



---

APA NEWSLETTER ON

# Asian and Asian-American Philosophers and Philosophies

---

David Haekwon Kim, Editor

Fall 2003

Volume 03, Number 1

---

---

## FROM THE EDITOR

---

**David Haekwon Kim**

*University of San Francisco, CA*

At the start of every semester or quarter, teachers of philosophy struggle with a common problem: How, in very concrete terms, should esoteric knowledge be conveyed through the medium of a syllabus, lesson plan, and other pedagogical projects? This edition of the APA Newsletter addresses some aspects of this problem. It offers two very helpful essays on how to teach Chinese philosophy and Asian American philosophy in introductory philosophy courses. A distinctive feature of both of these essays is that they are written for professors who do *not* specialize in Chinese philosophy or Asian American philosophy. But I hasten to add that many an old pro in these fields will also find here a good deal to consider in fine-tuning the teacher's craft.

The first essay, by Bryan W. Van Norden, offers a concise informative guide through original texts and secondary literature in Chinese philosophy. This guide is designed specifically for instructors who teach general introductory philosophy courses and would like to include perspectives from Chinese philosophy. Of particular value is the clarity with which detailed suggestions are presented by the author. And regarding detail, even such specific information as advice on pronunciation and the two common romanization schemes are offered. Finally, the essay concludes with a bibliography that may be consulted in formulating a list of required texts and in preparing for lesson plans.

Although Asian philosophy is starting to get incorporated in general philosophy courses, Asian American Philosophy has made comparatively fewer inroads. In the second essay, Gary Mar offers a wealth of considerations that help to motivate concern for Asian American perspectives in teaching. He explores some of the structures of on-going marginalization of Asian American viewpoints and realities, and the resulting classroom dynamics. A distinctive aspect of Mar's treatment of these issues is his personal account of the use of new media in teaching Asian-American Philosophy. His essay offers both a critique of common philosophical pedagogy and a model for how to use increasingly available technology to make an impact in the lives of students who fall within our circles of care and instruction.

---

## ARTICLES

---

### *How to Add Chinese Philosophy to Your Introductory Course*

**Bryan W. Van Norden**

*Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY*

This is a guide for those who are trained in Western philosophy, and who are unfamiliar with Chinese philosophy, but would like to incorporate it into their introductory courses. I shall limit my discussion to early Chinese philosophy (prior to the Qin Dynasty, which was also before the arrival of Buddhism). I shall discuss various figures and texts one might use, and provide complete bibliographic information at the end.

Most people have heard of Confucius, whose sayings are recorded in the *Analects*, and Laozi (Lao Tzu), the supposed author of the *Daodejing* (*Tao Te Ching*).<sup>1</sup> Consequently, it is a natural assumption to make that these are the authors and the texts to begin with. And, depending on your philosophical sensibility and style of teaching, they may work for you. However, my impression is that most philosophers will find these works quite difficult to teach successfully without extensive study. Each is written in a highly aphoristic style, and, as Joel Kupperman remarks,

If educated Chinese, Koreans, and Japanese (along with a small number of Western scholars) think that they understand *The Analects of Confucius*, it is because they have read it all, probably more than once. The pithy sayings take on meaning in the larger context. For the Western reader who is not a specialist *The Analects of Confucius* initially will seem like one of those amorphous blots used in Rorschach tests.<sup>2</sup>

And the same might be said of the *Daodejing*. Furthermore, there are difficult issues regarding the composition and historicity of each text that are hard to ignore, but also difficult to address at the introductory level.

If you still want to teach the *Analects*, there are fine complete translations by Arthur Waley, D.C. Lau, and Raymond Dawson. In addition, Edward Slingerland has a translation with commentary on every passage in the *Analects*, including many selections from some of the classic Chinese commentaries. I would recommend as background reading (for you and possibly for your students) the introduction and essays in Bryan W. Van Norden, ed., *Confucius and the Analects: New Essays*. Two important earlier books on Confucius are Herrlee Creel's *Confucius and the Chinese Way* (which is unfortunately out of print) and Herbert Fingarette's *Confucius – the Secular as Sacred*. Creel does a good job presenting a speculative personal and intellectual biography of Confucius, and Fingarette has a very good discussion of the role

---

of ritual in Confucianism. (However, Fingarette's insistence that Confucius was a sort of behaviorist is well criticized in Benjamin Schwartz's *The World of Thought in Ancient China*.)

The *Daodejing* is one of the most frequently translated books in world history. Complicating matters is the fact that there are several different versions of the Chinese text of the *Daodejing*. Among the best translations of the traditional text (the Wang Bi version) are those by Wing-tsit Chan, Philip J. Ivanhoe, Richard Lynn, and Arthur Waley. (Lynn's translation includes Wang Bi's ancient commentary.) The historically earlier version of the text that was unearthed at Mawangdui in China a few decades ago has been ably translated by Victor Mair and Robert Henricks. The Guodian version has also been translated by Henricks. D.C. Lau has produced elegant translations of both the traditional version and the Mawangdui text.

There are two excellent collections of secondary studies of the *Dadejing*: Mark Csikszentmihalyi and Philip J. Ivanhoe, eds., *Religious and Philosophical Aspects of the Laozi* and Livia Kohn and Michael LaFargue, eds., *Lao-tzu and the Tao-te-ching*. Generally speaking, the essays in the former volume are mostly philosophical, while the latter includes more historical and textual essays.

But instead of either Confucius or Laozi, I recommend five philosophers for your introductory classes: Mozi (Mo Tzu), an agent-neutral consequentialist, Yang Zhu (Yang Chu), an egoist, Mengzi (Mencius), a Confucian virtue ethicist, Gongsun Longzi (Kung-sun Lung Tzu), the author of a sophisticated dialogue, and Xunzi (Hsun Tzu), a Confucian virtue ethicist who was a critic of Mengzi.

Mozi is a fascinating figure who founded a major intellectual and political movement in ancient China that criticized "Confucianism." One of the major achievements of this school of thought is an essay entitled "Impartial Caring," which argues in favor of a sort of agent-neutral consequentialism. (Mohist consequentialism differs from Western utilitarianism, though, in that it is based on the maximization of wealth, populousness and social order, rather than on any psychological state such as pleasure, happiness or "preference.") The arguments of "Impartial Caring" are intriguing, although flawed, so any philosophy professor interested in analyzing arguments should love teaching this essay. (I discuss and critique these arguments in "A Response to the Mohist Arguments in 'Impartial Caring.')" Another fascinating aspect of the Mohist philosophy is their use of a "state of nature" argument to justify unifying social norms and governmental authority. This argument may be found in the essay "Obeying One's Superior." (Both of the essays I mention may be found in Burton Watson's *Mo Tzu: Basic Writings*, where they are entitled "Universal Love" and "Identifying with One's Superior.")

Both Mohism (the philosophy of Mozi and his followers) and Ruism (the philosophy of Confucius and his followers) were criticized by Yang Zhu. Yang Zhu was probably some sort of egoist, but there is disagreement about exactly what kind of egoist he was. Consequently, you could give your students your own favorite article on ethical and psychological egoism, then have them read about Yang Zhu and discuss what kind of egoist he was and whether his position is plausible. (My own best guess is that he was a kind of ethical egoist, but one who based his egoism on a normative conception of human nature. He held that ethics, of either the Confucian or Mohist varieties, was both the cause of, and the result of, deformations of human nature, and that one would act in an egoistic fashion if human nature were allowed to develop in an unfettered way.) Unfortunately, no writings that can be definitively attributed to Yang Zhu survive. Nonetheless, there are at least two options for introducing his ideas to your students. First, there is a chapter

called "Yang Zhu" ("Yang Chu") in a work known as the *Liezi* (*Lieh-tzu*). This chapter is almost certainly not an historically accurate representation of Yang Zhu's ideas, however it does offer an entertaining and challenging presentation of a sort of extreme hedonistic egoism. A. C. Graham's translation is excellent. Another way to teach Yang Zhu is to use the "Robber Zhi" ("Robber Chih") section (chapter 29) from a work known as the *Zhuangzi* (*Chuang Tzu*). Some scholars believe that this chapter represents something like the ideas of the historical Yang Zhu. A. C. Graham's *Chuang-tzu: The Inner Chapters* has this chapter (pp. 234-243) as does Burton Watson's *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*.

Mengzi (also known as "Mencius") was a charismatic and eloquent philosopher and political figure whose sayings and dialogues are recorded in the eponymous *Mengzi*. He saw himself as defending Confucianism against the twin challenges of Mohism and Yangism. He did so with a distinctive theory of human nature, holding that human nature is good in the sense that all humans innately possess incipient dispositions toward virtuous feeling, perception, action, and thought. These incipient dispositions must be developed, though, in order for humans to become fully virtuous. Since human nature is good, Yang Zhu is wrong in thinking that ethics is a deformation of human nature. But human nature also inclines us to agent-relative concern for members of our own family. Consequently, Mohist impartiality is unworkable because it contravenes our natural inclinations. (David S. Nivison has argued persuasively in "Philosophical Voluntarism in Fourth-Century China," that the early Mohists, at least, regarded human motivations as almost infinitely malleable, because humans possess no nature.)

Mengzi argues for the existence of these dispositions through the use of thought experiments, the most famous of which is the story of the baby at the well (which is found in *Mengzi* 2A6 – book 2, part A, section 6). Any person, Mengzi argues, who was suddenly confronted with the sight of a child about to fall into a well would have a feeling of alarm and compassion. Using an agricultural metaphor, Mengzi says that this reaction is the "sprout" of benevolence. Similarly, Mengzi argues that even the most downtrodden beggar will reject a handout given with contempt (6A10). This is a manifestation of our innate but incipient sense of shame. This raises the question of what Mengzi would say about those who are now sometimes called "sociopaths," "psychopaths," or those with "antisocial personality disorder" – people who seemingly show no concern for the well-being of others.<sup>3</sup> He answers this with his story of Ox Mountain (6A8). Ox Mountain was originally verdant, but its trees were destroyed by loggers, and the remaining plants were eaten by grazing animals, till the mountain was left bald. People assume that this was the mountain's "nature," but it is actually just the result of a bad environment. Another challenging passage in the *Mengzi* is 1A1, which suggests that aiming at profit is, at the least, self-effacing, and possibly also self-defeating (in Parfit's senses of those expressions). More difficult to interpret, but also intriguing, are passages 1A7 (in which Mengzi tries to convince a king that the kindness he showed toward an ox being led to slaughter shows that the king is capable of ruling virtuously), 3A5 (in which Mengzi argues against a Mohist) and 6A1-5 (in which Mengzi and his disciples argue with the rival philosopher Gaozi and his disciples over human nature).

Probably the best complete translation of the *Mengzi* is that by D. C. Lau. (But for some suggested amendments to Lau's translation, see "<http://faculty.vassar.edu/brvannor/lau.html>".) Among secondary studies, Kwong-loi Shun's *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought* is a careful, scholarly study of many issues raised by this text. Lee H. Yearley's *Mencius and Aquinas* is a seminal comparison

of the two philosophers, using a virtue ethics framework. Two helpful anthologies are Xiusheng Liu and Philip J. Ivanhoe, *Essays on the Moral Philosophy of Mengzi*, and Alan K. L. Chan, *Mencius: Contexts and Interpretations*. Among the fine essays in the Liu and Ivanhoe anthology are Angus C. Graham's classic "The Background of the Mencian Theory of Human Nature," a paper by Xiusheng Liu comparing Mengzi and Hume, and essays by Eric Hutton, David Wong, and Philip J. Ivanhoe that discuss the role of intuitions, emotions and reason in Mengzi's view of ethical development. One of the best essays in Chan's anthology is "Between Family and State: Relational Tensions in Confucian Ethics" by Sor-hoon Tan, which explores the varieties of positions that Confucians have taken on agent-relative obligations. In addition, two essays worth reading that have not yet been anthologized are Paul Goldin's "Xunzi in the Light of the Guodian Manuscripts," which discusses early Chinese views of human nature in the light of manuscripts not available at the time Graham wrote his article, and David Wong's insightful "Universalism vs. Love with Distinctions: An Ancient Debate Revived," which complements Tan's more historical essay by defending a version of Confucian agent-relativity against Mohist agent-neutrality.

Gongsun Longzi is famous for a brief work, "The White Horse Dialogue," in which one person defends the claim that "A white horse is not a horse" against an interlocutor. In his classic, "A First Reading of the 'White Horse,'" Angus Graham made clear how the argument for this sophistry is supposed to work. In Chinese (and, fortunately for expository purposes, also in English), the expression "X is (not) Y" is ambiguous between "X is (not) an instance of a Y" and "X is (not) identical with a Y." Context normally makes perfectly clear which sense is intended. (The ambiguity is further hidden in Chinese because it has neither definite nor indefinite articles.) But in the dialogue, the sophist defends "A white horse is not a horse" in the sense that a white horse is not exactly the same as a horse (since a horse could be any color, not just white, whereas a white horse has to be white), while his interlocutor assumes that the thesis being defended is that "A white horse is not an instance of a horse." (Although "The White Horse Dialogue" is a work of sophistry, Graham is probably right in suggesting that it and works like it had an important influence in calling into question the power of rational argumentation, leading to the anti-rationalism of the so-called "Daoists.") If you and your students like philosophical puzzles, ask them to read the dialogue and explain what the sophist is arguing for, whether his arguments are compelling, and what his interlocutor should have said in response.

Although Graham solved the interpretive puzzle for us, he did not provide us with a good translation. Graham was convinced that the text of the dialogue was massively corrupt, and that he knew how to rearrange it properly, so his translation deviates in idiosyncratic ways from the received text. I am partial (unsurprisingly) to my own translation, which may be found online at <http://faculty.vassar.edu/brvannor/Reader/whitehorse.html>. Graham does provide a good discussion of Gongsun Longzi's intellectual context and significance in his *Disputers of the Tao*. Another good secondary source is Christoph Harbsmeier's *Language and Logic* (volume 7, part 1 of *Science and Civilisation in China*, edited by Joseph Needham).

Xunzi was a Confucian, but also a critic of Mengzi. One might ask students to read selections from the *Mengzi*, and then read Xunzi's essay "Human Nature is Bad." One major issue (discussed in Graham's "The Background of the Mencian Theory of Human Nature") is whether Xunzi is attacking a straw man, by failing to understand what Mengzi's view of human nature was. However, Xunzi does have at least one major genuine disagreement with

Mengzi, since Xunzi seems to have held that humans have no innate dispositions toward virtue. This leaves Xunzi with a problem of explaining how humans *can* and why they *should* become virtuous. Influenced by the Mohists, his essay "A Discussion of Rites" presents a sort of "state of nature" argument for why we should use ritual practices to transform human nature. "A Discussion of Heaven" shows that Xunzi wants to work within what we would describe as a "naturalistic" framework. Finally, the philosophical psychology of "Rectifying Names" is, at least in part, an effort to explain how ethical cultivation is possible given Xunzi's pessimistic view of human nature and his naturalistic worldview.

Burton Watson includes all of these essays in his *Hsun Tzu: Basic Writings*. There is also a complete, although pricey, translation of all of Xunzi's works in three volumes by John Knoblock. *Virtue, Nature, and Moral Agency in the Xunzi*, edited by Thronon C. Kline and Philip J. Ivanhoe, is a useful collection of secondary essays discussing many of the issues I mentioned in the previous paragraph.

I have left off my list of recommended philosophers two early Chinese thinkers who are also frequently taught and much admired. Zhuangzi (Chuang Tzu) is traditionally described as a "Daoist" ("Taoist"), and said to be a later defender of the thought of Laozi, in the way that Mengzi is a later defender of the thought of Confucius. Contemporary scholars question both the label "Daoist" (the term is vague, and was only applied retrospectively by later historians) and whether the *Daodejing* (whenever it was composed by whomever) influenced Zhuangzi. Clearly, the eponymous *Zhuangzi* is a masterpiece of philosophy and literature, and it is also a favorite of students. However, it is an extremely challenging book to understand philosophically. (This is true even if we limit ourselves to the so-called "Inner Chapters," the first seven chapters of the *Zhuangzi*, which are regarded by most scholars as being the work of one author.) Read the opening story about the giant fish that metamorphosizes into a giant bird that is laughed at by a cicada and a dove and you'll start to see what I mean. If you're intrigued, or just daring, and want to explore more, one of the major issues surrounding this text is whether it is defending some version of relativism, skepticism, mysticism, particularism, pluralism, or something else. Probably the two most helpful anthologies are Victor Mair's *Experimental Essays on Chuang-tzu*, in which you should especially read Chad Hansen's provocative "A Tao of Tao in Chuang-tzu," and *Essays on Skepticism, Relativism, and Ethics in the Zhuangzi*, edited by Paul Kjellberg and Philip J. Ivanhoe. (I argue for a kind of mystical interpretation of the *Zhuangzi* in my "Competing Interpretations of the Inner Chapters.")

Among the best translations of the *Zhuangzi* are Graham's *Chuang-Tzu: The Inner Chapters* (which includes a detailed introduction and extensive selections from parts of the work outside of the Inner Chapters), Burton Watson's *Chuang Tzu: Basic Writings* (which includes the Inner Chapters and less extensive selections from other chapters), and Watson's *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*.

Finally, Han Feizi (Han Fei Tzu) is a brilliant theorist of power – how it is accumulated, how it is lost, how to maintain it. I hesitate to recommend him only because I have never been satisfied with my own teaching of his work, so I am unsure what advice to give. Burton Watson provides a partial translation of his essays in his *Han Fei Tzu: Basic Writings*, and there is a complete translation by W. K. Liao. A helpful secondary article is Paul Goldin's "Han Fei's Doctrine of Self-Interest."

Among the better-known anthologies of selections from early Chinese philosophical texts are Wing-tsit Chan's *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* and Philip J. Ivanhoe and Bryan W. Van Norden's *Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy*. Chan's

book is a mixed bag. It has selections from almost every major Chinese philosopher of the last 2,500 years, including some that are not readily available in other translations. However, Chan's translations sometimes lapse into incomprehensibility, and his explanatory notes are almost always both confused and confusing. *Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy* has selections from the *Analects* of Confucius, the Mohist writings (including "Impartial Caring" and "Obeying One's Superior"), the *Mengzi*, the complete *Daodejing*, and selections from the *Zhuangzi*, *Xunzi*, and *Han Feizi*. For those interested in Chinese philosophical writings about women and gender, Robin R. Wang's *Images of Women in Chinese Thought and Culture* is a very useful collection of translations. Three of Burton Watson's translations are available bound together as *Basic Writings of Mo Tzu, Hsun Tzu, and Han Fei Tzu*. (Each is also available as a separate volume.)

Perhaps the two best general histories of early Chinese philosophy are Benjamin Schwartz's *The World of Thought in Ancient China* and A. C. Graham's *Disputers of the Tao*. Schwartz has a broadly humanistic approach. Graham takes a more narrowly philosophical approach, but his chapters on Confucianism (Ruism) are all fairly weak. One of the best discussions of some of the major Confucians over the last two and a half millennia may be found in Philip J. Ivanhoe, *Confucian Moral Self Cultivation*, which is organized around the themes of "thinking" and "learning" in Confucianism. Joel Kupperman's *Classic Asian Philosophy* has brief but helpful introductions to Confucius, Mengzi, the *Daodejing*, and the *Zhuangzi* – as well as some major Indian and Chinese Buddhist texts. Fung Yu-lan's two-volume *A History of Chinese Philosophy* is probably the best-selling history of Chinese philosophy of all time,<sup>4</sup> but (not surprisingly for a work first published in Chinese in the 1930s) it is hopelessly out of date. I mention it only to warn the unwary away from it. *The Cambridge History of Ancient China*, edited by Michael Loewe and Edward L. Shaughnessy, is an excellent general historical introduction to early China.

Finally, a note on orthography and pronunciation. As you presumably know, there is a very distinctive Chinese writing system that is non-alphabetic. For a readable but no-nonsense approach to it, try John DeFrancis, *The Chinese Language: Fact and Fantasy*. You don't need to know Chinese, or to discuss the Chinese language in your class, in order to teach some Chinese philosophy, though. You *will* have to deal with romanization systems, which are the ways to represent spoken Chinese (almost always the Mandarin dialect, which is the national standard in both Mainland China and Taiwan). Unfortunately, there are two romanization schemes in current use: Pinyin and Wade-Giles. Wade-Giles is the older system, and is still found in many works. Pinyin is now the official romanization scheme of the People's Republic, the UN, and major news organizations. Lots of books have conversion charts in them for going from Wade-Giles to Pinyin or vice versa. In this article, I have given Pinyin romanizations first, with the Wade-Giles equivalents in parentheses. Whichever system you encounter, I would not worry too much about getting the pronunciations correct. Doing it well requires exacting training, and you're supposed to be teaching philosophy, not spoken Chinese or phonology. If you're dying to know, very roughly, in Pinyin (or Wade-Giles), "c" ("ts' " or "tz' ") is pronounced like a "ts"; "q" ("ch' ") like a "ch"; "si" ("szu") like "sz"; "x" ("hs") like "sh"; "you" ("yu") like "yoe"; "yu" ("yü") like "yew"; "zh" ("ch") like "j"; "zhi" ("chih") like "jr"; "zi" ("tzu") like "zz"; and everything else about like you would guess. The only thing I ask is that you please do not pronounce the expression "zi" ("tzu") as if it were read "zoo." It's an honorific

term meaning "master" that is found after a surname, and is pronounced like "zz" (or more exactly "dz"). There are also two Jesuit Latinizations that are still in common usage: "Confucius," whose name is more properly Romanized like "Kongzi" ("K'ung Tzu"), and "Mencius," whose name is actually more like "Mengzi" ("Meng Tzu"). Finally, the Chinese term that we translate "Confucianism" is actually not etymologically related to the name of Confucius (although one could conceivably say "Confucius-ism" in modern Chinese). "Confucian" in Mandarin Chinese is "Ru," so some scholars use "Ruism" in place of "Confucianism."

## Bibliography

- Chan, Alan K.L., ed. *Mencius: Contexts and Interpretations*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002.
- Chan, Wing-tsit, trans. *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963.
- Chan, Wing-tsit, trans. *The Way of Lao Tzu (Tao-te Ching)*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1963.
- Creel, Herrlee G. *Confucius and the Chinese Way*. Reprint, New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1960.
- Csikszentmihalyi, Mark and Philip J. Ivanhoe. *Religious and Philosophical Aspects of the Laozi*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999.
- Dawson, Raymond, trans. *The Analects*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- DeFrancis, John. *The Chinese Language: Fact and Fantasy*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1984.
- Fingarette, Herbert. *Confucius – the Secular as Sacred*. New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1972.
- Fung, Yu-lan. *A History of Chinese Philosophy*. 2 vols. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952.
- Goldin, Paul R. "Han Fei's Doctrine of Self-Interest." *Asian Philosophy* 11:3 (2001): 151-60.
- Goldin, Paul R. "Xunzi in the Light of the Guodian Manuscripts." *Early China* 25 (2000): 113-46.
- Graham, Angus C. "The Background of the Mencian Theory of Human Nature." In *Studies in Chinese Philosophy and Philosophical Literature*, Angus C. Graham, 7-66. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990.
- Graham, Angus C., trans. *The Book of Lieh-tzu*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1960. (This includes the chapter "Yang Chu.")
- Graham, Angus C., trans. *Chuang-Tzu: The Inner Chapters*. Reprint, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2001.
- Graham, Angus C. *Disputers of the Tao*. Chicago: Open Court Press, 1989.
- Graham, Angus C. "A First Reading of the 'White Horse.'" In *Studies in Chinese Philosophy and Philosophical Literature* by Angus C. Graham, 167-92. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990.
- Harbsmeier, Christoph. *Language and Logic*. Volume 7, Part 1 of *Science and Civilisation in China*, edited by Joseph Needham. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Henricks, Robert G., trans. *Lao Tzu's Tao Te Ching: A Translation of the Startling New Documents Found at Guodian*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.
- Henricks, Robert G., trans. *Te-tao ching*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1989. (This is a translation of the text according to the Mawangdui manuscripts.)
- Ivanhoe, Philip J. *Confucian Moral Self Cultivation*. Revised edition, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2000.
- Ivanhoe, Philip J., trans. *The Daodejing of Laozi*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2003.
- Ivanhoe, Philip J. and Bryan W. Van Norden, eds. *Readings in Classic Chinese Philosophy*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2003.
- Kjellberg, Paul and Philip J. Ivanhoe, eds. *Essays on Skepticism, Relativism, and Ethics in the Zhuangzi*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996.
- Kline, Thornton C. and Philip J. Ivanhoe, eds. *Virtue, Nature, and Moral Agency in the Xunzi*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2000.

- Knoblock, John, trans. *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works*. 3 vols. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988, 1990, 1994.
- Kohn, Livia and Michael LaFargue, eds. *Lao-tzu and the Tao-te-ching*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998.
- Kupperman, Joel J. *Classic Asian Philosophy: A Guide to the Essential Texts*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Lau, D. C., trans. *The Analects*. New York: Penguin Books, 1979.
- Lau, D. C., trans. *Mencius*. New York: Penguin Books, 1970.
- Lau, D. C., trans. *Tao Te Ching*. New York: Knopf, 1994. (This includes Lau's translation, originally published by Penguin Books, of the traditional Wang Bi version of the text, and also his revised translation, based on the manuscripts unearthed at Mawangdui.)
- Liao, W.K. *The Complete Works of Han Fei Tzu*. 2 vols. London: Arthur Probsthain, 1939, 1959.
- Liu, Xiusheng and Philip J. Ivanhoe, eds. *Essays on the Moral Philosophy of Mengzi*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2002.
- Loewe, Michael and Edward L. Shaughnessy. *The Cambridge History of Ancient China: From the Origins of Civilization to 221 B.C.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Lynn, Richard John, trans. *The Classic of the Way and Virtue: A New Translation of the Tao-te ching of Laozi as Interpreted by Wang Bi*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.
- Mair, Victor, ed. *Experimental Essays on Chuang-tzu*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983.
- Mair, Victor, trans. *Tao Te Ching: The Classic Book of Integrity and the Way*. New York: Bantam Books, 1990.
- Nivison, David S. "Philosophical Voluntarism in Fourth-Century China." In *The Ways of Confucianism: Investigations in Chinese Philosophy*. 121-32. Chicago: Open Court Press, 1996.
- Schwartz, Benjamin I. *The World of Thought in Ancient China*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985.
- Shun, Kwong-loi. *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997.
- Slingerland, Edward, trans. *Confucius: Analects*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2003.
- Van Norden, Bryan W. "Competing Interpretations of the *Inner Chapters*." *Philosophy East and West* 46:2 (April 1996): 247-68.
- Van Norden, Bryan W., ed. *Confucius and the Analects: New Essays*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Van Norden, Bryan W. "A Response to the Mohist Arguments in 'Impartial Caring.'" In *The Moral Circle and the Self: Chinese and Western Perspectives*, edited by Kim-chong Chong, Sor-hoon Tan, and C. L. Ten. Chicago: Open Court Press, 2003.
- Waley, Arthur, trans. *The Analects of Confucius*. Reprint, New York: Vintage Books, 1989.
- Waley, Arthur, trans. *The Way and Its Power*. Reprint, New York: Grove Press, 1988. (This is a translation of the traditional version of the *Daodejing*.)
- Wang, Robin R., ed. *Images of Women in Chinese Thought and Culture: Writings from the Pre-Qin Period through the Song Dynasty*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2003.
- Watson, Burton, trans. *Basic Writings of Mo Tzu, Hsun Tzu, and Han Fei Tzu*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1964. (This volume consists of three separate books bound together. Each translation is also available separately.)
- Watson, Burton, trans. *Chuang Tzu: Basic Writings*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.
- Watson, Burton, trans. *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1968.
- Wong, David. "Universalism vs. Love with Distinctions: An Ancient Debate Revived." *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 16:3/4 (1989): 251 - 272.
- Yearley, Lee H. *Mencius and Aquinas: Theories of Virtue and Conceptions of Courage*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990.
3. On these terms, see David T. Lykken, *The Antisocial Personalities* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1995), and "Antisocial Personality Disorder: Psychopathy," in *Case Studies in Abnormal Psychology* (5th ed.), edited by Thomas F. Oltmanns, John M. Neale, and Gerald C. Davison (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1990): pp. 295-303.
4. Fung tells the charming story of how he worked with Derk Bodde on the English translation of this work until the eve of the Korean War, when Bodde prudently left China. All contact with the West was cut off, and it was not until the beginning of China's reopening in 1972 that Fung learned that his book had become the classic history of Chinese philosophy in the English-speaking world! (Feng Youlan, *The Hall of Three Pines: An Account of My Life*, trans. Denis C. Mair. [Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000]: pp. 238.)

---

## ***New Media and New Mirrors in Asian American Studies\****

**Gary Mar**

*Stony Brook University, Stony Brook, NY*

### **Strategies for Transforming Knowledge into a Pedagogy of Empowerment**

"We enter human society... with one or more imputed characters—roles into which we have been drafted—and we have to learn what they are in order to be able to understand how others respond to us and how our responses to them are apt to be constructed... Deprive children of stories and you leave them unscripted, anxious stutterers in their actions as in their words."

— Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*<sup>1</sup>

This article is about how new media can be recruited into remaking a pedagogy of empowerment. If Francis Bacon was right that "knowledge is power," then as educators we ought to be interested in the pedagogical possibilities of new media because that technology has increasingly become the means for transforming knowledge into power. Pedagogy and new media is, therefore, a timely issue for the theory and practice of Asian American philosophy.

### **1. Asian American studies is a self-consciously transformative discipline.**

It aims not only at imparting *information*—such as knowing the facts of an unduly neglected history or being conversant with influential political and cultural critiques—but also at *transformation*—changing students from passive consumers of knowledge into activists willing to advocate for issues of concern to themselves and their communities. Pedagogy must be "made and remade" in the words of Paulo Freire, because pedagogy depends on what the struggles for liberation might be at any particular historical moment.<sup>2</sup>

In this article I first deal with the problem of missing mirrors. Any project of exploring Asian American identity in the context of history must confront the fact that Asian Americans are virtually absent in the mirror of American history. Secondly, I discuss the new pedagogical challenges posed by the increasing presence of Asian Americans in the classroom. This demographic shift must be understood in the context of recent immigration history unless stereotypes of Asian Americans as the "yellow peril" or as "model minorities" blind us to the diversity of Asian America and the new educational challenges. Thirdly, the project of remaking pedagogy must also be understood in terms of the evolving disciplinary practices of Asian American studies. Asian American studies (as well as the other area studies covered within this publication) must draw from its disciplinary roots so

### **Endnotes**

1. See the end of this essay for an explanation of why I give multiple versions of Chinese names.
2. Joel J. Kupperman. *Classic Asian Philosophy: A Guide to the Essential Texts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 58.

that new pedagogy can bloom. Fourthly, I recount a pedagogical experiment in which students in an Asian American philosophy class at Stony Brook University learned about the Angel Island Immigration experience through reading poetry, telling oral histories, and participating in the making of a short documentary. By telling the story of this particular experiment in using new media I draw out pedagogical strategies that are applicable to the teaching of philosophy more generally. Finally, I conclude with some thoughts about the social significance of creating new mirrors that reflect the diversity of our students.

## 2. The Problem of Missing Mirrors and the Politics of Remembering.

“Given the exclusionary nature of the traditional canons and the erasures of official histories, a young minority writer soon finds, as I did, that many of the necessary mirrors for his or her experience are somehow missing. I became a writer, in part, because I felt that it was absolutely necessary for me to find those missing mirrors, even if I needed to create them myself. Otherwise, I would never know where I came from, who my family was and is, or who I am.”

— David Mura, “Mirrors of the Self”<sup>3</sup>

One way to transform students is to place the issue of their identities in the mirror of history. James Loewen, in his humorous and thought-provoking critique of high school history books, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*<sup>4</sup>, poses an intriguing question: why do minorities tend to do better in math but relatively poorer in history? Loewen’s answer is, in part, that minorities are either absent from the mirror of American history or when present, portrayed as victims. Imagine looking at a mirror and seeing only the face of a victim, or worse, seeing no face at all—such an experience, in the words of poet, feminist, and literary theorist Adrienne Rich, is “a moment of psychic disequilibrium.” That is: the pedagogical challenge is finding ways to deal with the problem of these “missing mirrors,” the problem of missing historical narratives and public ignorance of the multicultural history of America.

Even the presence of Asian Americans in history is, paradoxically, represented by their conspicuous *absence*. Consider three examples of how Asian America typically enters into history textbooks.

Most Americans are familiar with the famous historic photograph that commemorates the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad at Promontory Point, Utah on May 10, 1869. History textbooks may note that the Chinese constituted 90% of the workforce on the Central Pacific Railroad and that over a 1,000 Chinese died in the perilous construction process. (The phrase “not a Chinaman’s chance” comes from the high mortality rate of the Chinese workers who were hung in baskets over cliffs with gunpowder to blast a way through the snow-covered granite walls of the high Sierra Nevada Mountains.) Yet at the centennial reenactment in 1969, Secretary of Transportation John Volpe offended the Asian American community again by boasting “Who else but Americans could have accomplished this?” and then blocking Philip Choy, a representative of the Chinese Historical Society of America seated with the platform party, from dedicating a commemorative plaque at the main public assembly to honor the lives and labor of Chinese workers.

Community groups have tried to correct this historical absence. For example, a plaque placed by the Chinese Historical Society of Southern California on September 5, 1976 commemorated the Chinese who built the Southern Pacific Railroad and the San Fernando Tunnel. It contains a tribute “On

this centennial we honor over 3,000 Chinese who helped build the Southern Pacific Railroad and the San Fernando Tunnel. Their labor gave California the first North-South railway, changing the State’s history” and a Chinese poem, which is translated:

*A railroad in California  
Linking the South and the North  
(Lingers) the spirit of the Chinese  
Who gave their flesh and blood.*

More recently, in July 2002, the Organization of Chinese Americans, a national advocacy organization of Chinese and Asian Americans, held a conference in Utah so that its members could pose at the historic Promontory Point. Why is retelling the history of the Chinese contributions to the Transcontinental Railroad so important when it is absent from public memory? Veteran documentary filmmaker Loni Ding put it this way: “It is somehow not enough that we’ve lived among a group of people, and see them every day in life. Something essential is missing when that existence is not also a confirmed public existence. The subtext of media absence is that the absent group ‘doesn’t count,’ or is somehow unacceptable. And psychologically we know it affects our sense of self, our feeling of being agents who act upon the world...”<sup>5</sup>

Ironically, historians note, the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad set up the conditions for Chinese exclusion. The Transcontinental Railroad, connecting the nation from “sea to shining sea,” made possible the importation of Irish and European labor into California. Chinese labor changed from being invaluable to America’s Manifest Destiny to being viewed as unfair foreign competition, or, in the words of the satirical Bret Harte poem, as the ‘heathen Chinese’.<sup>6</sup> Legal scholars widely regard the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act as a watershed in legal history, for it was the first law in American history to single out by name a group for exclusion by race and class. The law enacted legislation excluding “idiots,” “lunatics,” and “Chinese laborers” for ten years. It was renewed in 1892, and then extended indefinitely, until by 1924 immigration laws restricted virtually all Asian immigrant groups. The Chinese Exclusion Act was not repealed until 1943 when China was a U.S. ally during World War II. Even then, the repeal was nominal, since it only raised the quota on Chinese immigration from any country of origin from 100 to 105 Chinese per year, compared with the yearly quota from Great Britain and Northern Ireland of 65,721. Today many of the Asian Americans drawn to America by immigration laws designed to lure hard-working, high-tech professionals from Asia are being treated with similar double standards. Once the information highway was completed, especially during times of economic recession, these Asian Americans were perceived “unfair foreign competitors” or “high-tech coolies” taking away jobs from “real Americans.”

A second prominent example of how Asians enter American history textbooks is the internment during World War II of over 120,000 civilians of Japanese descent, two-thirds of whom were American citizens. Japanese Americans were imprisoned, solely on the basis of ancestry, in ten concentration camps scattered throughout deserted areas in the Western part of the United States and Arkansas with a great cost to themselves of property and liberty and without any trial or evidence of their disloyalty. The standard textbook photograph is of a Japanese American girl, sitting forlorn on a suitcase, silently awaiting deportation. The first-generation *Issei* and second-generation *Nisei* victims of the Japanese internment exiled themselves to a silence that lasted forty years. However, once the history of the Internment was learned through courses in Asian American studies by the activist third-generation *Sansei*, there began a long struggle for reparations that resulted in some of the most significant Civil Rights cases of the century, culminating in the

1988 Civil Liberties Act. The government's own 1983 report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC) concluded that the Japanese internment was based on "race prejudice, war hysteria, and a lack of political leadership."

Despite this history, in the aftermath of the shocking events of 9-11, the Bush-Ashcroft administration has appealed to the Japanese Internment as a positive precedent and exploited the fear that Arab-Muslim-Middle Eastern immigrants were all potentially "evil enemy terrorists within" to gain unprecedented powers. What valuable lessons for dealing with these current controversies over the use of "military necessity" as justifications for wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and the Patriot Act for "homeland security" could have been learned from this forgotten history? Consider the evidence that formed the basis of the famous *coram nobis* petition that reopened, 40 years after the fact, the infamous *Korematsu v. the United States*. The main points of the petition were (1) that officials in the War Department had altered and destroyed key evidence and withheld knowledge of this evidence from the Department of Justice and the Supreme Court regarding the rationalization of "military necessity"; (2) that officials in the War Department and the Department of Justice suppressed evidence with regard to the loyalty of Japanese Americans; (3) that government officials failed to advise the Supreme Court of the falsity of key factual statements in the Final Report of General DeWitt, who issued the military curfew and exclusion orders; and (4) the government's abuse of the doctrine of judicial notice, fraudulently asking the Court to rely on evidence not in the trial record and not subject to critical examination. Could we have learned about the dangers of a militarized patriotism, reinforced by the government's manipulation of public opinion, that trampled the very freedoms at home that America claimed to be fighting for abroad?

A third example of how Asian Americans enter American history textbooks is as "model minorities"—a stereotype that emerged during the struggle for Civil Rights of the 1960s and continued after the Vietnam War. In one high school history book, the phrase "model minority" is introduced on the page opposite a photograph showing African Americans and Latinos looting stores in the aftermath of the Rodney King verdict. The myth that Asian immigrant success in school can be attributed solely to a "respect for authority" and "family values" implies that the failure of other minorities—especially those vocally agitating for Civil Rights—can be blamed, not on institutional racism, but on the victims of discrimination themselves for lacking these family values.

The "model minority" stereotype not only served to pit Asians against other minorities, but it also continues to render invisible the real needs of Asian American communities. According to the 1997 report on the educational needs of Asian Pacific American Youth, Asian American students faced a crisis of invisibility: "This crisis is largely invisible to most Americans—most significantly, even to many in the teaching professions—because most see all Asian Pacific American students as members of a 'model minority' destined to excel. But for many Asian Pacific American students, this image is a destructive myth."<sup>7</sup>

Although the "model minority" is purportedly a "positive" stereotype, it functions to disadvantage Asian American students, first by fueling resentment from other minorities through invidious comparisons, and secondly, by a mechanism of exclusion that misrepresents all Asian Americans as "successful" and so not in need of social services. Bob Suzuki, President of Cal State Polytechnic Pomona, noted that "the vast majority of Asian students are not super-bright, highly motivated over-achievers who come from well-to-do families. Large numbers

of them are encountering personal and academic difficulties; many, especially those who have recently immigrated, are struggling to learn English. The ESL needs of these students, the majority of whom are foreign-born and do not speak English as their first language, have largely been ignored by most institutions."<sup>8</sup>

At my own institution, for example, I found that the very Asian Americans who were recruited to boost the university's rankings on average standardized test scores could become scapegoats blamed for the low levels of English proficiency of the student body at large. Asian American students were the "yellow peril" or "Asian invasion" when it came to locating blame, but they were "model minorities" to be passed over when it came to rationing resources to deal with problems.

The "model minority" stereotype continues to lock Asian Americans out of resources to deal with real social problems. In December of 1999, John Kuo Wei Tchen, Director of NYU's Asian/Pacific/American Institute and Studies Center, arranged for community leaders and Asian American studies faculty from Columbia, Hunter, NYU, SUNY Binghamton and SUNY Stony Brook to meet with Shamina Singh, the Executive Director of Executive Order 13125. This Executive Order, signed by President Clinton in June 1999, was the second Executive Order in U.S. history dealing with Asian Americans (the first authorized the internment of Japanese Americans). The new executive order aimed at increasing participation of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in federal programs. The lack of Asian American studies programs at research universities resulted in a lack of community research of the sort that could justify federal programs. Without Asian American studies courses within the college curriculum, therefore, Asian Americans would not only be deprived of a knowledge of their history but Asian American communities would continue to be unfairly locked out of federal programs.

### **3. New Asian American Demographics and Dynamics in the Classroom.**

Pedagogy, to remain transformative, must adapt to the changing demographics of the classroom. Asian America underwent a major demographic shift after the 1965 Hart-Celler Act finally ended nearly a century of legalized discrimination against Asian immigration. Though designed to encourage European immigration, one consequence of the Hart-Celler Act was that the Asian immigrant population doubled from 1.5 million in 1970 to 3.7 million in 1980 and doubled again to 7.3 million in 1990. From 1971-1990, approximately 855,500 Filipinos, 610,800 Koreans, and 576,100 Chinese entered the United States, and with the collapse in 1975 of U.S.-backed governments in South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, over one million refugees from these countries settled in the United States. In the 1980s, Asia was the largest source of U.S. legal immigrants, and accounted for 40% of the total. As of 1990, nearly 66% of the Asian American population was foreign born; and as of 1997, America's foreign-born population surpassed 25 million, representing 10% of the total population with about 25% of this population coming from Asia.<sup>9</sup> In contrast to the largely unskilled immigrant population of the pre-World War II era, the new arrivals now also coming from India, Pakistan, and Middle Eastern or West Asian countries include a significant number of professionals drawn into white-collar jobs such as those in high technology. The majority of the Asian American students in my classes came to be in America as a result of this post-1965 immigration, and the families of all the students have been impacted in one way or another by U.S. immigration policies.

As a faculty member at Stony Brook University, I had become alarmed at the increasing number of stereotypical statements

made by faculty about the oral and written skills of Asian American students. Serving on a committee to study the problem, I interviewed Asian American students who had taken introductory and remedial writing courses. Their experiences provided a more detailed description of some of the problems, frustrations, and abuses of the current Writing Program and were included in a minority report in 1994 on why the writing program at Stony Brook had not been working for many Asians and Asian Americans. At that time, Asian Americans accounted for 24% of the student population at Stony Brook, as compared with an average of 5.6% at four-year colleges and universities. Through analyzing this problem, I became aware of how issues of “merit” could disguise racial discrimination and be reinforced by culturally-biased pedagogy.

The issue of fluency in English, moreover, impacted international graduate students of Asian descent. Many graduate students are required to earn their tuition as teaching assistants by leading discussion sections. Administrators were vowing to “crack down” by refusing teaching assistantships to graduate students “who could not speak English.” Of course, these graduate students were admitted into very competitive graduate programs precisely because their excellent technical training furthered the university’s reputation in research. No thought was given to the question of whether the university bore some responsibility in providing language instruction that would allow these graduate students to be more than technical assistants for faculty research. Moreover, I discovered that research on this problem indicated that it was deeper than the issue of accents. An article in *Linguafranca*, “Acute Accents” (Nov/Dec 1993, p. 7) reported on Donald Rubin’s research at the University of Georgia. Four minutes of a recorded lecture were played to two groups of students. Half the students were shown a slide of an Ohio-born white woman, while the other half was simultaneously shown a slide of a similarly dressed Chinese woman. “The students who thought the speaker was foreign... rated her teaching skills lower than those who thought she was American.” More intriguing was the finding that students actually score *lower* on comprehension tests when they thought the information was delivered by the Asian woman. Clearly, the issue was not about accents, but about the racial and ethnic images of authority the students were willing to accept.

When the demographics of the classroom shifts, so do its dynamics. Sucheng Chan wrote a perceptive analysis of why the successful implementation of an ethnic studies requirement at her university adversely affected the pedagogy of the Asian American Studies classroom. Chan’s analysis, for example, showed that the silence of Asian Americans in the typical classroom is a more complex issue than stereotypically attributing it to obedience, inhibition, and Asian enculturation.<sup>10</sup> Chan observed that Asian Americans “who were verbally reticent could slowly learn to express themselves” in classes in which they were the majority. Verbal restraint is not only cultural, but a survival strategy in the face of racism in the classroom that threatens minorities unless they ‘stay in their place.’ ‘Staying in place’ for Asian Americans has often meant being ‘model minorities’ and keeping silent.

When Asian Americans are in the majority, they can talk openly and explore thoughts and experiences without being implicitly told to “stay in their place.” Instead of being locked into silence, they find that experiences which they may have thought unique to themselves are validated by their peers. In this setting, hearing the stories of Asian American students, whether told in halting English with East Asian accents, the rhythmic cadences of Asian Pacific Islanders, or the colonial British accents from South Asia, can be a powerful and healing experience.

With support from an Academy of Teachers-Scholars Award in 1997, I was able to begin addressing these problems in a

newly conceived course, Philosophical Issues in Asian American Studies. Since its first offering at Stony Brook University, over a thousand students of diverse ethnicities have taken this course. The course is one of the few that allows students to explore philosophical issues of identity, history, community, ethnicity, race, and gender through the lens of Asian American studies. Formally trained as a logician in the analytic tradition, retooling myself to teach this course was a daunting challenge and a difficult career decision. When no other faculty arise to take up the pedagogical challenge, when no additional hires are made, the burden of conscience to teach such courses often falls on faculty of color. Senior administrators took me aside and advised me not to make academic alliances with Africana Studies and to distance myself from the faculty and students who could be natural allies in a struggle for institutionalizing Asian American studies. Lisa Yun, a colleague at sister public institution SUNY Binghamton, has called this the “Just Say No” career option: “Just Say No emerges from an ideology of division and disempowerment. The already isolated scholar, [often] a woman and person of color, becomes further divided from praxis at the very moment when engagement and co-investment are needed. For minority studies, its crucial characteristic is the inseparability of theory, praxis, and *the body*.”<sup>11</sup> In order to survive the process of educating myself through teaching, I needed to give myself a job description that embodied values and goals that could be shared and embraced by my students with their hearts and minds.

Embarking on any new project often requires a confidence that is not warranted by anything we have done before. Goethe said, “Whatever you can do or dream you can do, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it.”<sup>12</sup> Anyone who knew what it would take to accomplish our goals would have, looking from the outside, undoubtedly advised caution. They would have predicted failure, for they would have lacked a crucial piece of evidence—the fire in the hearts of a committed core of students to overcome the odds and make a difference. One reason for our foolhardy optimism was that in 1996, I had approached the founder and CEO of Computer Associates, a Long Island-based computer company, for funds to convert an abandoned hallway into an Asian American Center. One thing led to another, and by the end of that year, Charles B. Wang announced his decision to donate \$25 million to build the Charles B. Wang Asian American Center, the largest donation to the public education system in New York State. The building was to have a theater, food court overlooking a pond with Asian gardens, an art gallery, and state of the art high-tech distance learning capabilities. Wang’s generous donation was expanded over the years and the Wang Center had its grand opening last year. During the intervening years, envisioning what the Wang Center could be sustained our optimism and fueled our hearts with hope.

I conceived of the new course, Philosophical Issues in Asian American Studies, as a means for bringing about an “about face” at Stony Brook University. This “about face” would involve reversing the invisibility of the educational needs of Asian American students, “giving face” to a silenced generation of Asian Americans whose struggles formed an important but neglected chapter of American history, and giving Stony Brook administrators reasons to “save face” by doing what educational justice required—the formation of an independent Asian American Studies Program at Stony Brook. One critical issue was educating students, faculty and administrators to distinguish between Asian Studies and Asian American Studies.

#### **4. Pedagogy and Evolving Disciplinary Practices in Asian American Studies.**

Pedagogy is shaped by theory, and theory is shaped by evolving disciplinary practices. Glenn Omatsu in his insightful analysis of

Asian American activism from the 1960s to the 1990s tracks the keywords that reflected the values and concerns of the Asian American Movement.<sup>13</sup> Birthed in 1969 at San Francisco State and U.C. Berkeley in the aftermath of the Black Student Union and Third World Liberation Front strike, the early Asian American Movement took inspiration from the anti-colonial liberation struggles of Third World peoples around the world and from the Civil Right Movement in America. The demand for freedom and self-determination was justified in terms of such keywords as ‘liberation,’ ‘consciousness,’ and ‘participatory democracy.’

As Asian American studies expanded to educational institutions nation-wide throughout the 1970s and 1980s, these keywords shifted from ‘liberation’ to ‘legitimacy,’ from ‘consciousness’ to ‘empowerment,’ and from ‘participatory democracy’ to ‘advocacy.’ Having gained a foothold within the academy, Asian American Studies aimed at legitimacy. Adopting the Eurocentric methods of postmodern scholars, however, the scholarly work of Asian Americanists became increasingly inaccessible to outsiders. Indeed, the very success of Asian American Studies in staking a claim to legitimacy threatened to uproot it from its vital connections to Asian American communities.

What do keywords tell about the discipline of Asian American studies today? An Internet search under “Asian American Studies, Pedagogy” took me to an announcement of a conference “Pedagogy and Performance in Asian American Studies” held in 2001. Consider, not the content, but the language of the announcement:

“Through pedagogy, we refer not only to hands-on curriculum and classroom issues but also to such issues as how to address the increasingly contentious relationship between practice and theory, how to negotiate between various Asian American ethnic groups, and how to trace historical continuities without eliding specificity and differences. We extend the traditional idea of pedagogy through its interface with current interrogations of cultural performance and practice: we treat ‘performance’ in its broadest sense—as cultural practice—as well as in the specific sense of expressive culture, asking how film, theater, dance, music, performance art, etc., open up pedagogical spaces wherein the very terms of knowledge and power can be questioned and potentially transformed.”<sup>14</sup>

Why have the keywords of the discipline shifted from ‘liberation’ and ‘legitimacy’ to ‘negotiating differences,’ from ‘consciousness’ and ‘empowerment’ to ‘interrogating,’ and from ‘participatory democracy’ and ‘advocacy’ to ‘performance’? Today Asian American studies thrives, not only on the West Coast, but also at elite East Coast universities such as NYU, Columbia, and Brown. Asian American studies is struggling to reconceptualize its relation to Asian Studies at public universities such as SUNY Stony Brook and Binghamton.<sup>15</sup> Having won many of the battles for legitimacy and space within the academy, Asian American studies turned to negotiating power struggles within that space. Unlike Asian Studies, which had its disciplinary roots in the Orientalist scholarship of containment during the Cold War period, Asian American studies, birthed in the Civil Rights movement, is committed to the values of self-determination, anti-colonialism, and democratizing higher education.

When Asian American studies adopted the discourse of European postmodernism, however, whatever it gained in academic legitimacy it lost in terms of democratizing the pedagogical playing field. I realized that the typical Asian American student at my public institution would neither have the linguistic skills nor the academic sophistication to enter into

that discourse. (Indeed, I had doubts about my own academic inclinations and abilities.) As critical legal theorist, Mari Matsuda, warned, “whisperings at Yale and elsewhere about how deconstructionist heroes were closet Fascists remind me of how important it is to stay close to oppressed communities.”<sup>16</sup> What pedagogical approach, rooted in the originating disciplinary values of Asian American studies, would be relevant and accessible to the new student demographics of Asian America?

To summarize the argument so far, Asian Americans are apt to be confused in their identities when they don’t see themselves reflected in the mirror of American history. Moreover, history textbooks—from high school to those used at my own institution—omit how Asian Americans have been active agents of history and how their struggles have played pivotal roles in the formation of this nation. The problem of absence from the mirror of history is to be solved by creating presence. However, the problem of creating presence is complicated by the fact that Asian American students are now demographically diverse and so questions of why the immigration history of one particular Asian ethnic group should be important for all students needed to be addressed.

Why is knowing the history of Asian immigration important, not just for Asian American students, but all students? Lisa Lowe in *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics*, a sophisticated synthesis of cultural studies and Marxist analysis, answered the question this way:

“Understanding Asian immigration to the United States is fundamental to understanding the racialized foundations of both the emergence of the United States as a nation and the development of American capitalism. This is far from claiming that Asians are the only group to have been racialized in the founding of the United States but rather to suggest that the history of the nation’s attempt to resolve the contradictions between its economic and political imperatives through laws that excluded Asians from citizenship—from 1790 until the 1940s—contributes to our general understanding of race as a contradictory site of struggle for cultural, economic, as well as political membership in the United States.”<sup>17</sup>

In other words, knowing the history of Asian immigration is crucial for understanding racial formation in America. If critical race theory is correct in claiming that all racial identities are relational rather than resting on intrinsic properties of any one group, then the racial identities of all groups would be affected by the legalized discrimination enacted to deal with Asian immigration. Asian immigration history requires the analysis of race to go beyond the usual Black/White paradigm.

It is interesting to note, for example, that the popular but simplistic ideal that “our constitution is color-blind” and that “in respect of civil rights, all citizens are equal before the law” is to be found in Justice Harlan’s dissent to the famous 1892 ruling in *Plessy v. Ferguson*. In that dissent Harlan wrote:

“There is a race so different from our own that we do not permit those belonging to it to become citizens of the United States. Persons belonging to it are, with few exceptions, absolutely excluded from our country. I allude to the Chinese race. By the statute in question, a Chinaman can ride in the same passenger coach with white citizens of the United States, while citizens of the black race in Louisiana, many of whom, perhaps, risked their lives for the preservation of the Union, who are entitled, by law, to participate in the political control of the State and nation, who are not excluded,

by law or by reason of their race, from public stations of any kind, and who have all the legal rights that belong to white citizens, are yet declared to be criminals, liable to imprisonment, if they ride in a public coach occupied by citizens of the white race.”<sup>18</sup>

Treated as foreigners, Asian Americans were excluded from equal protection doctrines because the distinction drawn to exclude Asian Americans appeared to be a permissible line between citizens and non-citizens, rather than the impermissible line based on race.

The racial discrimination faced by Asians was double-edged—Asians were considered not only as “non-white” along with African Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, and others, but also as “perpetual foreigners” and so barred from the legal protections of citizenship. The Fourteenth Amendment enacted after the Civil War extended naturalization rights to “persons of African descent,” for example, but intentionally excluded persons of Asian descent.

Unlike the discrimination faced by other immigrant groups, legalized discrimination stunted and skewed the formation of Asian families in America. The 1875 Page Law, which effectively prohibited the immigration of Chinese women, and anti-miscegenation laws that prohibited the marriage of Chinese and whites created “bachelor communities” of aging Chinese men who labored at jobs distained by others so they could send money to their wives and children in China. In 1880, for example, there were about 70,000 Chinese men documented in California, but fewer than 4,000 Chinese women. (Outside of California the ratio was 30,000 Chinese men to 1,000 Chinese women.) This together with anti-miscegenation laws made prostitution inevitable and prevented conjugal Chinese families from taking root in America. The gender imbalance in the Asian American population would not be normalized to a roughly 1:1 ratio of male to female until the 1980s.

A brief timeline of Immigration, Exclusion, and Internment Acts dealing with Asians reveals that (1) there is nothing natural about “naturalized citizenship,” (2) that immigration law is a major site for legalizing racial discrimination, and (3) that there is a long-standing historical pattern to Asian exclusion and that the Chinese Exclusion Act or the Japanese American Internment, for example, were links in a long historical chain of legalized discrimination.

1790 **Naturalization Act** restricts naturalized citizenship to “free whites” only.

1854 **People v. Hall**—the California court upholds the ban on Chinese testimony against white persons on the grounds that Chinese were non-white and hence included in the law banning the testimony of Blacks and Indians and Mulattoes.

1865 **Thirteenth Amendment** ends slavery and this year marks the beginning of the recruitment of replacement Chinese laborers by the Central Pacific Railroad.

1868 **Fourteenth Amendment** ratified with its due process and equal protection clauses to include persons of African descent but continues to exclude persons of Asian descent.

1875 **Page Law** prohibits the importation of Chinese, Japanese, and Mongolian women for immoral purposes, forcing them to prove they were not prostitutes.

1882 **Chinese Exclusion Act** bars immigration of Chinese laborers for 10 years.

1888 **Scott Act** declares the certificates that allowed Chinese worker to reenter the U.S. after visiting their families in China “null and void.”

1892 **Geary Law** renews the Chinese Exclusion Act for 10 more years; **Fong Yue Ting v. U.S.** upholds constitutionality of Geary Law.

1896 **Plessy v. Ferguson** upholds the constitutionality of “separate but equal” for Blacks, and Harlan’s dissent arguing for a “color blind constitution” draws on racist comparisons with Chinese as non-citizens.

1898 **United States v. Wong Kim Ark** decides that the Chinese born in the U.S. cannot be stripped of their citizenship.

1902 **Chinese Exclusion Act** is renewed without an expiration date.

1906 **San Francisco earthquake** destroys public records, opening the possibility of circumventing legalized discrimination through the illegal practice of creating “Paper Sons and Daughters.”

1907 **Gentlemen’s Agreement** reached in which Japan agrees to stop issuing passports to laborers bound for the U.S.

1910 **Angel Island Immigration Station** is established.

1913 **Alien Land Act** prohibits “aliens ineligible to citizenship” from buying land or leasing it for longer than three years.

1917 **“Barred Zone” Immigration Act** creates an Asiatic Barred Zone: all Asian immigration except Japanese and Filipinos banned by Congress; hence extending exclusion to India.

1922 **Takao Ozawa v. U.S.** declares a Japanese man, who married a woman brought up in the U.S., had two children, and was a Christian, is nevertheless ineligible for naturalization as a member of an “unassimilable race.”

1922 **Cable Act** strips an American female citizen of her citizenship should she marry an “alien ineligible to citizenship.”

1923 **U.S. vs. Bhagat Singh Thind** declares Asian Indians, despite their categorization as Caucasians by anthropological science of the time, “ineligible for naturalized citizenship” because the “understanding of the common man” regarded them as “non-white” and hence excluded them from naturalized citizenship.

1924 **National Origins Act** prohibits “aliens ineligible to citizenship” from immigrating, extending Asian exclusion to now also encompass the Japanese.

1934 **Tydings-McDuffie Act** closes loophole for Filipino Immigration as U.S. nationals and limits Filipino immigration to 50 per year.

1941 March: **Justice and War Department** agree to coordinate **internment** of “enemy aliens” based on lists compiled in the late 1930s.

1941 December 8: U.S. declares **war on Japan** after Japan attacks Pearl Harbor on December 7<sup>th</sup>.

1942 February 19: Franklin D. Roosevelt signs **Executive Order 9066** calling for all persons of Japanese descent living in the Pacific Coast states to be evacuated to internment camps.

1943 **Hirabayashi v. United States, Korematsu v. United States, and Yasui v. United States** challenge the constitutionality of curfew and internment laws targeting Japanese Americans.

1943 **Chinese Exclusion act “repealed”** largely for propaganda purposes to counter the criticism of Japan during World War II that the U.S. had discriminatory policies against its own ally. The “repeal” was nominal

- since it only raised the quota of 100 to 105 Chinese per year from any country, compared with the yearly quota from Great Britain and Northern Ireland of 65,721.
- 1945 August 6: U.S. drops first **atomic bomb** ever used in war on **Hiroshima**; Nagasaki is bombed three days later.
- 1952 **McCarran-Walter Act** abolishes racial and ethnic limitations on naturalization while retaining a race-based National Origins Quota System and creates an Asia-Pacific restrictive zone to limit immigration.
- 1965 The **Hart-Celler Act** amends the McCarran-Walter Immigration and Nationality Act and removed barriers to Asian immigration, placing it on an equal footing with other nations.

Now, the Hart-Celler immigration Act would be relevant to the majority of Asian American students in my class, for it was the law that finally ended discriminatory quotas against Asian immigration and was the legal door that opened the way for their families to emigrate to America. The pedagogical challenge was this: how could I translate this timeline into an educational experience that transformed students' lives?

### 5. "I Saw Myself": A Pedagogy of Presence.

"Almost all my work has been for television, designed for reaching a mass audience. In doing that, I've made certain assumptions about the audience. I assume, for example, that they carry somewhere in their minds three common misrepresentations of Asian Americans: the common stereotypes of Asians as perpetual foreigners; as resigned, silent victims; and most recently, as successful 'model minorities' who 'contribute to America.'

"I have tried not to counter these misrepresentations directly, but rather to address the three kinds of stereotypes in my overall project design...to 'show the opposite' rather than to 'explain, argue and oppose.' For the problem of absence, the main work is to create presence...Authentic images of minorities do not abound. For ourselves too, we have a need for the objectifying record. We think we know what we look and sound like, until we're surprised or shocked by hearing our actual voices on a tape recorder, or seeing our physical selves in moving images."

— Loni Ding, "Strategies of an Asian American Filmmaker"<sup>19</sup>

One of the most consistently rewarding assignments in Philosophical Issues in Asian American Studies has been the compilation of a family album in which students learn to place their roots in the context of immigration history. Through oral history interviews, they listen as parents and grandparents tell their stories, often for the first time. In the Spring semester of 2000, I experimented with a more ambitious and technologically sophisticated expansion of this proven pedagogy: the collective recovery of a forgotten story of early twentieth-century Asian immigrants' first encounter with America.

"*Imagination is More Important Than Knowledge.*" This quotation from Einstein does not imply that knowledge is unimportant, but that imagination can give birth to a vision that guides our efforts to know. Setting goals, powerfully imagined, that can determine what we will know.

The project I shall be discussing was conceived in a chance conversation. Dini-Diskin Zimmerman, a former CNN television director, like most Americans, had never learned about the Angel

Island Immigration Station, misleadingly described as the "West Coast version of Ellis Island." I told Dini about how I had it in my mind to do something about an injustice I had encountered. When my family visited Angel Island in 1995, I was surprised to find bike paths and recreation facilities but no signs to mark Angel Island as an important historical site. After hiking for over a mile, we found that the barracks and museum entrance were locked and protected with barbed wire that excluded visitors. We found "a hallowed spot...falling into ruin." These last words come from the website of the National Trust for Historic Preservation which, in 1999, placed the Angel Island Immigration Station on a list of America's 11 most endangered historic sites:

A unique and moving record of the hardships they endured can be found in the 30 years' worth of Chinese poetry—as well as other inscriptions in Japanese, Russian, Arabic, East Indian, German and English—carved in the walls of the former Detention Barracks...Unless stabilization is undertaken soon, many of California's state-owned historic places—including the Angel Island Immigration Station, with its poignant record of hope and heartbreak—will crumble and disappear.<sup>20</sup>

In contrast to Ellis Island, where processing would take a matter of hours, on Angel Island the Chinese were detained for several weeks and months, even years. On the walls of the barracks, the Chinese carved poems expressing their loneliness, disillusionment, and protest. Like most working people, the Chinese immigrants left few written records of their lives, and so the Chinese poetry carved and painted on the walls of Angel Island are an especially poignant and revealing record of the hopes and hardships of the Chinese immigrants stranded in a "land without ghosts"—a place where people are so enchanted with the lure of wealth that they have forgotten where they come from and who their ancestors were.<sup>21</sup>

*There are tens of thousands of poems on these walls  
They are all cries of suffering and sadness  
The day I am rid of this prison and become  
successful  
I must remember that this chapter once existed  
I must be frugal in my daily needs  
Needless extravagance usually leads to ruin  
All my compatriots should remember China  
Once you have made some small gains,  
You should return home early.*

Felicia Lowe, cultural activist and the director and producer of "Carved in Silence," the classic documentary on the Chinese detainees at the Angel Island Immigration Station, put the case for preservation powerfully: "Once you go into the building and see this poetry, unless you're a piece of wood, you cannot help but be touched by the experience...The walls speak to you."

*Setting Goals, Unlike Having Desires, Requires Action.* During that chance conversation, Dini sketched a storyboard, and, on the spot, we decided to collaborate on a video with students reading poems from the walls of Angel Island. Dini sent for brochures from the park service, began browsing for pictures in the library, and set her imagination free to envision the process. Within a week, I was arranging for student volunteers to be videotaped in a studio she had built. Dini knew how to work with students, who could be quite self-conscious in front of a camera, and how to elicit their best performances. The students were told to choose a poem and a photograph, map, or painting that would form the backdrop for their taping. To ease their nervousness in the studio, Dini put each student to work writing out their chosen poem by hand with markers on a large pad set on an easel off-camera that they could read from a distance. "I

loved those guys,” Dini told me because she could sense their sincerity. So began a project, requiring many hundreds of hours of creative effort, to research and produce a documentary. Dini told my students that this was “the most meaningful collaborative project” she had been involved in since coming to Stony Brook.

Taking on this project meant deviating from the standard syllabus. In class we began to explore how to think about documentaries as visual and narrative arguments. Rather than constructing arguments with a Thesis-Supporting Evidence structure, we began searching for ways to turn them into visual narratives with a Conflict-Plot-Resolution structure. In order to find models of what we wanted to do, we compared Felicia Lowe’s *Carved in Silence* with Loni Ding’s *Island of Secret Memories*, two classic, but very different, documentaries, on Angel Island.

Through work on this “hands-on” history project, students learned to critique conventional distortions of textbook history. Telling the neglected history of the Angel Island immigration requires “disrupting” and “interrogating” the typical textbook narrative of America’s immigration history. In the imagination of the American public, Ellis Island along with the Statue of Liberty represents a “gateway to freedom” for, in Emma Lazarus’ now famous words, the “...tired, ...poor, ...huddled masses yearning to breathe free.” Angel Island, in contrast, tells the darker, grittier and less triumphant, underside of the immigration story. From 1910 to 1940, an estimated 250,000 Chinese and 150,000 Japanese, along with thousands of immigrants from other nations, passed through Angel Island, the main point of entry for immigrants from the Pacific Rim and parts of South America. What images would we use to tell this story? We had originally thought of including a Nazi-like interrogation scene, but found that unintended comparisons with Jewish death camps could overpower the poetry and detract from the story we were trying to tell.

*Keeping the Project on Track and on Schedule by Preparing for Performance.* Choosing the project of retelling the story of Angel Island was not only personally meaningful to my students, but also one that was politically and pedagogically timely. On March 7, 2002, California voters would be deciding whether to authorize \$4.6 billion in bonds to improve drinking water, flood protection, and state park and land conservation. The bond issue contained a provision for the restoration of the Angel Island Immigration Station site. Later that semester, also in March, our class was scheduled to do a “Read Aloud” outreach at a local middle school, where my students shared Asian American history and literature. Due to student advocacy the previous year, Asian American month had been placed on the University’s diversity calendar for the first time in April. I had lobbied for the Provost’s office to invite Loni Ding as the first invited speaker for Asian American month, to give a presentation on her work “Making History/Making Home” on April 11. The following day, the student project would be entered in the Undergraduate Student Research Competition. Preparing for performances with specific deadlines helped to keep the project moving ahead.

*Dealing with Diversity by Creating Collaborative Teams.* The range of student abilities in the class was both a pedagogical problem to address and a resource to exploit. Some students had sophisticated computer skills, while others had research skills from the social sciences, some had poor skills in English while having fluency in an Asian language, some were mathematically-minded while others had poetic sensibilities, some Asian American students had racist views of minorities, while other minority students in the class had stereotypical views of Asians. The pedagogical challenge was to choose a project with enough dimensions to engage the full range of these ethnicities, races, and abilities. One solution to this

challenge was to cluster students with complementary skills sets into various task forces, where they could learn together, and from one another, through completing their assignments as a team.

The process of producing a documentary is time-consuming, and in order to complete the project during the semester, we needed to process the work in parallel. In addition to the various task forces involved in the documentary itself, other groups were assigned to various components—documenting the process of making video, critiquing textbooks, formulating a philosophy of public history, finding ways to measure the success of the project, coming up with creative ways to give a student first-hand experience with the discriminatory interrogation process. Student teams were also involved in arranging, scheduling, and recording oral history interviews with Asian American faculty and staff (a project which we called ‘AALOHA’ for Asian American Legacies/Oral History Archives). Project AALOHA would not only begin the process of documenting these biographies, but also network students with Asian American faculty and staff scattered throughout the campus.

*Capturing the Hearts and Minds of Students by Connecting to History.* To complete this project in one semester required students to complete their part of the project in a timely fashion. I told them that the “train was leaving the station” and their “tracks had to be laid before the train arrived” in order for the project not to be derailed. We referred to our project as our “Ten-Mile Day,” alluding to the record set on April 28, 1869 by the Chinese. As the Union and Central Pacific Railroads raced towards Promontory Point, the Union Pacific’s Vice President Durant bet Charles Crocker of the Central Pacific that his Chinese “pets” could not beat their record of laying 7½ miles of track in a day. Crocker boasted that his Orientals, who had built the Great Wall of China, could lay ten miles of rail in a day. Durant scoffed at the boast and wagered \$10,000 that it could not be done. On April 28, 1869, in a record that has never been broken, a team of eight Irish rail handlers running the rails forward and an army of thousands of Chinese leveling and filling the ground, placing the ties, shoving the rails in place, driving spikes, raising ties, and tamping the ground, in the greatest railroad construction race in history, laid 10 miles and 56 feet of track in a little less than 12 hours. The names of the eight Irish men have been passed down through the years, but the names of the army of “John Chinamen” were never recorded.

*Addressing Disciplinary Prejudices and Political Incorrectness.* During the semester we were working on this project, there was an article in the student newspaper about a study that showed that SUNY students would fail a test for those seeking American citizenship. This study was taken up by politicians in Albany who saw it as an opportunity to impose a core requirement that would cover, in one semester, American history “from Columbus to Clinton.” The conservative argument for requiring a core went something like this: today’s students are particularly ignorant of the most basic orienting facts of American history. The result of this ignorance is that the chords of a shared cultural memory have been cut, threatening the very fabric of American society. Therefore, a core American history should be required that would impart this core knowledge.

The problem with this argument is not that it *deplores* a lamentable ignorance of history but that it contains an implicit *diagnosis* of why that ignorance exists. But what if that diagnosis is wrong? Then the above argument would be invalid because it is possible that the proposed *solution*—implementation of a core requirement—could instead be a *contributing cause* of the problem. In a classroom exercise we reproduced the findings of Michael Frisch in his reasoned and refreshing study “American History and the Structures of Collective Memory: A

Modest Exercise in Empirical Iconography.” Frisch found that “whatever the deeper knowledge and grasp of history among my students, there is no indication in the data that the chords of cultural memory, in terms of historical symbols, have weakened in the slightest...[T]he structure of myth and heroes, martyrs and mothers, is firmly in place,” and concluded that “If anything, the lesson is that indoctrination and education need to be more effectively decoupled, not conflated.”<sup>22</sup>

The subtext of the above conservative argument, of course, was that ethnic studies lead to “intellectual ghettoization” and “ethnic balkanization” and so were contributing to the fragmentation of America. A colleague in the History Department wrote a letter to the editor about the article in the student newspaper and argued that ethnic studies courses were “excuses for students to retreat into enclaves smaller, more self-stroking than the unquestionably arrogant and narrow old studies that confined themselves to the nation’s dominant white, northern European, and male component.” Pointing the finger of blame at minority students and scholars for failing to join the mainstream conversation, however, can be a dangerous game to play.

*Critiquing History Textbooks: A Practical Exercise in Deconstruction.* My students decided to analyze this professor’s own textbook in American history, required at Stony Brook, with regard to its coverage of Asian American history. The students were amazed to discover the photograph of the meeting of the Transcontinental Railroad with an inadequate explanation of the Chinese contribution. The coverage of the Japanese internment was limited to a paragraph equal in length to another paragraph discussing the fact that the Harry Truman’s middle name was ‘S’ rather than being an initial. Then there was the classic photograph of the victimized Japanese American girl on the suitcase waiting to be deported to an Internment Camp, but no discussion of the activists of the reparations movements that resulted in the 1988 Civil Liberties Act. This was a practical “hands-on” lesson in the criticism and ‘deconstruction’ of master narratives.

The students began to realize the impact of power on the production of knowledge. The economics of textbook sales could result in suppressing controversial topics like the Japanese Internment, the ‘heroification’ of individuals like Harry S Truman in “feel good” rationalizations of the unleashing of the atomic bomb on civilian populations, and the uncritical acceptance of stereotypes, like the myth of the model minority, that mask complex issues of institutional racism during the turbulent period of the 1960s. Moreover, the students began to discern a striking difference between a “boring” textbook written for students and “provocative” research articles for scholars. The point of view of the unquestioned authoritative omniscient observer of history in the textbook contrasted sharply with the passionate arguments of professional historians. Perhaps history consisted not of memorizing facts about the past, but, like philosophy, consisted of long-standing debates and the construction of arguments and explanations from the raw materials of history.

*Constructing a Philosophy of History.* This critique allowed us to distinguish two conceptions of history. According to *contributionism*, there is a “Master” or “Grand Narrative” which is told from the supposedly objective point of view of the omniscient observer of history and to which minorities may make “contributions.” An alternative approach sees history as a *critical prism* in which the experiences of minorities could function as a lens through which the socially constructed ideology of whiteness could be analyzed into a

rainbow of multicultural history that was hidden but always present.

Historian Gary Okhiro in his “Margins and Mainstreams” lectures at Amherst College contended, contrary to the above conservative argument, “that the core values and ideals of the nation emanate not from the mainstream but from the margins—from among Asian and African Americans, Latinos and American Indians, women, and gays and lesbians. In their struggles for equality, these groups helped preserve and advance the principles and ideals of democracy and have thereby made America a freer place for all.”<sup>23</sup> Perhaps ethnic insularity was the result of an alienation from history due to the missing or distorted mirrors of history as imposed by a traditional core, and the solution to the problem of absence was to tell history, not from the single point of view of the omniscient observer above, but below from the multiple perspectives of multicultural history.

Shirley Hune in “Opening the American Mind and Body” noted that Asian American studies is “transformative in that [it]...looks to both a restructuring of education and an expansion of knowledge. Asian American scholars envision that their teaching and research will play a role in countering the cultural domination of the existing Euro-American knowledge base taught in American colleges; they hope to produce the kind of scholarship and students capable of resolving injustices and crating a more equitable society. In short, Asian American studies seeks to *democratize* higher education.”<sup>24</sup>

*Respecting the Disciplinary Values of Asian American Studies.* If the solution to ethnic insularity and apathy toward history was reconnecting with history, then this required that my student embrace the democratizing disciplinary values of Asian American studies. This is initially difficult for some Asian American students who are reluctant to shed the protected, stereotypical status of a “model minority.” Yet the students began to realize how their knowledge of Asian American history would have been radically different if it had been limited to a traditional textbook in some required core curriculum survey course, and how they could be deprived of the very knowledge they needed to succeed in society once they graduated from college. Making this documentary could be our way of “fighting back” and to advocate for opening up the college curriculum. The students realized that our project would not even have been possible without ethnic studies created by the earlier struggles of the Black Student Union and the Asian American students and community activists at San Francisco State in 1968. Nor would our project have been dreamed of without the ground-breaking historical preservation undertaken by Him Mark Lai, Genny Lim, and Judy Yung in *Island: Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island 1910-1940*. The original publication of this work by the San Francisco Study Center’s *Hoc Doi* (History of Chinese Detained on Island) Project in 1980 as a project of the Chinese Culture Foundation of San Francisco testifies to its community roots. Moreover, the history of the Chinese on Angel Island might have remained a story of shame, untold within academia had it not been for the pioneers like Felicia Lowe and Loni Ding, who created the genre of Asian American documentaries and who struggled for years to raise money to make their independent films. When we began this project, our library had none of the above materials that would enable students to connect themselves to this Asian American past. Now my students were gaining access to that history and equipping themselves with the critical abilities they needed to construct their own historical narrative.

*Why Make New Documentaries About Old Topics?* About half-way through the project, Dini came up with the brilliant title: *I Saw Myself*. These simple words captured the philosophy and pedagogy of the process. Recreating their ancestors' experiences, the students discovered new voices. As student Johnny Chui put it, "I felt my ancestors speaking through me." Zhi Deng cited another benefit: "reclaiming history for us not only retains our cultural heritage but also instills a greater sense of pride about our history." Though he had initially joined the project for extra credit, Tony Lee came to realize that "I could have been one of the people" in "this place of lingering memories and tarnished dreams." I realized that our student documentary was importantly different from the classic documentaries by Felicia Lowe and Loni Ding: our documentary not only retold the history of Angel Island but also reflected what happens to students when they recover that history. No longer "anxious stutterers" in words and deed, these students struggled to become the authors—the heroes and heroines—of their own lives.

*Incorporating Strategies of Asian American Filmmaking.* The first version of our documentary was screened in class, and students were asked to critique the film in writing. Since women in China were denied literary educations, the poems carved into the walls of the Angel Island barracks were by Chinese men. As a result, at this point in the project, the cast included only Asian American males, speaking in English. How could we incorporate the diversity within the classroom as a resource? Moreover, the performance of a succession of poems was a little disjointed. How could we find a way of weaving the various performances together? The cumulative impact of the poems created a feeling of sadness and hopelessness. How could we avoid portraying these Chinese immigrants as mere victims of history?

Not only did we want to avoid the trap of victimization history, we also wanted to avoid the trap of "blaming the victim"—of dismissing the Chinese immigrants as "law breakers," "illegal aliens," and "liars." After the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, many Chinese began to devise ways of entering the United States illegally. The San Francisco earthquake of 1906 ruined most of the city's official records, and this provided a unique opportunity for Chinese people to circumvent the discriminatory laws by creating fake documentation for "paper sons" and "paper daughters" who could claim to be the sons and daughters of American citizens.

The Angel Island Immigration Station was established as a detention center where immigration officials subjected all prospective Chinese immigrants coming through the West Coast, even those exempted, such as scholars, merchants, and students, to grueling interrogations about their family history. Transcripts of these interrogations reveal questions so detailed that even a real son or daughter hardly could be expected to know the answers from memory: "How many windows were there in your bedroom?" "Who occupied the house on the fifth lot of your row in your native village?" "What is the name of the wife of the neighbor in the first house in the second row?" "How many water buffaloes does your village have?" "How many of the water buffalo were male and how many female?"

As an exercise to bring home the point about the fallibility of memory, students were asked to answer similar questions about the house in which they first lived and then to check with their parents about the accuracy of their own memories. Most failed to get the details right. In order to pass the interrogations, the Chinese immigrants memorized "coaching books" which gave in great detail facts about the presumed village in China they claimed as home. This helped students to see the motivation for creating fictional autobiographies for the purposes

of self-defense (as in the "autobiographical" novel *Woman Warrior* by Maxine Hong Kingston, once the most assigned novel in colleges). Students could also see why the immigration debate cannot simply resolve issues of justice by invoking the citizen/non-citizen distinction to rationalize unequal protection for targeted racial and religious minorities. The issue is very much alive today whether it involves the indiscriminate lumping of Arab-Muslim-Middle Eastern immigrants or the guilt by association that licenses the deportation of Filipino immigrants through the U.S. designating the Philippines as an Al Qaeda-harboring country. "Fighting for democracy" is not only about battles fought in the name of democracy abroad, but also about battles to preserve civil liberties at home.

*Finding History Was Already Multicultural.* The diversity within the classroom motivated us to rediscover the diversity already present in the history we were researching. First, we added a student performing a poem in Chinese (in Mandarin, since that is the language most Chinese would understand today, although the original speakers would have spoken Cantonese) and without subtitles so the audience could hear the rhyme schemes and feel the isolation of being imprisoned in a foreign land without being able to understand the language. Peter Morales, an African-Latino American male, and Charlotte Eng, a Chinese American female, volunteered to be co-anchors to introduce the history of Angel Island for the audience. Chinese women were imprisoned on Angel Island, and so we found their oral histories to tell. Two Asian American sorority sisters agreed to be filmed together, recalling Loni Ding's moving portrait of the Chinese women in the frontier west who were impressed into prostitution to pay for their passage to America and were all called "China Mary" by Caucasians, who could not be bothered to learn their Chinese names. An African American woman, Billyn Tarplain, confessed she was "provoked to jealousy" when she saw the first version of the video, and her dramatic reading of the oral history of a Chinese woman turned out to be one of the most powerful segments of the video. Her presence in the documentary in voicing the oral history of a detained Chinese woman provoked interethnic comparisons: "Asian Americans . . . are like a quiet storm that enlightened me with their rich cultural traditions and history similar in some ways to my African heritage—the only thing that separates us is melanin." Contrary to the conservative argument that ethnic studies isolates students into intellectual ghettos, Latino and white and African and Asian American students were working together to script, perform, and disseminate our project.

*Giving Voice to Victims of History Without Reinforcing Victimization History.* Reading Loni Ding's "Strategies of an Asian American Filmmaker," we knew that victimization wasn't the whole story, so we sought creative and truthful ways to find an ending that would be appropriately, but not artificially, "upbeat." Our solution was to place the story of Angel Island poetry within the struggle of the Asian American community to reclaim and preserve the history of Angel Island. The poems and oral histories were woven together with a wandering and lonely melody from an *erhu*, a Chinese, single-stringed violin. Then to mark a transition to the present, contemporary music, with the beat of a different drum, was the background to the co-anchors reporting on the on-going struggles to preserve Angel Island as an important piece of American history. Before the closing credits, we incorporated three timelines: "Fighting Exclusion," "Recovering Memories," and "Reclaiming History" to chronicle how the Asian American community had collectively struggled to preserve their history. We believe that this story of struggle made a documentary — focusing on the Chinese immigrants at Angel Island — at the same time a story that had universal human significance. In addition to giving voice to a silenced generation of immigrants, the students had themselves become cultural activists.

*Why is the Camera's Gaze so Powerful?* After our attempts to implement Loni's strategies were added to the documentary, Dini screened the revised video on a large 25-foot screen so the students could see the effect. This was one of the most memorable moments in twenty years of teaching. The class was stunned at what we had accomplished together. A phone conversation with Loni Ding helped me to understand the power of the image: "Someone once startled me with the proposal that if you were to gaze at anybody long enough, you could become enamored with them. Like the primal bonding of mother to infant.... Perhaps the gaze of the camera does the same, in the hand of someone who turns towards the camera subject with respect.... A human gaze is empowering; equally empowering is the camera's gaze." Even though the students had seen each other on a day-to-day basis, there was something empowering in seeing those faces framed by the camera—the faces of ordinary students doing something quite extraordinary, recovering a neglected history and validating that history through a project aimed at public education. All this was completed the day before the fateful vote in California would decide the issue of funding for the restoration of Angel Island. This story would not be covered on radio or television in New York, so one of the students who had been an editor of the student newspaper tapped into the wire service and emailed the class telling them that the bill had passed!

The first test of the educational power of the production occurred unexpectedly in the midst of a live performance mid-semester. Students who produced the video gave up two days of their spring break to participate in the annual "Read Aloud" program that shares Asian American history and literature at local schools. The first assembly at Great Hollow Middle School in Nesconset opened with a Japanese Taiko drumming performance, which was following by a group of students reading a poem, "Child of Asian America" by Marie Villanueva.<sup>25</sup> The drumming was overpowering and a tough act to follow for the students with only the power of their spoken word. At the second assembly, we decided to use the power of the medium. Some students reading the poem were also in the documentary, so we decided to better prepare the way for the poem by screening "I Saw Myself" first. As the documentary's closing credits began to roll, the auditorium full of students and teachers burst into spontaneous applause. The real test was when the lunch bell rang and the students remained glued to their seats to hear the last few stanzas of the students reading the poem. Some of the middle schoolers actually approached the college students in the documentary for autographs! Praising the video for "bringing attention to a period of our history that too often is ignored," school librarian Harriet Pasca Ortgies observed, "One only had to look at the intent faces of our students to realize that here was a program of great import."

*Why Having Measurable Goals Is Important Even if the Numbers are Not.* A week after viewing the video, "I Saw Myself," a sample of about 30 predominantly Asian American students of varying linguistic abilities were asked to write, for 15 minutes each, as many details as they could remember about Ellis Island and about Angel Island. Prior to viewing "I Saw Myself" the previous week, most of these students had never heard of Angel Island. Students compared the writing samples about Ellis Island with those about Angel Island with respect to the number of sentences, the average number of words per sentence, the number of specific descriptive details, and the number of active verb constructions. In our sample, there was a measurable increase in all these categories when writing about Angel Island: the percentage increases in each of these categories were, 63%, 63%, 37%, and 22%, respectively. Although the measurement was crude, this is some empirical evidence that a more inclusive

history could have a positive impact on the writing of Asian American students. It was important for my students to think about measuring the impact of their work, even if the numbers were not particularly important, because what is measured gets attention.

*Networking with Experts.* Throughout this project, the students were inspired immeasurably by Loni Ding, a veteran documentary filmmaker for nearly 30 years, and executive director of the Center for Educational Telecommunications. Before Loni's Provost lecture, we arranged to tape an interview with her by journalist Bill Zimmerman with the class as the audience. We had decided to surprise Loni with a screening of "I Saw Myself" which contained a dedication to her in the closing credits. One could see the students leaning forward on the edge of their seats to hear what Loni would say after the surprise screening. Moved both professionally and personally, Loni told us that our work was "very important" and that she could see the students were not merely reciting the poetry, but "speaking the words as their own." Loni made us realize that our documentary, like hers and Felicia's, was important and unique: our documentary not only recounted the history of Angel Island, but also reflected the impact on students of recovering that history as their own. Loni invited my students to work with her in producing a CD to accompany the companion book for her Emmy-award winning PBS television series, *Ancestors in the Americas*. This CD project will, in Loni's words, challenge students "to participate with the full unity of their hearts and minds" in constructing "something wholly theirs, which is at once critical/analytical and narrative story telling."

*Staying Emotionally Committed to the Importance of Your Project.* Given the exhilarating race to finish the 'Ten-Mile Day', the empirical validation of the impact of the work, and the validation of the project by experts in the field, the students were in a state of heightened expectation as they gathered around the display table at the Undergraduate Research Competition the following day. The energy was very high even though the students had gotten little sleep. The display exhibited not only the documentary itself, but include slideshow presentations on the Philosophy of History, the making of "I Saw Myself", and Asian American Immigration History. One student, Michael Kwan, who had been invaluable in documenting the whole project, was chosen as the spokesperson for the project, but the student representatives of the various tasks forces were also present.

When the judges arrived, instead of viewing the documentary, they cross-examined Michael about the project. Somewhat nervous with the responsibility resting on his shoulders, Michael explained what the project was about, how student teams had been working on various components, and how the project addressed issues in the philosophy of history. The judges' questions (I was later told by the students) revealed controlling stereotypes about Asian Americans, a suspicion that the collaborative work was somehow "unfair competition," and a desire to catch Michael in a mistake rather than to consider the project on its merits. Collaboration, while common in the sciences, is uncommon in the humanities, where the single authored article or book still dominates. The students were disheartened when judges did not find it worth their time, less than ten minutes, to actually view the project that the students had worked so hard to complete.

*Failure Can Be a Prelude to Success.* The reception of the project was a tremendous blow, not only to the students representing the display, but also to the class as a whole. When we returned to class the following week, I could see the disappointment on their faces. Some students couldn't get over the unfairness and superficiality of the judging process. An

African American student in the class said she was seeing, for the first time, how the “model minority” stereotype of Asian Americans could unfairly disqualify a project dealing with racial discrimination in the minds of the judges. Other students put on a display of defensive cynicism to hide their disappointment, “How could we have expected to win anyway?” How could a sense of empowerment be rescued from this perceived failure?

The occasion stimulated a classroom conversation about the meaning of “winning” and “losing.” What was the goal in embarking on the project in the first place? The research competition had been a good motivation for completing the project on time, but perhaps the competitive model of success was inadequate to measure what really had been accomplished. The excellence that had been achieved did not depend on being judged better than all the other projects, but in the creating of a community of cultural workers around a set of shared values. The Chinese in the frontier west had been despised for the very reason they succeeded: their ability to engage in collaborative projects that required a great deal of preparatory labor before benefits would accrue to future generations. Had we, in our own way, tasted the bitterness and injustice experienced by the Chinese workers, whose names and faces never appear in the photograph commemorating the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad?

When I told Loni about the discouragement of my students, she graciously returned to Stony Brook from NYU, where she had screened a revised version of the first part of *Ancestors in the Americas*. Loni wanted to encourage the students, especially Michael, whom she had seen working so hard behind the scenes. Loni provided some constructive criticism for improving the project, but more importantly, she told us that this kind of hostile reception for the kind of work we were doing was quite common. She had experienced similar disappointments. Any work that goes against the grain can provoke defensiveness and create “cognitive dissonance” in others by challenging comforting myths about American history.

What would be our response to this perceived unfairness in the judging process? Here again we were helped by Loni’s work. In her *Chinese in the Frontier West: An American Story*, there is an interview with Charles McClain of the Boalt School of Law, an expert on the profound impact of Chinese legal protests on the development of Constitutional Law. The 1873 San Francisco Queue Ordinance prohibited men from wearing queues, the long braid required during the rule of the Manchu Dynasty if one was to return to China, and then ordered that all prisoners have their queues cut off. If the Chinese paid the fines for their queues, they would have no money to send home to China, and if their queues were cut off, they were forbidden to go back to China. The Chinese Associations banded together and Ho Ah Kow, who had had his queue cut off in jail, sued the San Francisco Sheriff for \$10,000.

McClain noted, “The case went before the Federal Circuit Court in San Francisco, was heard by two very famous judges. One was Stephen Field who was a Justice of the Supreme Court. In the opinion, Field said that the ordinance was null and void, that it violated the Civil Rights Act of 1870 and secondly, it violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. That it was an attempt to impose a more severe penalty on Chinese than was imposed on others. Well, here was Field saying, for the first time, that the Chinese were protected by the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution.” In other words, in fighting this battle, the Chinese were involved in a constitutional struggle that would eventually extend the constitutional protections in the Fourteenth Amendment not only to citizens but to anyone residing in the United States. McClain concluded with the observation: “In fact, I would say it’s hard to think of a single discriminatory law, a law perceived

by the Chinese as discriminatory, that they did not challenge in court.”

Taking this example as a guide, I had asked one of the judges to write a letter of apology to my class for not taking the time to view the research project. I read this apology to my astonished students. We had not “eaten bitterness” by simply taking unfair treatment as “silent, resigned victims.” Something had been done, but it was clearly not enough. The point of the protest was not that we should have won, but that the project should have been viewed. I promised my students that I would continue to work on the project and find a venue in which the project would be seen.

*New Media and New Possibilities of Collaboration.* Migrating a project to new media allows for the creation and completion of projects that may take more than one generation of students to complete. The Transcontinental Railroad was not built in a day or in a semester. New media makes materials transportable over time and space, and so opens up new possibilities for student collaboration that go beyond one class of students. We transferred the project so that it could be viewed on computer over the Internet as streaming video. Moreover, the new medium allowed for re-editing and, more importantly, incorporating a rich texture of period photographs, historical documents, political cartoons, and mementos. We were not able to find photographs of the crowded and humiliating bathroom facilities at the Angel Island barracks, so I incorporated photographs taken by my mother when she had visited years ago. The project changed from being a video into being a multi-media presentation that could be transported internationally.

In October 2001 I presented a paper, “Dialogues of Truth and Reconciliation: Paradoxes of Apology, Philosophies of History, and the Healing of Nations” at the Sixth Symposium of Chinese-American Philosophy and Religious Studies: Cross-Cultural Dialogue at Shandong University. I incorporated “I Saw Myself” as an example of what is required in the healing of historical wounds between America and China. Although the technical difficulties were not solved by my Chinese hosts until the very last moment, the fact that the documentary was a CD that could be played on any standard computer made the screening technically possible. Chinese graduate students at Stony Brook had worked on migrating the project to CD and had also incorporated Chinese subtitling. In this international venue, the value of seeing Asian American faces as conveyers of knowledge, and the value of incorporating Asian and African American women into the project was most evident. American and British white male colleagues dominated the Western delegation; Chinese male colleagues dominated the Eastern delegation. Here were minority students from Stony Brook University telling a chapter of American’s treatment of the Chinese that was previously unknown to my colleagues both East and West.

Upon returning from China, I learned that the Angel Island exhibit from San Francisco was coming on January 28, 2002 to the Museum of the Chinese in the Americas (MoCA) in New York City’s Chinatown. Talking with Fay Chew, Executive Director of MoCA, I arranged for a version of “I Saw Myself,” now enhanced with interactive educational programs, to be exhibited at the “Gateway to Gold Mountain: The Angel Island Immigration Experience.” I contacted students from the original class who had since graduated to join a fieldtrip with students from an Honors College class. These former students could finally celebrate the long awaited exhibition of the project. Moreover, they could also serve as cultural guides for the Honor students, many of whom were venturing into New York’s Chinatown for the first time on this field trip.

One of the menu items that had been added to this new interactive version of the project was a dramatic reading of “Child of Asian America.” This video contained a compelling

closing commentary on the power of words by Michael Kwan, who recounts how the college students involved in another 'Read Aloud' outreach at a local school during Martin Luther King, Jr. week had been verbally assaulted with racial slurs by a group of students at the school. After our performance, one of the college students, Abelin Siriban, asked for permission to address the assembly. Through her tears and courageous words, Abelin taught the students a memorable lesson about the power of words (and, in so doing, lived up to her namesake, for 'Abelin' is a contraction of 'Abraham Lincoln'). With Abelin's permission, her powerful testimony was incorporated into the closing moments of the 'Child of Asian America' video, which now was more than students reading a poem, it was a powerful anti-bias teaching tool. The students were clearly taking ownership of the project by engaging in it with full hearts and minds.

Attending the grand opening of the exhibition at MoCA gave me an opportunity to meet Felicia Lowe, Katherine Toy, the Executive Director of the Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation (AIISF), and Erika Gee, the new educational director for the foundation. A letter of support from Erika enabled me to successfully apply for a small educational grant at my university for "Making New Mirrors for Reclaiming the Public History of Angel Island by Publishing a Multi-Media Research Project in a Museum Kiosk Bridging Asian American Studies from San Francisco to Long Island." This project would support the migration of the project onto a stand-alone computer kiosk.

*A Misplaced Perfectionism Can be the Enemy of Progress.* Sometimes success can lead to failure because success seduces one into prematurely stopping work on a project. On the other hand, a misplaced perfectionism can also be the enemy of risk-taking. In March 2003, the *Tin See Do: The Angel Island Experience* exhibit was coming to the Ellis Island Immigration Museum. This would be a culminating historic moment for all Asian Americans to finally see the Angel Island immigration experience being validated in a national museum in the shadow of the Statue of Liberty. As the culmination of two years of advocacy, Loni Ding had returned to Stony Brook on December 22, 2002 to receive an honorary doctorate, and during her visit, she gave us her valuable time and advice on how to take the project to the next level. Exhausted by the many hours required for the project and the struggle for Asian American studies at Stony Brook, I was too tired to even think of what would be required to get a CD ready in time for the Ellis Island exhibition. I was resigned to the realization that it would not be possible to go the final step and have the project ready on time for the Ellis Island exhibition.

At the point when I was about to give up, Dini, who also had been not only a collaborator but a source of encouragement throughout the project, exhorted me to seize the moment, "You owe it to your students to keep the work in circulation." Dini reminded me that the project was not supposed to be a professional documentary. At this point, I contacted Virginia Ng, who was organizing the Organization of Chinese Americans chapters on the East Coast to attend a fund-raising reception for *Tin See Do: The Angel Island Experience*. Virginia listened to my story and my request and understood.

Working intensely with a former student, Paul St. Denis, who had become the Director of Multi-Media Projects at the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching, I was able to reduce the scope of the project sufficiently to migrate a polished portion of it onto a CD. The grant I had won paid for the CDs to be professionally pressed and packaged by a company, whose manager, after hearing what our project was about, moved it ahead in the production process so it would be ready on time for the museum opening. There it was distributed in the gift bags for those attending the opening reception.

*Why Create a Community with Shared Values?* Later that semester on May 3, I arranged for a fieldtrip so that my students could attend special workshops offered as part of the Angel Island exhibit at Ellis Island Immigration Station Museum. It was unusual to see so many Asian faces on the ferry trip to Ellis Island. The faces of my students shined with anticipation, and for many, even though they had lived in the area for years, this was the first time they had made the trip. A call from a colleague told me about the possibility of applying for a grant so that some of the travel costs for the students could be subsidized by Stony Brook University's *Committee on Leadership and Ethics*. Did my students learn about ethics and leadership?

My students were able to attend a special screening of *Carved in Silence* with director Felicia Lowe, who introduced the documentary and led a discussion. After that the students participated in a reenactment comparing the treatment of a Russian immigrant with a Chinese immigrant who was interrogated at Ellis Island. My students were able to relate these educational experiences to their own. For example, Hao Ahn Li wrote: "As I watched this film, it really breaks my heart as a Chinese immigrant myself on how these immigrants were mistreated and discriminated against on the basis of their race. A Korean American student Yong Kim observed, "I was simply amazed at the difference in treatment between European and Chinese immigrants. The fact that European immigrants were asked about 11 questions during interrogation compared to 21 single-space pages of interrogation for Chinese." Others began to see connections between past and current events. Priya Desai, a South Asian American, wrote: "Carved in Silence opened my eyes to an America I never thought existed...There was a plaque about a woman who was interrogated at the age of two. It amazed me to think about how the interrogators could think a two year old was a menace to the American government." Jessica Dong reflected on the unfairness of the interview process: "I was also surprised to find out that one of the interviewers had asked his own children the questions that were asked of the Chinese immigrant and they could not answer them all correctly. The treatment of the Chinese at this time was unthinkable. Not only had they discriminated against us in the past but those actions still have effects on us as a society today."

Some students discussed the implications of widespread public ignorance about the history of Angel Island. Miranda Chung was moved by a woman who was only given a minute to speak but who had mortgaged her house so a part of the exhibition could be hung: "Tremendous credit needs to be given to all the generous people who had put up their houses, their time, long-term savings, effort, but most of all their hearts, in order for this exhibit to be shown." Peter Stuemke wondered about the implications of public ignorance: "The thing that bothered me the most about this learning experience was the fact that not too many people know about it. Everyone has heard of Ellis Island and how the immigrants felt freedom for the first time they saw the Statue of Liberty. The general American public needs to learn about the other side of the coin." And for other students this was an occasion for uncovering and discussing family secrets. Jason Ng wrote: "I remember Felicia Lowe asking the audience whether anyone had relatives or family members that were detained in either Angel Island or Ellis Island. I couldn't raise my hand, not because I didn't have any, but because I didn't know. Not until I went home and asked around that I came to learn that my great-grandfather had also been detained at Angel Island for several weeks upon entering the states. I gathered that, from the insightful conversation with my grandmother for one hour; history really brings a family together, in more aspects than one."

## 6. Concluding Remarks: Looking into Our Future Through a Rear-View Mirror.<sup>26</sup>

"I Saw Myself" is an example of the potential of new media in creating a new pedagogy of empowerment. A kiosk version of the project made its debut at Stony Brook University on May 13, 2003. The occasion was the third annual "With Liberty and Justice for All..." symposium, which is dedicated to exploring ways in which Asian Americans have been involved in struggles for social justice. It was also the first time this symposium was held in the newly opened Wang Center. The topic was "The Politics of War and Remembrance." Noam Chomsky, who had recently been profiled in *The New Yorker* as "one of the greatest minds of the twentieth century," spoke on U.S. wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and nuclear tensions with North Korea.<sup>27</sup> Gary Okihiro, Director of Columbia's Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race, spoke on "Remembering Viet Nam." Speaking on "Gangsters, Gooks, Geishas, and Other Things that Go Bump in the Night" was Helen Zia, the activist featured in the Oscar-nominated documentary by Renee Tajima and Christine Choy, "Who Killed Vincent Chin?" (1989) and, more recently, co-author of *My Country versus Me* with Dr. Wen Ho Lee, the Los Alamos scientist imprisoned and falsely accused of being a spy.<sup>28</sup> Lisa Yun read a presentation on behalf of Loni Ding, who could not attend for health reasons. The presentation included video clips from *The Color of Honor* (1987) and *Nisei Soldier: Standard Bearer of an Exiled People* (1983), history-making documentaries shown in Congress and credited with being critical to the passage of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 authorizing reparations for the Japanese American internment. Seeing their work exhibited in the Wang Center with these powerful speakers, my students were able to witness their work as living history.

Projects like "I Saw Myself" demonstrate that multicultural education need not be limited to a "cultural tourism" which celebrates food and dance: it can also construct a critical intellectual prism through which we can examine the hidden multicultural dimensions of American history. Perhaps the new media is precisely what is needed to democratize the production of knowledge and to bring Asian American Studies back to its roots. Robert Ku, now director of the Asian American Studies program at Hunter College, once warned: "Asian American studies was once an illegitimate discipline which dreamt it was legitimate. Now, it is in danger of fast becoming a discipline that has forgotten how to dream."<sup>29</sup> Historian Ronald Takaki reflected upon the importance of dreaming new dreams and imagining new ways of defining ourselves in the mirror of history: "we can be certain that much of our society's future will be influenced by which 'mirror' we choose to see ourselves. America does not belong to one race or one group, the people in this study remind us, and Americans have been constantly redefining their national identity...By sharing their stories, they invite us to see ourselves in a different mirror."<sup>30</sup>

### Endnotes

\* I would like to thank Loni Ding, Dini Diskin-Zimmerman, Michael Kwan, Felicia Lowe, Faye Chew-Matsuda, Melinda de Jesus, Erika Gee, Felicia Lowe, Sunita Mukhi, Virginia Ng, Katherine Toy, David Kim, Karen Ford, Gary Okihiro, John Tchen, JoAnne Young, Lisa Yun, Paul St. Denis, Zaheer Abbas, Yingrou Chen, Raheel Kahn, Kurt Simbron, my students whose enthusiasm and dedication have made the struggle worthwhile, Charles B. Wang, and Lana Mar who knew that it was wrong that the Angel Island Immigration Station was falling into ruins that day we visited. "I Saw Myself" is currently being renovated by a new generation of students and can be viewed at <http://www.aac.sunysb.edu>. There is a link on the website for a free download of Realplayer, which is needed to view this project.

1. Alastair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (South Bend, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1981).
2. Paulo Freire in his classic *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), 33. "This pedagogy makes oppression and its causes objects of reflection by the oppressed, and from that reflection will come their necessary engagement in the struggle for their liberation. And in the struggle this pedagogy will be made and remade."
3. David Mura, "Mirrors of the Self: Autobiography and the Japanese American Writer," in Shirley Hune, Hyung-chang Kim, Stephen S. Fugita, and Amy Ling (editors), *Asian Americans: Comparative and Global Perspectives* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1991), 249.
4. James W. Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong* (NY: Touchstone: 1995).
5. Loni Ding, "Strategies of an Asian American Filmmaker," in Russell Leong (editor), *Moving the Image: Independent Asian Pacific American Media Arts* (UCLA Asian American Studies Center and Visual Communications, 1991), 47.
6. The satirical intent of Bret Harte's poem "The Heathen Chinese" published in the *Overland Monthly* in 1870 was to expose America's hypocritical treatment of the Chinese, but the phrase entered into popular usage to the extent that Harte's poem was quoted in defense of Chinese Exclusion.
7. *An Invisible Crisis: The Educational Needs of Asian Pacific American Youth*, AAPIP, 1997.
8. Bob H. Suzuki, "Education and the Socialization of Asian Americans: A Revisionist Analysis of the 'Model Minority' Thesis," reprinted in Don Nakanishi and Tina Nishida (editors), *The Asian American Educational Experience: A Source Book for Teachers and Students*, (New York: Routledge, 1995): 113-132.
9. See the U.S. Census Bureau website <http://www.census.gov/prod/2000pubs> as well as an analysis of these trends by Yen Le Espiritu, *Asian American Women and Men* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Press, 1996).
10. Sucheng Chan, "On the Ethnic Studies Requirement," originally published in the *Amerasia Journal* 15 (1989): 267-80. Reprinted in Nakanishi and Nishida (editors), *The Asian American Educational Experience: A Source Book for Teachers and Students*: 329-338.
11. Lisa Yun, "Domestic Terrorism: The Ideology of Division, the Power of Naming," *Amerasia Journal* 28:3 (2002), 27.
12. Lana Mar penned this quotation in calligraphy on parchment and for the last twenty years it has been more apt than I would have ever imagined.
13. Glenn Omatsu, "The 'Four Prisons' and the Movements of Liberation: Asian American Activism from the 1960s to the 1990s" in Karin Aguilar-San Juan (editor), *The State of Asian America: Activism and Resistance in the 1990s* (Boston: South End Press, 1994): 19-69.
14. The website for the U.C. Riverside Conference "Pedagogy and Performance in Asian American Studies" held February 24, 2001 is <http://ideasandsociety.ucr.edu/asianam/>.
15. Lisa Yun, SUNY Binghamton, and Gary Mar, SUNY Stony Brook were co-presenters of "Going Global: Re-theorizing Asian American Studies via the Stony Brook Charles B. Wang Center and the Binghamton Hybrid Major" at the APAHE (Asian Pacific Americans in Higher Education) Annual Conference "Campus Communities: Promises and Prospects of Asian and Pacific Americans in Higher Education" at Columbia on November 2, 2002.
16. Mari J. Matsuda, *Where is Your Body? And Other Essays on Race, Gender, and the Law* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), 9.
17. Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), ix.
18. See *Race, Rights, and Reparation: Law and the Japanese American Internment* (Gathersburg, NY: Aspen Law and Business, 2001) by Eric K. Yamamoto, Margaret Chon, Carol L. Izumi, Jerry King, and Frank H. Wu for an excellent analysis of this issue.

19. Loni Ding, "Strategies of an Asian American Filmmaker," in Russell Long (editor), *Moving the Image: Independent Asian Pacific American Media Arts* (UCLA Asian American Studies Center and Visual Communications, 1991), 47.
20. The National Trust for Historic Preservation website is <http://www.nationaltrust.org>.
21. The poetic and haunting description of America as a "Land without Ghosts" is due to Fei Xiaotong, a University of Chicago trained Chinese sociologist. It is also the title of a book by David Rakish and Leo O. Lee, *Land Without Ghosts: Chinese Impressions of America from the Mid-Nineteenth Century to the Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).
22. This essay is Chapter 4 of Michael H. Frisch (editor), *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History*, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990).
23. Gary Okihiro, *Margins and Mainstreams: Asians in American History and Culture* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994), ix.
24. Shirley Hune, "Opening the American Mind and Body: The Role of Asian American Studies," *Change* (November/December 1989): 56-63. Reprinted in Nakanishi and Nishida (editors), *The Asian American Educational Experience: A Source Book for Teachers and Students* (NY: Routledge, 1995), 329-338.
25. Marie Villanueva, "Child of Asian America" in *Children of Asian America*, compiled by the Asian American Coalition, (Chicago: Polychrome Publishing Company, 1995), 10-11.
26. This is a paraphrase of a well-known McLuhanism, "We look at the present through a rear-view mirror."
27. The rest of the quotation reads "and one of the most reviled" and comes from Larissa MacFarquhar's "The Devil's Accountant," *The New Yorker* (March 31, 2003), 64-79, a profile with unsupported innuendo throughout.
28. Wen Ho Lee and Helen Zia, *My Country Versus Me: The First-Hand Account by the Los Alamos Scientist Who was Falsely Accused of Being a Spy* (New York: Hyperion, 2001).
29. Robert Ji-Song Ku, "Teaching Against the Grain: Thoughts on Asian American Studies and 'Nontraditional' Students," in *Teaching Asian America: Diversity and the Problem of Community*, edited by Lane Ryo Hirabayashi (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1988), 108.
30. Ronald Takaki, *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1993), 17.