

CLASH

Continued from Page 1

vigilantes," and blacks in L.A. were shown as "opportunistic hoodlums," although people of every color participated.

Another part of the problem is a criminal justice system that often leaves minorities feeling cheated. A Korean American man, Vincent Chin, was killed several years ago by two whites in the Midwest, but they were not given prison time.

Even more recently, in L.A., a Korean store owner shot and killed a 15-year-old African American girl, Latasha Harlins, whom the store owner suspected of shoplifting. The two had a brief struggle before Harlins put the money for the item on the counter and headed out of the store. She was then shot, but the store owner, who was found guilty of manslaughter, was sentenced to only five years probation.

"For the Asian American community, if we're going to speak out against the killing of people like Vincent Chin," she said, "we have to speak out against the killing of people like Latasha Harlins."

Economic structures that block certain neighborhoods from being a viable part of the picture add to the cycle of deterioration of the quality of life for those living in the inner cities, Cho said.

For example, some store and supermarket chains refuse to locate in "high risk" areas because insurance is either too



Sumi K. Cho

high or unavailable and there is a lack of potential profit in low-income areas.

An African American audience member said part of the problem is that Korean Americans often isolate themselves and tend to cluster in a community.

Cho agreed that some Korean American shop owners are not respectful to all customers and a way to begin changing that and the inclusiveness is to hire other minorities.

A shift toward better relations also includes multiracial education, such as ethnic studies, Cho said.

"We must get beyond the binary oppositions in the framing of race relations," Cho said. "We need to look at where these stereotypes are coming from and why we think the things we do."

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