

The
MAKING
of
ASIAN AMERICA
A History

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Making a New Asian America Through Immigration and Activism

Out of the 1960s a new Asian America was formed. First came the passage of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, which liberalized the nation's immigration policy and ushered in new generations of immigrants from throughout Asia, many of whom had no connection to pre-World War II communities. Over the past fifty years, Asian American communities have grown exponentially, and, with the additional arrival of refugees from Southeast Asia, have become increasingly diverse and transnational.

The second major change was the widespread involvement of Asian Americans in a number of campaigns for civil rights, women's liberation, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) rights, and an end to the war in Vietnam. Out of this political participation came the emergence of a distinctive Asian American movement that helped to define diverse peoples as Asian Americans and call them to action. After decades of being lumped together by the media and lawmakers as undifferentiated "Orientals" who were threats to American society, a new generation willingly and consciously joined together as self-identified Asian Americans to promote multiethnic alliances and action. They identified common historical and contemporary experiences, demanded fuller inclusion and recognition in American society, and formed significant and enduring institutions and organizations that addressed specific Asian American issues and inequalities.

Contemporary Asian immigration to the United States can be directly tied to the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act. Support for immigration reform grew out of Cold War politics and civil rights activism during the 1960s. At a time when the United States emphasized its virtues of freedom and democracy over the totalitarianism of communism, the unequal treatment of immigrants based on race exposed the hypocrisy in American immigration regulation. Strong leadership came from the White House under President John F. Kennedy, whose 1958 book, *A Nation of Immigrants*, was an unabashed celebration of America's immigrant heritage and a call for immigration reform.¹

Following Kennedy's assassination, President Lyndon B. Johnson embraced the cause and declared that the national origins quotas in the 1924 Immigration Act was "incompatible with our basic American tradition." This new support of America's immigrant heritage was cautious and partial. As congressional debates made clear, immigration from Europe was still preferred, and the president stressed the bill's primary intent to redress the wrong done to southern and eastern Europeans affected by the quotas.² More importantly, he connected U.S. immigration reform to America's global image and agenda. In his State of the Union address in 1964, Johnson declared that with immigration reform the "nation that was built by the immigrants of all lands can ask those who now seek admission: 'What can you do for our country?' [not] 'In what country were you born?'" A new immigration law, the president continued, would help the United States achieve its "ultimate goal" of creating "a world without war [and] a world made safe for diversity, in which all men, goods, and ideas can freely move across every border and every boundary."³

Supporters of immigration reform picked up on the message of caution and disputed charges that the bill would allow entry to "hordes" of Africans and Asians or that the bill would allow the United States to become the "dumping ground" for Latin America.⁴ The final bill imposed the first annual global cap, or numerical limit, on immigration to the United States. And when President Johnson signed the Immigration Act into law on Liberty Island with the Statue of Liberty in the background, he assured Americans that "this is not a revolutionary bill." "It does not affect the lives of millions," he declared.⁵



50. President Lyndon B. Johnson signs the Immigration Act as Vice President Hubert Humphrey, Lady Bird Johnson, Muriel Humphrey, Senator Edward (Ted) Kennedy, Senator Robert F. Kennedy, and others look on. Liberty Island, New York City, October 3, 1965.

The president would be proven wrong. The 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, also known as the Hart-Cellar Act, was meant to be the first incremental step in changing the nation's immigration policies, but in the absence of comprehensive immigration reform in the past fifty years, it remains the foundation of immigration policy today. The law did affect the lives of millions. And it changed the course of Asian American and U.S. history. In fact, it can be argued that no group benefited more from the act than Asian Americans. The 1965 act resulted in three major changes. First, the law abolished the national origins quotas and ushered in a new era of mass immigration that has been qualitatively different from earlier periods both in terms of volume and in terms of ethnic makeup. Prior to 1965, the peak decade for immigration was 1911–1920, when 5,736,000 immigrants entered the country, mostly from Europe. During the 1980s, a record 7,338,000 immigrants came to the United States, followed by 6,943,000 from 1991 to 1997. The 2000 census figures revealed that the United States was accepting immigrants at a faster rate than at any other time since the

1850s.⁶ In 2010, there were 40 million foreign-born residents in the United States, making up 13 percent of the total population. Over half had entered the United States since 1990; one third had entered since 2000.⁷

Post-1965 immigration is also significantly different from earlier arrivals. While immigrants coming to the United States during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had predominantly been from Europe, most new immigrants have come from Asia and Latin America. In the 1980s, more than 80 percent of all immigrants came from either of these two regions. This pattern has continued into the twenty-first century. In 2010, 53 percent of all foreign-born peoples in the United States were born in Latin America; 28 percent were born in Asia. The 50.5 million Hispanics (both foreign-born and native-born) make up 16 percent of the total population. In 2011, the total Asian American population, including foreign-born (59 percent) and U.S. born (41 percent), was 18.2 million, or around 5.8 percent. And the number of newly arriving immigrants from Asia is an increasing proportion of all immigrants, making up 40 percent of all foreign-born peoples who have arrived in the United States since 2008.⁸

Second, the law created immigration preference categories based on family reunification and professional skills. This policy worked to the advantage of prospective Asian immigrants, who have come to fill needed professional positions and to reunite with family already in the United States. Recent immigration laws have continued that trend. The 1990 Immigration and Nationality Act, for example, increased the flow of highly skilled "guest workers" from abroad with temporary visas known as H-1B visas, and U.S. companies, especially in the high-tech sector, have actively recruited high-skilled workers from Asia. Asian immigrants receive about three quarters of these visas; Indians alone received 56 percent of the 129,000 H-1B visas granted in 2011.⁹

The last major change resulting from the 1965 Immigration Act was the establishment of a global cap on immigration and new restrictions on immigration from the Western Hemisphere for the first time. As a result, the law ushered in a new era of undocumented immigration that has dominated immigration debates since the 1970s.

Post-1965 immigration from Asia and Latin America has resulted in the racial restructuring of U.S. society, and every sector, from politics and education,

to health care and intermarriage, has been affected. Asians' growing numbers, economic investments, and contributions to the United States have transformed everyday life throughout the country. They are concentrated in the West and the Northeast, but in recent decades Asian Americans have increased in every region, and between 2000 and 2010 the Asian population also grew in every state. North Carolina, for example, now has a sizable Indian population, while Minnesota is home to the second largest population of Hmong Americans in the country after California.¹⁰

There are both similarities and differences with Asian immigrants from previous decades. As in the past, Asian immigrants are highly regulated by immigration laws, but the emphasis of U.S. laws in admitting family-sponsored immigrants and professional, highly skilled individuals has meant that the majority of new arrivals come to join family already here and bring a different set of educational and professional skills than earlier immigrants. In contrast to the single male laborers of the early twentieth century, women now make up a much larger number of all immigrant arrivals, and many immigrants arrive as families. Among the foreign-born Asian population in the United States, women are actually the majority (54 percent). Sixty-two percent of the most recent immigrants from China, India, the Philippines, Korea, Vietnam, and Japan received their Green Cards based on family members already in the United States.¹¹ And with no bans on becoming naturalized citizens as existed in the past, 59 percent of foreign-born Asian adults in the United States are naturalized citizens.¹²

There is also a much greater diversity of Asian immigration. In 1960, Japanese Americans were the largest Asian American group, making up 50 percent of the total, but immigration from Japan has been very low since 1924, and in 2010, Japanese Americans were 7 percent of all Asian Americans.¹³ Chinese immigrants still come in large numbers, and the magnitude of immigration from the Philippines, India, and Korea is much higher than in the early twentieth century. In addition, there has been sustained and growing immigration from countries that had sent few immigrants to the United States before 1965, such as Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Pakistan, and Bangladesh.

Recent arrivals from Asia also represent great diversity in educational background and professional skills. Since the 1980s, engineers and medical professionals from India, the Philippines, China, and Taiwan have made up

one third of these professions in the entire U.S. labor market. At the same time, a growing number have entered the United States with minimal education and job skills, leading to Asians being represented at both extremes of the educational and class spectrums. Unauthorized Asian immigrants also make up a significant proportion (10–11 percent) of the total number of the 11 million undocumented immigrant population in the United States from 2000 to 2010.¹⁴

Some of this diversity can be seen in the Chinese American community. Between 1961 and 1998, almost 1.5 million immigrants, made up almost equally of men and women, were admitted to the United States from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the People's Republic of China (after U.S.-China relations became normalized in 1972 and China began to allow emigration in 1977). From 1960 to 1990, the Chinese population in the United States nearly doubled every decade. In 1960, there were just under 100,000 Chinese-born immigrants in the United States. In 2010, the U.S. Census reported over 3.3 million adult Chinese Americans in the country. Making up the largest group of Asian Americans and the largest ethnic Chinese population (including Taiwanese) outside of Asia, they represent 24 percent of the U.S.'s adult Asian population. Three quarters (76 percent) are foreign-born, and 69 percent are U.S. citizens. Chinese immigration has been so great in recent decades that foreign-born Chinese in the United States now outnumber native-born Chinese Americans.¹⁵

They come for a variety of reasons. Many Chinese first arrived in the 1960s as students or professionals under the provisions of the 1965 act. Others have come to reunite with family. Immigrants and naturalized Americans have actively sponsored their spouses, children, parents, brothers, and sisters into the country, who have arranged in turn for the entry of their family members as well. Family-based chain migration has been so extensive under the 1965 act that it is no wonder that it has been nicknamed the "Brothers and Sisters Act."¹⁶ Some fled communism, political repression, and economic hardship in the People's Republic. Kenny Lai, for example, was only fourteen when he was sent to an agricultural commune near Canton in southern China and a life of hard labor. "The government chose for you [and] there was no way out," he explained. Convinced that if he did not escape he would condemn his children and his children's children to a life

of forced labor, he planned his escape to Hong Kong when he was twenty. He and his wife eventually made it to the United States in 1978.¹⁷

Chinese immigration increased dramatically from Taiwan and Hong Kong after the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre in Beijing, when the Chinese army cracked down on pro-democracy activists. Hundreds were killed and more were wounded. Pro-democracy leaders were rounded up. Hong Kong residents who were already wary of the return of the colony to mainland China in 1997 viewed having foreign passports as a safeguard against communist rule. In the 1980s, surveys of Hong Kong residents found that 60 percent of its lawyers, 70 percent of its government doctors, and 40 percent of its civil engineers planned to leave the colony before 1997. Many paid tens of thousands of dollars to establish themselves in Canada, Australia, and the United States.¹⁸

With its emphasis on employment-based immigration and capital investment, the U.S.'s 1990 Immigration and Nationality Act has brought in highly skilled and educated Chinese immigrants as temporary foreign workers employed in "specialty occupations" and as investors willing to apply their capital to U.S.-based enterprises in exchange for permanent residency status. Among Chinese Americans age twenty-five and older, more than half (51 percent) have a bachelor's degree, compared to the national population (28 percent). Their median annual personal earnings are higher (\$50,000) than other Asian Americans (\$47,000) and for U.S. adults (\$40,000) overall. Almost one quarter of employed Chinese-born men work in occupations related to information technology, sciences, or engineering.¹⁹

These elite and professional immigrants are part of the "uptown, high-tech Chinese," who include English-speaking scientists, real estate moguls, capitalist entrepreneurs, and professional elites. Many of these professional immigrants have formed new ethnic enclaves in the suburbs, complete with Chinese-owned banks, restaurants, malls, and Chinese-language newspapers. Chinese make up more than one third of Monterey Park's population in southern California, for example, giving the city the nickname of "the first suburban Chinatown," while in New York City there are now numerous Chinatowns spread across the five boroughs.²⁰

While these well-educated and high-earning Chinese Americans represent a portrait of stunning economic success, the Chinese American

population is in fact overrepresented at both extremes of the socioeconomic ladder. There are also "downtown, low-tech" Chinese who are low-skilled workers, waiters, domestic workers, garment workers, cooks, and laundrymen.²¹ For example, Chinese immigrant women made up 80 percent of the sewing machine operators in San Francisco in the early 1990s. Similarly, in New York City, Chinese immigrant women comprised 85 percent of the garment industry workforce. They juggled their multiple roles as wives, mothers, and wage earners. As workers, their wages made important financial contributions to their family economies. But at home, they were expected to conform to traditional caretaking roles of cooking, cleaning, laundry, grocery shopping, and caring for children, husbands, and sometimes parents.²² Slowly, some things have changed at home. "My husband dares not look down on me," one Chinese garment worker told sociologist Min Zhou in 1992. "He knows he can't provide for the family by himself."²³



51. Chinese garment workers (mother and child), New York City, 1976.

Still, with limited English abilities and job skills, many Chinese immigrant women not only felt trapped by the jobs available to them but also by

the exploitative and low-paid work of the garment industry. Some women found ways to juggle their responsibilities and achieve some job security and improved working conditions. Garment workers in New York's Chinatown, for example, organized around the need for affordable child care. In 1977, a group of workers expressed their needs to their union, the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, the ILGWU. When their demands went unheeded, day care activists began to organize, sometimes bringing their babies with them to meet with union officials. When the ILGWU began negotiations for a new union contract in 1982, these activists played an important role in mobilizing 20,000 Chinatown workers to take to the streets in support of a strike. Negotiations resumed between the union and contractors, and in recognition of the work of day care activists, the ILGWU opened its first day care in 1984.²⁴



52. Chinese waiters, Lunar New Year, New York City, 2012.

Other "downtown" Chinese include those who have entered the country without proper documentation. With neither professional skills nor relatives already in the United States who could sponsor them, an estimated

150,000 Chinese chose to enter without documentation beginning in the 1990s.²⁵ Many come from Fujian, a rural and impoverished coastal province in Southern China. They hope to strike it rich, taking great risks and paying huge sums to fulfill long-standing American dreams. As in the early twentieth century, countries in Latin America have become back doors into the United States and Canada, sometimes with the help of smugglers, or "snakeheads," who force the Chinese to take long, circuitous, and dangerous journeys into the north. In 1989, Lily Wang paid \$30,000 to be guided from Fuzhou to Hong Kong, Thailand, Bolivia, Mexico, and across the border into the United States. By 2010, Chinese immigrants were being charged \$80,000.²⁶

Countless Chinese die en route. In 1995, eighteen Chinese suffocated to death inside a sealed trailer on its way to Hungary. Five years later, fifty-eight Chinese were found dead inside a refrigerator full of rotting tomatoes in Dover, England. In 1993, a ship called the *Golden Venture* ran aground on Rockaway Peninsula near New York City with 260 Chinese immigrants. Urged by the crew to swim ashore, the Chinese jumped overboard. Ten drowned. Between 2005 and 2008, the U.S. Border Patrol apprehended 6,000 Chinese nationals attempting to cross the U.S.-Mexico border without documentation. As of 2009, an estimated 120,000 unauthorized immigrants in the United States were from China.²⁷

Even if they survive the journey to the United States, undocumented Chinese immigrants often face years of exploitation. Hidden in urban centers, they work menial jobs in an effort to pay back the exorbitant smuggler's fees and send money back home to waiting relatives. Some have been imprisoned, beaten, or forced to work for extremely low wages. A few repay their debts and even become financially successful. Others have found only hardship and even death in the United States.²⁸ Lily Wang, for example, began working in a garment factory but has ended up as a prostitute. "America is not a paradise; it's a hell," she concluded.²⁹

Also coming to the United States beginning in the 1990s are adopted children from China. Strict enforcement of the communist government's one-child policy established in 1979 to curb explosive population growth led many families to put children up for adoption or to abandon them outright. Because of patriarchal values that led families to value sons over daughters,

a large majority of these children have been girls. Orphanages became overcrowded and abuse was commonplace. In 1992, the government began to encourage large-scale international adoption, and the United States became a major receiving nation.

By 2000, China became the leading provider of children put up for international adoption, with over 5,000 Chinese adoptees arriving in the U.S. that year. Viewed as a both a humanitarian act and a symbol of progress for multicultural America, the Chinese adoption program has helped to create even more "global families" in the United States.³⁰

Like Chinese immigrants, Filipinos have also come to the United States in increasing numbers since 1965. Almost 665,000 Filipinos entered the United States in the twenty years after the 1965 Immigration Act was passed. Between 1990 and 2000, the Filipino population grew by 66 percent. In 2010, there were 2.55 million Filipinos in the country, making up 18 percent of the adult Asian population. Sixty-nine percent were foreign-born; three quarters were U.S. citizens.³¹

Filipino immigration to the United States is only one part of a larger global movement out of the Philippines. As a result of global economic restructuring, export-based nations like the Philippines rely on the emigration of their citizens in order to bring foreign currency into their economies. Over 8 million Filipinos, or around 10 percent of the entire Philippine population, currently work overseas in 140 countries. Made up of nurses, doctors, schoolteachers, entertainers, domestic workers, and seafarers working aboard container ships and luxury cruise liners, the Filipino diaspora is perhaps the largest in the world. Reflecting patterns of gendered immigration, more than 60 percent of these overseas workers are women, and the remittances that they send home provide an economic lifeline to their families and to the country as a whole.³²

Just as in earlier decades, the vast majority of Filipinos who have settled abroad permanently have come to the United States. The U.S. presence in the Philippines has sustained a culture of immigration. Just as in the early twentieth century, American education, abundance, and popular culture—not to mention relatives and friends already in the United States—have attracted the vast majority of Filipinos coming to the United States.

Filipino immigration continues to be shaped by the colonial and military relationships between the United States and the Philippines as well. Long after U.S. colonization of the Philippines ended in 1946, trade relations, foreign assistance, and the presence of U.S. military bases in the Philippines tied the two countries closely together and facilitated certain types of Filipino immigration into the United States, including and especially military service members and medical professionals. In 1970, the 14,000 Filipinos serving in the U.S. Navy outnumbered the number of Filipinos serving in the Philippine Navy, and today, Filipinos are the second largest group of foreign-born veterans in the United States armed forces after immigrants from Mexico.³³

Likewise, since the 1960s, the Philippines has sent the largest number of professional immigrants to the United States. Filipino nurses, doctors, and other medical practitioners have been heavily recruited by American health institutions to help alleviate a shortage of medical personnel, especially in inner cities and rural areas. By the 1970s and 1980s, the Philippines became the largest supplier of health professionals to the United States. In 2010, over 15 percent of employed Filipino-born men worked in health care support occupations, and almost 23 percent of Filipino-born women worked as registered nurses. They have become the Philippines' "new national heroes."³⁴

Political conditions in the Philippines, especially the repressive government of Ferdinand Marcos (1965–1985) and the civil unrest caused by communist rebels and Islamic separatists, also spurred immigration abroad. Marcos declared martial rule from 1972 to 1981 and exerted firm control over the media and the legislature. Many of his political opponents were arrested.

Continuing massive unemployment and underemployment as well as income inequality have sustained a culture of immigration. College graduates who had difficulty finding work at home took their skills to another country. Educated in the American-style educational system, fluent in English, and familiar with American culture, Filipinos have been well prepared to migrate to the United States, and their skills have been in demand. In 1972, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that over 2,000 Filipinos a day were asking for visas to come to the United States.³⁵

Not all Filipino medical professionals are able to find commensurate professional opportunity in the United States, however. Additional examinations

and state medical requirements as well as workplace racism often create employment barriers for new immigrants. While many successfully navigate what Dr. Edgar Camboa calls the "subtle form of racism" directed toward foreign-born doctors, others undergo lengthy recertification processes and examinations or end up working in fields unrelated to their medical training.³⁶

Filipino nurses have also faced obstacles in the United States and have responded with collective action. When a backlash against foreign-trained nurses and licensure requirements erupted in the 1970s and 1980s, Filipino nurses organized to provide a collective voice for their members, alleviate hardships that Filipino nurses faced abroad, and advocate for fair licensure procedures for foreign nurses. Filipina nurse Norma Ruspian Watson, executive secretary of the Foreign Nurse Defense Fund, for example, called attention to the discriminatory practices that permeated the profession in a letter to President Ronald Reagan. "Foreign nurses, particularly Filipinas [sic] are the, 'COOLIES OF THE MEDICAL WORLD. . . . We are sick and tired of being subservient and culturally non-aggressive. . . . I would like to see all foreign nurses walk out of the hospitals in this country, and see what happens." Watson's vision of a walkout never occurred, but by 1981 Filipino nurse organizations had successfully persuaded the California Board of Registered Nursing to establish nondiscriminatory licensure examinations.³⁷

In the years directly following the passage of the U.S.'s 1965 Immigration Act, immigration from both India and Pakistan—independent nations created in 1947—has also increased. The U.S. Census recorded 371,630 South Asians in the country in 1980, including those from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. In 1990, the number had almost tripled to 919,626, and in 2010 there were 2.84 million Indians, 363,699 Pakistanis, 128,792 Bangladeshis, and 28,596 Sri Lankans in the United States.³⁸

Immigrants from India make up the bulk of arrivals from South Asia. They are the third largest group among Asian Americans; 87 percent are foreign-born.³⁹ Unlike the small numbers of immigrants who arrived in the early twentieth century mostly from the Punjab region of what is now India and Pakistan, today's newcomers come from throughout India. In addition, people with Indian ancestry have also immigrated to the United

States from the Caribbean, East Africa, Canada, and the United Kingdom. While the early-twentieth-century immigration was almost exclusively male laborers, both men and women make up contemporary Indian immigrants. Compared to other immigrant groups, Indian immigrants are much better educated. The majority are fluent in English and are highly educated professionals, including physicians, engineers, and computer scientists. This is due to both economic conditions in India as well as favorable U.S. immigration policies. During the 1960s and 1970s, India's economy could not keep pace with the number of college graduates it was producing. In 1974, there were 100,000 engineers out of work in India. At the same time, the U.S. was recruiting these types of highly skilled individuals under the technical and professional preferences of the 1965 Immigration Act.⁴⁰

Educated professionals sought opportunities abroad just as the United States' 1965 Immigration Act offered visas to those with technical skills. Ram Gada was one who arrived in the United States in the 1960s. He had received his engineering degree and was working at an auto company in Bombay, but he felt that his future lay outside India. Friends and relatives already in the United States encouraged him to come and helped him apply for scholarships in advanced mechanical engineering. His parents knew someone living in North Dakota, so he packed his bags, moved to North Dakota, earned his master's degree, and eventually settled in Minneapolis.⁴¹

Gada was hardly alone. Out of the 46,000 employed Indian immigrants in the United States in 1974, 16,000 were engineers, 4,000 were scientists, and 7,000 were physicians or surgeons. The next year, 93 percent of Indian immigrants admitted into the country were either "professional/technical workers" or their spouses. According to the 2010 census, 81 percent of recent Indian immigrants already hold a college degree, which makes them extremely competitive in the job market.⁴² The arrival of so many highly educated and skilled workers has had a tremendous impact on American industry. Scholar A. L. Saxenian estimated that by 1998, Chinese and Indian immigrants had started over a quarter of the technology businesses (around 2,000) in California's Silicon Valley and generated 60,000 jobs. By 2012, 15.5 percent of all start-ups were founded by immigrant entrepreneurs born in India.⁴³ And almost half of all computer-related H-1B visas (given to highly trained workers with skills that meet current needs in the U.S.

economy) were given to workers from India at the turn of the twenty-first century. Over one quarter of employed Indian-born men worked in information technology, and one third of Indian-born women worked in business, management, and information technology fields.⁴⁴

Since the 1990s, Indian immigration has diversified to include a growing number of arrivals coming as relatives of family members already in the country. In 1991, 35,000 out of 44,121 Indian immigrants had family members in the United States.⁴⁵ Unlike those with advanced degrees who find work in white-collar industries, these working-class immigrants often do not have college or university degrees and toil in small grocery stores, gas stations, or motels. In fact, Indian Americans own about half of all the motels in the United States. Typically from the Gujarat, a state in western India, motel owners have come from rural landowning families from the Bhakta and Patel lineages. Many are the siblings of professional immigrants already in the United States and have pooled their resources into their motels to provide economic security and a place of residence. Much of the success of these enterprises relies upon the unpaid labor of immigrant women in the family who clean rooms, do the laundry, and perform reception and office tasks on top of the household labor they perform for their own families. One motel owner's wife told an interviewer, "I get up at about 5:30 in the morning, make breakfast for the family, and get the two children ready for school. If there is a guest, I check him in. After the kids are gone I clean the rooms . . . and make beds, take out laundry . . . and clean house."⁴⁶ Arriving with few resources, some Indian motel owners have become economically successful. But they also remain highly marginalized from mainstream society.⁴⁷

Just as there are class divisions among recent Indian immigrants, so are there differences of opportunity for male immigrants versus female immigrants. In July of 2012, the Indian newspaper *The Hindu* published an exposé on the "sea of broken dreams" that Indian women in the United States faced. Many were highly educated professionals in their own right but had come with H-4 visas as spouses of husbands working in the expanding IT industry with temporary H-1B visas. Caught in a net of visa restrictions that prevented them from working, these career women who had once been able to support themselves and nurture their own careers found themselves

isolated, depressed, and without purpose. Rashi Bhatnagar, an H-4 visa holder with a master's degree from India and years at a successful career, found only slammed doors when she relocated to the United States to join her IT-worker husband. She set up a Facebook group called "H-4 visa, a curse."⁴⁸

Altogether, the 2010 census counted over 1.73 million Indian Americans. They were the fastest growing Asian American group in the 1990s and are highly diverse in terms of language, religion, and increasingly, class, as more working-class family members arrive to join those already here. They have settled throughout the country, but one of the first concentrations, or Little Indias, was in Jackson Heights, New York.⁴⁹

Immigration from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka to the United States has also increased since the 1990s, with most of the new arrivals coming through family-sponsored immigration. During the 1990s, the Pakistani American community grew by at least 88 percent. Over 134,000 came between 1990 and 2000. Over 70,000 Bangladeshis arrived during the same period. The 2010 U.S. Census reported over 409,000 Pakistanis in the U.S. and over 147,000 Bangladeshis.⁵⁰

Many Pakistani immigrants come as part of a larger immigration of Pakistanis going to various places around the world. The dream of immigration, anthropologist Junaid Rana has found, is cultivated through word of mouth from relatives and friends already abroad, through Pakistani television serials, and through Bollywood films. The largest numbers head to Middle Eastern countries as laborers on construction projects. These *Dubai chad* working-class immigrants differ from the *Amrikan* Pakistani, who are educated professionals working in the United States, Canada, or Europe.⁵¹

Newer groups like Bangladeshis and Sri Lankans are smaller in number but growing in their impact. Both have flocked to New York City, where the 74,000 Bangladeshis in the city are the eleventh-largest foreign-born population and the population of 5,000 Sri Lankans in Staten Island marks the area as having one of the highest concentrations of Sri Lankans outside Sri Lanka.⁵²

Since 1965, Korean immigration (overwhelmingly from South Korea) to the United States has also skyrocketed. In 1970, the census reported 70,598

persons of Korean ancestry in the United States. Twenty years later, the census counted almost 800,000, and in 2010, the Korean population was estimated to be 1.26 million. Almost 80 percent were foreign-born, and 67 percent of the Korean population were U.S. citizens. This rapid immigration occurred within the context of political instability and economic dislocations in South Korea. During the Cold War, the United States invested heavily in the South Korean economy to help contain communism. The military dictatorship of Park Chung-hee initiated an accelerated industrialization program, and during the 1980s and early 1990s South Korea was known as an NIC—newly industrializing country—a "Little Tiger" of Asia (along with Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore). This rapid industrialization expanded the pool of industrial laborers, but it also came with some costs: low wages, government suppression of labor strikes, and income inequality for large segments of the Korean working class, intense rural-to-urban immigration, and increased population density. Dramatic population growth also exacerbated conditions. From 1960 to 1975, the population increased from 25 to 35 million. As opportunities for socioeconomic mobility diminished, middle-class Koreans increasingly considered moving abroad. The South Korean government also actively promoted emigration as part of its population control program.⁵³

Like the earlier wave of Korean immigrants to the United States, the newcomers are both men and women and tend to immigrate as families. A majority have quickly become naturalized citizens. Professionals and students made up the bulk of the initial wave of Korean immigrants, including physicians, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists. But like recent Filipino immigrants, they have not always been able to work within these same professions once in the United States. Professional certifications from Korea were not always accepted in the United States, and immigrants suffered from their lack of English fluency. Han Chol Hong, a Korean engineer who immigrated to the United States in 1983, for example, struggled to find employment. When he was turned away from engineering jobs, he enrolled at a plumbing and welding school but was unable to find work. He became licensed to paint houses, but again he had trouble finding a job. He finally became a janitor just to make ends meet.

As a result of their declining professional status, many Korean immigrants

like Han pooled their resources with other Koreans in a credit-rotating system known as *kae* and opened up their own businesses. Koreans flocked to American inner cities and took over the ownership of grocery stores and other small businesses previously owned by older Jewish, Italian, and Greek immigrant and second-generation families. After a friend told Han about a grocery market that was for sale in South Central Los Angeles, he and his family bought it and became one of the many Korean immigrant entrepreneurs running small businesses in American cities by the 1990s. Rising at five every morning to pick up produce, the Hans then ran the store "from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., seven days a week, three hundred sixty five days a year," he explained, and rarely took a day off. "Doing business like this takes hard work," Han admitted. "But I am my own boss. . . . Nobody tells me what to do." ⁵⁴

The peak years of Korean immigration were in the late 1970s and 1980s, when many family members of immigrants already in the country began to arrive. Since the 1990s, when South Korea's living standards and democratization have increased, immigration to the United States has declined, but the Korean American population remains vibrant. In 1997, there were almost 136,000 Korean-owned businesses in the United States. ⁵⁵ In 2010, more than half of all Korean Americans had a bachelor's degree compared to the national rate of 28 percent. But like Chinese Americans, Koreans are overrepresented at both ends of the economic scale. In general, they have higher median annual personal earnings than the U.S. population. But they also have higher poverty rates as well. ⁵⁶

At the same time that new Asian immigrants began arriving in the United States, another equally dramatic change was taking place within Asian American communities. Diverse Asian American activists began working together and with others for recognition, political empowerment, and equality. They envisioned a new Asian America and a new America.

Some activists began fighting for equality and working across racial lines in the immediate post-World War II era. Japanese Americans and African Americans came together to challenge the whites-only rule in Los Angeles neighborhoods like Crenshaw, for example. Their interethnic alliances helped to move the city's civil rights agendas forward and laid important

political foundations for interracial activism in later years. ⁵⁷ During the 1960s and 1970s, a new generation of activists came of age and expanded the previous generations' struggles against racism and inequalities at home and abroad. They were simultaneously part of larger social justice movements that were transforming American society and politics as well as new campaigns organized around distinct Asian American-specific causes.

Yuri Kochiyama, Philip Vera Cruz, and Grace Lee Boggs were among those who got their start in the African American civil rights movement or the farmworkers' movement. Born to Japanese immigrants in California in 1921, Kochiyama was incarcerated along with other Japanese Americans at the Jerome, Arkansas, camp. At the end of the war, she moved back to California to persistent anti-Japanese sentiment. Every night, customers would call her "Jap" at her waitressing job, or worse, throw cups of hot coffee at her. She soon moved to New York City with her husband, Bill, and it was during these years that Yuri met Daisy Bates, the NAACP Little Rock chapter president who had guided the Little Rock Nine in their school desegregation movement. "It was after my meeting Daisy Bates," Kochiyama explains, "that I began to take a serious interest in the civil rights movement. I kept my eyes on the newspapers as civil unrest and demonstrations erupted all over the South." This new awareness set the stage for what would become a significant period for the Kochiyama family. "People were fighting for things that we had taken for granted," she recalled. "I started to realize that I needed to fight for my civil rights, too." Kochiyama would go on to become a community organizer, a close associate of Malcolm X, and an important force connecting the emerging Asian American movement on the East Coast to the ongoing African American civil rights movement. She gave her voice and energy to various causes, including protesting against U.S. imperialism in Asia and supporting ethnic studies in New York City schools. During the 1980s, she and Bill testified in the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians. In her later years, she remained active in the movement to free political prisoners and to end racial profiling after September 11, 2001. ⁵⁸

Another early Asian American activist was Philip Vera Cruz. A member of the first wave of Filipinos who came to the United States in the early twentieth century, Cruz spent thirty years working on farms and in canneries

and restaurants in Minnesota and Washington. When he moved to California in the 1950s, he became involved in the Filipino labor movement and helped organize the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee in a series of effective strikes and boycotts that crippled the grape industry in Delano in 1965. These actions led to the formation of the United Farm Workers (UFW), which joined Filipino farm laborers with other ethnic groups, including Mexicans. Vera Cruz served as the UFW's vice president under Chicano César Chávez until 1977. In his later years, he educated a new generation of activists with his messages of grassroots organizing, devotion to the rights of working people, commitment to democracy, and solidarity.⁵³

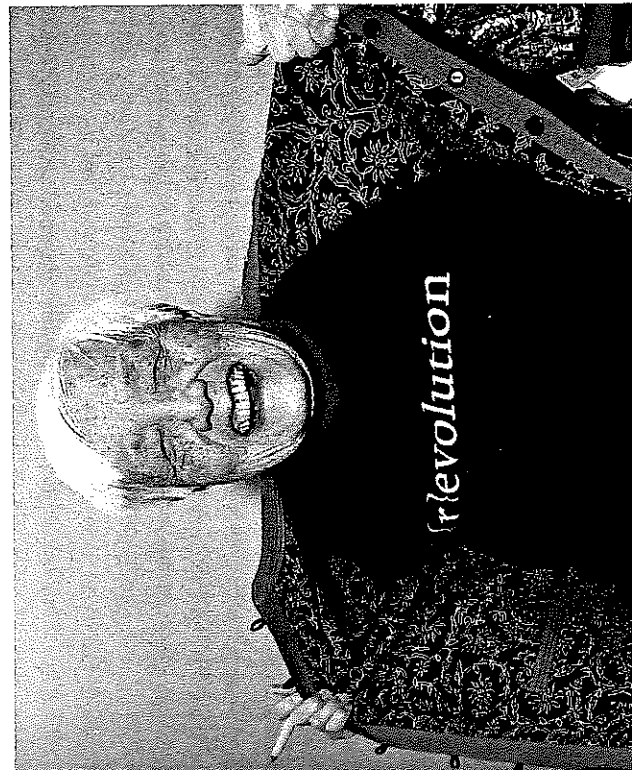
Like Cruz and Kochiyama, Grace Lee Boggs became active in social justice movements in the 1960s. Born in 1915 to Chinese immigrant parents, Boggs grew up in Providence, Rhode Island. She attended Barnard College and then went on to Bryn Mawr, where she received her PhD in 1940. Unable to find a job in academia, she relocated to Chicago, where she became

involved in African American civil rights activism through her work with West Indian Marxist C. L. R. James. She was inspired by African Americans' struggle for civil rights, especially labor leader A. Philip Randolph's successful campaign to establish fair hiring practices in American defense plants during the 1940s. "When I saw what a movement could do I said, 'Boy that's what I wanna do with my life,'" Boggs recalled. She married African American activist James Boggs and moved to Detroit in 1953. The pair worked together for decades playing a key role in the many social and what she calls "humanizing" movements of the



53. Yuri Kochiyama marching during a Chinese Restaurant Waiters' strike, New York City, 1980s.

late twentieth century, including civil rights, Black Power, labor issues, women's rights, antiwar campaigns, environmental concerns, and Asian American rights.⁵⁴ In her nineties when she published an autobiography and a collection of essays, Grace Lee Boggs still expressed her steadfast belief in the power of ideas and the need for organizing to build a twenty-first-century America in which people of all "races and ethnicities live together in harmony."⁵⁵



54. Activist Grace Lee Boggs, 2012.

Like Boggs, Cruz, and Kochiyama, a growing number of Asian Americans began to push forward a new era in radical Asian American politics in the 1960s. Inspired by the civil rights, Black Power, and antiwar movements as well as the visions of prominent socialists and communists like Mao Zedong of the People's Republic of China, Ho Chi Minh in North Vietnam, Kim Il-sung in North Korea, Che Guevara in Argentina, Fidel Castro in Cuba, and

Frantz Fanon in Algeria, these new activists called for unity among Asian Americans and other peoples of color, economic justice, community services, and Asian American-centered education and arts. They rejected the label "Orientals," the prevailing term used in the United States, as well as the model minority stereotype and its emphasis on cooperation and assimilation. Instead, they proclaimed themselves Asian Americans, a pan-ethnic identity that emphasized commonalities across all Asian immigrant and ethnic groups. They "sought to achieve radical social change by building interracial coalitions and transnational solidarities," according to historian Daryl Maeda, and they worked to end oppression in the United States and beyond. Political, cultural, and community organizations were formed to finally give Asian Americans a place and voice in American politics.⁶²

Most activists got their start in other social movements. Asian Americans participated in the civil rights movement in the South, the Free Speech movement on the UC Berkeley campus, and the anti-Vietnam War movement during the 1960s. But no Asian American organization existed to focus on issues unique to Asian American communities. As activist Yuji Ichioka remembered, there were "so many Asians out there in the political demonstrations, but we had no effectiveness. Everyone was lost in the larger rally." He and his partner, Emma Gee, thought that if Asian Americans could rally behind an "Asian American banner" they could have a larger impact.⁶³ Together with other activists, Ichioka and Gee formed the Asian American Political Alliance (AAPA) at UC Berkeley in May of 1968. It explicitly brought together a multigenerational group of Asian American women and men from different ethnic and class backgrounds and became the first organization to use "Asian American" to "stand for all of us Americans of Asian descent," as Ichioka put it.⁶⁴

The Asian American Political Alliance focused on three goals that would help define the broader Asian American movements of the 1960s through the 1980s. First, AAPA sought to bring together all Asians as a political group regardless of ethnic or other differences. In one of its early documents describing the goals of the organization, the AAPA began each goal with the collective phrase "We Asian Americans." Second, AAPA explicitly critiqued the United States as a racist, imperialistic, and exploitative society. Rejecting the model minority premise that Asian Americans were not victims of American racism, the AAPA declared that "Asian Americans have been

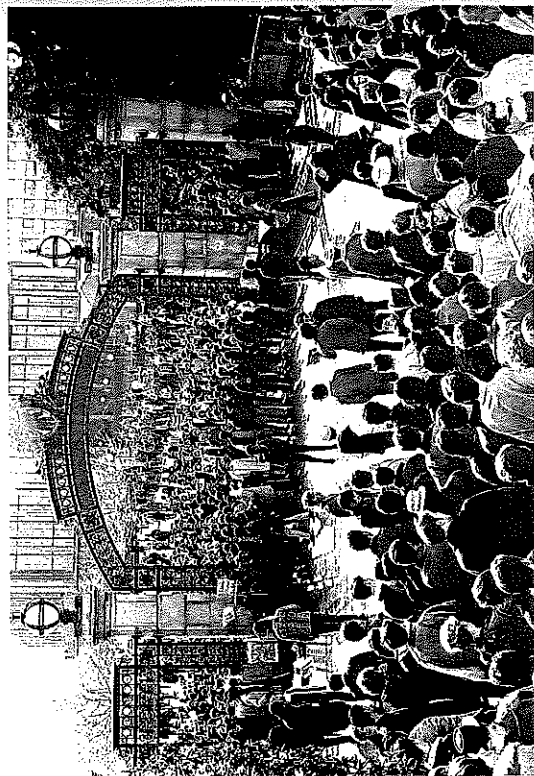
continuously exploited and oppressed by the racist majority." Third, AAPA affirmed its commitment to interracial solidarity with other "Third World people" in the United States and abroad and pledged its "support [of] all oppressed peoples and their struggles for Liberation." Identifying as part of the Third World in the United States, Asian Americans connected with other nonwhite people, including African Americans, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, and Native Americans, who were similarly racially oppressed and economically exploited. In voicing a particular opposition to U.S. imperialism, the AAPA also specifically critiqued the Vietnam War.⁶⁵

The AAPA in Berkeley had a short history and was disbanded in late 1969. It nevertheless helped to inspire similar organizations to form across the country in Los Angeles, New York, and Hawai'i, like New York's Asian Americans for Action (AAA) and I Wor Kuen, the largest revolutionary Asian American organization aligned with the Black Power movement. Together, these and other organizations helped forge a new Asian American consciousness and inspired the creation of new institutions that addressed the distinct needs of Asian Americans and gave voice to the growing community.⁶⁶

Some of the first sites of activism occurred on college campuses. In 1968, the AAPA at San Francisco State University joined with Chicano, Native American, and African American students in the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF), which identified racism and colonialism as common sources of oppression of people of color in the United States and abroad. Demanding curricula and programs that reflected the histories, needs, and experiences of people of color, the Third World Liberation Front called a strike on the San Francisco State campus on November 6, 1968. The student organizers received support from Stokely Carmichael, the former chairman of the civil rights organization SNCC, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, who urged the students to seize power and to strive for "real control."⁶⁷ Protests, demonstrations, sit-ins, and building occupations followed, and more than 700 students were arrested over the next five months.

UC Berkeley's campus was similarly engulfed in activism. African American, Chicano, Asian American, and Native American student groups had similar grievances with the campus administration and the lack of what they viewed as relevant and accountable curricula and programs. The Berkeley Third World Liberation Front was formed as a way to express interracial

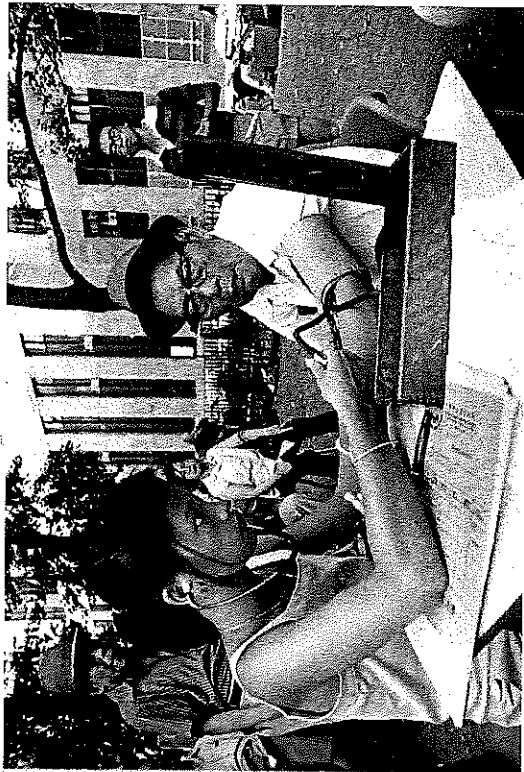
solidarity, and a strike for what Daryl Maeda calls "self-determination in education" was called for January 22, 1969.⁶⁸ Over the next three months, student protesters and their allies went toe-to-toe with police as they blocked campus walkways and formed protest lines that wound throughout the campus. Police responded by using helicopters to dump tear gas onto demonstrators. Arrests multiplied and the police clashes with protesters became so violent that California governor Ronald Reagan threatened to establish martial law and send the National Guard to Berkeley's campus.



55. Third World Liberation Front strike supporters gather at UC Berkeley's Sather Gate, January 28, 1969.

Both the San Francisco State and UC Berkeley strikes ended within days of each other in March 1969. The San Francisco State strike culminated in the creation of the first School of Ethnic Studies in the nation. At Berkeley, an Ethnic Studies department was established. Over time, similar efforts spread on college and university campuses across the country and extended into communities and to mainstream culture and politics. What had begun on college campuses resulted in an entire generation consciously finding its voice and acting for change.⁶⁹

Asian American activists' struggles on campus coincided with similar efforts by community-based activists to engage in "serve-the-people" programs to provide affordable housing, social services, health care, and labor rights for poor and working-class Asian Americans. Urban and rural campaigns sprang up around the country. One of the most important efforts involved the campaign to save the International Hotel, a single room occupancy building located on the edge of San Francisco's Chinatown and Manilatown that housed elderly working-class Filipino and Chinese men.



56. Establishing community-based health care services were an important aspect of the Asian American movement in the 1960s and 1970s. 1973 Chinatown Health Fair, New York City.

When the owners of the I-Hotel, as it was known, threatened the residents with eviction in 1969, community activists banded together to lease the building, renovate it, and bring in Asian American businesses and cultural and arts organizations as tenants. Three years later, the hotel was threatened again, and a coalition of Asian American groups, students, and tenants formed once more to fight eviction. Despite their efforts, eviction plans moved forward. On the night of the final eviction on August 3, 1977,

200 activists barricaded themselves inside the hotel while 2,000 supporters circled the hotel, created a human chain, chanted "Stop the Eviction! We Won't Move," and sang civil rights movement protest songs. In the early hours of the next day, 250 riot-equipped police officers began to break up the protesters with clubs. Sheriff's deputies used sledgehammers and axes to break down doors and led the tenants and protesters outside.

The campaign to save the I-Hotel had failed. The longtime tenants were forced out and the building was razed. However, the I-Hotel movement helped to inspire other campaigns for affordable housing in San Francisco's Chinatown and Japantown. Equally important, in bringing together a diverse group of supporters who crossed generational, ethnic, political, and class lines, it mobilized broad-based support and had a lasting legacy that created a new generation of political leaders who would continue to serve their communities and enter mainstream American politics in the following decades.⁷⁰

As they struggled to meet the basic needs of community members in very specific local neighborhoods, Asian American activists also saw themselves as part of a larger global struggle against capitalism and imperialism. They expressed this internationalism by declaring their solidarity with the peoples of Asian nations affected by U.S. imperialism. And they fiercely opposed the Vietnam War. Many believed that the war was just the latest example of ongoing U.S. imperialism in Asia that had resulted in the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the occupation of Okinawa, and the Korean War. Carrying banners that read "Stop the Bombing of Asian People" and "Stop Killing Our Asian Brothers and Sisters," Asian American antiwar protesters emphasized the similarities between the oppression of Asians within the United States and the violence against Asians in Asia.⁷¹

The Bay Area Asian Coalition Against the War (BAACAW) declared its goal to "build a solid, broad-based anti-imperialist movement of Asian people against the war in Vietnam" and connected the oppression of Asians in the United States to the war as part of its "One Struggle, Many Fronts" banner.⁷² Some activists visited China, North Vietnam, and North Korea in an attempt to connect to Asians in Asia and to explore how socialism worked in these countries.⁷³ After the war ended, Asian American activists continued

to act for change. They vowed to "bring the war back to the communities" to help provide health care and employment services to neglected poor and working-class Asian American neighborhoods.

Asian Americans' involvement in the civil rights and antiwar movements led to their engagement with other radical movements of the 1960s and 1970s, including the women's liberation and gay liberation movements. Reacting to the chauvinism that some of their fellow male activists displayed, Asian American women increasingly began to form their own organizations to address gender inequality inside and outside their communities. Like other women activists in the civil rights movements, Asian American women were often given secondary, background roles within Asian American organizations. While men made decisions, gave speeches, and were the public face of the organizations, women were called upon to type up leaflets and newsletters, take notes, make coffee, and even clean the toilets. Increasingly, Asian American women recognized their "triple oppression" of being people of color, women, and workers, and they organized to create change from within their communities.⁷⁴

Groups like Asian Women United and the Organization of Asian Women flourished in the late 1960s and 1970s. Largely led by educated, middle-class women, these groups devoted themselves to promoting the status of women through educational and service projects. But there were countless other Asian American women activists, like Unsuk Perry, a Korean American hotel employee who as a union steward frequently translated for her Korean workers and made sure that they understood what rights they had. And there was also housing activist Chang Jok Lee, who worked tirelessly throughout the 1970s and 1980s to protect the rights of low-income tenants in San Francisco's Chinatown.⁷⁵

Similar to the ways in which Asian American women's participation in women's liberation emerged from their marginalization in other social justice movements, Asian American LGBT activism also grew from other social justice movements. LGBT Asian Americans felt keenly their exclusion from mostly white mainstream LGBT organizations. In addition, other liberation movements were, at best, dismissive of LGBT issues or, at worst, homophobic. Activist, author, and journalist Helen Zia recalled being put

and enabled them to organize programs to fight homophobia inside and outside the Asian American community and to provide support for those living with HIV/AIDS.⁷⁸

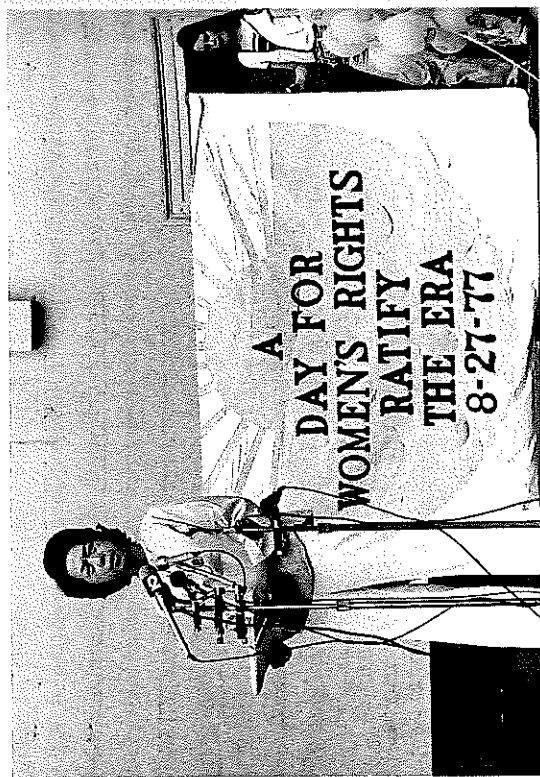
By the early twenty-first century, Asian American LGBTs were no longer at the margins of the Asian American community and were instead growing more active and visible. They worked to raise awareness and acceptance around issues that affected both the Asian American and LGBT communities, like equality. Asian American organizations were in fact central actors in the same sex marriage debates in some states. "With each individual who comes to realize there are Asian queers and queer Asians," explained Zia, who with her partner became one of the first same sex couples to marry in California, "that space where the gay zone meets the Asian zone opens a little more."⁷⁹

Out of the civil rights and social justice movements of the 1960s also came a desire among Japanese Americans to revisit their experiences of forced removal and incarceration during World War II. It was Aiko Herzig-Yoshinaga's involvement in the antiwar and Asian American movements in New York City that triggered her own reappraisal of the treatment of Japanese Americans during the war years. Through her involvement with Asian Americans for Action, she started to think about "our own experience back in wartime, and why did it happen, and what we were suffering from as a result."⁸⁰

During the 1970s, support for investigating and addressing the injustices during the war began to grow, and a number of different Japanese American organizations began a campaign to seek an official apology and restitution from the U.S. government for incarceration during the war. Deep divisions existed within the Japanese American community over political strategies and the meaning of incarceration, but the groups eventually found common ground in their efforts to obtain redress and reparations. After years of advocacy, the movement began to gain traction. In 1976, President Gerald Ford officially declared the wartime removal and relocation of Japanese Americans a "tragedy." The president acknowledged that "we now know what we should have known then—not only that evacuation was wrong but that Japanese Americans were and are loyal Americans."⁸¹

The U.S. Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of

on trial by other Asian American and black liberation activists in Boston in the 1970s. There was "no place for gays" in the liberation movement, Zia was told. "I had not yet come out, and they made it clear that if I did, I would also be out of the liberation community. That threatening message kept me in the closet for the next several years."⁷⁶



57. Asian American women were active in the larger women's liberation movement. "A Day for Women's Rights to Ratify the ERA, 1977."

Working alongside other LGBT people of color and their allies, an Asian American LGBT movement began in October 1979 when more than 600 black, Latino, Native American, Asian, and white people attended the First National Third World Gay and Lesbian Conference in Washington, D.C. That same weekend, the First National March for Gay and Lesbian Rights began, including a newly formed Lesbian and Gay Asian Contingent. Activist Trinity Ordonez marks this moment as the birth of "a seminal Asian gay and lesbian movement."⁷⁷ Another organization, the Asian/Pacific Lesbians and Gays (APLG), was established in Los Angeles 1980 as the first to represent the interests of gay and lesbian Asians in that city. These and other organizations highlighted the unique issues facing LGBT Asian Americans

Civilians was created in 1980. Over the next year, congressional hearings were held in twenty cities throughout the country. More than 500 Japanese Americans testified. It was the first time that many of them had ever spoken publicly about their wartime experiences. In 1982, the commission released its report, *Personal Justice Denied*, which included testimonies of camp inmates given at the hearings and highly important government documents discovered by Aiko Herzig-Yoshinaga and her research team that proved that Japanese Americans had not been disloyal. It also issued a scathing rebuke of the government's actions: "The promulgation of Executive Order 9066 was not justified by military necessity," the commission's report concluded. Instead, race prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership led to an egregious policy. "A grave injustice was done to American citizens and resident nationals of Japanese ancestry who, without individual review or any probative evidence against them, were excluded, removed, and detained by the United States during World War II."⁸²



58. Onlookers watch as President Ronald Reagan signs the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, which offered a national apology for the wartime removal and incarceration of Japanese Americans. August 10, 1988, Washington, D.C.

The commission recommended the passage of a joint congressional resolution officially apologizing for the removal and relocation, the establishment of an educational and humanitarian fund, and reparations paid to each survivor. In 1985, the Manzanar camp in southern California was designated a National Historic Landmark. At the same time, legal efforts proceeded to reconsider the three wartime Supreme Court cases (*Hirabayashi*, *Yasui*, and *Korematsu*) that had sanctioned the government's wartime actions. In 1988, the Civil Liberties Act was approved by Congress and signed into law by President Reagan. The act authorized a national apology for removal and incarceration, the payment of \$20,000 to each surviving Japanese American affected by Executive Order 9066, and the establishment of educational and other programs.

In Canada, the government followed suit and offered an official apology and redress payments to Japanese Canadians. Efforts to obtain redress for Japanese Latin Americans have taken longer. In 1996, the United States officially apologized for its actions affecting Japanese Latin Americans and offered minimal reparations. The campaign to advocate for compensation equal to what was awarded to Japanese Americans, however, continues.⁸³

The U.S. government's payments did not come close to repaying Japanese Americans for the financial disaster they experienced during the war. Nor could the payments make Japanese Americans spiritually whole again. Nevertheless, the Japanese American redress movement was instrumental in spearheading movements to right historical injustices, in creating enduring educational resources to help prevent a repeat of past mistakes, and as Senator Daniel Inouye explained, in helping make Americans' "concept of democracy get closer to perfection."⁸⁴ "We wrote a page in history—U.S. history," added activist Hitoshi H. Kajihara.⁸⁵