COMMEMORATING

50 YEARS

OF ASIAN AMERICAN
STUDIES AT SF STATE,
UC BERKELEY & UCLA

MOUNTAIN MOVERS

STUDENT ACTIVISM & THE EMERGENCE OF ASIAN AMERICAN STUDIES

edited by

RUSSELL JEUNG
KAREN UMEMOTO
HARVEY DONG
ERIC MAR
LISA HIRAI TSUCHITANI
ARNOLD PAN

Educational resources related to this book
can be found at: ucla.in/2ILk88H

MOUNTAIN MOVERS
Student Activism and the Emergence of Asian American Studies
1st Edition, 288 Pages, April 2019

Editors:
Russell Jeung
Karen Umemoto
Harvey Dong
Eric Mar
Lisa Hirai Tsuchitani
Arnold Pan

Printed in the United States of America

ISBN 978-0-934052-54-2
Library of Congress Control Number: 2019935627

ucla asian american
studies center press
www.aasc.ucla.edu

Copyright © 2019 UCLA Asian American Studies Center Press

UCLA Asian American Studies Center
3230 Campbell Hall, Box 951546, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1546
aascpress@aasc.ucla.edu

All rights reserved. No part of this book covered by the copyright hereon may be reproduced or used in any form or by any means— graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping or information storage and retrieval systems— without written permission of the publisher.

Introduction

MOUNTAIN MOVERS AND THE EMERGENCE OF ASIAN AMERICAN STUDIES

RUSSELL JEUNG

Irene Dea was the village darling in her little farming town of Hoiping, China in 1948, just before the founding of the People's Republic of China. Often found singing at the top of her lungs on rooftops, she was a self-declared "spunky chatterbox." When she was two years old, her father in the United States sent for his wife and three children to reunite the family. Unfortunately, he had visa papers for two of his children, and Irene was the only girl.

Her mom took a photo of two-year-old Irene so that she could remember her soon-to-be left-behind daughter, and packed up all their belongings to make the journey across the Pacific. On the day they were about to leave, though, Mrs. Dea looked at Irene's little face and couldn't bear to leave her. She decided to remain in China with her three children, separated from their father.

After first moving his family to Hong Kong, Irene's father sent passage again for his wife and two of the children. This time, Irene's older brother remained behind and Irene, who had cut her hair and was disguised to look like a boy, took his place. Arriving in San Francisco in 1953, the Deas lived in a Chinatown hotel where they shared a bathroom and kitchen with five other families. Despite her harsh and crowded living environment, Irene felt fortunate that her mother had made the split-second decision to bring her to the U.S. She felt even luckier when they moved to a small, one-bedroom apartment, and they could have their own bathroom.

Even in Chinatown, Irene found her whole world had changed. She no longer could use her village dialect, Hoiping, because Cantonese was the main language spoken in Chinatown. At school, her teachers forced her to use English; it was sink or swim for her. Because of these drastic changes, Irene became reticent and withdrawn. The former chatterbox and darling of the village found herself muted in this new land, and her entire personality changed because of her migration experience.

Irene's school experience wasn't unique but commonplace for Chinese Americans.

She recalled that her white male teachers would yell at the Chinese American students at Galileo High School in the 1960s because they "would not speak up in class." Just as her teachers didn't understand her immigrant experience, her school curriculum was alien to her. She couldn't recall a single book that took place in China or Chinatown.

By the 1960s while Irene was in high school, Chinatown, like the rest of the United States, was swept in the changes of the time. Young Chinese Americans, like those in other low-income urban areas, drew attention to the deplorable conditions that they faced—substandard housing, dire health disparities, and lack of social services. Irene joined in the spirit of serving the community and nation by tutoring younger immigrant children almost nightly at the local YWCA. She would later go on to San Francisco State College (now SF State University), where she would join the Intercollegiate Chinese for Social Action (ICSA). Soon after starting school, she would join the student-led strike for ethnic studies with hundreds of classmates supporting the demands of the Black Student Union and the Third World Liberation Front

(TWLF). They were calling for an education that was relevant and accessible to the communities from which they came. She explained,

> When the strike came along, it just spoke to me. Everything that I had wondered about, everything that I cared about, everything that I was working on in the community—it all came together in the strike—all the experiences of my life, of having teachers yell at us, the way we were taught English.
>
> When the Black students said, "We need classes that reflected our own communities," it really spoke to me, because you could just see in our community—we needed services! My main concern was the community and the lack of services in the community: the inequality of services given to our community.

For Irene, the strike's demands synthesized all that she had experienced and felt as a student of color. They made up more than an ideological statement; the TWLF was a movement addressing the community that she cared about and the values she espoused.

What socio-historic factors shaped Irene to become a student activist and, eventually, move mountains in her community? Why did students like Irene feel such a need for Asian American studies that they organized and went on strike for over four months? The year 1968 was a watershed moment for students of color in the United States. At the height of the Vietnam War with no end in sight, students rallied at college campuses across the country to protest the mounting casualties of American intervention in Southeast Asia. The assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. heightened urban tensions between African Americans and whites as well, and the nation convulsed with race riots in several cities. Challenging the twin evils of imperialism and racism, Asian Americans joined with other young persons in movements for peace, the environment, Black power and civil rights, and women's rights.

Not only did students like Irene participate in these broader movements, but they fought for themselves and the self-determination of their communities, that is, the right to have a say in the issues affecting their lives. Likewise, they supported the right for nations to have independence and sovereignty over their people and lands. They sought neighborhood preservation and healthcare, for decent housing and for needed social services. They wanted to see democracy lived in practice. Thus, the fight for ethnic studies was a call for an education relevant to contemporary social problems where they could learn to develop effective strategies for social change.

Mountain Movers: Student Activism and the Emergence of Asian American Studies details the founding of Asian American Studies (AAS) programs at San Francisco State University (SF State) and the University of California at Berkeley (UCB) and Los Angeles (UCLA). This book shares the life story of six individual students who sought and obtained educations to make a difference in their own home communities and in the larger world. It also features the stories of three younger students who benefited from ethnic studies and Asian American studies almost fifty years after both were established. They represent a new generation of leadership who carry on the legacy of community activism. Together, they are mountain movers who have made changes on campuses and in their communities through activism, community organizing, and solidarity with others.

To put the narratives of the nine individuals profiled in *Mountain Movers* into historic context, this chapter offers a brief historical background of Asian Americans leading up to the student protests of 1968. It then discusses the "twin evils" of racism and imperialism, and how they impacted Asians in the United States. These socio-historic forces set the stage for the

PHOTOGRAPH BY STEVE LOUIE, WEI MIN SHE AND ASIAN COMMUNITY CENTER PHOTOGRAPHS, AAS ARC 2015/3,
ETHNIC STUDIES LIBRARY, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

Elderly Filipino manongs and Chinese American residents fought displacement from their homes at the International Hotel in San Francisco in the 1960s and 1970s. Asian American students joined the campaign to fight the evictions and redevelopment and to preserve low-income housing for the elderly.

COURTESY OF *GIDRA*, DENSHO

According to the Densho archive, "This retrospective on a 1946 Japanese American Committee for Democracy march reminded young folk that Nisei and even Issei were also down for the cause." (Gidra, Dec. 1970)

founding of Asian American studies not only at the three California universities covered in this book, but for other campuses as well, including Merritt College in Oakland, the College of San Mateo, Santa Clara University, UC Davis, UC Santa Barbara, and California State University at Pomona and Long Beach. Early Asian American and ethnic studies courses were also fought for on East Coast campuses, such as Yale University and Hunter College of the City University of New York. In general, Asian American college students sought self-determination for themselves and their communities, and this demand required relevant curriculum in their schooling. After highlighting the roots of Asian American studies, this introduction concludes with a reflection on the fruits that Asian American studies has borne and new areas for growth.

THE HISTORY OF ASIAN AMERICANS BEFORE 1965

By 1968, Asians had been in the United States for over three generations. Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos, and Koreans were the first groups to arrive in significant waves starting with large-scale migration of Chinese after the California Gold Rush in 1849. Smaller numbers of arrivals reached the continental U.S. even earlier, including Filipinos, who had established a settlement in Louisiana as early as 1763. The early settlers, primarily male laborers, soon met racial hostility, political disenfranchisement, economic exploitation, and cultural stereotyping from the European American establishment. This pattern of racial subjugation would continue with each wave of Asian immigrants.

UNITY NEWSPAPER

On May 19, 1979, the Korean American community rallies with Asian American student and community activists in Stockton, CA, calling for the release of Chol Soo Lee, an immigrant facing the death penalty for killing a man in a prison fight. The pan-Asian Chol Soo Lee Defense Committee organized support from campuses to Korean churches, building awareness and pressure on the courts, resulting in Lee's acquittal March 28, 1983, and eventual release.

In response, Asians in California resisted discrimination and oppression through protests and strategic maneuvers, through lawsuits and mass civil disobedience. Tens of thousands of Chinese refused to register as aliens when the U.S. Congress passed the 1892 Geary Act that extended the Chinese Exclusion Act. Japanese, unable legally to purchase land as non-citizens, bought farms under the names of their children until further laws prevented them from doing so. Filipinos, despite mob violence and police harassment, organized as unions and went on strike for fair wages and decent conditions in several notable cases.

World War II exposed the blatant hypocrisy of American democracy and its institutional racism when the U.S. government incarcerated over 120,000 persons of Japanese ancestry in concentration camps. Over six in ten internees were U.S.-born citizens, who were incarcerated for about four years under the suspicion of espionage and fear of their disloyalty. Not until 1988, after Japanese Americans lobbied for redress and reparations, did the U.S. government apologize for unjustly incarcerating its own citizens.

In the decade after World War II, Asian Americans remained scarred by the internment and by the anti-communist hysteria of the McCarthy era. Consequently, the U.S.-born generations of Asians, who grew up attending American public schools, generally felt pressure to integrate into American society by acculturating and assimilating. While African Americans protested for civil rights during the 1950s, politicians would pit them against Asian Americans, whom they framed as the "model minority": a racial group that stereotypically did not complain about the discrimination they faced, but simply worked hard to overcome it. This new stereotype con-

DOROTHEA LANGE / NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION

During World War II, Japanese Americans were held in temporary "assembly centers" before being taken to one of 10 concentration camps operated by the War Relocation Authority. Pictured is the Sacramento Assembly Center, which held nearly 5,000 Japanese Americans from the Sacramento area in 1942 prior to their transfer to Tule Lake concentration camp in northern California.

tinued the labeling of Asian Americans with dehumanizing, blanket generalizations.

In 1965, the Hart-Cellar Immigration and Nationality Act radically changed the demographics of the Asian American population. Following the principles for equality and social justice advocated by the Civil Rights movement, this act removed bans on immigration from Asian nations. Instead, it gave preferences for visas to family members of Americans and to professionals. As a result, the numbers of family reunion visas and professional visas for Asians to the United States skyrocketed, and increased the population of Asian Americans drastically. The demographic shifts in the community corresponded to social and political changes that also took place in the 1960s.

ASIAN AMERICAN STUDENTS IN THE 1960S: THE SOIL OF THE ASIAN AMERICAN MOVEMENT

Coming of age in the 1960s, Asian American students at universities developed a new, distinct consciousness as Asian Americans shaped by the racial and international context of the time. By 1968, when the Asian American population numbered about 1.3 million, 80 percent of Japanese Americans and about 50 percent of Chinese Americans and Filipino Americans, respectively, were born in the United States. Asian Americans had come to reach the same educational attainment as whites, but still earned substantially less because of racial discrimination. For example, in 1960 Filipinos earned only 61 percent of the income of whites with comparable educations. Japanese and Chinese also earned less than their white counterparts, making 77 percent and 87 percent, respectively. Among the 107,366 Asian American college students on university campuses in 1970, Chinese and Japanese made up the vast majority, with over eight out of ten Asian American students being of either Japanese or Chinese American descent.

ASIAN COMMUNITY CENTER ARCHIVES

These students arrived at campuses in tumult, as the nation was undergoing a political unrest over U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War and a cultural revolution over race, sexuality, and the role of authority. The assassinations of President John Kennedy, presidential candidate Robert Kennedy, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. devastated the nation's morale. Yet young people continued to rise up. Urban race riots in Harlem, Philadelphia, Watts, Newark, Chicago, and Baltimore—just to name a few—erupted over discrimination, high unemployment, and police brutality. The Black Power movement, led by various groups including the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, Nation of Islam, and the Black Panther Party, emerged in the latter half of the sixties. Coined by Black Panther leader Stokely Carmichael, the Black Power movement inspired racial pride and advocated for local community control, self-determination and economic development. At the same time, other social movements challenged the existing social order. At UC Berkeley, students engaged in civil disobedience over a university ban on political activity and initiated the Free Speech movement. The women's liberation movement emerged in the late '60s as organizations formed to confront society's sexism and to promote women's equality. Likewise, activists organized the

PHOTO BY NIKKI ARAI

***Above**: Oakland High School students participated in the funeral for Black Panther Bobby Hutton, killed by Oakland Police in 1968.*

***At left:** Huey P. Newton, who was a cofounder of the Black Panther Party in 1966, is seen speaking. Behind is Richard Aoki, who was an early member of the Black Panthers and became a leading member of the Asian American Political Alliance (AAPA) at UC Berkeley.*

COURTESY OF ASIAN AMERICAN STUDIES CENTER, *GIDRA* PHOTO COLLECTION

Asian Americans not only called for peace in order to bring troops home, but also protested U.S. intervention and imperialism in Vietnam, c. 1971.

environmental movement to protect the earth, stop pollution, and clean-up toxic environmental hazards in low-income neighborhoods and communities of color. Each of these movements, as well as their militancy, informed the Asian American movement.

In this movement, Asian Americans, who had individually become involved with the causes of the times, drew together to address their own racial status and identity. They confronted enduring stereotypes of the unassimilable heathen, the Yellow Peril, and the perpetual foreigner. This generation of students faced the model minority myth, that Asian American students were expected to be hard-working, studious, and quiet even in the face of discrimination. While many sought to assimilate to mainstream Anglo-American cultural norms, they soon recognized that they could not assimilate fully into the white mainstream.

The other racial model for Asian Americans was the Black Power movement, which rejected American racism and promoted Black autonomy, racial pride, and community control. For those African American activists, the ideologies of self-determination and cultural nationalism became realized through militant organizations, a flowering of Black arts and expression, and a reclamation of indigenous and ethnic histories. Some of the subsequent Asian American organizations, such as the Red Guard, modeled themselves partially after the Black Panthers, while others were more connected to diasporic movements, such as the Union of Democratic Filipinos, which was also involved in opposing martial law in the Philippines.

Students involved in the Asian American movement challenged the existing white/Black dichotomy of U.S. race relations that rendered Asian Americans mostly invisible to the broader society. Being neither Black nor white, Asian American students became conscious of their marginalized status as unequal racial minorities. They came to embrace a pan-ethnic identity as Asian Americans to reject the connotations of the oft-used group term, "Oriental." To be Oriental was to be traditional, objectified, and foreign. In contrast, the newly minted group identity of "Asian American," signaled a political and cultural collectivity with new possibilities and shared aspirations.

As a newly-formed group identity, Asian American consciousness was rooted in the communities from which they came. Actively seeking to reclaim their histories and to find their own voices, they sought out narratives from their ancestors and elders. They became engaged with their home neighborhoods, creating local programs to "serve the people" and to rally the masses. They also sought to forge solidarities across ethnicity, race, and national boundaries as they identified with other "Third World" peoples. This term recognized the exploitative relations in the global hierarchy where the least developed nations faced oppressive histories and conditions similar to historically marginalized communities in the U.S. Through the practice of supporting one another's movements and struggles, Asian American students built a collective identity and common cause to address racial injustices.

Additionally, Asian American students were deeply influenced by major international developments of the 1960s. The anti-war movement against U.S. military involvement in Southeast Asia reached its apex on campuses in early 1968; the success of North Vietnam's Tet offensive demonstrated that despite the onslaught of U.S. military might, the war could not be easily won. Asian American war protestors realized their paradoxical position. On one hand, they knew they were Americans, but they were being sent to fight an enemy that not only looked like them, but were in a subordinate position in the world order like they found themselves to be within boundaries of their own country.

Identifying themselves as part of the Third World, Asian Americans drew inspiration from the Bandung Conference held in Indonesia in 1955. This meeting of African and Asian nations, many who had just become independent from their colonized status, promoted international cooperation and independence from the United States and the Soviet Union—the First and Second World powers. The thought of Chairman Mao Tse-Tung of the People's Republic

of China, Ho Chi Minh of North Vietnam, and Che Guevara of Cuba, each of whom advanced Third World-ism, became another source of ideology for some in the Asian American movement. Students came to embrace their analysis that racial discrimination in the U.S. was a product of colonialism and imperialism, such that people of color and Third World peoples faced a common oppression from Western nations.

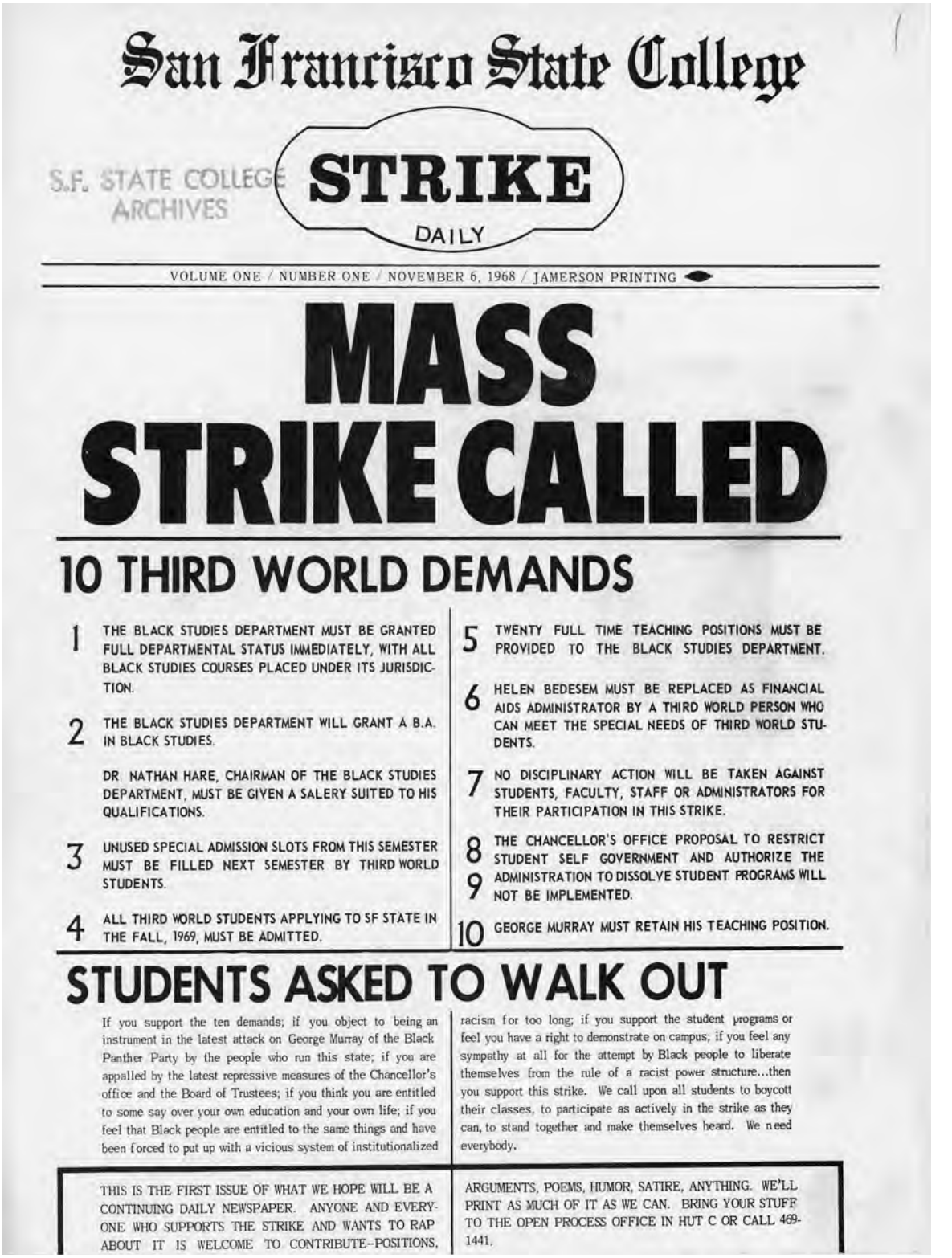
So in this way, Asian American students in the 1960s responded to the twin evils of racism and imperialism. First, due to racism, Asian Americans found themselves marginalized since they were neither white nor Black. Furthermore, they were considered neither authentically American nor Asian. Often coming from ethnic enclaves, they recognized that their parents faced discrimination, segregation, and cultural stereotyping due to their race. Yet they continued to feel the pressure to discard their ethnic heritages and to assimilate into the white mainstream in order to pursue the American Dream. Second, in examining the wars in Southeast Asia, students came to question American intervention that violated the sovereignty of other nations for the sake of its national interests. And they opposed maintaining a long-term war that did not seem winnable. Instead of seeing other Asians as the enemy, students who joined the Asian American movement found solidarity with them in their common subjugation as Third World peoples, dominated by other Western nation-states and subject to exploitation by multinational corporations.

THE CALL FOR ASIAN AMERICAN STUDIES ON WEST COAST CAMPUSES

As students became involved with both international and local issues, they began to call for a relevant education that could address these concerns. However, as Irene Dea expressed, they found a system of higher education that largely excluded students of color from admission and whose courses showed little reflection of their histories and experiences. In 1960, California enacted its Master Plan for Education that created a three-tiered college system. The University of California (UC) system was to admit the top 12 percent of the state's high school students, while the California State University (CSU) system was to accept the top 33 percent. The community colleges were to admit all others. Due to the creation of this stratified system, the percentages of Black students dropped at San Francisco State University from 11 percent in 1960 to only 5.3 percent in 1968. Students of color made up only 17 percent of the university overall.

In response to these educational disparities, students at SF State were the first to mobilize large numbers of campus and community supporters around demands for an accessible and relevant education. The Black Student Union (BSU), along with the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF) organizations, demanded special admissions for underrepresented communities. TWLF included three Asian American student groups: Intercollegiate Chinese of Social Action (ICSA, founded in 1967); Philippine Collegiate Endeavor (PACE, 1967); and Asian American Political Alliance (AAPA, 1968). Each of these groups had already developed community-based projects, such as youth development work in Chinatown, resistance to the I-Hotel evictions in Manilatown, and fighting redevelopment in Japantown. The TWLF organized itself around three goals: special admissions, development of Third World curricula, and hiring of faculty of color. Supporting the BSU and TWLF, members of these groups participated in a sit-in at the campus president's office in spring 1968, and won the establishment of an Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) office on campus and an increase in special admissions.

The next fall semester, however, SF State administrators attempted to remove a lecturer in Black Studies who was an advocate in the Black Power movement. They also broke their



San Francisco State College

S.F. STATE COLLEGE ARCHIVES

STRIKE DAILY

VOLUME ONE / NUMBER ONE / NOVEMBER 6, 1968 / JAMERSON PRINTING

MASS STRIKE CALLED

10 THIRD WORLD DEMANDS

1. THE BLACK STUDIES DEPARTMENT MUST BE GRANTED FULL DEPARTMENTAL STATUS IMMEDIATELY, WITH ALL BLACK STUDIES COURSES PLACED UNDER ITS JURISDICTION.
2. THE BLACK STUDIES DEPARTMENT WILL GRANT A B.A. IN BLACK STUDIES.

   DR. NATHAN HARE, CHAIRMAN OF THE BLACK STUDIES DEPARTMENT, MUST BE GIVEN A SALERY SUITED TO HIS QUALIFICATIONS.
3. UNUSED SPECIAL ADMISSION SLOTS FROM THIS SEMESTER MUST BE FILLED NEXT SEMESTER BY THIRD WORLD STUDENTS.
4. ALL THIRD WORLD STUDENTS APPLYING TO SF STATE IN THE FALL, 1969, MUST BE ADMITTED.
5. TWENTY FULL TIME TEACHING POSITIONS MUST BE PROVIDED TO THE BLACK STUDIES DEPARTMENT.
6. HELEN BEDESEM MUST BE REPLACED AS FINANCIAL AIDS ADMINISTRATOR BY A THIRD WORLD PERSON WHO CAN MEET THE SPECIAL NEEDS OF THIRD WORLD STUDENTS.
7. NO DISCIPLINARY ACTION WILL BE TAKEN AGAINST STUDENTS, FACULTY, STAFF OR ADMINISTRATORS FOR THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THIS STRIKE.
8. THE CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE PROPOSAL TO RESTRICT STUDENT SELF GOVERNMENT AND AUTHORIZE THE
9. ADMINISTRATION TO DISSOLVE STUDENT PROGRAMS WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED.
10. GEORGE MURRAY MUST RETAIN HIS TEACHING POSITION.

STUDENTS ASKED TO WALK OUT

If you support the ten demands; if you object to being an instrument in the latest attack on George Murray of the Black Panther Party by the people who run this state; if you are appalled by the latest repressive measures of the Chancellor's office and the Board of Trustees; if you think you are entitled to some say over your own education and your own life; if you feel that Black people are entitled to the same things and have been forced to put up with a vicious system of institutionalized racism for too long; if you support the student programs or feel you have a right to demonstrate on campus; if you feel any sympathy at all for the attempt by Black people to liberate themselves from the rule of a racist power structure...then you support this strike. We call upon all students to boycott their classes, to participate as actively in the strike as they can, to stand together and make themselves heard. We need everybody.

THIS IS THE FIRST ISSUE OF WHAT WE HOPE WILL BE A CONTINUING DAILY NEWSPAPER. ANYONE AND EVERYONE WHO SUPPORTS THE STRIKE AND WANTS TO RAP ABOUT IT IS WELCOME TO CONTRIBUTE--POSITIONS, ARGUMENTS, POEMS, HUMOR, SATIRE, ANYTHING. WE'LL PRINT AS MUCH OF IT AS WE CAN. BRING YOUR STUFF TO THE OPEN PROCESS OFFICE IN HUT C OR CALL 469-1441.

COURTESY OF THE SF STATE STRIKE COLLECTION, SAN FRANCISCO STATE UNIVERSITY

COURTESY OF ASIAN AMERICAN STUDIES CENTER, *GIDRA* PHOTO COLLECTION

Students had to keep fighting for Asian American and ethnic studies courses to be offered every year in the early period of the ethnic studies centers.

promise to use special admissions for 428 Third World students and shelved a proposal to hire for Black Studies. BSU and TWLF thus initiated a student strike on November 6, 1968 with the BSU making ten demands and TWLF seeking five additional ones, including community control over faculty hiring and curriculum development in the establishment of ethnic studies.

After a five-month strike, during which picketing students would be tear-gassed, beaten, and arrested, the TWLF gained a School of Ethnic Studies which included departments of American Indian Studies, Asian American Studies, Black Studies, and La Raza Studies. The first semester after the strike in the fall of 1969, students were able to take 17 different Asian American Studies courses, most focusing on the experiences of specific ethnic groups. The following fall, the school offered 44 courses, reflecting the hard work of student curriculum committees to establish these first-of-their-kind classes.

Across the San Francisco Bay, students of color at University of California, Berkeley were similarly fighting for ethnic studies, but faced formidable challenges. In 1966, African Americans and Latinos made up only 1.5 percent of the student body, with Asian Americans comprising 10 percent. Each of these racial groups had made demands for ethnic studies courses, but the university administration dragged its feet in implementing this curriculum.

In January 1969, the UC Berkeley Chinese Students Club, the Nisei Students Club, AAPA, and other organizations hosted the Yellow symposium at Pauley Ballroom, which included attendees from as far as New York to Hawai'i. SF State strikers George Woo and Laureen Chew called on the group to support the TWLF strike and to initiate their own ethnic studies programs at their campuses. On the campus at UC Berkeley itself, an experimental course for Asian American Studies in fall 1969 drew over 400 students, demonstrating the high interest for such curriculum.

Following the model of SF State, UC Berkeley students formed their own Third World Liberation Front and initiated a strike in January 1969. Like their counterparts, they sought a Third World College and "Third World control" over curriculum and programs. The UCB strike lasted three months, including a confrontation between 3,000 strikers and 1,600 law enforcement officers and National Guardsmen. Students subsequently won an Ethnic Studies department with four divisions to cover the history, culture and experiences of African Americans, Mexican Americans, Asian Americans, and Native Americans.

To the south, UCLA students were also caught up in the political moment and advocated for Asian American studies. In the fall of 1968, of the 29,000 students on campus, 12 percent were students of color and 1,700 were Asian American (5.8 percent of the student population). That year, students founded Sansei Concern, a student organization of primarily third-generation Japanese Americans, who sought to become active in the pertinent issues facing the Asian American community. Sansei Concern organized the "Are You Curious Yellow?" conference in fall 1968, prior to UC Berkeley's Yellow symposium, and that convening helped to galvanize a movement for Asian American studies classes, an Asian American studies research unit, and Asian American organizations such as *Gidra,* a community-based, student-run magazine.

Building from the momentum of this conference and related efforts to establish an Asian American research unit on campus, students and supportive faculty created the first AAS course at UCLA called "Orientals in America" in spring 1969. This class brought in an array of speakers and presenters, including representatives from community organizations such as the Yellow Brotherhood, the Oriental Service Center, the Japanese American Citizens League, and the Filipino-American Council.

While this course was offered through an experimental program, students and faculty were lobbying for an Asian American Studies program alongside African American Studies, Chica-

no Studies, and American Indian Studies. UCLA's Chancellor conceded to a research institute model, perhaps due to fear of student unrest that had already exploded at SF State and UC Berkeley. He envisioned the institute to be an academic research center that would examine Asian Americans in ways traditional to the academy. In contrast, students negotiated for, and eventually won, a center that would address the social problems in the community and courses that would engage students in community issues. By fall 1969, the UCLA Asian American Studies Center offered five courses: "Orientals in America," "Koreans in America," "Chinese in America," "Wartime Relocation Experiences," and "Comparative Analysis of Asian American Community Organizations."

THE FLOWERING OF ASIAN AMERICAN STUDIES

After the TWLF strikes at SF State and UC Berkeley and the creation of the Asian American Studies Center at UCLA, the struggle to establish Asian American studies continued as students sought to develop the curriculum that was relevant to their communities. At UCLA, in 1975, for example, the university did not approve Asian American studies courses for having enough intellectual merit. Again, the students and faculty had to organize to keep Asian American studies alive. To establish and maintain Asian American studies, students at each campus needed:

1) to create the curriculum and classes themselves;
2) to produce and publish Asian American works;
3) to establish further institutional relationships in local communities.

Since Asian American studies was a new field, it had very few published books and articles in 1969 and the faculty had to create their own readers from mimeographed articles. These new classes also had to be officially approved by the universities, and the students formed curriculum planning committees that ensured that the course content was relevant to Asian American communities and met university standards. At SF State, the faculty and students worked extensively so that Asian American studies courses fulfilled General Education requirements. The classes were purposively interdisciplinary to address the Asian American experience in a holistic manner. At UC Berkeley, classes addressed not only the significant social problems facing Asian American communities, but also examined the literature, arts, and creative expressions of Asian Americans. These courses revealed the diverse voices of many important Asian Americans who had been silenced or ignored in American mainstream popular culture. Likewise, Asian American history courses highlighted the contributions and struggles of Asians in the United States. Replacing a history of faceless victims, these classes instead revealed the resilience, activism and movements of past Asian Americans for a better life and a more just society.

Along with offering classes that were relevant in these ways, these early programs helped to lay the foundation for Asian American studies as academic field of study. At UCLA, students gathered oral histories, uncovered primary source materials, and collected existing publications about Asian Americans. The UCLA Asian American Studies Center published the first anthologies: *Roots: An Asian American Reader* (1971), *Counterpoint* (1976), and *Letters in Exile: a Pilipino American Reader* (1976). In 1971, it became home to *Amerasia Journal,* the first academic journal in Asian American studies.

Along with creating the curriculum and scholarly field, Asian American student activists remained engaged in an extensive array of grassroots organizations and bridged their campus-

PHOTOS BY AMY UYEMATSU

In 1971 UCLA's Asian American Studies Center produced one of the first books in Asian American Studies, Roots: An Asian American Reader. It was co-edited by Franklin Odo, Buck Wong, Eddie Wong, and Amy Uyematsu (then known as Amy Tachiki). Roots has sold over 50,000 copies.

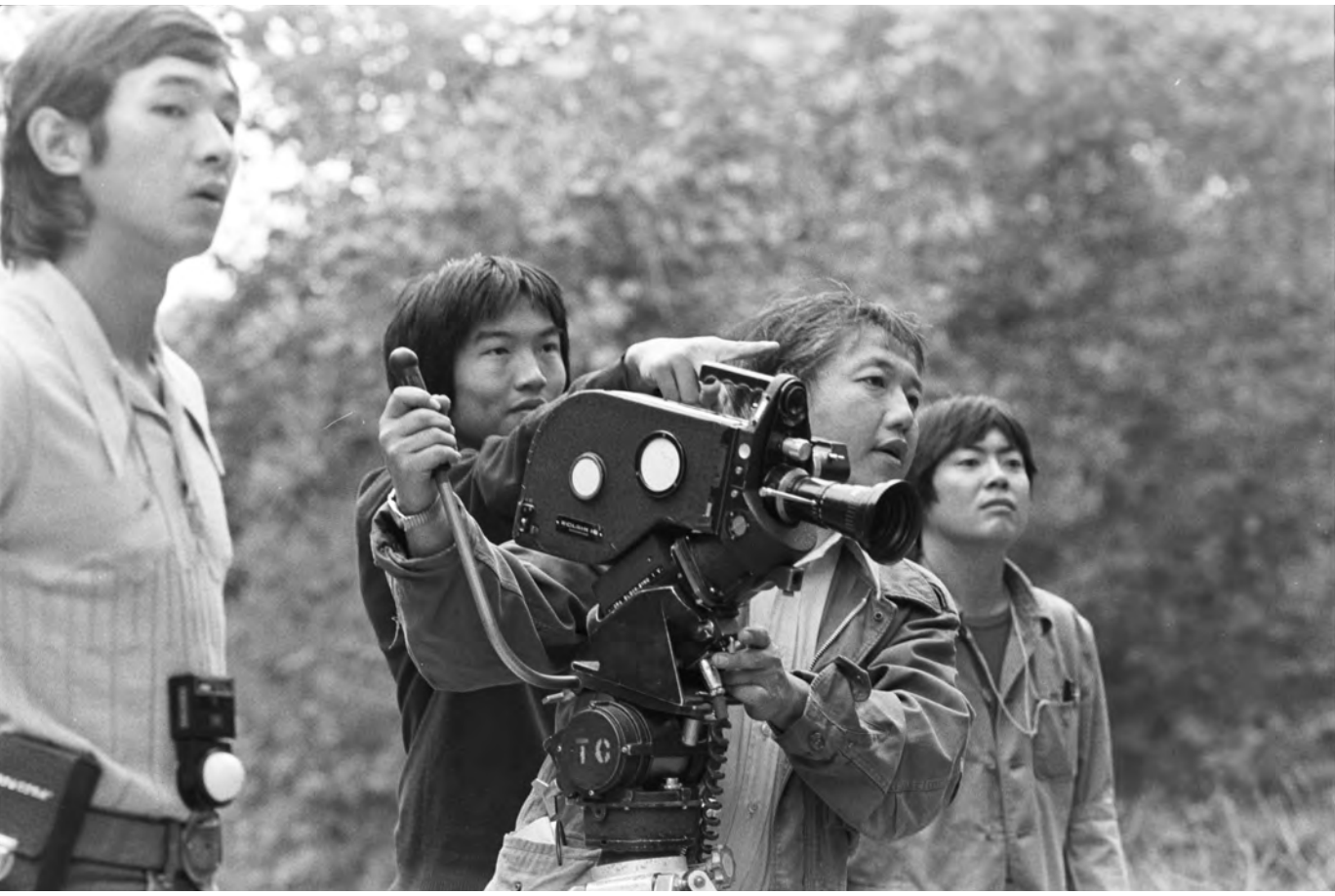
es to their communities. San Francisco State created a special program, the Nine Unit Block, where students got credit for working in the community. SF State student Jeff Mori credits this program for helping students apply their ethnic studies knowledge, providing direction for their future careers, and building networks of leaders in the Asian American community. His fellow classmates became future leaders in Asian American organizations. They included Gordon Chin (Chinatown Community Development Center), Steve Nakajo (Kimochi Senior Center), Tom Kim (Korean Community Center), Ed De La Cruz (West Bay Pilipino Services), Fred Lau (San Francisco Police Chief); and Anita Sanchez (San Francisco Civil Service Commission).

Just as SF State Asian American Studies Department produced community leaders and UC Berkeley established centers in the community, the UCLA Asian American Studies Center spawned several organizations that linked the university with the surrounding Asian American communities. Besides *Gidra* newspaper, it hosted Visual Communications, a visual arts organization, and Asian American Studies Central, which promoted ethnic studies both in higher education and at K-12 public schools. Activists involved at UCLA similarly came to lead many important local and national service and advocacy organizations.

THE FRUITS OF ASIAN AMERICAN STUDIES

The roots of Asian American studies and its flourishing as a field of study has borne fruit, evidenced by the accomplishments of its students, a growing diversity in the curriculum, and the strength of local Asian American community institutions. For the students, Asian American studies validated their identities as Asians in America. It allowed them to explore a common history and cause with fellow Asians. And it offered a space to develop solidarities within and across racial, ethnic, gender and other boundaries. Asian American studies was a hotbed where students could grow in their activism and leadership. On university campuses, Asian American studies institutionalized community-based learning and research that re-envisioned the role of the university. Finally, the Asian American community as a whole benefited, as students went on to apply their skills and experiences to establish needed community programs and services as well as local and national organizations. They also entered mainstream institutions and advocated on behalf of those whose voices were missing.

The 1960s student activists profiled in this book each helped to establish Asian American studies and to work on behalf of Asian American and Pacific Islander communities afterwards. UCLA student Casimiro Tolentino, hailing from central Los Angeles, tutored three nights a week across town in Venice, California while in school. He later worked as an attorney litigating unfair agricultural labor practices and served many community organizations, such as Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Los Angeles. Amy Uyematsu was raised in a white Los Angeles suburb but recognized how her high school history and civics classes failed to acknowledge Japanese American internment during World War II. While she worked at UCLA's AASC, she co-edited *Roots*. Eventually, she became a high school teacher herself, while gaining acclaim as a poet. SF State student Irene Dea tutored almost nightly in San Francisco Chinatown, and Jeff Mori organized youth in San Francisco Japantown while they were undergraduates. Later, Irene would lead the Association of Chinese Teachers and Jeff would become executive director of the Japanese Community Youth Center. Harvey Dong, whose family lived near Sacramento Chinatown, shared how UC Berkeley students established the Asian Studies Field Office, which housed an elderly drop-in center, the Chinatown Cooperative Garment Factory, a community meal site, and a bookstore in San Francisco's Chinatown. Eventually, that space became the Asian Community Center, funded by the seniors themselves. While earn-



VISUAL COMMUNICATIONS PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVES

As Alan Ohashi (at left) and project director Alan Kondo (at right) look on, fellow Visual Communications co-founders Eddie Wong and Robert Nakamura prepare a 16mm camera during a location shoot in Los Angeles' Griffith Park. Visual Communications created pioneering motion picture documentaries through the 1970s and early 1980s.

ing a Ph.D. in Ethnic Studies at UC Berkeley years later, Harvey began Eastwind Bookstore, promoting Asian American books in Berkeley. Similarly, UC Berkeley student Lillian Fabros grew up supporting Filipino farm worker organizing in Salinas, and later worked as a mental health organizer herself. Her work included staffing the Pilipino Organizing Committee in the low-income South of Market neighborhood of San Francisco.

Today, Asian American studies courses provide students with the theories, frameworks, language, and role models that help students acknowledge and claim their Asian American narratives and identity. Along with the student activists from the1960s and '70s, *Mountain Movers* profiles recent graduates of Asian American studies: Holly Lim, a Filipino American student from SF State; Nkauj Iab Yang, a Hmong American student from UC Berkeley; and Preeti Sharma, a South Asian graduate student from UCLA. Each grew up in communities quite different from the students of the 1960s. Holly Lim came from a multiracial, Southern California suburb, Nkauj Iab was raised in a low-income neighborhood in Sacramento, and Preeti came from a Caribbean diasporic community in south Florida. Nevertheless, each shared how Asian American studies gave them the words to frame their own experiences and that of their immigrant families. Not only did they learn about their own histories, but they also connected with fellow Asian Americans to draw inspiration and solidarity for their own community advocacy and research work. Today, Holly runs a leadership development program, and Nkauj Iab and Preeti are graduate students, in addition to actively contributing to the community.

These three Asian American Studies programs, like others across the nation, have played a critical role in making institutional reforms and advancing new fields of knowledge. They have created curricular changes and student-serving programs to broaden access for Asian American students. They continue to further research of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the U.S. through their faculty and graduate programs. The legacy of programs like SF State's Nine Block Program continue to shape the curriculum, as SF State Asian American Studies majors all do community internships as part of their coursework. UC Berkeley hosts the premier doctorate program in Ethnic Studies. UCLA's Asian American Studies Center continues to publish *Amerasia Journal* and other important publications, while the Asian American Studies Department offers both master's and undergraduate degree programs.

While ethnic studies and Asian American studies programs have altered the landscape of the university and while students and faculty continue to play prominent roles in society, much work remains. Many campuses across the country have yet to incorporate ethnic studies into their curricular offerings. Many courses still lack the diversity of critical perspectives that such scholarship provides. Asian American and ethnic studies faculty still face discriminatory treatment in a field that continues to push intellectual boundaries. A major issue is the underrepresentation of newer immigrant and refugee populations in many universities; in particular, groups, including Southeast Asians, South Asians, and Pacific Islanders, face a lack of faculty representation, which impacts teaching and research. Asian American studies continues to experience growing pains as the field strives to expand the tent to be more inclusive of the diversity reflected in our populations.

This book is written in hopes that it provides useful historical context as well as interesting stories that can paint a clearer history of Asian American studies as a product of the militancy and vision of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements. The stories here remind us that ethnic studies, like any change born of conflict and struggle, is something that people are often forced to defend over time as it becomes part of our institutions. It is the students, faculty, and community partners that continue to establish and grow these programs in the service of our communities and our increasingly, interconnected world. Just as students and community advocates of the sixties and today have placed themselves in the timeline of history, may this history lay a foundation for future activism, engagement, and innovation.

PHOTO BY HARVEY DONG

Latinx students mobilize at the TWLF 50th Anniversary Rally on the Mario Savio Steps at UC Berkeley on January 22, 2019. Jesus Barraza of Dignidad Rebelde designed the anniversary poster.