvd/Broadway, created by Sunny Zheng (April 20, 2016).

Notably, an extended clip scattered in short frames throughout the video features Asian American Youtubers at Factory Tea Bar in San Gabriel: greeting each other, consuming food/commercial goods, and singing the “626” anthem. In these scenes, the Fung Brothers deny the viewer a fixed image of Asian American as either young-professional model minority or Oriental alien. Slipping away from their normative career/heritage spaces, the Asian American youth emerges in places of pleasure. These moments present an Asian American lifestyle and identity based in the transitory: pleasure cannot be fixed to one specific locale or time frame as the main actors move from restaurant to restaurant. The viewer cannot follow the Asian American subject into their permanent homes or workplace – the spaces where their “model minority” hard work and white-collar aspirations manifest – seeing them only as they appear in brief social scenes. In “626,” imaging leisure becomes a political act that refuses to picture Asian

Americans in the spaces of the model minority, disrupting U.S. national attempts to visually fix – and thus, socially reproduce – the “Reagan generation” model minority.

Throughout the video, over ten different restaurant scenes featuring disparate Asian ethnic foods flash by in rapid succession, visually displaying the multiplicity of the Asian American youth identity and the temporality of their social spaces. In rapping:

From Shanghai to Saigon, Tokyo to Taiwan
Beijing to Hong Kong something to bite on
Valley, Atlantic, Garvey, I drive on¹⁰⁶

The Fung brothers connect and condense the geographically disparate capitals of food and culture in the land of their Asian immigrant ancestors, visually casting Asian transnational intersections onto the physical streets they experience on a daily basis in the automobile. Like the film collages at the beginning of the montage, this scene visually “cuts” and “splices” the different streets of the 626 – “Valley, Atlantic, Garvey” – to piece together a terrain of Asian American traversability. The imagined path of commercial streets and spaces can be read as a “staking out” of an Asian American fusion identity that recovers the transnational crossings – once denounced as “alien” by the 1990s national press – of a plural Asian America. Driving down Valley Blvd, passing by signs of Latin@ and white American presence that fade into blurring peripheral frames, transported from Vietnamese to Chinese to Japanese eateries, one has the impression of living in a changing “fusion” Asian America, on the streets of once-white suburbia. Quoting the chorus, the fact that they can “eat good” speaks to the landscape of shops, restaurants, strip malls, and car boulevards in the “626” that allow Asian Americans to visually collage their new-old fusion identity and to access this identity through the mobility of the car.

¹⁰⁶ “626 (Music Video),” 3:45-55

Midway through the video, a seemingly random interlude pictures the brothers walking into a photo studio, wearing t-shirts, jeans and a snapback. The brothers proceed to pose for a photo shoot, flashing “V” and “shaka” (hang loose) signs at the Asian American photographer.¹⁰⁷ In this scene, the Fung Brothers appropriate different markers of ‘60s counterculture, including the WWII “V” for “Victory” hand sign that became the symbol for “peace” during the anti-Vietnam War protests, and the “shaka” hand sign, connected to Hawaiian surf culture and popularized in the mainland U.S. during the ‘60s.¹⁰⁸ Their attire “collages” signs of black hip-hop culture onto Asian American bodies and visually re-presents the style of the “626” rap parody – which uses the form of black hip-hop to construct an Asian American youth identity that is intimately connected to black culture and refuses to assume the historically anti-black image of the model minority. In the photo shoot, the Fung Bros mix counterculture hand signs and hip-hop clothing to “pose” an “Asian America” that materializes from both Black and Asian American ‘60s radicalism and 21st century black hip-hop culture, joining past and present as continuous struggle. The photo shoot reveals the 626 video as a “counter-branding” project: using the language of Reagan-era commercial consumerism – complete with cars, cash, clothes, food, popular music, and photo shoots – to produce a different “brand” of Asian America that defies racial model minority categorizations from the 1970s-90s period.

This counter-branding involves alternate codes of Asian American business and consumption, stating:

We’re far enough from LA where nobody’s actin phony!
Except maybe on our taxes, it’s cash only!

¹⁰⁷ “626 (Music Video),” 3:00. See images of Section 3.

¹⁰⁸ “The Japanese Version (the Sign of Peace),” Icons: A Portrait of England, accessed March 27, 2016, <http://web.archive.org/web/20080621122852/http://www.icons.org.uk/theicons/collection/the-v-sign/a-harvey-smith-to-you/the-asian-v-sign-in-progress>

Tell the health department stop hating
cuz a B-rating stands for better tasting¹⁰⁹

the Fung Bros present another film collage of themselves eating dim sum next to a photograph of a “B” rating public health notice posted in front of an Asian American restaurant. Flaunting Asian American disregard of public health codes and state taxes, the Fung Bros playfully allude to a history of Asians as the deceptive and contaminating “yellow peril” in the American imaginary and to a history of radical Asian American anti-government revolt. Like *Gidra* in the ‘60s, the Fung Brothers present anti-Asian tropes as part of their youth culture collage identity. Rather than appearing repulsed, the Fung Bros eagerly chow down on these stereotypes, consuming the “B” rating that attempts to mark Asian food spaces – especially working-class, 1st generation immigrant food spaces – as almost clean, and therefore, almost (white) American. Inverting the national standards that contain the model minority within a “B,” the Fung Bros propose a set of alternate standards that equates “B” with “better tasting.” Following this alternate code, the brothers choose to ingest the “sketchy” products of a plural Asian American visibility over consuming the sterilized white commodities of the model minority, whose “A” rating connotes a lack of flavor and, by extension, a lack of desirability.

At the end of the video, the Fung Bros return to the future as their granddaughter tells them to “wake up!” Reverting back into their stereotypical “Asian grandfather” guises, the Fung Bros reassume their Asian accents and comment on how the granddaughter’s piano skills make them “velly velly proud.” They then offer to bring her to Yogurtland – a dessert store that existed in their 2012 youth-hoods – as a reward for all her hard work. Just as *Gidra* used fragments of anti-Asian stereotypes to assemble an unstable impression of Asian American radical identity in

¹⁰⁹ See images of Section 3.

the late '60s, the Fung Bros parody historic Asian stereotypes in the “future” 626 to unsettle the stability of their own narrative. Instead of appearing as older versions of their hip-hop youth selves, the brothers choose to visualize the entire “626” anthem montage as an ephemeral dream sequence and frame the beginning and end of their video with a scene from the future that visually collapses future/present and denies the viewer a linear story of Asian American suburban generations. “626” visualizes a “monster” Asian America composed of ambiguous revolutionary politics that can always return, in unstable ways.

In *Ends of Empire*, Asian American historian Jodi Kim frames the Cold War as a “history of false endings.”¹¹⁰ Following the radical movements of the '60s, conservative American national policy from the 1970s to the 1990s attempted to visually define the Asian American subject as a new Reagan-era model minority and to ground that subject within the American suburbs. The suburbs, where many Asian American student activists moved after the '60s moment, became the setting of a “false ending” of Asian American radical identity that resolved towards a fixed image of young professional success within white-designated confines. Moving into the 21st century, a new generation of Asian American suburban youths are recuperating the ambiguity of radical “Asian America” through contemporary forms of marginal art. Claiming the built spaces of the future “626,” the Fung Bros conclude their video with a scene of Asian America’s volatile continuity in difference.

There are three imagined generations represented in this bizarre opening/conclusion with a clear time/age inconsistency that, like the classic model minority text, appears almost cyclical. The Fung Brothers, who are themselves the grandchildren of the radical '60s student activists, enter as representations of 1st-generation immigrants who bear the racialized markers of the

¹¹⁰ Kim, 4

“oriental” image in their mannerisms and dress. The piano teacher serves as the 2nd-generation intermediary figure representing the visual politics of the ‘60s: embodying both the quiet white-collar, suburban, model minority and the radical Asian American subject as she teaches the still-amorphous “future” 3rd-generation Asian American how to play the piano (a model minority stereotype) via the subversive “626” anthem (signaling the present visual politics of Asian American youth culture). The future of “Asian American” in the 21st century thus emerges from the archives of visual intersections of white model minority stereotype and radical *Gidra* monster identity. In the final scene of “626,” the ambivalent Asian American subject – at once Asian hip-hop rapper and hard-working Asian model minority/alien – walks hand in hand with the next generation towards an ambiguous future as the “626” anthem continues to play and the screen fades to black.

Appendix

Petersen, William. "Success Story, Japanese-American Style," *New York Times*, (Jan. 9, 1966)
[select pages: 20-21, 36, 38, 40-41 in original newspaper edition

HIST 33 P. 6

The New York Times Magazine

JANUARY 9, 1966



Success Story, Japanese-American Style

By WILLIAM PETERSEN

ASKED which of the country's ethnic minorities has been subjected to the most discrimination and the worst injustices, very few persons would even think of answering: "The Japanese Americans." If the question refers to persons alive today, that may well be the correct reply. Like the Negroes, the Japanese have been the

object of color prejudice. Like the Jews, they have been feared and hated as hyper-efficient competitors. And, more than any other group, they have been seen as the agents of an overseas enemy. Conservatives, liberals and radicals, local sheriffs, the Federal Government and the Supreme Court have cooperated in denying them their elementary rights—most notoriously in their World War II evacuation to internment camps.

WILLIAM PETERSEN is a professor of sociology at the University of California at Berkeley. His latest book is "The Politics of Population."

Generally this kind of treatment, as we all know these days, creates what might be termed "problem mi-



PRESENT—Two decades after the war, Japanese Americans—here, in Los Angeles' "Little Tokyo" and on California farms—lead a generally affluent and, for the most part, highly Americanized life: "Even in a country whose patron saint is the Horatio Alger hero, there is no parallel to their success story."

norities." Each of a number of inter-related factors—poor health, poor education, low income, high crime rate, unstable family pattern, and so on and on—reinforces all of the others, and together they make up the reality of slum life. And by the "principle of cumulation," as Gunnar Myrdal termed it in "An American Dilemma," this social reality reinforces our prejudices and is reinforced by them. When whites defined Negroes as inherently less intelligent, for example, and therefore furnished them with inferior schools, the products of these schools often validated the original stereotype.

Once the cumulative degradation has gone far enough, it is notoriously difficult to reverse the trend. When new opportunities, even equal opportunities, are opened up, the minority's reaction to them is likely to be negative—either self-defeating apathy or a hatred so all-consuming as to be self-destructive. For all the well-meaning programs and countless scholarly studies now focused on the Negro, we barely know how to repair the damage that the slave traders started.

The history of Japanese Americans, however, challenges every such generalization about ethnic minorities, and for this reason alone deserves far more attention than it has been given. Barely more than 20 years after the end of the wartime camps, this is a minority that has risen above even prejudiced criticism. By any criterion of good citizenship that we choose, the Japanese Americans are better than any other group in our society, including native-born whites. They have established this remarkable record, moreover, by their own almost totally unaided effort. Every attempt

to hamper their progress resulted only in enhancing their determination to succeed. Even in a country whose patron saint is the Horatio Alger hero, there is no parallel to this success story.

FROM only 148 in 1880 to almost 149,000 in 1904 the number of Japanese in the United States grew steadily and then remained almost constant for two decades. Then in 1906, with the more than 200,000 Japanese in Hawaii added to the national population, the total reached not quite 475,000. In other words, in prewar years Japanese Americans constituted slightly more than 0.1 per cent of the national population. Even in California, where then as now most of the mainland Japanese lived, they made up only 2.1 per cent of the state's population in 1920.

Against the perspective of these

minuscule percentages, it is difficult to recapture the paranoid flavor of the vast mass of anti-Japanese agitation in the first decades of this century. Prejudice recognized no boundaries of social class; the labor-dominated Asiatic Exclusion League lived in strange fellowship with the large California landowners. The rest of the nation gradually adopted what was termed "the California position" in opposing "the Yellow Peril" until finally Asians were totally excluded by the immigration laws of the nineteen-twenties.

Until the exclusion law was enacted, Japanese businesses were picketed. In San Francisco, Japanese were assaulted on the streets and, if they tried to protect themselves, were arrested for disturbing the peace. Since marriage across racial lines was prohibited in most Western states, many Japanese lived for years with no nor-

mal family life (there were almost 25 males to one female in 1900, still seven to one in 1910, two to one in 1920). Until 1952 no Japanese could be naturalized, and as noncitizens they were denied access to any urban professions that required a license and to the ownership of agricultural land.

But no degradation affected this people as might have been expected. Denied citizenship, the Japanese were exceptionally law-abiding alien residents. Often unable to marry for many years, they developed a family life both strong and flexible enough to help their children cross a wide cultural gap. Denied access to many urban jobs, both white-collar and manual, they undertook menial tasks with such perseverance that they achieved a modest success. Denied ownership of the land, they acquired control through one or another subterfuge and. (Continued on Page 33)



FAST—In World War II, 117,116 Japanese Americans—citizens and noncitizens alike—were taken from their homes and held in internment camps. Above, an internee's sketch of a kindergarten class.



UPROOTED—A family eats dinner at one of the internment camps in which Japanese Americans were confined during World War II. Right, a poster in San Francisco announcing the program. The evacuees left behind property worth \$200-million, despite the promise of "services with respect to the management" of such property, many lost everything they had.

**WESTERN DEFENSE COMMAND AND FOURTH ARMY
WARTIME CIVIL CONTROL ADMINISTRATION**
Office of San Francisco, California
April 1, 1942

**INSTRUCTIONS
TO ALL PERSONS OF
JAPANESE
ANCESTRY**

Living in the Following Area:

All that portions of the City and County of San Francisco, State of California, the property and the contents of the restaurant located at 1000 Broadway, San Francisco, California, and the property and the contents of the restaurant located at 1000 Broadway, San Francisco, California, to the business of the restaurant located at 1000 Broadway, San Francisco, California.

All Japanese persons, both alien and naturalized, shall be removed from the above described area by 12:00 a. m., Friday, April 3, 1942.

No Japanese person will be permitted to enter or leave the above described area after 12:00 a. m., Thursday, April 2, 1942, unless obtaining special permission from the Federal Marshal at the Civil Control Station located at 1000 Broadway, San Francisco, California.

The Civil Control Station is required to assist the Japanese population affected by this evacuation in the following manner:

1. Provide advice and information on the evacuation.
2. Provide services with respect to the transportation, storage, sale, storage or other disposition of most kinds of property, including, but not limited to, household and professional equipment, furniture, household goods, books, automobiles, and other personal effects.
3. Provide temporary quarters elsewhere for all Japanese in family groups.
4. Transport persons and a limited amount of clothing and equipment to their new abodes in specified buses.

The following instructions shall be observed:

1. A responsible member of each family, preferably the head of the family, or the person in whose name most of the property is held, and who is qualified to file a report to the Civil Control Station to receive further instructions. This name for filing must be filed between 12:00 a. m. and 1:00 p. m., Thursday, April 2, 1942, or between 12:00 a. m. and 1:00 p. m., Friday, April 3, 1942.

(Continued from Page 35)
the most decorated units in all three services.
With this extraordinary record building up, the Secretary of War announced another change of policy: the nisei in camps became subject to the draft. As District Judge Louis Goodman declared, it was "shocking to the conscience that an American citizen be confined on the ground of disloyalty, and then, while so under duress and restraint, be compelled to serve in the armed forces, or be prosecuted for not yielding to such compulsion." He released 26 nisei tried in his court for refusing to report for induction.
The Government's varying

policy, posed dilemmas for every young man it affected. Faced with unreasoning prejudice and gross discrimination, some nisei reacted as one would expect. Thus, several hundred young men who had served in the armed forces from 1940 to 1942 and then had been discharged because of their race were among the renunciants at Tule Lake. But most accepted as their lot the overwhelming odds against them and bet their lives, determined to win even in a crooked game.
In John Okada's novel "No-No Boy," written by a veteran of the Pacific war about a nisei who refused to accept the draft, the issue is sharply drawn. The hero's mother,

who had raised him to be a Japanese nationalist, turns out to be paranoid. Back in Seattle from the prison where he served his time (he was not tried in Judge Goodman's court), the hero struggles to find his way to the America that rejected him and that he had rejected. A nisei friend who has returned from the war with a wound that eventually kills him is pictured as relatively well-off. In short, in contrast to the works of James Baldwin, this is a novel of revolt against revolt.
THE key to success in the United States, for Japanese or anyone else, is education. Among persons aged 14 years (Continued on Page 36)

(Continued from Page 36)
 or over in 1960, the median years of schooling completed by the Japanese were 12.2, compared with 11.1 years by Chinese, 11.0 by whites, 9.2 by Filipinos, 8.6 by Negroes and 8.4 by Indians. In the nineteen-thirties, when even members of favored ethnic groups often could find no jobs, the nisei went to school and avidly prepared for that one chance in a thousand. One high school boy used to read his texts, underlining important passages, then read and

underline again, then read and underline a third time. "I'm not smart," he would explain, "so if I am to go to college, I have to work three times as hard."

From their files, one can derive a composite picture of the nisei who have gone through the Berkeley placement center of the University of California over the past 10 years or so. Their marks were good to excellent but, apart from outstanding individuals, this was not a group that would succeed solely because

of extraordinary academic worth. The extracurricular activities they listed were prosaic — the Nisei Student Club, various fraternities, field sports, only occasionally anything even as slightly off the beaten track as jazz music.

Their dependence on the broader Japanese community was suggested in a number of ways: Students had personal references from nisei professors in totally unrelated fields, and the part-time jobs they held (almost all had to work

(Continued on Page 40)



G.I.'S—In World War II, all nisei, though native-born citizens, were first classified as enemy aliens. They had to fight for the right to serve. Below: Members of the much-decorated 442d Infantry Combat Team and 100th Battalion, wounded in France and Italy. Left: A nisei veteran, home safely, is welcomed by his father.



(Continued from Page 38)

their way (through college) were typically in plant nurseries, retail stores and other traditionally Japanese business establishments.

Their degrees were almost never in liberal arts but in business administration, optometry, engineering, or some other middle-level profession. They obviously saw their education as a means of acquiring a salable skill that could be used either in the general commercial world or, if that remained closed to Japanese, in a small personal enterprise. Asked to designate the beginning salary they wanted, the applicants generally gave either precisely the one they got in their first professional job or something under that.

To sum up, these nisei were squares. If they had any doubt about the transcendental values of American middle-class life, it did not reduce their determination to achieve, at least that level of security and comfort. Their education was conducted like a military campaign against a hostile world; with intelligent planning and tenacity, they fought for certain limited positions and won them.

The victory is still limited. Japanese are now employed in most fields, but not at the highest levels. In 1960, Japanese males had a much higher occupational level than whites—56 per cent in white-collar jobs as compared with 42.1 per cent of whites, 26.1 per cent classified as professionals or technicians as compared with 12.5 per cent of whites, and so on. Yet the 1959 median income of Japanese males was only \$4,306, a little less than the \$4,338 earned by white males.

FOR all types of social pathology—about which there are usable data, the incidence is lower for Japanese than for any other ethnic group in the American population. It is true that the statistics are not very satisfactory, but they are generally good enough for gross comparisons. The most annoying limitation is that data are often reported only for the meaningless generalized category of "nonwhites."

In 1964, according to the F.B.I.'s "Uniform Crime Reports," three Japanese in the whole country were arrested for murder and three for manslaughter. Two were arrested for rape and 20 for assault. The low incidence holds also for crimes against property: 20 arrests for robbery, 192 for breaking and entering, 83 for auto theft, 251 for larceny.

So far as one can tell from the few available studies, the Japanese have been exceptional in this respect since their arrival in this country. Like most immigrant groups, nisei generally have lived in neighborhoods characterized by overcrowding, poverty, dilapidated housing, and other

"causes" of crime. In such a slum environment, even though surrounded by ethnic groups with high crime rates, they have been exceptionally law-abiding.

Prof. Harry Kitano of U.C. L.A., has collated the probation records of the Japanese in Los Angeles County. Adult crime rates rose there from 1920 to a peak in 1940 and then declined sharply to 1960; but throughout those 40 years the rate was consistently under that for non-Japanese. In Los Angeles today, while the general crime rate is rising, for Japanese adults it is continuing to fall.

According to California life tables for 1959-61, Japanese Americans in the state had a life expectation of 74.5 years (males) and 81.2 years (females). This is six to seven years longer than that of California whites, a relatively favored group by national standards. So far as I know, this is the first time that any population anywhere has attained an average longevity of more than 80 years.

FOR the sansai—the third generation, the children of nisei—the camp experience is either a half-forgotten childhood memory or something not quite believable that happened to their parents. They have grown up, most of them, in relatively comfortable circumstances, with the American element of their composite subculture becoming more and more dominant. As these young people adapt to the general patterns, will they also—as many of their parents fear—take over more of the faults of American society? The delinquency rate among Japanese youth today is both higher than it used to be and is rising—though it still remains lower than that of any other group.

Frank Chuman, a Los Angeles lawyer, has been the counsel for close to 200 young Japanese offenders charged with everything from petty theft to murder. Some were organized into gangs of 10 to 15 members, of whom a few were sometimes Negroes or Mexicans. Nothing obvious in their background accounts for their delinquency. Typically, they lived at home with solid middle-class families in pleasant neighborhoods, their brothers and sisters were not in trouble. Yori Wada, a nisei member of the California Youth Authority, believes that some of these young people are in revolt against the narrow confines of the nisei subculture while being unable to accept white society. In one extreme instance, a sansai charged with assault with the intent to commit murder was a member of the Black Muslims, seeking an identity among those extremist Negro nationalists.

In Sacramento, a number of sansai teen-agers were ar-



GENERATIONS—Right: The wife of a prosperous businessman, an active clubwoman and Brownie leader, Mrs. George T. Aratani is a second-generation Japanese American, or nisei. Her garden overlooks a lake in the Hollywood Hills. Above: Violinist Roy Tanabe, 27, belongs to the third generation, the sansai. He is the first Japanese to play with a major American symphony orchestra, the Los Angeles Symphony.

rested for shoplifting—something new in the Japanese community but, according to the police, "nothing to be alarmed at." The parents disagreed. Last spring, the head of the local J.A.C.L. called a conference, at which a larger meeting was organized. Between 400 and 500 persons—a majority of the Japanese adults in the Sacramento area—came to hear the advice of such professionals as a psychiatrist and a probation officer. A permanent council was established, chaired jointly by a minister and an optometrist, to arrange for whatever services might seem appropriate when parents were themselves unable (or unwilling) to control their offspring. According to several prominent Sacramento nisei, the publicity alone was salutary, for it brought parents back to a sense of their responsibility. In the Japanese communities of San Francisco and San Jose, there were similar responses to a smaller number of delinquent acts.

Apart from the anomalous delinquents, what is happening to typical Japanese Americans of the rising generation? A dozen members of the Japanese student club on the Berkeley campus submitted to several hours of my questioning, and later I was one of the judges in a contest for the clubmen.

I found little that is news-worthy about these young

people. On a campus where to be a bohemian slob is a mark of distinction, they wash themselves and dress with unostentatious neatness. They are mostly good students, no longer concentrated in the utilitarian subjects their fathers studied but often majoring in liberal arts. Most can speak a little Japanese, but very few can read more than a few words. Some are opposed to intermarriage, some not; but all accept the American principle that it is love between the partners that makes for a good family. Conscious of their minority status, they are seeking a means both of preserving elements of the Japanese culture and of reconciling it fully with the American one; but their effort lacks the poignant tragedy of the earlier counterpart.

Only four sansai were among the 778 arrested in the Berkeley student riots, and they are as atypical as the Sacramento delinquents. One, the daughter of a man who 20 years ago was an officer of a Communist front, is no more a symbol of generational revolt than the more publicized Bettina Aptheker.

It was my impression that these few extremists constitute a special moral problem for many of the sansai students. Brazenly to break the law invites retribution against the whole community, and this is doubly wrong. But such acts, however one judges them on

other grounds, also symbolize an escape from the persistent concern over "the Japanese image." Under the easygoing middle-class life, in short, there lurks still a warning born of their parents' experience as well as a hope that they really will be able to make it in a sense that as yet has not been possible.

THE history of the United States, it is sometimes forgotten, is the history of the diverse groups that make up our population, and thus of their frequent discord and usual eventual cooperation. Each new nationality that arrived from Europe was typically met with such hostility as, for example, the anti-German riots in the Middle West a century ago, the American Protective Association to fight the Irish, the national-quota laws to keep out Italians, Poles and Jews. Yet, in one generation or two, each white minority took advantage of the public schools, the free labor market and America's political democracy; it climbed out of the slums, took on better-paying occupations and acquired social respect and dignity.

This is not true (or, at best, less true) of such "nonwhites" as Negroes, Indians, Mexicans, Chinese and Filipinos. The reason usually given for the difference is that color prejudice is so great in this country



that a person who carries this visible stigma has little or no possibility of rising. There is obviously a good deal of truth in the theory, and the Japanese case is of general interest precisely because it constitutes the outstanding exception.

What made the Japanese Americans different? What gave them the strength to thrive on adversity? To say that it was their "national character" or "the Japanese subculture" or some paraphrase of these terms is merely to give a label to our ignorance. But it is true that we must look for the persistent pattern these terms imply, rather than for isolated factors.

The issei who came to America were catapulted out of a homeland undergoing rapid change—Meiji Japan, which remains the one country of Asia to have achieved modernization. We can learn from such a work as Robert Bellah's "Tokugawa Religion" that diligence in work, combined with simple frugality, had an almost religious imperative, similar to what has been called "the Protestant ethic" in Western culture. And as such researchers as Prof. George DeVos at Berkeley have shown, today the Japanese in Japan and Japanese Americans respond similarly to psychological tests of "achievement orientation," and both are in sharp contrast to lower-class

Americans, whether white or Negro.

The two vehicles that transmitted such values from one generation to the next, the family and religion, have been so intimately linked as to reinforce each other. By Japanese tradition, the wishes of any individual counted for far less than the good reputation of his family name, which was worshiped through his ancestors. Most issei attended Japanese-language schools either one hour each weekday or all Saturday morning, and of all the shushin, or maxims, that they memorized there, none was more important than: "Honor your obligations to parents and avoid bringing them shame." Some rural parents enforced such commandments by what was called the moxa treatment—a bit of incense burned on the child's skin. Later, group ridicule and ostracism, in which the peers of a naughty child or a rebellious teen-ager joined, became the usual, very effective control.

This respect for authority is strongly reinforced in the Japanese-American churches, whether Buddhist or Christian. The underlying similarity, among the various denominations is suggested by the fact that parents who object strongly to the marriage of their offspring to persons of other races (including, and sometimes even especially, to

Chinese) are more or less indifferent to interreligious marriages within the Japanese groups. Buddhist churches have adapted to the American scene by introducing Sunday schools, Boy Scouts, a promotional effort around the theme "Our Family Attends Church Regularly," and similar practices quite alien to the old-country tradition.

On the other hand, as I was told not only by Buddhists but also by nisei Christian ministers, Japanese Americans of whatever faith are distinguished by their greater attachment to family, their greater respect for parental and other authority. Underlying the complex religious life, that is to say, there seems to be an adaptation to American institutional forms with a considerable persistence of Buddhist moral values.

It is too easy, however, to explain after the fact what has happened to Japanese Americans. After all the subordination of the individual to the group and the dominance of the husband-father typified the family life of most immigrants from Southern or Eastern Europe.

Indeed, sociologists have fashioned a plausible theory to explain why the rate of delinquency was usually high among these nationalities' second generation, the counterpart of the nisei. The American-born child speaks English without an accent, the thesis goes, and is probably preparing for a better job and thus a higher status than his father's. His father, therefore, finds it difficult to retain his authority, and as the young man comes to view him with contempt or shame, he generalizes this perception into a rejection of all authority.

Not only would the theory seem to hold for Japanese Americans but, in some respects, their particular life circumstances aggravated the typical tensions. The extreme differences between American and Japanese cultures separated the generations more than in any population derived from Europe. As one issei mother remarked to the anthropologist John Embree: "I feel like a chicken that has hatched duck's eggs."

Each artificial restriction on the issei—that they could not become citizens, could not own land, could not represent the camp population to the administrators—meant that the nisei had to assume adult roles early in life, while yet remaining subject to parental control that by American standards was extremely onerous. This kind of contrast between responsibility and lack of authority is always galling; by the best theories that sociologists have developed we might have expected not merely a high delinquency rate among nisei but the highest. The best

(Continued on Page 43)

SUCCESS STORY OF ONE MINORITY GROUP IN U.S.

At a time when Americans are awash in worry over the plight of racial minorities—

One such minority, the nation's 300,000 Chinese-Americans, is winning wealth and respect by dint of its own hard work.

In any Chinatown from San Francisco to New York, you discover youngsters at grips with their studies. Crime and delinquency are found to be rather minor in scope.

Still being taught in Chinatown is the old idea that people should depend on their own efforts—not a welfare check—in order to reach America's "promised land."



—USN&WR Photo

Schooling is important to Chinese-Americans

Reported from
SAN FRANCISCO, LOS ANGELES
and NEW YORK

Visit "Chinatown U.S.A." and you find an important racial minority pulling itself up from hardship and discrimination to become a model of self-respect and achievement in today's America.

At a time when it is being proposed that hundreds of billions be spent to uplift Negroes and other minorities, the nation's 300,000 Chinese-Americans are moving ahead on their own—with no help from anyone else.

Low rate of crime. In crime-ridden cities, Chinese districts turn up as islands of peace and stability.

Of 4.7 million arrests reported to the Federal Bureau of Investigation in 1965, only 1,293 involved persons of Chinese ancestry. A Protestant pastor in New York City's Chinatown said:

"This is the safest place in the city."

Few Chinese-Americans are getting welfare handouts—or even want them. Within a tight network of family and clan loyalties, relatives continue to help each other. Mrs. Jean Ma, publisher of a Chinese-language newspaper in Los Angeles, explained:

"We're a big family. If someone has trouble, usually it can be solved within the family. There is no need to bother someone else. And nobody will respect

any member of the family who does not work and who just plays around."

Today, Chinese-American parents are worrying somewhat about their young people. Yet, in every city, delinquency in Chinatown is minor compared with what goes on around it.

Strict discipline. Even in the age of television and fast automobiles, Chinese-American children are expected to attend school faithfully, work hard at their studies—and stay out of trouble. Spanking is seldom used, but supervision and verbal discipline are strict.

A study of San Francisco's Chinatown noted that "if school performance is poor and the parents are told, there is an immediate improvement." And, in New York City, schoolteachers reportedly are competing for posts in schools with large numbers of Chinese-American children.

Recently Dr. Richard T. Sollenberger, professor of psychology at Mount Holyoke College, made a study of New York City's Chinatown and concluded:

"There's a strong incentive for young people to behave. As one informant said, 'When you walk around the streets of Chinatown, you have a hundred cousins watching you.'"

What you find, back of this remarkable group of Americans, is a story of adversity and prejudice that would shock those now complaining about the hardships endured by today's Negroes.

It was during California's gold rush that large numbers of Chinese began coming to America.

On the developing frontier, they worked in mines, on railroads and in other hard labor. Moving into cities, where the best occupations were closed to them, large numbers became laundrymen and cooks because of the shortage of women in the West.

Past handicaps. High value was placed on Chinese willingness to work long hours for low pay. Yet Congress, in 1882, passed an Exclusion Act denying naturalization to Chinese immigrants and forbidding further influx of laborers. A similar act in 1924, aimed primarily at the Japanese, prohibited laborers from bringing in wives.

In California, the first legislature slapped foreign miners with a tax aimed at getting Chinese out of the gold-mining business. That State's highest court ruled Chinese could not testify against whites in court.

Chinese-Americans could not own land in California, and no corporation or public agency could employ them.

These curbs, in general, applied also to Japanese-Americans, another Oriental minority that has survived discrimination to win a solid place in the nation.

The curbs, themselves, have been discarded in the last quarter century. And,
(continued on next page)

SUCCESS STORY OF ONE MINORITY

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in recent years, immigration quotas have been enlarged, with 8,800 Chinese allowed to enter the country this year.

As a result, the number of persons of Chinese ancestry living in the United States is believed to have almost doubled since 1950.

Today, as in the past, most Chinese are to be found in Hawaii, California and New York. Because of ancient emphasis on family and village, most of those on the U. S. mainland trace their ancestry to communities southwest of Canton.

How Chinese get ahead. Not all Chinese-Americans are rich. Many, especially recent arrivals from Hong Kong, are poor and cannot speak English. But the large majority are moving ahead by applying the traditional virtues of hard work, thrift and morality.

Success stories have been recorded in business, science, architecture, politics and other professions. Dr. Sollenberger said of New York's Chinatown:

"The Chinese people here will work at anything. I know of some who were scholars in China and are now working as waiters in restaurants. That's a stopgap for them, of course, but the point is that they're willing to do something—they don't sit around moaning."

The biggest and most publicized of all Chinatowns is in San Francisco.

Since 1960, the inflow of immigrants has raised the Chinese share of San Francisco's population from 4.9 per cent to 5.7 per cent. Altogether 42,600 residents of Chinese ancestry were reported in San Francisco last year.

Shift to suburbs. As Chinese-Americans gain in affluence, many move to the suburbs. But about 30,000 persons live in the 25 blocks of San Francisco's Chinatown. Sixty-three per cent of these are foreign-born, including many who are being indoctrinated by relatives in the American way of life.

Irvin Lum, an official of the San Francisco Federal Savings and Loan Community House, said:

"We follow the custom of being good to our relatives. There is not a very serious problem with our immigrants. We're a people of ability, adaptable and easy to satisfy in material wants. I know of a man coming here from China who was looked after by his sister's family, worked in Chinatown for two years, then opened a small restaurant of his own."

Problems among newcomers stir wor-

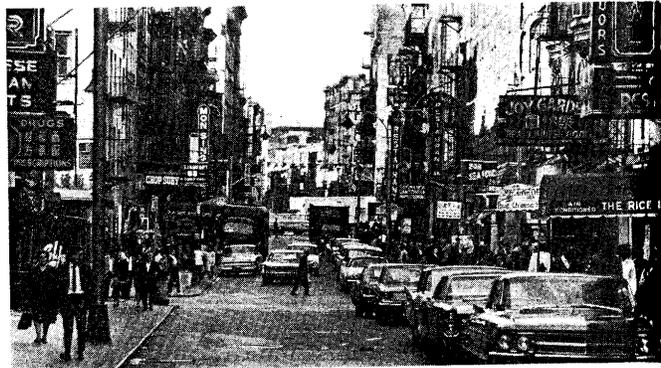
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CHINESE-AMERICANS are found living in all parts of the U. S.—but ancient ways are strongest in big-city Chinatowns, especially those in San Francisco and New York. To show the traditional way of life, and pressures of the new, a staff photographer of "U. S. News & World Report" visited New York City for these pictures of Chinese-Americans.

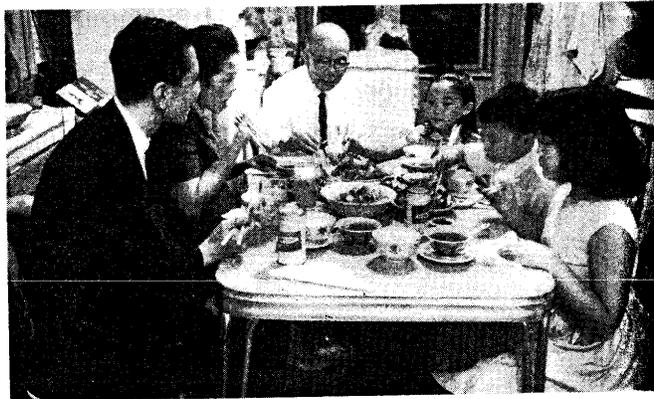


—USN&WR Photos

New York City's Chinatown has 20,000 persons packed into eight-block area

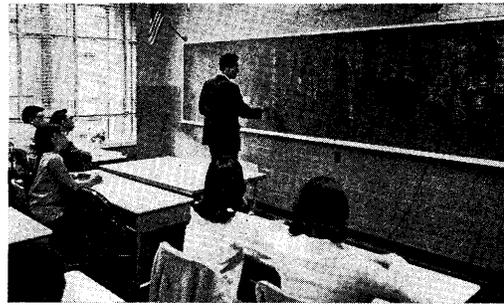


Overcrowding has caused many Chinese-Americans in New York City to move to suburbs—but others, especially immigrants, prefer Chinatown's way of life



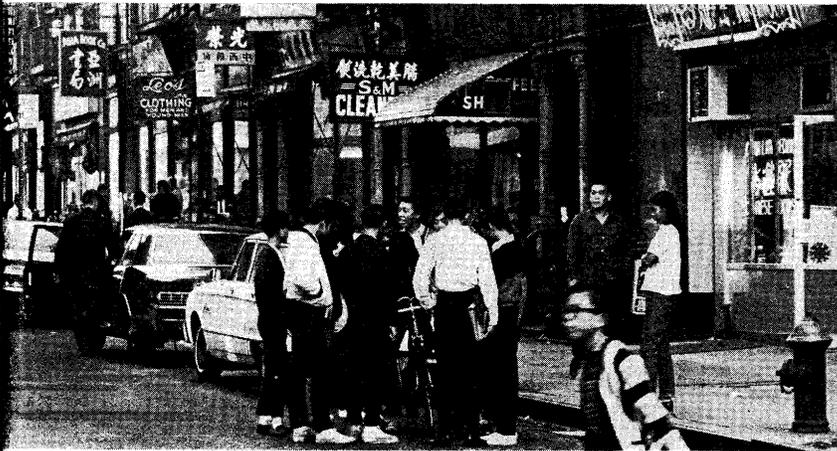
Family ties, going back to ancient times, continue to play strong role in the Chinese-American community—providing its members with a sense of self-reliance and self-discipline, even at a time when television and fast automobiles make inroads

Photo
20,000
are



Chinese-American youngsters tend to be obedient and hard-working in the classrooms of New York City's public schools—as well as after hours when they study Chinese history, language and culture

move
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Even though Chinese-American teenagers in New York City, as in other cities with Chinatowns, are a source of growing worry to their parents, statistics show that those youths still cause far less trouble for the police than others do

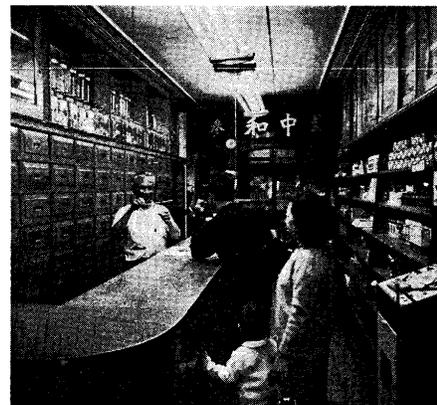
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Chinese grocery store, where the cash register has replaced the abacus, still is a place where the customer can choose from all kinds of spices and other ingredients for the traditional Chinese meal



Newsstand in Chinatown sells the latest editions of New York City's major newspapers—but its big attraction to both Chinese-Americans and new arrivals is its Chinese-language publications



Apothecary's shop fills Western-style prescriptions, but it also offers traditional Chinese herbs and medicines to its customers



—USN&WR Photo

Jazz and other "Americanizing" influences are now being felt in Chinatown

SUCCESS STORY OF ONE MINORITY

[continued from page 74]

ries, however. A minister said: "Many are in debt when they arrive. They have a language problem. They are used to a rural culture, and they have a false kind of expectation."

A youth gang of foreign-born Chinese, known as "the Bugs" or "Tong San Tsai," clashes occasionally with a gang of Chinese-American youngsters. And one group of Chinese-American teen-agers was broken up after stealing as much as \$5,800 a week in burglaries this year.

Yet San Francisco has seen no revival of the "tong wars" or opium dens that led to the organizing of a "Chinese squad" of policemen in 1875. The last trouble between Chinese clans or "tongs" was before World War II. The special squad was abolished in 1956.

"Streets are safer." A University of California team making a three-year study of Chinatown in San Francisco reported its impression "that Chinatown streets are safer than most other parts of the city" despite the fact that it is one of the most densely populated neighborhoods in the United States.

In 1965, not one San Francisco Chinese—young or old—was charged with murder, manslaughter, rape or an offense against wife or children. Chinese accounted for only two adult cases out of 252 of assault with a deadly weapon.

Only one of San Francisco's Chinese youths, who comprise 17 per cent of the city's high-school enrollment, was among 118 juveniles arrested last year for assault with a deadly weapon. Meantime, 25 per cent of the city's semifinalists in the California State scholarship competition were Chinese.

Most Chinese-Americans continue to send their youngsters to Chinese schools for one or two hours a day so they can learn Chinese history, culture and—in

some cases—language. A businessman said: "I feel my kids are Americans, which is a tremendous asset. But they're also Chinese, which is another great asset. I want them to have and keep the best of both cultures."

Much the same picture is found in mainland America's other big Chinatowns—Los Angeles and New York.

Riots of 1871. Los Angeles has a memory of riots in 1871 when white mobs raged through the Chinese section. Twenty-three Chinese were hanged, beaten, shot or stabbed to death.

Today, 25,000 persons of Chinese ancestry live in Los Angeles County—20,000 in the city itself. About 5,000 alien Chinese from Hong Kong and Formosa are believed to be in southern California.

In Los Angeles, as elsewhere, Chinese-Americans are worrying about their children. Superior Judge Delbert E. Wong said: "Traditionally, the family patriarch ruled the household, and the other members of the family obeyed and followed without questioning his authority."

"As the Chinese become more Westernized, women leave the home to work and the younger generation finds greater mobility in seeking employment, we see greater problems within the family unit—and a corresponding increase in crime and divorce."

A Chinese-American clergyman complained that "the second and third-generation Chinese feel more at home with Caucasians. They don't know how to act around the older Chinese any more because they don't understand them."

The family unit. On the other hand, Victor Wong, president of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association in Los Angeles, said:

"Basically, the Chinese are good citizens. The parents always watch out for the children, train them, send them to school and make them stay home after school to study. When they go visiting, it is as a family group. A young Chinese doesn't have much chance to go out on his own and get into trouble."

A high-ranking police official in Los Angeles found little evidence of growing trouble among Chinese. He reported:

"Our problems with the Chinese are at a minimum. This probably is due to strict parental supervision. There is still a tradition of respect for parents."

New York City, in 1960, had a population of 32,831 persons of Chinese ancestry. Estimates today run considerably higher, with immigrants coming in at the rate of 200 or 300 a month.

Many Chinese have moved to various parts of the city and to the suburbs. But newcomers tend to settle in Chinatown, and families of eight and 10 have been found living in two-room apartments.

"The housing shortage here is worse

than in Harlem," one Chinese-American said. Altogether, about 20,000 persons are believed living in the eight-block area of New York's Chinatown at present.

The head of the Chinatown Planning Council said recently that, while most Chinese are still reluctant to accept public welfare, somewhat more are applying for it than in the past. "We are trying to let Chinese know that accepting public welfare is not necessarily the worst thing in the world," he said.

However, a Chinese-American banker in New York took this view:

"There are at least 60 associations here whose main purpose is to help our own people. We believe welfare should be used only as a last resort."

A sizable number of Chinese-Americans who could move out if they wanted to are staying in New York's Chinatown—not because of fears of discrimination on the outside, but because they prefer their own people and culture. And Chinatown, despite its proximity to the Bowery, remains a haven of law and order. Dr. Sollenberger said:

"If I had a daughter, I'd rather have her live in Chinatown than any place else in New York City."

A police lieutenant said: "You don't find any Chinese locked up for robbery, rape or vagrancy."

There has been some rise in Chinese-American delinquency in recent years. In part, this is attributed to the fact that the ratio of children in Chinatown's total population is going up as more women arrive and more families are started.

Even so, the proportion of Chinese-American youngsters getting into difficulty remains low. School buildings used by large numbers of Chinese are described as the cleanest in New York. Public recreational facilities amount to only one small park, but few complaints are heard.

Efforts at progress. Over all, what observers are finding in America's Chinatowns are a thrifty, law-abiding and industrious people—ambitious to make progress on their own.

In Los Angeles, a social worker said:

"If you had several hundred thousand Chinese-Americans subjected to the same economic and social pressures that confront Negroes in major cities, you would have a good deal of unrest among them."

"At the same time, it must be recognized that the Chinese and other Orientals in California were faced with even more prejudice than faces the Negro today. We haven't stuck Negroes in concentration camps, for instance, as we did the Japanese in World War II.

"The Orientals came back, and today they have established themselves as strong contributors to the health of the whole community." [END]

U. S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT, Dec. 26, 1964

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"City Returns to Work, School," L.A. Times, (May 05, 1992)

Los Angeles Times

CIRCULATION: 1,164,388 DAILY / 1,531,327 SUNDAY

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City returns to Work, School

COLUMN ONE

Fissures of Race Tear Fabric of L.A.

A third-generation Chinese-American comes to a haunting realization about multiracial L.A. For the first time, she feels prejudice—and fear.

By Elaine Woo

On Saturday morning, I saw a woman wearing a T-shirt that said, "Love Knows No Color." Fear, however, does know color. That, I'm afraid, was the rude lesson of last week for many Asian-Americans like myself. It is a startling, deeply troubling realization.

I am a native of this city, born 37 years ago at White Memorial Hospital in East Los Angeles. I am also a third-generation Chinese-American. In my nearly four decades—living first in the Crenshaw district, then in Monterey Park and now in a community near Pasadena—I never felt fear because of the color of my skin. Prejudice was a remote concern.

But after the not-guilty verdicts were returned Wednesday against the four white officers in the Rodney King case, the city—my city—blew up in a firestorm of racial suspicions. And the whole equation of living and working in multiracial L.A. changed.

Suddenly, I am scared to be Asian. More specifically, I am afraid of being mistaken for Korean.

Having acknowledged those fears, I feel shame, guilt and an almost paralyzing puzzlement over

A woman who adopted this city as a student sees its myths unmasked. And she knows the rebuilding must be of the soul as well as the structures.

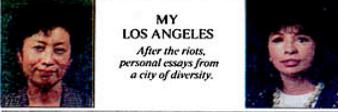
By Patt Morrison

I came here two decades ago to go to college. My mother and father ran out of fingers licking off the reasons I shouldn't. Charles Manson. Smog. Bobby Kennedy. Bobby Seale. Earthquakes. Drugs. Watts. Freeways.

The smog was so bad that for the first month I didn't know the San Gabriels existed. Then it lifted for a brief, clear autumn moment before the Santa Ana winds whipped the smoke of burning shake roofs back to where the smog had been.

On the sidewalk outside the old Hall of Justice, I stepped uneasily past girls my own age, girls with shaved heads and "Xs" hacked into their foreheads, to sit in the courtroom where Charles Manson was sentenced to death, his mad eyes

glaring at the lawyers. I got my first bite of tear gas during the SLA vs. LAPD match. My first earthquake knocked down the shelf I had unwisely built over the head of my bed. If I hadn't already been awake, I could have been killed by my own books—just as I could have been killed by my own typewriter. 10 years later, when my car got hit on the freeway, I rolled down the No. 4 lane like a big steel die, and my type-



MY LOS ANGELES

After the riots, personal essays from a city of diversity.

where to go from here. Family members and Asian-American friends made these same admissions to me over the past few days—some quite gingerly because the awareness leads to all kinds of politically incorrect thoughts.

Ever since last year's rash of shootings involving Korean merchants and black customers, Koreans have taken center stage in the public consciousness of who Asian-Americans are. It is not a prominence Koreans asked for or want. But I raise it because sorting out who Asians are has become a convoluted proposition over the last decade, which brought waves of new immigrants to our city, and that sorting out is important if we are to explain the dilemma other

Please see WOO, A12

writer—which was in the back to go to the repair shop—was tossed around, too.

I missed me. But what a great reminder that it would have made. I repeated it with bravado.

Most businesses, however, held off major aid efforts and confined their initial actions to food drives and other disaster relief. Ueberroth flew to Chicago on Monday to meet with potential investors, said Joel K. Rubenstein, a partner in Ueberroth's Orange County investment firm, the Contrarian Group. Ueberroth was scheduled to return to Orange County later Monday for at least one other meeting.

Rebuild L.A., Ueberroth's extravaganza task force, has yet to name a board of directors, select permanent staff or pick a headquarters site. Close associates

Please see MORRISON, A6



A businessman passes National Guardsmen on watch at a Pacific Bell building at 5th and Olive streets.

Firms Pledge to Rebuild Shattered Areas of City

By PATRICK LEE and JUBESHIVER JR.
TIMES STAFF WRITERS

Several major Los Angeles businesses jumped in Monday with a range of plans to help rebuild riot-torn areas of the city, while criticism continued to mount against the embryonic redevelopment efforts headed by former baseball Commissioner Peter V. Ueberroth.

Actions ranged from a \$25-million loan program from Bank of America and aid programs by African-American and Korean-American owned banks, to the formation of an investment group by retired basketball star Earvin (Magic) Johnson aimed at spurring minority businesses.

Ueberroth conferred with attorneys, architects, land-use experts, real estate executives and others in Los Angeles to define the scope of their group's enormous task.

But the Rev. Jesse Jackson criticized Ueberroth's appointment as sending the wrong message, and at times criticized REBUILD, A12

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National Guard Official Cites Series of Delays

By DANIEL M. WEINTRAUB
TIMES STAFF WRITERS

SACRAMENTO—The first troops Gov. Pete Wilson ordered to the Los Angeles riots were delayed for several "critical" hours by a series of decisions and breakdowns that began long before the jury in the Rodney G. King beating trial delivered its verdict, a top California National Guard general acknowledged Monday.

Brig. Gen. Daniel L. Brennan insisted that the Guard's response compared favorably to any of its previous commitments in times of civil unrest, including the Watts riots. But Brennan, in an interview

Please see GUARD, A11

Police Pullout, Riot's Outbreak Reconstructed

By TED ROHRLICH and RICH CONNELL
TIMES STAFF WRITERS

In the incident that appeared to trigger last week's riots, at least 20 Los Angeles police officers backed down late last Wednesday afternoon in a tense confrontation with South Los Angeles gang members and other residents furious over the verdicts in the Rodney G. King case.

The officers fled when the encounter turned into a shoving match in front of a house at 71st Street and Normandie Avenue and one officer told his colleagues repeatedly, "It's not worth it. Let's go." They did not return for hours and have returned to fully explain why.

After the officers' departure, the crowd of perhaps 50 quickly surged one block south to the intersection of Normandie and Florence avenues and raged unchallenged for hours in a display of destruction.

Members of the crowd stoned Anglo and Latino motorists, pulled them out of cars and looted and torched stores, according to witnesses and an amateur videotape of many of the incidents made available to The Times on Monday.

Although much already has

Recovery: Freeways and buses are once again crowded as the day appears to go smoothly. Bush announces loans and grants for rebuilding.

By STEPHEN BRAUN and SHERYL STOLBERG
TIMES STAFF WRITERS

With their street corners still guarded by rifle-toting soldiers and their nerves less jittery but still frayed, Los Angeles residents went back to work and school Monday as officials grappled with how to rebuild the city—both physically and emotionally—in the wake of last week's riots.

Freeways, buses and trains were once again crowded. Most classrooms were full, although school officials reported slightly higher than normal absentee rates. Surtaxed men and well-dressed women returned to the streets of downtown. Shoppers went back to the malls.

Despite the trauma that Los Angeles has experienced since the riots began last Wednesday, the day appeared to go smoothly. But in neighborhoods across the city, as people attempted to go about their daily routines, they experienced changes subtle and profound. At every turn, there were constant, sometimes painful, reminders of the devastation.

As one resident, spotting a snub-nosed Army helicopter flying over the Federal Building in Westwood, put it, "Every time you think you are getting back to normal, you see something that reminds you that it isn't quite yet."

In major developments Monday, President Bush said the federal government will make available \$500 million in loans and cash grants to help repair damage. At the same time, the White House blamed "liberal programs of the 60s and 70s" for the upheaval, triggered by last Wednesday's not-guilty verdicts in the Rodney G. King police beating case. The President's spokesman, Martin Flitwater, said that programs offering "direct handouts" do not

encourage people to improve their lives by owning property and developing a stake in their community.

A Bush's likely Democratic opponent, Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton, issued a statement criticizing the White House and South Los Angeles and met with a variety of government, civic and religious leaders. "I am convinced if we can heal the wounds of racial division in this community, then we can do it anywhere," Clinton told a group of Latino activists.

A Mayor Tom Bradley stuck by his decision to lift the dusk-to-dawn curfew, despite an incident Sunday night in which a National Guardsman shot and killed a motorist. Long Beach officials extended their curfew for another night.

Please see UNREST, A19

Ruling Eases Prosecutors' Task Before Grand Juries

Supreme Court: Evidence that might clear a suspect need not be revealed when federal indictment is sought.

By DAVID G. SAVAGE
TIMES STAFF WRITER

WASHINGTON—The Supreme Court strengthened the power of federal prosecutors to seek criminal indictments Monday, ruling that they need not tell grand jurors of evidence that could show a suspect is not guilty.

The high court stressed that a grand jury is "an accusatory body" obliged to "hear only the prosecutor's side."

In so ruling, the court discounted arguments by some federal judges who have ruled that concealing evidence that could exonerate the target of a probe amounts to "prosecutorial misconduct."

Neither a suspect nor his lawyer

has a right to appear before a grand jury if they have evidence proving innocence, however, they may present it during a trial, the 5-4 majority said.

Writing for the court, Justice Antonin Scalia said it is "quite absurd" to believe that a prosecutor has a duty "to alert the grand jury to the nature and extent of the available exculpatory evidence."

He referred to documents or testimony which could show the charges against the suspect are false. But the four dissenters main-

Please see COURT, A23

INSIDE TODAY'S TIMES

GEORGE MURPHY DIES
George Murphy, the first movie actor elected to the U.S. Senate, died at age 89. The conservative Republican served one term from California in the 1960s. A34

KINGS FIRE WEBSTER
The Kings fired Coach Tom Webster after he failed to take the team past the second round of the National Hockey League playoffs in three seasons. C1

NEW ATTITUDE IN IRAN
Iran is not the same place it was even three years ago. Pragmatism is increasingly replacing religious zealotry in the corridors of power. World Report

WEATHER: Morning low clouds and patchy fog clearing to hazy sunshine this afternoon. Civic Center low/high today: 60/78. Details: B5

TOP OF THE NEWS ON A2



Utah's Blue Edwards, left, L.A.'s Ken Norman scramble.

CLIPPERS ELIMINATED
The Utah Jazz beat the Clippers, 98-89, in Salt Lake City and eliminated Los Angeles in their best of 5 NBA playoff series. C1

Families in the Riot Areas Try to Pick Up the Pieces

Survival: After five nights of living in fear, many try to settle back into everyday routines. Others look to leave.

By JOHN L. MITCHELL and TINA GRIGGO
TIMES STAFF WRITERS

At the street corner where the Los Angeles riots began, Roy and Laverne Walker had endured five nights of terror—watching fires, hearing gunshots, doing without lights or a phone and sleeping on the floor for safety.

But on Monday, the jittery Walkers could look to the streets and see calm. They could dress and feed their 21-month-old daughter, Saida, in a household where the lights worked, where the phone was on. A gardener came by, expecting to be paid, and for the first time in days a mail carrier completed his appointed rounds.

"Is that it? No bills?" asked Walker, 41, a state police officer accepting a stack of junk mail at the couple's neat, middle-class home on Normandie Avenue where, miraculously, even the roses survived the most violent unrest in city history.

Without fanfare, and with uncertain prospects of help from authorities or charitable organizations, the Walkers and untold numbers of other families in Los Angeles are beginning to pick up the pieces of their homes, shops and battered psyches.

For many, Monday brought a welcome sense of the routine, a spring day's respite from the raging onslaught of violence. There

Please see FAMILIES, A6

“Breathing Life Into Southland: From mainland millionaires to grad students, a 'new wave' of Chinese immigrants is invigorating the economy,” *L.A. Times* (Oct. 04, 1993)



U-PEI WU / Los Angeles Times



LORE EISENBERG / Los Angeles Times



MIKE READDOW / Los Angeles Times

U-Pei Wu, left, chairman of General Bank, fled repression in Taiwan. Business is booming at San Gabriel Square, center. Lily Lee Chen, right, who was born in China, heads a Pasadena exporting business.

CHINESE: Immigrants Boost Southland Economy

Continued from A1
sources and business savvy that have made it a major hub in a dynamic network that links ethnic Chinese throughout the Asia-Pacific region.

It is a far cry from the tired and huddled masses of the American immigrant tradition. Wu has been watching deposits at his bank throughout the "new wave" of Chinese immigration that exploded in the 1980s. He says it is not unusual for families—mainly those from Taiwan—to bring \$200,000 in capital to Southern California.

To say that all Chinese newcomers are rich and engaged in lucrative trade with their cousins in Hong Kong or Singapore would be a distortion. Recent arrivals of boat people from Fujian province disabuse any such notion. Chinese in Southern California include poor families, uneducated busboys and sweatshop seamstresses. Sometimes, they are bedeviled by social problems, from organized extortion rackets to violent youth gangs.

But on the whole, the impact of recent Chinese immigration on the Southern California economy has been positive, evidence suggests—perhaps incredibly so. And this bright note has been largely unobscured by the chaotic diversity of the region.

Clearly, Chinese immigration has had a major effect on the economy, and a positive effect in terms of bringing investment and creating jobs in L.A.," said Michael Woo, the former

started in a Sino-Vietnamese enclave in Orange County.

"If you had a project that size and put it in West L.A. instead of San Gabriel, it would be in foreclosure by now," said Dominich Ng, chairman of East-West Federal Bank, a savings and loan started 30 years ago by the proprietor of a Chinatown bakery and a handful of small investors. The thrift, now owned by a Chinese tycoon in Indonesia, has 22 branches and \$1 billion in assets.

"Had it not been for the Chinese support, I think the real estate market would have gotten much worse," said Ng, a Hong Kong native. "Now, the Chinese are going to be creating jobs and helping this economy to start growing again. We may not be the dominant force, but we're going to be very important to the recovery."

Beyond the bright lights of the suburban malls, the Chinese entrepreneurial boost to the economy takes on less obvious forms.

Economic Clout

Nearly one in every five homes sold in Los Angeles County in 1992 was purchased by someone with a Chinese surname. Because ethnic Chinese made up less than 3% of the total population, their role in propping up the sagging residential real estate market appears critical.

	Properties purchased	Percentage of total sales	Percentage of population	Avg. price of home purchased
Chinese surnames	3,176	19%	2.8%	\$295,946
Asian surnames	4,395	26%	10.8%	\$296,374
Total for top 100 names	16,879	100%	-	\$219,535

Note: Figures based on a Times analysis of the top 100 surnames of home buyers in Los Angeles County in 1992, as provided by Data Quest. Data was compiled prospectively for ethnic communities to track their own ethnic groups. Latino surnames used by Hispanics were not included in calculations. Data represents 27% of all property sales.

Source: Data Quest Information Systems; Los Angeles Times

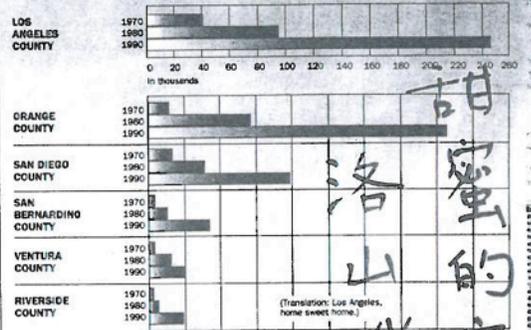
company employs 2,540 people nationwide, including

The Southland's Chinese Community

Including recent immigrants and longtime residents, the Chinese community is one of the fastest growing in Southern California. And its economic contributions — largely unseen — are disproportionate to its size.

Dramatic Growth

The number of ethnic Chinese in Southern California has increased nearly sevenfold during the past two decades. Los Angeles and Orange counties have the largest Chinese communities.



Diverse Origins

Contrary to the myth of a homogenous enclave, ethnic Chinese in Southern California come from a variety of origins. One in four was born in the United States, while a similar proportion were born in mainland China and immigrated here — either directly or, more likely, through Taiwan or Hong Kong.



Note: Based on estimates by Richard O. Taylor, Times director of computer graphics.

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