RETHINKING THE ASIAN AMERICAN MOVEMENT

Although it is one of the least-known social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, the Asian American movement drew upon some of the most powerful currents of the era, and had a wide-ranging impact on the political landscape of Asian America, and more generally, the United States. Using the racial discourse of the Black Power and other movements, as well as anti-war activist and the global decolonization movements, the Asian American movement succeeded in creating a multiethnic alliance of Asians in the United States and gave them a voice in their own destinies.

Rethinking the Asian American Movement provides a short, accessible overview of this important social and political movement, highlighting key events and key figures, the movement's strengths and weaknesses, how it intersected with other social and political movements of the time, and its lasting effect on the country. It is perfect for anyone wanting to obtain an introduction to the Asian American movement of the twentieth century.

Daryl Joji Maeda is Associate Professor of Ethnic Studies at the University of Colorado, Boulder, USA.

American Social and Political Movements of the Twentieth Century

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Rethinking the Asian American Movement
By Daryl Joji Maeda

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Daryl Joji Maeda

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
NEW YORK AND LONDON

First published 2012
by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Simultaneously published in the UK
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Maeda, Daryl J.
Rethinking the Asian American movement / by Daryl Joji Maeda.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
1. Asian Americans--Politics and government--20th century. 2. Asian Americans--Social conditions--20th century. 3. United States--Race relations--History--20th century. 4. United States--Social conditions--20th century. I. Title.
E184.A75M343 2011
305.895′073--dc23
2011040233

ISBN: 978-0-415-80081-5 (hbk)
ISBN: 978-0-415-80082-2 (pbk)
ISBN: 978-0-203-35748-4 (ebk)

Typeset in Bembo
by Taylor & Francis Books

Printed and bound in the Walsworth Publishing Company, Marceline, Mo.

CONTENTS

Series Editor's Introduction vi
Acknowledgements vii
Abbreviations ix

Introduction: Reframing the Movement 1

1 Key Organizations 9

2 Campus Activism 27

3 Community Activism in Cities and the Countryside 52

4 Arts and Culture 85

5 Interracialism, Internationalism, and Intersections of Gender and Race 107

6 Consolidations and Transformation 136

7 Conclusion: The Asian American Movement Remix 147

Notes 150
Bibliography 170
Index 179

SERIES EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the *American Social and Political Movements of the 20th Century* series at Routledge. This collection of works by top historians from around the nation and world introduces students to the myriad movements that came together in the United States during the twentieth century to expand democracy, to reshape the political economy, and to increase social justice.

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Heather Ann Thompson
Temple University

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book, which attempts to reinterpret a multifarious social movement, has been shaped by conversations, discussions, debates, and arguments with many people. Throughout the process of conceptualizing and writing it, I have been privileged to share ideas about Asian American activism, interracialism, and internationalism in personal exchanges, at conferences and symposia, and/or by exchanging papers with many who have helped to shape my thinking: among others, Sylvia Chan-Malik, John Cheng, Sylvia Chong, May Fu, Estella Habal, Moon-Ho Jung, Ben Kobashigawa, Lon Kurashige, Scott Kurashige, Karen Leong, Laura Pulido, Greg Robinson, Seema Sohi, Wesley Ueunten, Linda Vo, William Wei, Judy Wu, Caroline Yang, and Lisa Yun. Diane Fujino has been especially influential and helpful: her meticulous biographies of Yuri Kochiyama and Richard Aoki (forthcoming) are inspiring works that show how to bind together discrepant histories of Asian American and black activism, her historiography of the Asian American movement laid out the field in which this book is planted, and her generously offered, stringent, yet constructive criticism on major parts of this manuscript enriched it greatly. Nancy Araki and Allyson Nakamoto of the Japanese American National Museum were supportive, especially as I was finishing my first book and embarking on the formative stages of this project. I am especially indebted to Richard Katsuda, Kathy Nishimoto Masaoka, Mark Masaoka, Jim Matsuoka, Mike Murase, Erich Nakano, Alan Nishio, Dean Toji, Bill Watanabe, and Evelyn Yoshimura for allowing me to interview them about the housing struggle in Little Tokyo. Their reminiscences and analyses of nationalism and internationalism helped me to conceptualize larger parts of the manuscript as well. Though this book is a communal production, I accept all errors as my personal property.

My editor at Routledge, Kimberly Guinta, has been enthusiastic and patient in appropriate measures, and always helpful and utterly professional, and series editor

Heather Thompson has provided an inspiring intellectual vision of how to frame the movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Many thanks to my friends and colleagues at the University of Colorado at Boulder, who have provided intellectual community, political camaraderie, and sustenance of the soul. Being in a Department of Ethnic Studies reminds me constantly of the fruits of the struggles described in this book and of the necessity to continue those struggles. My students at CU Boulder—especially in seminars on social movements of the 1970s and Asian American radicalism—have challenged my thinking in innumerable ways and for that they have my gratitude. Two special shout outs: the first goes to my friends and mentors at the College of Ethnic Studies at San Francisco State University, which is both a subject of this book and, as my alma mater, an inspiration. A second goes to the Blue Scholars, whose "The Long March" EP provided the soundtrack for the writing of this book: "International District, rock rock on," indeed. It's my hope that this book, in some small way, will contribute to understanding the Asian American movement as an interracial and international district of its own.

Finally, I am enormously grateful to the best family on earth for their encouragement, patience, and inspiration. Thanks to my mother, Amelia Maeda, for all her support, and to my in-laws, Ken and Fran Dutro, and my little sister Katie for always being there when needed. Alex and Kenji made me smile and reminded me why cooking, movies, videogames and snowboarding are sometimes more important than writing. As always, Elizabeth Dutro has been my rock through thick and thin.

ABBREVIATIONS

AAA	Asian Americans for Action
AAFEE	Asian Americans for Equal Employment
AAPA	Asian American Political Alliance
AASU	Afro-American Student Union
ACC	Asian Community Center
AETF	Anti-Eviction Task Force
ASG	Asian Study Group
BAACAW	Bay Area Asian Coalition Against the War
BSU	Black Student Union
CANE	Committee Against Nihonmachi Eviction
CCBA	Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association
COINTELPRO	Counter Intelligence Program
CPP	Communist Party of the Philippines
CRA	Community Redevelopment Agency
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FFP	Friends of the Filipino People
FUCKU	Free University of Chinatown Kids, Unincorporated
ICSA	Intercollegiate Chinese for Social Action
IHTA	International Hotel Tenants Association
IWK	I Wor Kuen
JACCC	Japanese American Cultural and Community Center
JACS-AI	Japanese American Community Services, Asian Involvement Office
KKC	Kokua Kalama Committee
KMT	Kuomintang
LACRR	Los Angeles Committee for Redress and Reparations

LASO	Latin American Student Organization
LOP	Laotian Organizing Project
LTRA	Little Tokyo Redevelopment Association
NPAC	National Peace Action Coalition
LRS	League of Revolutionary Struggle
LTCDAC	Little Tokyo Community Development Advisory Committee
LTPRO	Little Tokyo People's Rights Organization
LTSC	Little Tokyo Service Center
MASC	Mexican American Student Confederation
NASO	Native American Student Organization
NASU	Native American Student Union
NCRR	National Coalition for Redress and Reparations
NPA	New People's Army
OSU	Oriental Student Union
PACE	People Against Chinatown Evictions
PACE	Pilipino American Collegiate Endeavor
PCPJ	People's Coalition for Peace and Justice
PRC	People's Republic of China
RGP	Red Guard Party
SCAN	Student Council of American Natives
SCCC	Seattle Central Community College
SNCC	Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee
TWLF	Third World Liberation Front
UFW	United Farm Workers

INTRODUCTION

Reframing the Movement

Although it is one of the least-known social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, the Asian American movement drew upon some of the most powerful currents of the era and had a wide-ranging impact on the racial and political landscape of Asian America and, more generally, the United States. This book situates the Asian American movement within the milieu of racial and anti-war activism of the 1960s and 1970s writ large. It shows how the Asian American movement created a multiethnic alliance comprising Asians of all ethnicities by drawing on the discourses and ideologies of the Black Power and anti-war movements in the United States, as well as decolonization movements around the globe. Most importantly, it argues that the Asian American movement was fundamentally committed to the ideologies of *interracialism* and *internationalism*. In other words, the Asian American movement sought to achieve radical social change by building interracial coalitions and transnational solidarities. Coalitional politics was not simply a by-product or late addition to the movement, but rather was foundational to its understanding of the United States as a capitalistic and imperialistic system that exploited people of color both within and outside its borders.

This book draws upon the burgeoning literature on the Asian American movement written by historians, social scientists, cultural studies scholars, and movement participants—as well as the latest scholarship on social movements for justice by other people of color during the 1960s and 1970s—to provide a succinct and accessible synthesis of the movement. Focusing on key organizations, events, and ideas, it examines how the Asian American movement arose, the influences from which it drew, its evolution over time, and the legacies it left. This account aspires to be representative, rather than comprehensive. As such, it must necessarily choose some organizations and campaigns for inclusion while excluding others or giving them short shrift.[1] The items selected—the organizations, the issues they struggled

over, and the ideologies that motivated them—are included because they typify the Asian American movement, were widely influential, or were particularly crucial.

The Existing Literature

The first book to comprehensively survey the Asian American movement was William Wei's (1993) *The Asian American Movement*. As a pioneering work, it examined the movement from East Coast to West Coast and covered a wide array of issues and participants. However, there are three main reasons why a new synthesis is necessary. First, a significant body of scholarship has appeared since the publication of Wei's book in 1993. This includes writings on the Asian American movement, literature on other related movements, and theoretical work on identity and racial formation. Second, Wei tends to treat the Asian American movement in isolation from other social movements of the era, in contrast to the current trend toward comparative work. Finally, Wei's interpretive framework—which pits radicals against reformers and consistently favors reformism—fails to appreciate the centrality of radicalism to movement ideologies and the critical roles that radicals played as participants within it.

A much more recent account, Michael Liu, Kim Geron, and Tracy Lai's *The Snake Dance of Asian American Activism: Community, Vision, and Power* (2008), uses a social movement theory perspective to analyze the Asian American movement. It argues that the Asian American movement should be understood in long historical focus from the 1930s to the 1990s. While such an elongated periodization has the positive quality of situating the movement within its historical precedents and antecedents, it also obscures the unique aspects of the movement as it occurred within a particular era. Although I agree with Liu, Geron and Lai that the Asian American movement in the 1960s and 1970s did not spring out of nothing in 1968, nor simply disappear after 1980, it is critical to understand how it differed from its predecessors, drew upon the contemporary influences of the Black Power and anti-war movements to create a novel form of politics and identity in the 1960s and 1970s, and how changing national and global political and economic climates irretrievably altered it by the 1980s. In addition, my book is centrally concerned with tracking the Asian American movement's commitment to interracialism and internationalism, two key features of the movement that combined in a unique and novel way in the period from 1968 to 1980.

A wealth of new sources on the Asian American movement—both primary and secondary—have been published in the past decade. Several monographs treat specific aspects of Asian American activism during the 1960s and 1970s. Diane Fujino's indispensable biographies of two highly influential activists demonstrate how the Asian American movement was integrally connected to other social movements, especially the Black Power movement: *Heartbeat of Struggle: The Revolutionary Life of Yuri Kochiyama* (2005) and *Samurai among Panthers: The Revolutionary Life and Times of Richard Aoki* (forthcoming). Estella Habal's *San Francisco's International Hotel* (2007)

provides a superb account of the battle for affordable housing that became one of the movement's most iconic campaigns. My own book, *Chains of Babylon: The Rise of Asian America* (Maeda 2009) is a cultural history of the Asian American movement. In addition to these monographs specifically covering the Asian American movement, Laura Pulido's *Black, Brown, Yellow and Left* (2006) examines African American, Asian American, and Chicano activism in Los Angeles during the movement period, and Max Elbaum's *Revolution in the Air* (2002) explores the New Communist movement of the 1970s. Both include discussions of Asian American radicals within the context of broader movements for social justice. In addition to these published sources, Ph.D. dissertations and M.A. theses by Patty Tsai (1995), Harvey Dong (2002), Jason Ferreira (2003), May Fu (2008), and Angela Ryan (2010) have produced valuable in-depth analyses of various components of the Asian American movement. I have drawn on specific elements from these dissertations and theses and am eager to see them published for wider promulgation. Finally, published journal articles—too numerous to list individually—have contributed to understanding aspects of the movement in new and different ways.

Of equal importance to monographs, dissertations, and articles, anthologies provide first-hand accounts of the Asian American movement and primary source documents. Steve Louie and Glenn Omatsu, eds., *Asian Americans: The Movement and the Moment* (2001) and Fred Ho, et al., eds., *Legacy to Liberation* (2000) offer many indispensible perspectives. The San Francisco State University Asian American Studies Department's *At 40: Asian American Studies @ San Francisco State* (Asian American Studies Department 2009) includes reminiscences and documents from the 1968–69 struggle onward. Perhaps the most valuable documentary collection to be published recently is the Asian Community Center Archive Group's *Stand Up: An Archive Collection of the Bay Area Asian American Movement, 1968–1974* (Asian Community Center Archive Group 2009), a treasure trove of primary source documents that will be useful to scholars and students for years to come. Anthologies necessarily present fragmented, rather than coherent, narratives, and unavoidably tend to privilege the perspectives of their editors. This book therefore attempts to draw from multiple perspectives to provide a synthesized point of view.

Finally, a body of work examines cultural and political connections between Asian Americans and African Americans. Vijay Prashad's *Everybody Was Kung Fu Fighting* (2001) and Bill Mullen's *Afro-Orientalism* (2004) explore the intertwinings of Asian American and African American activism, as do journal articles by Robin D. G. Kelley and Betsy Esch ("Black Like Mao," *Souls*, 1999) and me ("Black Panthers, Red Guards, and Chinamen," *American Quarterly*) (Maeda 2005). Edited collections, including Heike Raphael-Hernandez and Shannon Steen's *AfroAsian Encounters* (2006) and Fred Ho and Bill Mullen's *AFRO/ASIA* (2008), discuss cultural crossings and political alliances among and between Asian Americans and African Americans. These writings show that one cannot understand the Asian American movement without considering how Asian Americans' racial identity has been intertwined with the racial identities of other people of color.

Rethinking the Asian American Movement responds to Diane Fujino's persuasive call for more comparative analyses of the Asian American movement.[2] Indeed, it emerges from a conviction that a comparative framework is essential to comprehending the movement's grounding in coalitional politics. The Asian American movement emerged at the end of the 1960s and flowered through the early 1970s, a time when many social movements envisioned themselves as part of a worldwide, multiracial struggle against racism and exploitation. Groups like the Black Panther Party drew inspiration from the struggles of the Vietnamese, Algerians, and Palestinians, while simultaneously influencing Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, as well as Asian Americans. In the United States, Native Americans, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans and Asian Americans all questioned the legitimacy of borders and territorial claims that were imposed through conquest and imperialism. The Asian American movement did not begin as a narrowly nationalist movement that only gradually came to a broader understanding of racism. Rather, it came into being at a moment when comparative analyses of racism and imperialism were paramount, at least in radical circles. Hence, the Asian American movement, from its very inception, employed an expansive conceptualization of the problem of racism, and hence was committed to building alliances with people of color at home and abroad.

Rethinking the Asian American Movement and Its Influences

William Wei's (1993) pioneering study of the Asian American movement portrays it as a civil rights movement that existed within the 1960s, but did not fully partake in the radical politics of that era. Furthermore, Wei tends to portray the movement in isolation from other movements of that era. The wealth of new documents and scholarly accounts that have appeared in the past two decades necessitate approaching the Asian American movement from new perspectives. With this new knowledge uppermost in mind, this book builds upon the groundwork laid by Wei's work by presenting a new interpretation of the Asian American movement with three notable reconsiderations.

Reconsidering the Asian American movement means, first and foremost, identifying its central framework as one of power and self-determination, rather than civil rights. Not content to simply pursue formal equal rights for Asian Americans, the movement desired to end racism and economic exploitation by fundamentally reconfiguring society. Many members of the movement, including individuals and the organizations they were members of, called for revolution, even as they participated in quotidian efforts to improve the lives of poor people, students, and workers. In other words, they dreamed ambitiously of global transformations and multiracial, international coalitions even as they acted locally. Handing out leaflets on a street corner, collecting shoes for a clothing drive, contacting Asian American people at a rally to invite to a new organization—all of these acts were ordinary, yet were motivated by a desire to effect real changes in a society that the Asian American movement viewed as racist and exploitive.

A second reconsideration of the Asian American movement thus credits its energy and optimism to its ideological fearlessness, for the movement boldly called for a revolution that would end U.S. racism, imperialism, and capitalism. This reconsideration fully appreciates the role that radicals played in setting the movement's agenda and serving as its foot soldiers in campaign after campaign. Therefore, this book refuses to categorize the movement into reformist versus revolutionary wings, since revolutionaries often performed quotidian acts and those calling for small changes to institutions often hoped to see greater change follow.

The third reconsideration points to the inherently coalitional nature of the Asian American movement, arguing that it constantly created alliances among diverse peoples. It did so in three ways. First, it built the identity of "Asian American" as a multiethnic category. In this sense, to speak of the Asian American movement is already to speak of a coalition that included Asians of various ethnicities in the United States. This *interethnic* coalition was predicated on a particular understanding of race, one that emphasized equivalences among the experiences of Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, and other Asian ethnics—all of whom suffered from similar forms of labor exploitation, social prejudice, and legal discrimination. Because members of the Asian American movement understood race to be a system of differentiation that privileged some to the detriment of others, they saw that blacks, Native Americans, Chicanos, and Puerto Ricans also suffered from racism and exploitation in ways that paralleled the experiences of Asian Americans. The second form of coalition building engaged in by the Asian American movement thus created *interracial* alliances with other non-white people in the U.S. Finally, the Asian American movement consistently analyzed race in transnational terms, because it understood the system of capitalism to be unencumbered by national borders. The third form of coalition building therefore entailed creating *international* affinities with Third World people across the globe. Hence, this book emphasizes interracialism and internationalism as key components of the Asian American movement.

To understand the Asian American movement, one must consider its major influences. The three major influences on the movement were the Black Power movement, the anti-war movement, and Third World liberation movements around the globe. The Black Power movement, which emerged in the late 1960s as a logical extension of the earlier civil rights movement, fundamentally redefined the relationship between black people and the United States.[3] Drawing on discourses of black autonomy and nationalism dating back to Marcus Garvey and beyond, and inspired by contemporary decolonization movements around the globe, Black Power argued that black people could never attain equality and justice within a United States founded upon racism and exploitation. Instead, using slogans like "self-determination" and "community control," it called upon black people to seize the reins of power in their communities and in the institutions that impacted their lives.[4] The Black Power movement contained many different political strands, ranging from various forms of black nationalism (including cultural nationalism and territorial nationalism) to revolutionary nationalism and socialism or Communism.

The Asian American movement drew from the Black Power movement an understanding of the United States as a fundamentally oppressive nation and a conviction that the U.S. functioned as an empire on the world stage. Black Power's greatest influence on Asian Americans came from the revolutionary nationalist wing of the movement, particularly the Black Panther Party. Some Asian American groups organized in part because of the encouragement of Black Power advocates, many entered into coalitions or expressed affinity with Black Power organizations, and all were inspired by the example of Black Power.

In addition to Black Power, the Asian American movement was profoundly influenced by the anti-Vietnam War movement.[5] Opposition to the U.S. war in Indochina peaked in the late 1960s and early 1970s, at the exact moment when the Asian American movement emerged. As with Black Power, the anti-war movement brought together a broad range of activists, ranging from pacifists to liberals to radicals. Asian American opposition to the war drew primarily from the anti-imperialist wing of the anti-war movement, which understood the war to be an unwarranted expression of American imperialism over Asia. As Simon Hall notes, the black civil rights and anti-war movements largely failed to join efforts in opposing the war.[6] In contrast, the Asian American movement integrated its anti-war stance seamlessly into its domestic agenda by demanding self-determination for Asian and Asian American people alike.

As the influence of the anti-war movements suggest, the Asian American movement cast its eyes across the Pacific to Asia. Radicals of all stripes during the movement era admired Third World decolonization movements around the globe, from Algeria, Guinea and Ghana in Africa to China and Vietnam in Asia to Cuba in the Americas. Within the Asian American movement, no international leader held more authority or commanded greater admiration than Mao Zedong. Mao earned his spot as the most widely respected internationalist by virtue of his success as leader of the Chinese revolution, his numerous writings on politics and revolution, and the exhortations and encouragement he directed to Third World radicals in the United States. Mao revised classical Marxist–Leninist doctrine in a way that made it particularly attractive to Asian American and other Third World revolutionaries. Whereas classical Marxist–Leninist doctrine emphasized class struggle as the central conflict in capitalist societies, Mao put national liberation on an equal footing. Attaining self-determination for nations meant throwing off the yoke of imperialism. Asian American radicals interpreted Mao to mean that struggling for racial self-determination was equally important to ending the system of class exploitation. Mao and the Chinese example proved to be critical beacons of hope for fundamental change to the Asian American movement.

Rethinking the Asian American movement by incorporating the latest information available and in light of the most recent theoretical frameworks compels us to see the movement as inherently coalitional, with deep commitments to interracialism and internationalism. At heart, it was most concerned with attaining racial justice for Asian Americans by pressing educational institutions to serve them better through

affording better access and more relevant curricula, improving the communities and neighborhoods in which they lived, providing social services to those who needed them, and organizing workers to achieve better wages and working conditions. However, the Asian American movement believed that Asian Americans would never truly attain liberation until all people of color were freed from racism and exploitation and the United States ceased to unjustly exercise power over Third World nations around the globe.

Organization of the Book

This book is organized into chapters that provide in-depth explorations of Asian American activism within specific realms. Chapter 1 sets the stage by introducing organizations (and some individuals) that played key roles in the Asian American movement. The next two chapters examine Asian American activism on college and university campuses and in communities, respectively. It is impossible to neatly separate Asian American activism into distinct categories because groups and individuals often worked simultaneously on multiple campaigns on various issues and in different contexts. These groups often conceived of their work on campuses as an extension of their community work, and vice versa. But despite the messiness involved in trying to make these types of distinctions, I have chosen to treat Asian American activism on campuses and communities in discrete chapters simply as a way to make a more organized and accessible narrative. Thus, Chapter 2 explores how Asian American activism began on college and university campuses and participated in multiracial coalitions. Chapter 3 highlights community activism as a critical, even central, component of the Asian American movement. In cities and countrysides from Hawai'i to New York, Asian American activists struggled for affordable and livable housing, the preservation of historically Asian neighborhoods, sought to provide badly needed social services, and organized workers to fight for better wages and working conditions. Chapter 4 examines how Asian Americans built cultural institutions as a way to articulate a distinctly Asian American identity and aesthetic; these cultural institutions bound together Asians of many ethnicities, another indication of the movement's coalitional politics. Chapter 5 further explores themes inherent in the prior chapters by analyzing the Asian American movement's interracialism, internationalism, and the intersections between gender and race. It shows how members of the Asian American movement connected with other people of color in the U.S. and around struggles for racial justice, positioned Asian Americans as part of a global movement against U.S. imperialism, and struggled over questions of gender and women's liberation. Finally, Chapter 6 explains how the Asian American movement evolved in the mid-to-late 1970s. Though united in their urge toward justice, movement participants held fundamental disagreements on how to achieve it; at times, these disputes hampered the movement's effectiveness. Global political changes and the demise of the Black Power and anti-war movements led to a series of consolidations within the Asian American movement,

and ultimately, the alteration of the movement into new and different forms at the end of the 1970s. The Asian American movement evolved in response to its changing circumstances, and no matter what form it took, forever changed the possibilities for political activism in Asian American communities. Chapter 7 provides the conclusion, which ponders the legacies of the movement of the 1960s and 70s and their relevance to the twenty-first century.

1

KEY ORGANIZATIONS

The Asian American movement was a loosely organized social movement of national scope. However, the San Francisco Bay Area, Los Angeles, and New York were particularly important sites of Asian American activism. This chapter introduces the key organizations, explaining their origins, the issues they sought to address, and in some cases, how they evolved over time. Many organizations underwent significant changes in a relatively short time span: disbanding, changing names and priorities, or merging with other groups. Asian American radicals constantly had to manage the tension between focusing on their own communities, on the one hand, and building interracial and international solidarity by engaging in coalitions with other "Third World" people, on the other. All of the groups went on from the beginnings discussed here to contribute to subsequent campus activism, community work, labor organizing or political campaigns, either directly as groups or through the participation of individuals who had belonged to them.

Asian American Political Alliance (AAPA)

Any discussion of Asian American radicalism in the movement era has to begin with the Asian American Political Alliance (AAPA). Indeed, Yuji Ichioka coined the term "Asian American" when he co-founded the AAPA at the University of California, Berkeley, in May 1968. AAPA's story reveals how deeply Asian American activism of this period was rooted in the New Left movement of the time. Berkeley was a hotbed of political activism. In 1964–65, it was the site of the Free Speech Movement, in which students occupied the campus to demonstrate for the right to express their political opinions. By the late 1960s, groups like the Black Panthers were rejecting integrationist pleas for "civil rights" and instead calling for "self-determination," which they understood to mean that people of color should control their own

communities and institutions. The anti-Vietnam War movement was in full swing as well, and incorporated several lines of thought regarding the war: pacifists opposed all war as wrong, some white students believed that too many Americans were being killed in a meaningless war, and the Black Panthers and similarly minded organizations opposed it because they believed that in the process of killing yellow people, black and brown people were dying in disproportionate numbers. The Peace and Freedom Party was one white radical anti-war organization that allied itself with the Panthers; Eldridge Cleaver, Minister of Information of the Black Panther Party, even ran as the Peace and Freedom Party's presidential candidate in 1968.

Many Asian Americans were active in the protest movements at Berkeley, but initially, they participated as individuals rather than as a group. As Ichioka recounted:

> There were so many Asians out there in the political demonstrations but we had no effectiveness. Everyone was lost in the larger rally. We figured that if we rallied behind our own banner, behind an Asian American banner, we would have an effect on the larger public. We could extend the influence beyond ourselves, to other Asian Americans.[1]

To reach out to other progressive Asian Americans and create a political organization, Ichioka—along with fellow political activist and spouse Emma Gee—combed through roster of the Peace and Freedom Party, picking out people with Asian surnames and telephoning them to invite them to the meeting of an Asian caucus.[2] AAPA formed after the first meeting of this caucus. It is highly significant that Ichioka and Gee used the methodology of pulling out all *Asian* surnames—rather than simply trying to identify members of a single ethnic group—because it demonstrates that from its very inception, AAPA was explicitly envisioned as a multiethnic group for all Asians. Indeed, AAPA drew together a diverse group of Asian Americans as its first members recruited members from their own organizations and networks.

According to Harvey Dong (2002), AAPA brought together Asian American women and men from a variety of ethnic and geographical backgrounds, socioeconomic classes, and immigration generations. Its members included the Chinese, Filipino, and Japanese Americans who were the children of garment and restaurant workers and small farmers, as well as those whose families had recently ascended into the middle class. Some members were first-generation immigrants, while others were native-born second- and third-generation Asian Americans from the mainland U.S. and Hawai'i. Some had grown up in rural farming areas, while others were from inner cities and still others were suburbanites. Furthermore, AAPA drew students with different cultural and political experiences. Two young women had been politically active well before arriving on the Berkeley campus, having organized strike support for the United Farm Workers (UFW) and formed a chapter of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Similarly, a male member of AAPA had been a member of the UFW strike committee before settling in Berkeley. Richard Aoki was a veteran of the US Army who was a member of the

Black Panther Party. In addition to incorporating members with prior commitments to leftist politics, AAPA also recruited students from Asian student organizations that were primarily social in nature, such as the Chinese Students Association (mostly Hong Kong students), the Chinese Students Club (American-born Chinese), and the Nisei Students Club. Generational and geographical differences were manifest. Immigrant members who had been raised in Asian majority society saw that their American-born compatriots had internalized racial oppression and believed that they should turn to Asian culture to regain their voices.[3] Thus, it was highly significant that AAPA called itself a *political* organization, because it sought to differentiate itself from merely cultural organizations and it envisioned politics as the glue that could unite such diverse members.

AAPA's political commitments included building a multiethnic Asian American political movement and creating both interracial and transnational affiliations. In a document entitled "Understanding AAPA," it wrote:

> We Asian Americans believe that we must develop an American society which is just, humane, equal, and gives the people the right to control their own lives before we can begin to end the oppression and inequality that exists in this nation.
>
> We Asian Americans realize that America was always and still is a White Racist Society. Asian Americans have been continuously exploited and oppressed by the racist majority and have survived only through hard work and resourcefulness, but their souls have not survived.
>
> We Asian Americans refuse to cooperate with the White Racism in this society which exploits us as well as other Third World people, and affirm the right of Self-Determination.
>
> We Asian Americans support all oppressed peoples and their struggles for Liberation and believe that Third World People must have complete control over the political, economic, and educational institutions within their communities.
>
> We Asian Americans oppose the imperialistic policies being pursued by the American Government.[4]

There are three important things to note about this polemical statement. First, the repetition of the phrase "We Asian Americans" at the beginning of each paragraph indicates that AAPA sought to coalesce all Asians together as a political group. Second, AAPA understood the United States to be exploitative and racist at its very core. AAPA also argued that justice would only be achieved when communities of color were able to exercise "self-determination." Because it saw Asian Americans and other Third World people as similarly impacted by American racism, AAPA argued for solidarity among them. This is a prime example of AAPA's commitment to interracialism. Third, when AAPA opposed the "imperialistic policies" of the U.S. government, it was voicing opposition to the Vietnam War in particular. This language meant that AAPA saw the war as an attempt to overturn the legitimate

government of the sovereign nation of Vietnam through force. More broadly, AAPA declared solidarity with colonized and newly decolonized nations of Asia, Latin America, and Africa and lauded the efforts to build "Third World consciousness" that began with the 1955 Bandung Conference.[5] In arguing for Third World solidarity, AAPA frequently quoted Communist Chinese leaders, especially Mao Zedong, but also figures such as Chou En-Lai. AAPA thus displayed its internationalism through the significant attention it paid to political developments across the globe.

From its humble beginnings in Berkeley, AAPA became an important and influential organization, participating in the Third World Liberation Front strikes at San Francisco State College and Berkeley, the movement to free imprisoned Black Panther leader Huey Newton, supporting the United Farm Workers Union strike, protesting the Vietnam War, and fighting to save the International Hotel (see Chapter 2 on campus activism and Chapter 3 on community activism). Part of its success stemmed from its flexibility. AAPA envisioned itself as an entity that could bring people together to fight for their common goals, but did not demand strict adherence from its members. AAPA had no official membership requirements or even official rosters; instead, members set their own priorities and worked on the issues that they felt were most pressing.

Although AAPA was a pivotal organization in the Asian American movement, it was also short-lived. After the successful culmination of the TWLF strike at the University of California, Berkeley, which resulted in the creation of Asian American studies within an ethnic studies department, the Berkeley chapter disbanded in late 1969. Its members went on to participate in a wide variety of Asian American movement organizations and causes on campuses and in communities. In addition, AAPA inspired Asian Americans across the nation to organize politically. AAPA chapters formed in places as near as San Francisco, San Jose, and Los Angeles, and as far-flung as New York and Hawai'i, and at Yale and Columbia Universities. These chapters did not make AAPA into a formal national organization. Instead, they were started by people who shared AAPA's politics, were inspired by the Berkeley example, and borrowed the name to apply to their own organizations. Despite the fact that AAPA had chapters around the country, no formal AAPA national governing board ever attempted to impose a uniform ideology or criteria for membership, authorize the use of the AAPA name, or create a national consensus. Instead, just as the loosely organized individuals within local chapters enjoyed relative freedom to pursue the activism that they chose, AAPA chapters addressed issues of local concern in their own ways. However, the AAPA moniker certainly implied that a chapter shared the Third World politics of the original organization in Berkeley.

Asian Americans for Action (AAA)

In New York City, Asian Americans for Action (AAA, pronounced Triple-A) constituted another early and important Asian American activist group. The AAA narrative has two unique, but related elements: first, unlike AAPA, which started

with college students, AAA involved multiple generations, and second, whereas AAPA was an exclusively New Left group, AAA had ties to the Old Left. Despite these differences, however, AAPA and AAA were remarkably comparable in their political perpectives. Their similarities show that although the Asian American movement was not tightly coordinated, the organizations it comprised shared identifiable core values of anti-racism and anti-imperialism.

A pair of older Japanese American women with links to the Old Left organized AAA in New York in 1969. Before World War II, Kazu Iijima had been a member of the Young Communist League while a student at Berkeley and a member of a Japanese American progressive group called the Young Democrats. After the war, amidst McCarthyism, she avoided politics and concentrated on raising her family. In the 1960s, however, she and her friend Minn Masuda, who had also been a prewar radical, took notice of the swelling of Black Power. They attended rallies and heard speakers like H. Rap Brown and James Farmer indict the U.S. for its racism and imperialism. Deeply inspired, Iijima and Masuda decided to start their own organization. Iijima's son Chris urged his mother not to limit the group to Japanese Americans, but to include all Asian Americans. In order to recruit members, Iijima and Masuda approached every Asian person they saw at rallies and demonstrations, asking for their names and addresses, and inviting them to a meeting. Although many must have been confused by being approached by "two little old ladies," 12 to 15 people showed up at the first meeting on April 6 at the Iijima's apartment and the group grew steadily with each subsequent meeting. They dubbed their new organization Asian Americans for Action. Some initial members were, like Iijima and Masuda, Nisei (second-generation Japanese American) with ties to the Old Left. Younger members, mainly Chinese American college students from Columbia University and City College of New York, had been politicized by the Black Power and anti-war movements. Thus, unlike AAPA in Berkeley, AAA had connections to the Old Left through its older Nisei members, but what the two organizations did share was that both grew out of the New Left.[6]

The moniker Asian Americans for Action pointed out the organization's activist and political aims. Rather than being a cultural or social organization, AAA envisioned itself as a political formation with an emphasis on practice. Ideologically, it opposed racism, imperialism, and capitalism. As discussed in Chapter 5, AAA held vigils on the anniversaries of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, protested against the renewal of the U.S.–Japan Security Treaty, and especially demonstrated against the U.S. war in Vietnam. All of these anti-imperialist activities fostered AAA's growth.

One of the key recruits to AAA was Yuri Kochiyama, a Nisei woman who grew to be a legendary figure of Asian American radicalism. This tiny woman of boundless energy and enormous personal warmth lived an extraordinary life of political commitment that has inspired countless Asian American activists over the decades. Born as Mary Nakahara in San Pedro, California, in 1921, she was a patriotic American through high school and even after being incarcerated in an Arkansas

concentration camp during World War II for no reason other than being a Japanese American. Although she always socially involved, she did not become politicized until she and her family resettled after the war in New York City. In 1960, Yuri, her husband Bill, and their six children moved into an apartment in Harlem, a poor, black neighborhood yet politically vibrant. There, she met civil rights leaders, learned about Black history and culture, and became involved in the venerable civil rights organization CORE (Congress of Racial Equality). The Kochiyama household became a multiracial gathering place for Japanese Americans—friends, relatives, and acquaintances from the family's extensive ethnic network—and black members of the organizations in which Yuri had become involved.

As Kochiyama aptly said, "Harlem has been my university-without-walls." One of the key professors at this university was Malcolm X, whom she met in 1963. When she met Malcolm, Yuri was still an integrationist, yet was still drawn to his nationalism because she valued the hope and direction it gave to black people. On the evening of June 6, 1964, the Kochiyamas hosted a gathering of *hibakusha* (Japanese atomic bomb survivors) visiting the U.S., Japanese American friends, and black and white civil rights activists. The *hibakusha* had asked to meet Malcolm X, and remarkably, he appeared in the Kochiyama's living room. When Malcolm spoke, he wove together the history of domestic U.S. racism with its history of colonialism in Asia, telling the *hibakusha* that they had been atomically bombed, while blacks in America had been hit by the bombs of racism. Shortly after his visit with the *hibakushas,* Malcolm went on an international tour of Africa, a trip that saw him evolve from a nationalist to an internationalist. Bill and Yuri received 11 postcards from Malcolm, from a total of eight countries that he passed through on his transformational journey. Tragically, Malcolm was cut down before he could fully implement his new vision. When Malcolm X was shot at the Audubon Ballroom on February 21, 1965, Yuri Kochiyama rushed onto the stage to see if she could help him, and it was she who cradled his head in her lap as he breathed his last. From her association with Malcolm, Yuri went on to a storied life of activism, becoming one of the few non-black members of the Republic of New Africa, participating in the takeover of the Statue of Liberty in 1977 as part of the Puerto Rican liberation movement, and campaigning for and corresponding with political prisoners like Assata Shakur, Dylcia Pagán, Geronimo ji Jaga Pratt, and Mumia Abu-Jamal.[7]

Red Guard Party/I Wor Kuen (IWK)

The Red Guard Party and I Wor Kuen (IWK) were two important Asian American radical groups that formed on opposite coasts, in the Chinatowns of San Francisco and New York City, but merged to form the first national Asian American radical organization under the moniker of National IWK. IWK eventually became the largest revolutionary Asian American organization.[8] The name "I Wor Kuen" means "righteous, harmonious fists" in Chinese and refers to the Boxer Rebellion in

China. In the late nineteenth century, Western powers (along with Japan) carved up China into colonial "spheres of influence" within which foreign governments and businesses operated freely and Chinese people were treated as second-class citizens. Oppressed and humiliated by the powerlessness of the central Chinese government to stand up to foreigners, a peasant movement arose and organized thousands of "boxers," who were so named because they practiced martial arts and were only lightly armed. The Boxers revolted in 1900, attacking Westerners and symbols of foreign influence. Although they were roundly defeated and brutally repressed, the Boxers stood as an example of ordinary people attempting to restore Chinese dignity and stand up against Western imperialism. IWK identified with the Boxers' anti-imperialism and their militancy.

The Chinatowns of San Francisco and New York shared remarkable similarities: both were sites of extreme poverty and economic exploitation, both suffered from a substantial lack of social services, and both were havens for recent Chinese immigrants. In San Francisco, a youth group called Legitimate Ways (Leways for short) began in 1967.[9] Young people in Chinatown faced bleak economic prospects and found few positive recreational outlets. Consequently, some turned to petty crime and gangs, which tended to organize as immigrants versus American-born Chinese. Leways sought to provide job training and placement and an alternative set of activities. Most significantly, Leways opened a pool hall on Jackson Street in Chinatown. Hundreds of young people gathered there each night to play pool and hang out, but police began to harass and disrupt the pool hall. It was not uncommon for a dozen riot-equipped cops to burst in and throw kids up against walls, with the usual excuse being that they were searching for a Chinese suspect. Police brutalized kids for no good reason, earning them the enmity of Chinatown youth.

In addition to Chinatown kids, the Leways pool hall also attracted progressive Asian Americans who were dialed into the political activism of the Bay Area, including the Black Power and anti-Vietnam War movements. One such activist, Alex Hing, had grown up in Chinatown and landed in some legal trouble, so he ventured out to City College of San Francisco to get away from his problems. There, he got involved with the influential New Left group Students for a Democratic Society and participated in a mini-free speech movement on campus. He later hung out at the famous hippie scene in Haight Ashbury, but associated more with political radicals than the hippies. From there, he joined the Peace and Freedom Party and read radical literature, including the Black Power staple *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* and *Red Star over China*, a laudatory account of Mao's political and military struggles. Hing eventually returned to Chinatown and headed to Jackson Street to try to politicize the youth in the pool halls.

The political upheaval in San Francisco lit a spark among the Leways youth. Their discontent with police brutality, poverty, and racism found its focus when the Black Panther leaders Bobby Seale and David Hilliard visited the pool hall in late 1967 or early 1968. Amidst the jazz and soul music playing in the background, and the pool shooters smoking cigarettes and wearing field jackets and sunglasses in the

middle of the night, the Panthers found a group that was ready to organize in new ways to better their lives and the lives of other Asian Americans. The Panthers invited the Leways kids to study political theory with them: they read Mao, Frantz Fanon, Che Guevara at the Panthers' national headquarters in Oakland and at Eldridge Cleaver's house in San Francisco. A radical core planned a new organization, which they intended to call the Red Dragons, but Seale insisted that they should call themselves the Red Guard Party as a way to "freak fucking people out." The Red Guards in China were students and youth organized to carry out the dictums of Mao's Cultural Revolution. Hence, calling themselves the Red Guard Party was a bold and provocative move that challenged the predominantly anti-communist power elite of Chinatown.

Hing, who served as the Minister of Information of the Red Guard Party, believed that Chinese Americans shared important parallels with two other groups: the Black Panthers in the U.S. and the Red Guards in China. First, he believed that Chinese and blacks both suffered from American racism. The Red Guard Party organized itself as a Chinese American analog to the Panthers, calling police "pigs," feeding hungry people in the neighborhood, and demanding justice for "yellow" people. Second, he saw that Chinese Americans and the Chinese in mainland China were fighting against a common foe: the nationalist and repressive Kuomintang (KMT).[10] These two parallels demonstrate the RGP's interracial solidarities within the U.S. and internationalist solidarities that crossed the Pacific Ocean.

As early as 1971, Rocky Chin acknowledged from an East Coast perspective that, "The Asian American Movement had its genesis on the West Coast," and that the "West Coast movement with its 'critical mass' of Asians is some two to three years 'ahead' of the East Coast."[11] Although he was probably correct in acknowledging the predominance of Asian American activism on the West Coast, Chin's estimate of two-to-three years advancement was overly generous. Although Leways was active in 1967, the Red Guards did not formally announce themselves until April 1969. In February of that same year, a group of Asian American college and high school students opened a storefront collective in New York City and called themselves I Wor Kuen.[12] The initial members came from AAA, the AAPA chapter at Columbia, and other New Left organizations. They published a bilingual newspaper entitled *Getting Together*, which discussed Chinatown's social and economic problems and programs that sought to alleviate those ills, provided political analyses that linked the plight of Asian Americans to the situation of other people of color, and called upon Asian Americans to ally with other non-whites.

Far from being quaint or exotic, New York's Chinatown was, as Carmen Chow wrote, "a ghetto community which has one of the highest suicide rates, highest tuberculosis rates, the most congested housing facilities of any ghetto in New York City," with "inadequate" to "atrocious" heath care facilities. IWK members learned how to administer a tuberculosis test and went from block to block, testing Chinatown residents and taking people who tested positive to local clinics for

X-rays. They went even further, setting up a free storefront clinic staffed by doctors who volunteered their time, and gave out preventive health literature.[13]

In addition to providing badly needed social services, IWK presented a political program that linked Asian Americans to other people of color. They wrote:

> [O]ur programs will be the beginning blocks of the movement of Chinese, YELLOW POWER. We are not out to demand this phoney [sic] reform or that, but to fight for the total self-determination of the Asian people of Chinatown. Our programs are a step on the road of a thousand-li that leads to the freedom and power for all non-white (YELLOW, BROWN, BLACK) peoples of this community. POWER TO THE COURAGEOUS, HARDWORKING, PROUD, ASIAN-AMERICAN PEOPLE![14]

IWK aligned itself with advocates of Black Power, such as the Black Panther Party, and broadly identified Asian Americans—not just Chinese—as their target audience. Furthermore, from the beginning, IWK was committed to the idea that Asian American liberation could take place only in concert with the liberation of other people of color.

One of the links between IWK and the Black Panthers revolved around the Panthers' admiration of Mao Zedong. Indeed, IWK was strongly influenced by the Panthers' elevation of Mao to the status of a shining example of how a non-white leader could free his nation of colonialism. Part of Mao's appeal derived from his acknowledgement of the racial struggles of non-whites in the United States and his exhortations to revolution. Just as was the case in San Francisco, declaring allegiance to Mao in New York City's Chinatown was a dicey proposition, given that the anti-Communist Chinatown elite, especially the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA) repressed anyone suspected of being a radical. IWK's open avowal of support for Mao and the People's Republic of China (PRC) thus posed a clear challenge to the status quo, and many Chinatown residents were initially loathe to align themselves with radicals, though this changed somewhat over time. The fears of Chinatown denizens were not unfounded, as the IWK storefront had its windows broken repeatedly and was firebombed three times. IWK members also faced physical harassment in Chinatown. Nevertheless, they persevered in bringing an alternative political analysis to the Chinese American ghetto.

As part of its political education program, IWK showed free films. One film, *East is Red*—which extolled the virtues of Communist China—attracted over one thousand viewers over three nights. Many were elderly people who were eager to get a glimpse of their homeland. IWK emphasized Chinese films because the KMT enforced a repressive atmosphere in Chinatown, but they also screened films highlighting liberation struggles in other Asian nations, such as Vietnam, Laos, and Japan, and even more widely, in Palestine and the United States. The point of showing these films was to demystify Communism and politicize Chinese Americans and other Asian Americans.

Given their similarities, it is perhaps unsurprising that members of the Red Guard Party and IWK joined forces. In the summer of 1971, RGP and IWK held serious talks about merging their organizations. As they did so, they grappled with defining the way forward, struggling with issues such as the relationship between armed struggle and community work, and the role of women. The consensus that emerged marginalized advocates of an "ultra-military line" that viewed Serve-the-People programs as secondarily important to organized violence against the state, and also eliminated a male chauvinist line that called for the abolition of monogamy and the collectivization of sexual relations.[15] Hence, RGP was dissolved in July 1971 and a number of its members, including Alex Hing, merged into the San Francisco branch of IWK. In August, when IWK opened a storefront in San Francisco Chinatown, it became the first national Asian American revolutionary organization.[16]

Asian Community Center (ACC)/Wei Min She (WMS)

The Asian Community Center (ACC) emerged in San Francisco from young student activists who wanted to make a difference in Asian American communities. Over time, it evolved into a community-based, radical organization, and eventually became part of a multiracial Communist party. Along the way, it provided social services and an alternative political perspective in Chinatown. Although it was initially composed primarily of American-born Chinese, it later attracted ethnic Chinese foreign students as well.[17]

After the successful strike for Ethnic Studies at UC Berkeley (discussed in Chapter 2), some AAPA members came to believe that they could accomplish more within Asian American communities than on college campuses. Hence, in 1970 they formed the Asian Community Center in San Francisco's Chinatown/Manilatown; shortly thereafter, ACC relocated to the basement of the International Hotel.[18] Steve Yip recalls how this Asian American organization was related to other struggles for racial justice. Having been politicized in high school by the formation of the Black Panther Party and the Third World Liberation Front, Yip joined AAPA when he started college at Berkeley. Studying in the newly formed Ethnic Studies program exposed him to revolutionary writers like Mao. Students like Yip were particularly taken by Mao's dictum: "If you want to know the theory and methods of revolution, you must take part in revolution." They understood it as a charge to descend from the ivory tower and enter communities of poor people and workers, to serve those people, and to join with them in struggle.[19]

Given its location, it is unsurprising that one of ACC's major campaigns was to stop the destruction of the I-Hotel (see Chapter 3), but the group also operated a number of social programs. The physical space of ACC was an informal drop-in center that provided Chinese reading materials and screened free movies on the weekends. Many of the films were documentaries or features from mainland China, which made ACC a controversial organization within the political context of Chinatown.

Chinatowns in the United States were deeply impacted by international Cold War politics, in particular by the split between the Communist-led PRC and the U.S.-backed Republic of China (ROC). Mao Zedong had led a Communist revolution against the ruling Nationalist government, and upon achieving military success, proclaimed the establishment of the PRC (also known informally as mainland, Communist, or Red China) in 1949. The Kuomintang (KMT), or National Party, was driven off the mainland to the island of Taiwan, where it established a government in exile. For two decades, the U.S. refused to recognize the Communists as legitimate rulers of China, and instead continued to maintain diplomatic relations with the Nationalists.

Conservative business factions closely allied with the KMT-dominated American Chinatowns. Organizations like the virulently anti-communist Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA) establishment eagerly red-baited and blacklisted people suspected of having radical sympathies.[20] This meant that someone suspected of being a radical might find it difficult to secure employment, or, worse yet, could endure physical violence. Furthermore, the CCBA suppressed information about mainland China. ACC's Free Film Program thus proved to be popular among the immigrants of Chinatown who longed for sights, sounds, and news from their native land. The film series also attracted Chinese students from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the PRC, who identified with the mainland as the source of their diaspora.

In 1970, ACC opened Everybody's Bookstore, a cooperative that carried books and magazines in both Chinese and English, on topics including Asia (especially mainland China), Asian American history and literature, and contemporary social change. According to Harvey Dong, the founding members of the bookstore were mostly AAPA veterans of the Third World strike at Berkeley, who wanted to make a more immediate impact on Asian American communities. The bookstore not only provided a fresh source of information on Asia and Asian Americans, but importantly, it also linked Asian American struggles to the plight of other Third World people by carrying newspapers such as the *Black Panther News* and *Palante*, published by a Puerto Rican revolutionary organization, the Young Lords Party.[21]

ACC also operated a free food program. Each month, 300 people in Chinatown lined up to receive food provided by the ACC. Though the supplies came from a U.S. Department of Agriculture surplus food cache, the program required the labor of dedicated volunteers to transport and distribute them. Along with the food, ACC included a family newsletter, published in both English and Chinese, which provided recipes and nutrition advice to help recipients get the most from their supplies. To express ACC's political perspective and underscore that it was radicals who were providing for the needs of the community, the cover pages of the newsletters incorporated art produced by the Chinese Cultural Revolution.[22] In addition to the free food program, ACC opened a free health clinic that screened for glaucoma and distributed donated glasses and hearing aids. These programs targeted the elderly, most of whom had no health insurance, for they were the most impoverished group

in Chinatown.[23] Finally, ACC started a cooperative garment factory. Being a cooperative meant that workers themselves owned the factory and therefore had no boss to skim off profits.[24] Although the factory was not a long-term success, its structure as a cooperative underscored ACC's commitment to exploring non-exploitative models of production.

In 1971–72, the membership of ACC transformed into Wei Min She (WMS), or "Organization for the People."[25] This change resulted from considerable discussion and study of what it would take to end racism against and oppression of Asian Americans and other people of color. The members of WMS, heeding Mao's statements linking class exploitation and racial discrimination, came to see that the ultimate source of both forms of oppression was a system of imperialism, with the United States operating an empire that exploited people of color within its borders and abroad. WMS thus declared itself to be an "anti-imperialist" organization, dedicated to ending "U.S. imperialist rule." In addition to studying Mao, WMS members also discussed works by Lenin, Marx, and Stalin on the question of national liberation.[26] Even as WMS billed itself a revolutionary, anti-imperialist organization, ACC continued to function as a "mass" or community-based organization. WMS explicitly adopted the awkwardly named Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse-tung Thought (MLMTT) as a tool to fight for justice. Embracing Marx, Lenin, and Mao signaled WMS's commitment to creating revolutionary changes that would overthrow capitalism in favor of socialism. WMS's program included struggling for the rights of minority groups, organizing workers to attain wages and fair working conditions, ending the oppression of women, building friendship between the People's Republic of China and the United States, and organizing students as a force for change.[27]

Kalayaan/KDP

The group called KDP (*Katipunan ng mga Demokratikong Pilipino*, or the Union of Democratic Filipinos) constituted the most important leftist group among Filipino Americans.[28] It occupies a unique place within the Asian American movement by virtue of its close ties to Asian radicals. Despite its importance to the Asian American movement, KDP and the anti-martial law movement in which it participated have been largely ignored in writings about the movement, a move that historian Catherine Ceniza Choy rightly lambasts as exclusionist.[29] At its peak, KDP boasted perhaps 200 or 300 members in the United States, and operated a "two-sided political program" aimed at establishing national democracy in the Philippines and socialism in the United States.[30] KDP drew inspiration from three sources: (1) a history of Filipino radicalism in the U.S.; (2) the various social movements for justice in the 1960s and 1970s; and (3) the Philippine Left.

KDP envisioned itself as a vanguard organization, "the most 'advanced' political force in the Filipino American community" and set out to revive the progressive politics that once characterized Filipino immigrant communities in the early twentieth century.[31] KDP members looked for inspiration to figures like Carlos Bulosan, the

great unionist and writer, whose *America is in the Heart* chronicled the suffering and struggles of migrant Filipino laborers as they trekked from San Diego to Alaska in the 1920s and 1930s, working the agricultural fields and salmon canning houses, and eventually forming unions. They took pride in Filipino participation in farm worker strikes organized by the Trade Union Unity League (TUUL), a multiracial union established by the Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA) during the Great Depression. They remembered Filipino-led locals of the International Longshoremen and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU) in Hawai'i and Seattle. Although Filipino American socialism and Communism fell dormant during World War II and the McCarthy era, KDP sought to revitalize the tradition of progressive politics within the Filipino community.

Many of the people who eventually became KDP members were politicized in the political swirl of the 1960s, when a myriad of movements—for civil rights and Black Power, Third World unity, student rights, and ending the Vietnam War movement—sought social change. Estella Habal, who went on to lead the KDP efforts at the International Hotel (see Chapter 3), was a single mother living with her parents when she enrolled at Long Beach State College in 1969. She was fascinated by the progressive politics suffusing campus, but was less attracted to the white-, male-dominated Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) than groups organizing non-white students. Her first foray into revolutionary politics came about when she joined United Mexican American Students (UMAS), which would soon be renamed Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA). Drawn to a Chicano organization because of the similar working-class and immigrant communities of Mexican Americans and Filipino Americans, their common Catholicism, and histories of Spanish colonization, Habal felt an affinity with Chicana and Chicano students. She wore a beret and bandolier as a visual expression of her radicalism, and learned about Mexican revolutionaries like Emiliano Zapata before she ever learned about Filipino anticolonial fighters.[32] Similarly, Rose Ibanez, a Filipina American growing up in San Diego, formed a Third World Students club at her high school, with the goal of establishing Ethnic Studies. She later joined KDP while attending San Diego State.[33] Like Habal and Ibanez, many future KDP members moved in multiracial circles and participated in Third World organizations prior to becoming self-consciously Filipino activists.

Across the Pacific from Long Beach and San Diego, Cynthia Maglaya was a leader in a series of massive student demonstrations in Manila. The student group she belonged to was associated with the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), a Maoist upstart within the Philippines Left that sought to rectify the moribund and cautious approach of its predecessor.[34] As government repression of dissidents mounted, Maglaya migrated to the United States for her own personal safety.[35] Like Maglaya, Carol Ojeda-Kimbrough had her life transformed by political activism, first in the Philippines, then later in the U.S. She was a student activist at the University of the Philippines, then dropped out to work full-time with squatters and the urban poor who had no recourse other than to build non-sanctioned shelters on public or

private land and lacked clean water and sanitation. After the imposition of martial law, the police interrogated her frequently, and fearing arrest, she fled to the U.S. in 1975, intending to return once the situation cooled off. In Los Angeles, she got involved in anti-martial law organizing and eventually joined the KDP.[36]

In the U.S., Maglaya helped to organize support among Filipino Americans for the CPP and its guerilla arm, the New People's Army (NPA). She and about a dozen activists—both Filipino immigrants and Filipino Americans—organized a collective in June 1971. The Kalayaan (Freedom) Collective, as it came to be known, published a monthly newspaper entitled *Kalayaan*, beginning in August 1971.[37] Its name paid homage to the official organ of the Philippine Katipunan, a revolutionary Filipino organization that had fought against Spanish colonialism at the end of the nineteenth century.[38] The Kalayaan collective brought together radical students in exile from the Philippines, like Maglaya, with Filipino Americans. Likewise, the *Kalayaan* newspaper connected the struggle for revolution in the Philippines with struggles against racism in the United States. The February/March 1972 issue of *Kalayaan* called for the formation of a national organization of leftist Filipino Americans that would formalize ties between many local groups. A crisis in the Philippines made the need for such an organization even more urgent.

On 21 September 1972, President Ferdinand Marcos declared martial law in the Philippines. He claimed this action was necessary because of the NPA-led insurgency in several provinces. The declaration enabled Marcos to suspend democratic governance and rule by decree, and under its auspices, the government carried out mass arrests of thousands of civilians. The human rights watchdog Amnesty International reported hundreds of cases of torture.[39] Kalayaan activists joined in a broad coalition that created the National Committee for the Restoration of Civil Liberties in the Philippines (NCRCLP). NCRCLP included the entire political spectrum, from leftists like Kalayaan members to moderates and conservatives. Despite their differences, the NCRCLP united around the principles of opposition to martial law, restoration of civil liberties, release of political prisoners, and end of U.S. support for Marcos.

The creation of NCRCLP satisfied the need for broad-based opposition to martial law, but leftists desired a more focused group with greater ideological cohesion. At a planning retreat in the Santa Cruz mountains in July 1973, about 80 Filipino activists from around the U.S. formed the KDP. The new group coalesced around three points of unity: (1) support for revolution in the Philippines; (2) advocacy of socialism in the United States; and (3) the KDP as a "revolutionary mass organization." The organization adopted a democratic–centralist structure: members elected a nine-member National Council, which in turn elected three executive members to run the day-to-day operations.

The KDP played an integral part in building anti-martial law coalitions. It helped to establish Friends of the Filipino People (FFP), an organization of mostly non-Filipinos that lobbied the U.S. Congress to end support for the Marcos dictatorship.[40] It also formed what Toribio calls the "backbone" of the Anti-Martial Law Coalition,

which established chapters in cities around the U.S., monitored events in the Philippines and developments concerning the Philippines in the U.S. Congress, and demonstrated at Philippine consulates on the anniversary of the instatement of martial law.[41] All of these activities demonstrated the KDP's opposition to Marcos and his American backers.

Although several other organizations dedicated to fighting U.S. imperialism in the Philippines existed in the U.S., according to Choy:

> What distinguished the KDP, however, from other anti-martial law organizations was its focus on the "dual nature" of the Filipino American community, a community that was at once an overseas community bound to the history and culture of the Philippine nation, but becoming increasingly aware of its position as a racialized minority group in the United States.[42]

The KDP's dual nature was both a strength and a weakness, as it sought to unite Philippine nationals and Filipino Americans, but it was not always clear which of its focuses should take precedence, nor was it clear whether Filipino Americans should be treated merely as Filipinos in diaspora or as part of the non-white American working class. Tensions over these questions erupted in 1975, when the Chicago chapter temporarily split from the national organization, as the Chicagoans felt that the work in the U.S. overshadowed the KDP's efforts for the Philippines. (The chapter did eventually end up returning to the KDP fold.)

From the beginning of the Kalayaan collective to the formation of KDP, Filipino activists dedicated themselves to building consciousness and solidarity through print publications. The first *Kalayaan* newspaper was published in June 1971. Its pages introduced Filipino Americans to the CPP, the NPA, and the revolution in the Philippines. Another topic covered by the *Kalayaan* newspaper was the movement to reclaim Filipino American ethnic pride in the 1970s. At conferences held in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Seattle, and San Diego, young Filipino Americans (Fil-Ams) came together to learn about the racial oppression and economic exploitation of Filipinos, to network, and to explore Filipino history and culture. These gatherings provided powerful opportunities for young people to build a sense of identity and focus their activism, for as Habal recalls, "It is hard to describe one's feelings when you discover that you have a history worth studying and a culture to be proud of."[43] The Kalayaan Collective recognized the strength of the growing Filipino American movement and sought to harness it for progressive politics.

In October 1973, the newspaper *Ang Katipunan* (*AK*) replaced *Kalayaan* as activists moved from the former collective into the KDP. The *AK* mined a variety of sources from mainstream venues from the *New York Times* to underground Philippines publications to bring its readers news and analysis of the situation in the island archipelago. It covered abuses by the Marcos regime, opposition to martial law, and the NPA's advances, as well as the Moro rebellion taking place in the southern island of Mindanao. In addition, it linked the revolution in the Philippines

to uprisings around the world, in the Middle East, Central America, and South Africa. KDP members sold the *AK* in neighborhoods and at churches and workplaces. They also hawked the newspaper at community events, festivals, and celebrations of national holidays. In addition to *Ang Katipunan*, KDP also began publishing *Ang Aktibista* in November 1973. In contrast to the *AK*, it was an internal organ intended for activists rather than a mass audience. *Ang Aktibista* contained reports from KDP campaigns, as well as theoretical pieces analyzing issues such as democratic–centralism, the specific characteristics of the Philippine revolution, and Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia.

The KDP also reached out to, and sought to inspire, Filipinos and Fil-Ams through culture. Sining Bayan, or Filipino People's Performing Arts, was the cultural performance arm of the KDP. It incorporated Filipino dance, music, and drama into productions that reminded Filipinos in the U.S. of their connections to the Philippines.[44] Sining Bayan put on performances that dramatized the lives of immigrant nurses wrongly accused of crimes, Muslims in the Philippines, *sakadas* (sugar plantation workers in Hawai'i), and the wives of Filipino American soldiers after World War II. In 1976, the KDP released *Bangon! Arise!* on Paredon Records, an album of 19 revolutionary songs drawn from nearly a century of Filipino and Fil-Am uprisings, from the Katipunan of 1896 to the demonstrations of the 1970s. Its cover art suggested the KDP's revolutionary aims: peasant warriors and urban guerillas (both men and women) either charge toward the foreground or stand resolute, staring forward as if daring enemies to advance. They are armed with machetes, sharpened bamboo poles, assault rifles, and grenades.[45] The song list ranged from tributes to Andres Bonifacio, hero of the original Katipunan, to the anthem of the New People's Army, and even included a Tagalog rendition of the Internationale ("Internasyonal").

One of the most notable characteristics of Philippine migration to the United States during the 1970s was that a significant number of immigrants were medical professionals, due to the occupational preference system created by the immigration reforms of 1965. Hence, a significant number of Filipino immigrants were doctors or nurses. As highly skilled laborers, they were unlike previous generations, which had come to the U.S. and toiled for low wages in agricultural fields. However, they were still immigrant workers, and as such, the KDP sought to support and organize them. One of the KDP's most visible cases was support for Filipina Narciso and Leonora Perez, two Filipina immigrant nurses accused of murdering patients by poison injection at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Ann Arbor, Michigan, in 1975.[46]

The case drew national attention, with sensationalized coverage in venues such as *Time* magazine. A non-fiction book, *The Mysterious Deaths at Ann Arbor*, by Robert Wilcox, depicted Narciso and Perez as menacing, inscrutable Orientals and savage Filipino natives. The evidence against Narciso and Perez was scanty and circumstantial at best, and during the trial, supposed eyewitnesses collapsed under cross-examination, revealing their racism (one even called the two "slant-eyed bitches"). Furthermore,

a purported confession to the murders by a nurse supervisor who subsequently committed suicide was not admitted into evidence, because the supervisor's psychiatrist declined to testify. Despite the sorry state of the prosecution's case, Narciso and Perez were convicted of conspiracy and three counts of poisoning in 1977. They appealed the guilty verdicts.[47]

The KDP played a major role in helping to defend Narciso and Perez. Its newspaper, *Ang Katipunan*, published a hostile review of *Mysterious Deaths at Ann Arbor*, criticizing Wilcox for his racist depictions and irresponsible journalism. In addition, KDP members helped to organize the Chicago Support Group for the Narciso–Perez Case. Although KDPers held leadership positions—Esther Simpson, a Filipino nurse herself, served as coordinator—they distinguished the support group from the KDP in order to garner support from a wider spectrum of the community. Indeed, the Chicago Support Group drew supporters and raised funds from segments of the Filipino community that did not necessarily share the KDP's radical politics. The KDP's aims went beyond simply gaining the acquittal of the two accused nurses, however: it sought to use the case to educate Filipinos and Americans about racism and national discrimination. Simpson tied the prosecution of Narciso and Perez to a longer history of anti-Filipino racism in the U.S. going back to the days of Carlos Bulosan and the manongs of the 1920s and 1930s. As an organization dedicated to creating socialism in the U.S., the KDP seized on the Narciso–Perez case to highlight the travails of nurses, who constituted a significant portion of working Filipinas, especially in the Midwest.[48] Besides extensive coverage in the *AK*, the KDP shone a spotlight on the case by performing a play about the two nurses at various community events, circulating petitions, and conducting demonstrations and rallies.[49]

The Chicago Support Group conducted many activities, both to educate Filipinos about the case and to raise funds for the defense. Members leafleted apartment buildings with high Filipino populations and distributed educational brochures. The educational drive did induce some of the Filipinos visited by the support group to share their experiences of job discrimination—a clear victory in using the case to raise awareness of racism. The support group turned to the community for fundraising, selling raffle tickets and collecting donations from co-workers and customers of Filipino stores. They also turned ordinary social events, like birthday parties, into fundraisers by asking guests to donate rather than bring gifts. Local activities spread more widely, as the *Ang Katipunan* newspaper urged Filipinos to form support groups wherever the KDP had chapters. Simpson networked with organizers around the U.S. and even in Canada, offering her experience and perspective on the case. She became the national coordinator for a network that eventually had chapters in 20 American cities and states from San Diego to Maine, as well as Guam, and three in Canada.

The KDP campaign differed from other efforts to aid in the defense of the two nurses. According to Simpson, the Chicago Support Group was a grassroots organization, in contrast to efforts led by the Philippine consulate, professional groups, such as

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