

Commentary

Asian American studies: A tool for change

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and
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Charlie Chan is dead, "Ching Chong Chinaman" no longer "sitting on a fence, trying to make a dollar out of fifteen cents." Images of the quaint laundryman, ah so humble, replaced by the reverberating chants of Red Guard; laundry tickets given up for Red Book. Kung Fu played by a white actor in "yellow face," a definition of Asian which is illusion, which is lie, which is shuck. Yes, America is racist to its core, not because it produces KKK, but because it is unable to see people of color. We are invisible except as we embody negation, non-existent except as we fit an untrue picture of who we are. Basta ya!!

Third World peoples have traditionally been denied basic rights centering around the issue of self-determination. Self determination. This has meant most fundamentally that we have been forced to measure ourselves, to see ourselves, as reflected in standards we had no part in making. White was right, simply because white's prerogative was power: the

setting of standards, the making of laws. Beauty, truth, manners, philosophy, taste, the very act of definition itself was "white skin privilege." Self-fulfilling prophecy: dark is bad, dumb, sinful, degenerate. Internalized self hate was always the first lesson. Know thyself — know thy place. Learn the history of the world — western civilization triumph over the globe, bringing the light to the Dark Continent, uplifting the "little brown brothers," opening up the heathen Mongol East. Blacks are slaves, Indians murdering savages, Chicanos bandits, Asians coolies. Yellow is still yellow, our colors of the rainbow never look white, never seem right.

Asian American Studies is a response to this state of affairs, a fundamentally positive act of self-definition, the articulation of an authentic identity, a basic process of gaining self knowledge, the expression of an Asian American sensitivity generated by Asian Americans, and reflecting our experience. Asian American Studies exists because knowledge is a tool; a weapon; a means of suppressing

and warping a peoples' ability to resist negative images of itself. Knowledge can be a potent instrument of control. Conversely, true self knowledge, springing from within the life experiences of an oppressed population, is a liberating force of incredible proportions.

On the weekend of July 6 through 9, about 600 concerned Americans of Asian heritage gathered in San Jose to evaluate the current status of our programs nation-wide, ponder the events of the past few years, and map out strategies for the future. One fact emerges clearly. Asian peoples in America (and we speak predominantly of Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Chinese, Samoan, Hawaiian and other Pacific peoples) collectively and individually contain within themselves the seeds of their own awakening. In a situation where survival itself is a victory, where people are stripped of their identity, their dignity, forced to submit to second-class citizenship and made to feel inferior through psychological and physical oppression, identity on our own terms gives us the tools to understand conditions responsible for this loss of humanity.

Asian American Studies exists to confront institutionalized racism, to combat the effects of an educational system which has not always been sensitive to the

needs of Asian peoples. By omission or by distortion, our history has been kept from us. Asians have organized and fought against racist acts as long as they have been in America, yet we were never told that we ever resisted. Similarly, little is ever said about the resistance offered by other peoples of color, the result being that the will to resist is broken down.

Self knowledge is the goal of Asian American Studies, an awareness which recognizes the function of stereotypes. Non-whites have always been the recipients of mental images whose object was control. For example, whites have always characterized us as sexually aggressive and dangerous, and Asians were no exception. A stereotype, however, has many uses, and again, its function is control. Asian Americans are often referred to as a "model minority," as a people who have overcome the initial resistance to them. Implicitly or explicitly, other Third World peoples are urged to imitate the "Asian success." Later for that, Jack. This is nothing but the exploitation of a tool to disrupt Third World unity. Because a few yellow faces are allowed some economic security, the serious problems most of our people face are forgotten. More importantly, instead of being forced to confront the reality of racism, the

"openness" of the system to "talent and hard work" is validated. We reject this notion of success and openness entirely.

It has been necessary, in order to maintain the images of yellow success, to change fundamentally the stereotypes of Asian men. They had to be recreated in a passive, nonassertive, non-threatening mold (witness the attitudes non-whites are forced to assume to "pass" while living in a white suburb). The Asian man was no longer to be a threat (witness also the emasculation of the Third World man in the barrio, on the reservation, in a southern parish).

At the same time Asian women were to be legitimized as proper sex objects for white males. The image of Suzy Wong, exotic, appealing Asian woman was also created as a tool designed to "legitimize" and neutralize token Asian success. We must categorically reject these images as racist, sexist, and fundamentally dehumanizing.

It is the function of Asian American Studies to assist in the breaking of these patterns, to assist in the breaking of traditional patterns of thought about who we are, and to build a new, positive reality in its place.

Gary Young Kim and Sandra Muraoka are members of the Asian American Student Union.

Commentary

Tuition increase lamentable burden

Editor's note: The following is the presentation made by Leo to the State Board of Higher Education July 23 to argue against a tuition increase for the 1973-74 year. The Board approved an increase of \$8 a term for undergraduates, \$13 a term for graduate students and \$49 a term for nonresident undergraduates.

I am here today to speak against a tuition increase as outlined in the Staff Recommendation and the Report of the Finance Committee. The spiraling trend of automatically raising the cost of tuition as a response to a gap between the funds available and state support of the institutions involved is indeed a dangerous one. I feel that for the welfare of the students of the state as well as in the spirit of sound fiscal policy that this practice of increasing tuition as a means of filling the gap of funds budgeted and funds available as allocated by the legislature be stopped.

I think students realize that inflation has increased the costs of their education, but at the same time, it is important that the board realize the effects of inflation on students. Tuition is not the only increased cost of a student's education. Students are forced to pay the increased costs of living many-fold, as I might add, we all are.

Students seeking their educations are, for the most part, low income people. This is because of their stations of life. Many students are on fixed incomes, unresponsive to inflation costs. Often times students are forced to live close to the institution they attend, where

housing costs are substantially higher than in other areas of town. Students living in these areas are often times forced to pay higher than average prices in neighborhood grocery stores, because they are unable to afford transportation to lower cost food stores in the suburbs. Clearly, students are already paying the brunt of inflation in other areas in pursuit of their educations. I feel that if the trend of increasing tuition in order to fill the gap between funds budgeted and funds available continues, we will price ourselves right out of the education market. A market which would be gladly filled by lower priced community colleges.

I urge you to stop or at least decelerate this dangerous spiraling trend before it is too late. The first major effect of continuing this tuition spiral is that the students who have the least ability to pay, the student who is often times the one in most need of a college education for employment reasons, will be unable to meet the ever-rising costs of this educational commodity. Finally, I would ask the board to examine other means of generating income, rather than relying on an automatic increase in tuition to meet costs.

If you have heard these arguments before, it is because they are true. The board is faced with this decision... Shall it decide now to stop or slow down the spiraling cost of tuition, or will it maintain the trend and feel the effects of enrollment drops in the not so distant future.

Greg Leo is the ASUO Student Body President.

Letters

Nixon may be had

Just a word of optimism about the Watergate affair and ensuing investigations. Though it has yet to be conclusively substantiated that President Nixon did know of either the Watergate break in itself or the cover up there may well be ample opportunity for the Congress to give Nixon the axe. Nixon may well be in bounds by refusing to turn over the tapes to the Senate committee. However, he cannot claim grounds of separation of powers for refusing access to the tapes to his special prosecutor (Cox) as he is a member of the executive branch. If Nixon does indeed refuse such access he is violating law whether it be obstruction of justice or whatever. This would be grounds for impeachment according to my lay interpretation of the Constitution.

On the other hand suppose Nixon does turn over the tapes. I presume that they would contain damaging evidence. If not, why were they not turned over to the committee immediately following the very credible testimony (in my view) of John Dean III? Perhaps Nixon is saving his trump card for last after all the testimony has been given so that he could make the Democratic party look foolish. But this just doesn't seem to fit Nixon's character or personal political history. He doesn't like to stray too far out of control which is exactly what is happening now.

I hope they do eventually impeach Nixon. I do not enjoy seeing the nation's father image struck down any more than the next home grown. But Nixon is the worst catastrophe to ever strike America because it counts now more than ever. Some presidents (Kennedy and

Roosevelt for example) inspire hope and optimism in a nation which are vital ingredients for progress, happiness, and state success. Nixon conspires to depress and repress not withstanding Watergate. He is the man of a few people not all the people, of total control not spontaneity. I do hate to see the presidency itself hampered because we need strong affirmative direction from the top. Nixon does not cherish the guarantees of the Constitution or he would not be assaulting the fourth amendment. To me the price he asks of us is too high and dishonorable to suffer through. It is a lesser cost to suffer through a time of relative disorganization (as Congress assumes greater powers) than to forfeit one of the most basic tenets of English and American common law, i.e. the right to privacy in one's home or

office. Under Congressional direction the country may be more sluggish to respond to symptomatic problems. We may suffer economically for this. But our credibility overseas will not be further damaged. Perhaps this major illness is what the country needs to get the antibodies (dormant too long) flowing again, a real systems flushing.

Whatever, don't hide from facts when they look you in the eye as so many freedom defending Americans seem willing to do at this point. If you do hide your head in the sand when you come up for air there will be no freedoms left and air will be for sale. No matter what the facts are we'll be allright standing together to sort them out and take appropriate actions. Peace!

Darrell Murray
Senior Political Science



"I wonder how I could have missed those clues that would have made Watergate perfectly clear?"