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(UN)SEEN AND (UN)HEARD:
THE STRUGGLE FOR ASIAN AMERICAN "MINORITY" RECOGNITION
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN, 1968-1997

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

Are Asian American college students "minorities"? Using a measure of statistical parity of a student body compared to a state's demographics, Asian Americans have often been excluded from minority student status because they are "overrepresented." As a result, universities overlook their need for culturally and racially relevant curricula and support services. Unable to argue that they are underrepresented and depicted as the "model minority," Asian American students have struggled to have their educational needs seen and heard.

This dissertation examines the historical development of academic and support services for Asian American students at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) from 1968 to 1997. UIUC is home to the largest Asian American Studies program and Asian American cultural center in the Midwest, products of years of activism by Asian American students who challenged university discourses that they were not minorities. By investigating archival and oral evidence, the complex and nuanced experiences of Asian American students are revealed, beyond misperceptions of their seamless integration in predominantly white universities and beyond model minority stereotypes. This study of Asian American students offers a broader concept of "minority status" that is currently limited by a statistical focus and a black/ white racial lens.

This conference provides a place where Asian Pacific American students can empower themselves and others to rip off the blindfolds that have traditionally made Asian Pacific Americans invisible to others, that we can see ourselves and others not through the lens of a Western education, but through the lens of a multi-faceted, multi-dimensional model of society.

*This conference provides a place where we as Asian Pacific American students can rip the cotton from our ears and others' ears, so our screams, our protests, our voices of reason and passion, the voices of our community, our mothers, our fathers and children, can be heard.... By making our issues and concerns **SEEN and HEARD**, we begin to change the powers that be into empowerment within our own communities.*

—Taken from the Unseen Unheard conference program, an annual Asian American student activism conference at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, December 1999

To all Asian American students who struggle to be seen and heard

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AAA	Asian American Association
AAS	Asian American Studies
AATF	Asian American Task Force
ACCORD	Asian-Pacific American Coalition to Combat Oppression, Racism, and Discrimination
APA	Asian Pacific American
APAC	Asian Pacific American Coalition
APARB	Asian Pacific American Resource Board
APARC	Asian Pacific American Resource Committee
EOP	Educational Opportunities Program
HKSA	Hong Kong Students Association
IBHE	Illinois Board of Higher Education
ISA	Indian Student Association
KASA	Korean American Students Association
KUSA	Korean Undergraduate Students Association
MAAS	Midwest Asian American Students
MAASU	Midwest Asian American Students Union
OAR	Office of Admissions and Records
OMSA	Office of Minority Student Affairs
PSA	Philippine Student Association
SEOP	Special Educational Opportunities Program
TASC	Taiwanese American Students Club
UIUC	University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

SELECT TIMELINE OF ASIAN AMERICAN STUDENT ACTIVISM AT UIUC

1940's

Indian Student Association (ISA) founded by international students. ISA reorganizes in 1987. Philippine Student Association (PSA) founded (roots back to the 1919 Philippine Illini). PSA restructures in 1985 to focus on undergraduates.

Summer 1968

UIUC establishes Special Educational Opportunities Program (SEOP or "Project 500") to recruit disadvantaged (especially black) students to campus.

January 1971

The Asian American Alliance, the first pan-Asian American student organization at UIUC, forms.

April 1971

Members of the Asian American Alliance attend the national anti-Vietnam war march in Washington DC.

5 May 1971

Asian American Alliance members lead a local march against the Vietnam War.

Fall 1972

Asian Studies 199 is offered, the first course on Asian American issues at UIUC. The course continues in fall 1973 and spring 1974.

February 1973

The Asian American Alliance submits a proposal for an Asian American Studies program at UIUC.

1979

Korean Undergraduate Student Association (KUSA) founded, changes its name to Korean American Students Association (KASA) in 1995.

1983

Vietnamese Students Association (VSA) founded.

Spring 1986

Asian American Association (AAA), the second pan-Asian American student organization at UIUC, formed, with Assistant Dean of Students Yuki Llewellyn as its first sponsor.

April 1989

The first Midwest Asian American Students (MAAS) conference is sponsored by the Asian American Association at UIUC.

January 1990

Vice chancellor for Student Affairs Stan Levy creates Asian American Task Force, which meets through fall of 1991.

Spring 1990

The Asian Council founded as umbrella student group, includes representatives from the Asian American Association, Philippine Student Association, Korean Undergraduate Students Association, Indian Student Association, and Hong Kong Students Association.

6-8 April 1990

The second Midwest Asian American Students (MAAS) conference held at UIUC.

Spring 1991

The Asian-Pacific American Coalition to Combat Oppression, Racism, and Discrimination (ACCORD) founded to promote Asian American community needs and concerns.

Taiwanese American Students Club (TASC) founded.

March 1991

UIUC's first Asian American Awareness Month is held, coordinated by the Asian Council.

1-3 March 1991

The third Midwest Asian American Students (MAAS) conference held at UIUC.

Fall 1991

Asian American Programming Committee of Illini Union Board's cultural programming division formed.

Spring 1992

Asian American Artists Collective founded.

26 March 1992

Members of ACCORD protest anti-Asian racism in front of the Alpha Tau Omega fraternity.

3-5 April 1992

The fourth Midwest Asian American Students (MAAS) conference held at UIUC, in conjunction with the new network the Midwest Asian American Students Union (MAASU) meeting.

5 May 1992

Latina/o students and supporters sit-in at the Henry Administration building for eight hours and demand improving recruitment and retention of Latina/o students and faculty, developing a Latina/o Studies Program, increasing resources for La Casa Cultural Latina, and eliminating Chief Illiniwek as the university mascot.

Fall 1992

Anthropology professor Clark Cunningham and other invited guest lecturers teach the first semester of Sociology/Anthropology 296C (Asian American Experiences).

14 October 1992

State senate hearings held at UIUC to discuss university response to the May 5 protest and campus climate for students of color. Asian American students testify to anti-Asian sentiment at UIUC.

December 1992

Coalition of Asian American students submits petition for an Asian American cultural center to the UIUC chancellor.

Spring 1993

Asian Pacific American Coalition (APAC) founded.

9-11 April 1993

The fifth Midwest Asian American Students (MAAS) conference held at UIUC, co-sponsored by the Asian American Association and the Indian Student Association.

25-27 March 1994

The sixth Midwest Asian American Students (MAAS) conference held at UIUC, co-sponsored by the Asian American Association, the Indian Student Association, and the Philippine Student Association.

May 1994

Student-written proposal for an Asian Pacific American cultural center presented to the administration and is rejected.

Fall 1994

Students prepare legal documents against the university, claiming that by denying Asian American students support services, the university is violating state law defining Asian Americans as minorities in public institutions of higher education.

First Asiantation, an Asian Pacific American new student orientation, conducted.

September 1994

Asian Pacific American Resource Board (APARB) formed, funding \$30,000 annually for Asian American programming, renamed the Asian Pacific American Resource Committee (APARC) in 1997.

23-26 March 1995

The seventh Midwest Asian American Students (MAAS) conference held at UIUC.

April 1995

Students at Northwestern University undergo a hunger strike for Asian American Studies.

January 1996

Asian American students at UIUC hold day-long teach-in for Asian American Studies.

29-31 March 1996

The eighth Midwest Asian American Students (MAAS) conference held at UIUC.

Fall 1996

First Assistant Dean of Students for Asian Pacific American Student Affairs hired.

First Unseen Unheard annual Asian American activism conference held.

Ad hoc committee formed to investigate the possibility of starting an Asian American Studies program at UIUC.

Fall 1997

Asian American Studies Committee (AASC) established. The three-year building phase focuses on hiring six faculty in Asian American Studies, a university commitment that receives national attention.

Fall 1998

Clinical counselor position specializing in Asian American needs and issues is created.

Fall 2000

The AASC becomes the Asian American Studies Program under the college of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

Fall 2002

The Ad-hoc Committee on Asian Pacific American (APA) Student Life is appointed, charged with examining the personal, social, and academic needs and concerns of APA students on campus. Its report submitted in April 2003 highlights nine recommendations, the top being the creation of an APA cultural center.

9 September 2005

UIUC Asian American culture center grand opening at 1210 W. Nevada Street in Urbana.

CHAPTER ONE

THE STRUGGLE FOR ASIAN AMERICAN "MINORITY" STATUS

Are Asian American college students "minorities"? The answer depends on region, historical time period, and perspective. In the 1960's many colleges and universities, such as the University of California Berkeley, considered Asian American students minorities who were eligible for affirmative action recruitment and support programs. Yet, by the mid-1980's, they removed them.¹ Other universities with substantial Asian American populations mirrored this trend so that by the 1990's, many higher education institutions did not define Asian American students as minorities. Asian American students had undergone a process of "de-minoritization."²

There are three main reasons why colleges and universities do not recognize Asian American students as minorities. The first is a statistical measure: Asian Americans are often spoken about as being demographically "overrepresented" in higher education. A primary measure of minority status is parity—if a group is not represented in an institution or workplace at equivalent rates as their available population, they are defined as disadvantaged.³ Thus, Asian

¹ John Aubrey Douglass, "Anatomy of Conflict: The Making and Unmaking of Affirmative Action at the University of California," in *Color Lines: Affirmative Action, Immigration, and Civil Rights Options for America*, ed. John David Skrentny (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), 118-144.

² Sharon S. Lee, "The De-minoritization of Asian Americans: A Historical Examination of the Representations of Asian American in Affirmative Action Admissions Policies at the University of California," *Asian American Law Journal* 15 (2008): 129-152.

³ John David Skrentny, *The Ironies of Affirmative Action: Politics, Culture, and Justice in America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996); John Aubrey Douglass, "Anatomy of Conflict." John Skrentny describes how affirmative action policies moved towards measures of parity in assessing discrimination. In addition, John Aubrey Douglass outlines how the University of California decided that a goal of admissions was general racial/ ethnic parity with the state population.

American student numbers are invoked in arguments that they are not minorities because they are overrepresented based on some demographic measure. The statistically robust presence of Asian Americans in higher education is no secret. In 2000, Asian and Pacific Islander Americans constituted 5.9 percent of college and university students, as compared to only 4 percent of the US population.⁴ These achievement rates seem to testify that Asian American students do not have any educational needs based on their cultures or racialization.⁵

A powerful discourse of Asian Americans as "model minorities" is the second reason why Asian American students are not readily recognized as minorities. The model minority image of Asian Americans as hard working, non-complaining, and able to pull themselves up by their bootstraps through cultural values of education and respect for authority has a long history in the United States. Their success stories are compared to other groups such as African Americans and Latina/os and are used to argue that social programs such as affirmative action are unnecessary.⁶ (This image is highly problematic, as I will discuss later in this chapter). Asian Americans are thus ideologically separated from other minority groups and not seen as needing assistance.

The third reason why Asian Americans are overlooked in minority discussions is due to the predominance of a black-white racial paradigm. Despite changing racial demographics, the racial discourse in the United States still centers African American experiences. Many minority programs began in the 1960's as a result of the African American-led civil rights movement so,

⁴ William B. Harvey and Eugene L. Anderson, *Minorities in Higher Education: Twenty-first Annual Status Report: 2003-2004* (Washington DC: American Council on Education, 2005); US Census Bureau, *Current Population Survey, Racial Statistics Branch, Population Division*, 2000, <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/race/api.html> (accessed January 2, 2008).

⁵ Keith Osajima, "Racial Politics and the Invisibility of Asian Americans in Higher Education," *Educational Foundations* 9 (1995): 35-53.

⁶ Keith Osajima, "Asian Americans as the Model Minority: An Analysis of the Popular Press Image in the 1960's and 1980's," in *Contemporary Asian America: A Multidisciplinary Reader*, ed. Min Zhou and James Gatewood (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 449-458.

accordingly, they began with a focus on black students. However, a black-white paradigm of race relations marginalizes racial minorities who are neither white nor black.⁷ A likeness to an African American experience has become the "minority model," such as in higher education admissions and student services that have been premised on a black experience.⁸

The focus on statistical parity, the model minority myth, and a black-white racial framework obscure the complex experiences of Asian Americans. Asian Americans are a diverse population that complicates educational policies regarding minority students—they are a racialized non-white group, yet they are also overrepresented on many college campuses. Because of their overrepresentation, Asian Americans have been uncritically removed from minority programs and support; however, disaggregated data show Asian American underrepresentation for certain Asian ethnic groups and in certain academic disciplines.⁹ In addition, Asian Americans' continued experiences with racism reveal the different ways that groups are racialized in the United States. Asian Americans have been racialized as both model minorities and as foreigners, despite generations of US citizenship.¹⁰ This foreigner representation emerges in instances of anti-Asian tension and backlash, creating an inhospitable campus environment. Thus, Asian American students (even those who are academically high achieving) have argued against university policies that exclude them from minority services and programs. In doing so, these students and their allies pose a critical counter-narrative of minority

⁷ Angelo Ancheta, *Race, Rights and the Asian American Experience* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1988); Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960's to the 1990's, Second Edition* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

⁸ Paul Brest and Miranda Oshige, "Affirmative Action for Whom?" *Stanford Law Review* 47 (1995): 855-900.

⁹ Shirley Hune and Kenyon Chan, "Special Focus: Asian Pacific American Demographic and Educational Trends," in *Minorities in Higher Education: Fifteenth Annual Status Report: 1996-1997*, ed. Deborah Carter and Reginald Wilson (Washington DC: American Council on Education, 1997). Ethnic groups such as Southeast Asians and Pacific Islanders still struggle with educational access, and Asian Americans are underrepresented in a number of academic fields such as in the humanities and education.

¹⁰ Ancheta, *Race, Rights and the Asian American Experience*.

experiences that pushes against standard measures of underrepresentation, the model minority myth, and a black-white racial lens. They contest university policies that ignore them and propel the minority discourse to new places, working to establish resources such as Asian American Studies programs and Asian American cultural centers.

Figures of Asian American Students as Model Minorities and Foreigners

Any understanding of Asian American college students' experiences must begin with a critical analysis of the racial stereotypes they face. Two enduring and problematic representations of Asian Americans are that of the model minority and the perpetual foreigner.¹¹ While some education scholars point to the 1960's as the genesis of the image of Asian Americans as the model minority, which signaled an abrupt departure from their racialization as uncivilized and foreign,¹² the lauding of hard working Asians to divide them from other racial groups (primarily African Americans) has a long history. For instance, Frank Wu notes how journalists praised Chinese immigrants in comparison to freed slaves during Reconstruction and in comparison to Irish immigrants in the North. Wu quotes from a Baton Rouge newspaper: "(Chinese) are more obedient and industrious than the negro, work as well without as with an overseer, and at the same time are more cleanly in their habits and persons than the freedmen."¹³ Additionally, *The New York Times* wrote, "'John Chinaman' was a better addition to (American)

¹¹ Jennifer Ng, Sharon S. Lee, and Yoon Pak, "Contesting the Model Minority and Perpetual Foreigner Stereotypes: A Critical Review of Literature on Asian Americans in Education," *Review of Research in Education* 31 (2007): 95-130.

¹² Ji-Yeon Jo, "Neglected Voices in the Multicultural America: Asian American Racial Politics and its Implications for Multicultural Education," *Multicultural Perspectives* 6 (2004): 19-25; Bob Suzuki, "Revisiting the Model Minority Stereotype: Implications for Student Affairs Practice and Higher Education," *New Directions for Student Services* 97 (2002): 21-32.

¹³ Frank Wu, "Neither Black Nor White: Asian Americans and Affirmative Action," *Third World Law Journal* 15 (1995): 231.

society than was 'Paddy.'"¹⁴ These images divided the labor force along racial lines and fueled anti-Chinese sentiment.

The modern "model minority" image did re-emerge in the late 1960's, not coincidentally, during politically contentious times when other "non-model" minorities were engaged in social protest for racial equality. One of the earliest articles of this genre was William Peterson's 1966 *New York Times* article, "Success Story, Japanese American Style," which praised Japanese American occupational and educational success despite a history of racism and wartime incarceration.¹⁵ These stories likened Asians to whites and pointed to their phenomenal success due to hard work and cultural values of discipline, family strength, and respect for authority.

It is imperative to note that scholars have refuted this model minority image for various reasons: it generalizes success for a diverse group that has wide variation across ethnic lines¹⁶; it overlooks persistent racial discrimination against Asians in the United States; and it attributes culture and individual hard work to upward mobility rather than historical and structural resources. Additionally, it is used to divide Asian Americans from other minority groups, pitting them against each other.¹⁷ Thus, the model minority image is indeed a myth. Still, despite these criticisms, the model minority image and its alluring message of individualism and meritocracy have persisted as an explanation for Asian American success, fueling the notion that Asian

¹⁴ Wu, "Neither Black Nor White," 231.

¹⁵ Ki-Taek Chun, "The Myth of Asian American Success and its Educational Ramifications," 15 *IRCD Bulletin* 15 (1980): 2-12. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED193411). Other journalists followed suit, touting the success of other Asian ethnic groups. Ki-Taek Chun notes various other articles of the time including 1966 *US News and World Report's* "Success Story of One Minority Group in US"; a 1970 *New York Times* article "Japanese Joining Hawaii's Elite"; 1971 *Newsweek's* "Success Story: Outwhiting the Whites"; 1975 *Time's* "The Americans of Japanese Ancestry: Fast Rising Sons"; and 1977 *Los Angeles Times's* "Japanese in US Outdo Horatio Alger."

¹⁶ Hune and Chan, *Special Focus: Asian Pacific American Demographic and Educational Trends*.

¹⁷ Claire Kim, "The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans," *Politics and Society* 27 (1999): 105-138; Osajima, "Asian Americans as the Model Minority: An Analysis of the Popular Press Image in the 1960's and 1980's." Claire Kim theorizes about how these divisions are part of a field of racial positions by which Asians are valorized in relation to blacks.

Americans are no longer "minorities," or at the very least are the exemplary kind, a model minority making their way to the top.

Despite the seemingly positive representation of the model minority, Asian Americans are also posed as perpetual foreigners in times of economic or wartime stress and thus become targets of racial backlash. Many scholars have shown that one distinct component of the Asian American experience is that Asians have been primarily racialized as foreigners and aliens, despite generations of citizenship in the United States.¹⁸ Historical examples of this foreigner racialization include legislation that specifically excluded Asian groups from immigration such as the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, the 1907 Gentlemen's Agreement, and the 1917 and 1924 Immigration Acts.¹⁹ Naturalization rights were also denied to Asian immigrants despite Supreme Court challenges by Takao Ozawa (1922) and Bhagat Singh Thind (1923); viewed as unassimilable, Asian immigrants were not granted naturalization rights until after World War II because they were neither white nor Caucasian. Even for American-born Asians, citizenship rights have been precarious. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, wartime hysteria facilitated the incarceration of over 120,000 Japanese Americans in ten internment camps, and two-thirds of detainees were US citizens. In justification of the Japanese American evacuation of the west coast, General John DeWitt stated that the Japanese were essentially an "enemy race whose racial affinities were not severed by migration and whose racial strains

¹⁸ Ancheta, *Race, Rights and the Asian American Experience*; Margaret Chon, "On the Need for Asian American Narratives in Law: Ethnic Specimens, Native Informants, Storytelling and Silences," *UCLA Asian Pacific American Law Journal* 3 (1995): 4-32; Neil Gotanda, "Asian American Rights and the 'Miss Saigon Syndrome,'" in *Asian Americans and the Supreme Court: A Documentary History*, ed. Hyung-Chan Kim (NY: Greenwood Press, 1992), 1087-1103; Natsu Saito, "Model Minority, Yellow Peril: Functions of 'Foreign-ness' in the Construction of Asian American Legal Identity," *Asian Law Journal* 4 (1997): 71-95.

¹⁹ Sucheng Chan, *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991); Ronald Takaki, *Strangers From a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (Boston: Back Bay Books, 1998).

remained undiluted."²⁰ The suspicion of loyalty and the specter of foreign-ness are central to understanding the racialization of Asians in the United States.

The model minority and foreigner images are actually dialectically intertwined; once Asian Americans hit what Derrick Bell describes as a "tipping point," racialized backlash emerges.²¹ The model minority image is deceptive; it seems to promise full integration for Asian Americans (and other groups who play by the rules), but there are clear *limits* to merit for this non-white group. As Asian American college enrollments began to rise in the 1980's, higher education administrators described Asian Americans as overrepresented in response to charges of quotas against Asian Americans. The model minority super-student image also sparked anti-Asian backlash and tension on campuses in the 1980's, evidenced by racist nicknames denoting prestigious schools (MIT became "Made In Taiwan"; UCLA was "United Caucasians Lost Among Asians"). In addition, white students expressed a racial resentment against Asian American students, complaining that they were curve breakers.²²

Creating and Contesting Asian American Racial and "Minority" Categories

Both the model minority and foreigner stereotypes affect Asian American college students. Taken uncritically, the model minority myth prevents administrators from understanding the educational challenges that still persist for this population. As a racialized non-white group, Asian Americans have not been completely integrated and accepted on predominantly white campuses. When university minority programs fail to acknowledge this

²⁰ Chan, *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History*, 125.

²¹ William Kidder, "Situating Asian Pacific Americans in the Law School Affirmative Action Debate: Empirical Facts About Thernstrom's Rhetorical Acts," *Asian Law Journal* 7 (2000): 60; Sharon S. Lee, "Over-represented and De-minoritized: The Racialization of Asian Americans in Higher Education," *InterActions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies* 2 (2006), <http://repositories.cdlib.org/gseis/interactions/vol2/iss2/art4> (accessed November 23, 2007).

²² Wu, "Neither Black Nor White," 239.

reality, Asian American students resist the model minority discourse and create new racial constructions of themselves. As Michael Omi and Howard Winant articulate, racial categories are social constructions.²³ Omi and Winant analyze race beyond an essence, framing race as an unstable and contested category. They write, "The effort must be made to understand race as an unstable and 'decentered' complex of social meanings constantly being transformed by political struggle."²⁴ They propose a framework of racial formations, "the sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed."²⁵ The concept of racial formation reveals how racial categories are constructed and contested in our imagination and manifested in policies; they are neither essential categories nor permanent fixtures. Racial formation arises within a historical context through racial projects that structure the organization and stratification of a society.

Although race is a social construction, US society operates as if race is real, as government, education, and employment policies group individuals together in racial categories. Dvora Yanow astutely points out that social policies and practices treat racial categories as stable, real concepts.²⁶ While socially created racial categories do not adequately capture the wide variance and intersectionality of identity and experience, they are still presented and understood as unchanging exclusive concepts. She writes of this tension in understanding racial categorization: "They take on an ontological status as objectively real, especially as they are invoked and used by the state and imputed with an aura of 'science'; but as social constructions, they can be socially changed—with all the difficulties entailed in doing so, which requires

²³ Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 55.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 55.

²⁶ Dvora Yanow, *Constructing "Race" and "Ethnicity" in America: Category-Making in Public Policy and Administration* (Armonk, NY: ME Sharpe, Inc., 2003).

unseating a reified concept."²⁷ In other words, while these racial definitions are open to change and transformation, this change is not easy in the face of policies that treat racial categories as real. Such change involves considerable political and ideological contestation and negotiation.

Various forces have constructed and shaped the racial category "Asian" in the United States. The category "Asian American," along with its often-conflated corollary "Pacific Islander," consists of a diverse group encompassing many ethnicities, languages, cultures, religions, and histories. When Asian immigrant groups began entering the United States in the mid-nineteenth century, they identified along regional or ethnic lines; a sense of a larger pan-Asian identity did not form until the 1960's.²⁸ Asian American panethnicity emerged as a response to external forces such as government policies and legislation that racialized Asian ethnic groups as the same based on phenotype.

A shared racialized experience provides the context for pan-Asian mobilization. Asian American panethnicity emerged as an adaptive political strategy during the 1960's when Asian American leaders began to advocate for their needs and challenged negative depictions of their foreign-ness. Asian Americans also combated the fallacies of the model minority myth, which denied them automatic recognition for minority services and benefits and masked persistent racial discrimination.

The acknowledgement of Asian Americans as a minority was and is significant, especially as policies began to take shape to address racial disparities. This struggle for this recognition can be seen occurring in the development of Asian American categories in the United States census. Asians first made their appearance in the 1870 census, which had a racial category for Chinese. By 1970, there were five Asian Pacific subgroups listed: Japanese,

²⁷ Yanow, *Constructing "Race" and "Ethnicity" in America*, xii.

²⁸ Yen Le Espiritu, *Asian American Panethnicity: Bridging Institutions and Identities* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992).

Chinese, Filipino, Hawaiian, and Korean. The 1980 and 1990 censuses further expanded the list of Asian subgroups as a result of political mobilization by pan-Asian organizations that sought government recognition of their numbers.²⁹ Following 1960's civil rights legislation, statistical acknowledgement was critical, as numbers were the basis for determining eligibility for federal funding and services. Population statistics identified disadvantage and underrepresentation and outlined eligibility for affirmative action programs in education, employment, and public services.

Hence, a system that foregrounded enumeration for minority benefits provided an incentive for various Asian ethnic groups to come together and argue for Asian American minority eligibility, often in the face of their removal from such programs. For example, according to Hugh Davis Graham, Asian Americans were removed from the list of minorities eligible for the Small Business Administration 8 (a) program in 1978. However, they were quickly reinstated due to Asian American political lobbying.³⁰ Arguing for minority status is important for various reasons. Obviously, being recognized as a minority opens the door for services. Yet, this strategy is more than a ploy for political advancement; by claiming a minority identity, Asian Americans are also arguing against a model minority discourse that ignores their continued struggles as a racialized non-white group, with a long history of racial discrimination in the United States. This move can be read as an attempt to align with other people of color in the fight against institutionalized racism.

²⁹ Espiritu, *Asian American Panethnicity*. For example, in 1974, Asian Indians lobbied to be classified as Asian Americans, in order to receive affirmative action eligibility and protections in employment. Prior to this point, Asian Indians were classified as "other," but in 1980 they had become "Asian American."

³⁰ Hugh Davis Graham, *Collision Course: The Strange Convergence of Affirmative Action and Immigration Policy in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

Beyond Black and White

As Asian Americans came together to articulate a shared agenda, they did so in the face of the reality that minority programs had been defined along underrepresentation and had become racialized as black. Joy Ann Williamson notes affirmative action programs became racialized as black with the interchanging use of the terms minority, disadvantaged, and African American. She writes, "The confusion and the fact that African American students usually received the most attention racialized affirmative action programs ..."³¹ Thus, these programs and discourses have been limited by a black-white paradigm. Asian Americans don't fit this "minority model" well and have been uncritically removed or excluded from university minority programs and services.

When educational institutions began addressing the challenges facing "minority students," the focus was on African Americans. Historically, black-white relations have informed educational discourses and policies for racial equity; for example, since the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling, desegregation has been perceived as a black-white issue.³² And in higher education, policy makers initially aimed affirmative action policies to benefit African Americans.³³ Because of this nation's oppressive history of slavery, Jim Crow segregation, and anti-black racism, as well as the African American-led civil rights movement and resistance struggles of the twentieth century, it is no surprise that racial discourse begins in black and white. And in regional areas such as the Midwest where racial demographics are not as diverse as in California or New York, this black-white paradigm of race relations predominates. However, a black-white binary also marginalizes racial minorities who are neither white nor black and

³¹ Joy Ann Williamson, *Black Power on Campus: The University of Illinois, 1965-1975* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 56.

³² Kristi L. Bowman, "The New Face of School Desegregation," *Duke Law Journal* 50 (2001): 1751-1808.

³³ Brest and Oshige, "Affirmative Action for Whom?"

overlooks the increasing complexity of race in the United States. In fact, demographic trends reveal that Asian American and Latina/o populations are quickly growing in the country.

Particularly propelled by the liberalization of immigration policies after 1965, Asian American and Latina/o students have increased in number on university campuses and have also been a part of activist movements for culturally and racially relevant curriculum and support services.³⁴

Non-white and non-black groups do not fit well into a black-white dichotomy, as outlined by Eileen O'Brien, who calls Latina/os and Asian Americans "the racial middle." She writes of these groups, "They defy simplistic categorizations in a society that has insisted on operating along such dichotomous lines for the greater part of history."³⁵ O'Brien examines the complex and nuanced ways that the "racial middle" negotiates racial ideologies in her study, as Asian American and Latina/o respondents seek to create spaces in which to understand racial meanings. While in some ways these groups mirror "white" and "black" experiences along dichotomies of assimilation and discrimination, they also experience qualitatively different challenges. Both O'Brien and Critical Race Theory scholars (LatCrit and AsianCrit) point out that groups in this racial middle experience discrimination differently, such as along issues of foreign-ness and citizenship—Latina/os and Asian Americans encounter stereotypes and discrimination that peg them as un-Americans, suspicious, and disloyal. In addition, they face issues around language, immigration, and biculturalism, and they do not fit in simple black or white categories.³⁶ Thus, it

³⁴ Harvey and Anderson, *Minorities in Higher Education: Twenty-first Annual Status Report: 2003-2004*, 55. Asian Americans and Latina/os are highly visible in institutions of higher education; in 2000, Asian Americans made up 5.9 percent and Hispanics made up 8.9 percent of students enrolled in all institutions of higher education.

³⁵ Eileen O'Brien, *The Racial Middle: Latinos and Asian Americans Living Beyond the Racial Divide* (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 3.

³⁶ For Asiancrit, see: Ancheta, *Race, Rights and the Asian American Experience*; Robert Chang, "Toward An Asian American Legal Scholarship: Critical Race Theory, Post-Structuralism, and Narrative Space," *California Law Review* 8 (1993): 1241-1323; Neil Gotanda, "Asian American Rights and the 'Miss Saigon Syndrome'"; Chris Iijima, "The Era of We-Construction: Reclaiming the Politics of Asian Pacific American Identity and Reflections on the Critique of the Black/White Paradigm," *Columbia Human Rights Law Review* 29 (1997): 47-89; Natsu Saito, "Model Minority, Yellow Peril: Functions of 'Foreign-ness' in the Construction of Asian American Legal Identity."

is imperative to disrupt simple binaries of white and black in order to reveal the deeper complexities of race relations in the United States.³⁷

Limitations of Statistics and Parity: Asian American Counter-Narratives

Centering Asian American students in a historical study of higher education minority policies is critical to expanding the perspectives of administrators, policy makers, and researchers. Doing so reveals that Asian American students defy model minority stereotypes, experience anti-Asian racism, and encounter problems in campus adjustment that are obscured by a black-white racial paradigm that focuses on underrepresentation. Asian American students have pushed to have their educational needs seen and heard beyond traditional campus measures of minority student experiences.

In understanding minority experiences, it is imperative to conceptualize racial campus climate operating on multiple levels, beyond measures of statistical parity. Sylvia Hurtado, Jeffrey Milem, Alma Clayton-Pedersen, and Walter Allen argue that campus climate is produced within larger institutional and environmental contexts such as government policies (financial aid and affirmative action) and socio-historical forces that propel policy change.³⁸ Within an institution, this framework highlights four interconnected dimensions in which to assess racial climate: an institution's history, structural diversity (numerical representation among the student

For LatCrit see: Ian Haney Lopez, "Race, Ethnicity, Erasure: The Salience of Race to Latcrit Theory," *California Law Review* 85 (1997): 57-125; Athena Mutua, "Shifting Bottoms and Rotating Centers: Reflections on LatCrit III and the Black/White Paradigm," *University of Miami Law Review* 53 (1999): 1177-1218; Enid Trucios-Haynes, "Why 'Race Matters': LatCrit Theory and Latina/o Racial Identity," *La Raza Law Journal* 12 (2000): 1-42.

³⁷ Robert Chang and Keith Aoki, "Centering the Immigrant in the Inter/national Imagination," *California Law Review* 85 (1998): 1395-1447. Robert Chang and Keith Aoki argue that by centering the immigrant in racial discourse, scholars of LatCrit and AsianCrit shed insights into the complexities of race relations beyond black and white.

³⁸ Sylvia Hurtado, Jeffrey Milem, Alma Clayton-Pedersen, and Walter Allen, *Enacting Diverse Learning Environments: Improving the Climate for Racial/ Ethnic Diversity in Higher Education*, ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report, 26 (8), Washington DC: The George Washington University, Graduate School of Education and Human Development, 1999.

body and faculty), psychological climate (student perceptions of group relations), and behavioral climate (how groups actually interact).

In higher education policies, an over-reliance on structural diversity alone (statistical representation), fueled by ideological representations of Asian American students as model minorities, provides a rationale for the exclusion of Asian American students from minority student services or admissions considerations. Yet, Hurtado et al. examine the history of an institution as well as its psychological and behavioral dimensions. Historical and qualitative data reveal a much more complicated picture. A university's history provides an important context from which to understand the evolution of its minority student programs.

When looking at qualitative data of Asian American students' experiences, issues of racial hostility and marginalization emerge. Studies show that Asian American students continue to experience alienation in college *despite* their statistical success and high achievement. They continue to struggle with racial tensions even when their campus numbers outpace their state or national statistics, at the extreme end resulting in hate crimes and racial violence.³⁹ By undertaking qualitative and historical research of Asian American student experiences, a richer picture emerges.

Critical Race Theory and Asian American counter-narratives provide important lenses to understanding Asian American experiences. Critical Race Theory emerged from Critical Legal Studies and is an inter-disciplinary movement in law and educational research that recognizes the pervasiveness of racism in American society; challenges discourses of meritocracy and race

³⁹ Christine Bennett and Alton Okinaka, "Factors Related to the Persistence Among Asian, Black, Hispanic, and White Undergraduates at a Predominantly White University: Comparisons Between First and Fourth Year Cohorts," *The Urban Review* 22 (1990): 33-60; Chalsa M. Loo and Garry Rolison, "Alienation of Ethnic Minority Students at a Predominantly White University," *Journal of Higher Education* 57 (1986): 58-77; Alvin Alvarez and T. Ling Yeh, "Asian Americans in College: A Racial Identity Perspective," in *Asian and Pacific Islander Americans' Issues and Concerns for Counseling and Psychotherapy*, ed. Daya Singh Sandhu (Commack, NY: Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 1999), 105-119.

neutrality; uses a historical approach; works to end all forms of oppression; and centers the experiential knowledge of people of color.⁴⁰ Asian Critical Race Theory challenges discourses of meritocracy and the model minority myth and highlights Asian American counter-narratives.⁴¹ Asian American students who struggle to give voice to their experiences tell important and critical counter-narratives. Thus, it is imperative to examine Asian American college students' experiences and counter-stories so as to challenge the discourses of parity and the model minority myth and to recognize how race *continues* to be salient in their educational experiences.

The Study: Asian American Students at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

The meanings of Asian American minority status are shaped and contested within higher education contexts. How have university policies defined Asian American student needs? Have policies defined them as "minorities"? How have Asian American students interpreted and responded to these policies? By researching how university policies have understood Asian American student needs, along with how Asian American students themselves have interpreted these policies, one can see how these definitions and minority categories are shifting, unstable, and contested based on historical context.

The purpose of this study is to examine how Asian Americans' minority status has been, as Omi and Winant describe, "created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed" by university administrators and by Asian American students. I take as my case study the experiences of Asian

⁴⁰ Adrienne D. Dixson and Celia K. Rousseau, eds. *Critical Race Theory in Education: All God's Children Got A Song* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 4.

⁴¹ Neil Gotanda, "Asian American Rights and the 'Miss Saigon Syndrome'"; Mari Matsuda, *Where is Your Body? And Other Essays on Race, Gender, and the Law* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996). Scholars of Asian Critical Race Theory (AsianCrit) challenge the model minority discourse. Legal scholar Neil Gotanda describes how society does not believe that racism against Asian Americans exists, naming this phenomenon the "Miss Saigon Syndrome" (in reference to the disbelief and dismissal of Asian American protest of the Broadway musical which cast white actors in yellowface). Mari Matsuda also cautions the usage of Asian Americans in a middle position, pitted against African Americans and used as an example of racial equity.

American undergraduate students at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC), a major public flagship research university in the Midwest.

The University of Illinois, chartered in 1867 and funded by the Morrill Land Grant Acts, is an important site in which to examine the ways that administrators and students disagreed in their understanding of Asian American students' needs and minority status. UIUC struggled with providing access for racial minorities. While the university official charter did not limit enrollment by race and admitted women in 1870, it did not admit its first African American student until 1887.⁴² However, the first black student would not graduate until 1900. Black enrollment was slow and did not exceed over 1 percent of the student body through the 1940's.⁴³

Asian American enrollment at UIUC was low through the 1960's and 1970's and was mostly constituted of students whose families settled in Chicago before 1965.⁴⁴ Asian American demographics steadily rose through the 1980's and 1990's, so much so that by 2000, the population of domestic students identified by UIUC as "Asian/Pacific Islander" was approximately 3,690, or 13.2 percent of the undergraduate student enrollment.⁴⁵ Meanwhile, Asian Americans make up 3 to 4 percent of the state's population.⁴⁶ Additionally, campus

⁴² Williamson, *Black Power on Campus*, 17.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁴⁴ Barbara M. Posadas and Roland Guyotte, "Unintentional Immigrants: Chicago's Filipino Foreign Students Become Settlers, 1900-1941," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 9 (1990): 26-48; Susan Moy, "The Chinese in Chicago: The First One Hundred Years," in *Ethnic Chicago: A Multicultural Portrait*, ed. Melvin G. Holli and Peter d'A. Jones (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 378-408; Joseph Ahne, "Koreans of Chicago: The New Entrepreneurial Immigrants," in *Ethnic Chicago: A Multicultural Portrait*, ed. Melvin G. Holli and Peter d'A. Jones (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 463-500; Masako Osako, "Japanese Americans: Melting into the All-American Pot," in *Ethnic Chicago: A Multicultural Portrait*, ed. Melvin G. Holli and Peter d'A. Jones (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 423.

⁴⁵ University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Office of Equal Opportunity and Access, "Undergraduate Enrollment by Racial/ Ethnic Category, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Fall 1967 to Fall 2008," <http://oeoa.illinois.edu/Undergraduate%20Enrollment%20by%20Race.pdf> (accessed October 15, 2009). I am primarily looking at the population of domestic students who self-identify as Asian American; Asian international students are counted under a different category at UIUC.

⁴⁶ US Census Bureau, "2003 ACS Tabular Profile for Illinois [Data file]," 2003, <http://www.census.gov> (accessed April 1, 2006).

statistics showed that 85.0 percent of the Asian/Pacific Islander student cohort who had matriculated in 1997 had graduated by 2003 and completed their degree in six years; 83.3 percent of the white cohort completed their degrees in the same time.⁴⁷ At this institution, as at many others, Asian Americans persist and matriculate in high numbers. UIUC does not define Asian Americans as an "underrepresented minority" and does not include Asian Americans as a racial group in minority student services.⁴⁸ Unlike the University of California where Asian American were removed from minority programs, UIUC never actively included Asian Americans or defined them as minorities in support programs.⁴⁹

Despite this construction of Asian Americans as "non-minorities," the campus is home to the largest Asian American Studies (AAS) program in the region. Established in 1997, it is housed in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and has fourteen core faculty, eight affiliate faculty, and thirty-nine permanent courses listed in the spring 2010 course catalogue.⁵⁰ It is also home to an Asian American cultural center, established in 2005 under the Office of the Dean of Students. With a \$1.3 million construction budget, the 6,800 square foot center is the largest of its kind in the Midwest.⁵¹ Students, faculty, and staff advocated for these academic and student

⁴⁷ University Office for Planning and Budgeting, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, *Profile of Students, Faculty, and Staff by Racial/Ethnic Group, Gender, and Disability*, 2004, <http://www.pb.uiuc.edu> (accessed August 28, 2006).

⁴⁸ Office of Minority Student Affairs, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, "The Mission of Minority Student Affairs," 2007, <http://www.omsa.uiuc.edu/mission.aspx> (accessed March 18, 2007). According to the website of the campus' Office of Minority Student Affairs (OMSA), Asian Americans are not identified as a targeted racial group. OMSA's mission is to serve "African American, Latino/a, and Native American undergraduates" as well as students accepted through various academic programs. Asian Americans who are admitted under programs such as the Educational Opportunities Program or Transition/ Bridge can receive services through OMSA, qualifying based on socioeconomic need.

⁴⁹ This study focuses on undergraduate students at UIUC. Issues of hiring and recruitment of Asian American faculty is outside the scope of this study, as are issues relating to graduate students. Additional research is needed for investigate definitions of Asian American "minority" status in these areas.

⁵⁰ Asian American Studies Program website, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2009, http://www.aasp.uiuc.edu/p_faculty.html (accessed November 25, 2009); University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Course Catalogue, Asian American Studies, Spring 2010, <http://courses.illinois.edu/cis/2010/spring/catalog/AAS/index.html?skinId=2169> (accessed November 25, 2009).

⁵¹ "Facilities," Asian American Cultural Center website, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2009, http://studentaffairs.illinois.edu/diversity/aacc/about_facilities.html (accessed November 25, 2009).

affairs units beginning in the 1970's, with renewed activism in the 1990's, challenging the university rationale that their overrepresentation meant the absence of problems.

Asian American students argued that their cultural and racial needs were not being met on campus; however, they could not do so through a traditional "minority" paradigm argument, as they were not underrepresented. Instead, they advocated for staff positions, programs, academic courses, and financial support using discourses and strategies that argued that Asian Americans *were* a minority even though they were overrepresented. In this important way, they challenged policies and pushed the boundaries of minority status that were solely measured by underrepresentation and a focus on African Americans, in effect embracing Hurtado et al.'s framework of envisioning campus climate beyond mere structural diversity. One of the products of this push was the creation of the annual, student-organized activism conference titled "Unseen Unheard," in reference to the invisibility of Asian Americans in minority discussions. A recurring theme in researching this history is the metaphor that Asian American students used of breaking the silence surrounding their experience at UIUC. Slowly but surely, as students demanded to be *seen* and *heard*, university administrators responded and institutionalized services.

Asian American student experiences at UIUC highlight an important midwestern history. Given demographic concentration, research on higher education policies and Asian American college students has focused on California.⁵² The first Asian American Studies programs in the Midwest were established in 1989 at the University of Michigan Ann Arbor and in 1991 at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Asian American Studies and student support services have

⁵² Dana Takagi, *The Retreat From Race: Asian-American Admissions and Racial Politics* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992).

grown in the Midwest in recent years.⁵³ Midwestern sites have yet to be examined in great detail, and the state of Illinois is a prime site, home to the largest number of Asian Americans in the region and the sixth largest concentration in the country.⁵⁴ UIUC, as a public flagship, land-grant university, provides an important case study for Asian American student movements in the region from the 1960's through the 1990's.⁵⁵

Methodology and Chapter Outline

As a historical study, this project relies heavily on archives from the University of Illinois—those documenting the rise of minority programs on campus for African Americans, Latina/os, Native Americans, and Asian Americans and especially those documenting Asian American student life. There are rich collections at the university as well as at the Asian American cultural center, and these collections include memos, letters, brochures, and Asian American student organization files. I have also examined the local and campus newspapers of *The Daily Illini*, the *Champaign-Urbana News-Gazette*, and *Chicago Tribune* for articles, editorials, and letters that give voice to the student movements for multiculturalism during the 1960's through 1990's.

⁵³ Recent growth in the Big Ten include programs at the University of Minnesota in 2003 (<http://www.aas.umn.edu/> accessed November 29, 2009); Purdue University in 2007 (<http://www.cla.purdue.edu/asian-american/> accessed November 29, 2009); and Indiana University in 2008 (<http://www.indiana.edu/~aasp/index.shtml> accessed November 29, 2009). For additional information, see the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC), a consortium of Big Ten universities report, "The State of Asian American Studies in the Big Ten: A Committee on Institutional Cooperation Meeting Proceedings," 12 November 2000, <http://www.cic.net/Home/Reports.aspx> (accessed January 11, 2010).

⁵⁴ Jessica Barnes and Claudette E. Bennett, *The Asian Population, 2000. Census 2000 Brief*. Report C2KBR/01-16, 2002, <http://www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/c2kbr01-16.pdf> (accessed March 8, 2007). In 2000, the ten states with the largest Asian populations in descending order were: California, New York, Hawaii, Texas, New Jersey, Illinois, Washington, Florida, Virginia, and Massachusetts.

⁵⁵ Nancy Abelmann, *The Intimate University: Korean American Students and the Problems of Segregation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009). Nancy Abelmann has examined the experiences of Korean American students at UIUC in her ethnographic study, raising issues of how these students navigate a racialized landscape in understanding their ideals of higher education, despite policies that do not count them as official minorities.

Oral history interviews are also a significant source for this time period. Given my connections at the university through my professional experience as an administrator with the UIUC Asian American Studies program from 2000-2005, I was familiar with key administrators, faculty, students, and alumni who had been involved in building Asian American resources on campus. My role in assisting the program no doubt lent me credibility; almost all of the interviewees I contacted were willing to talk with me. Alumni in particular felt empowered to tell their stories and expressed surprise that someone was interested in writing a history about their time at UIUC. With Institutional Review Board approval, I gained consent from each interviewee to be identified in this study. All quotes gathered in this study received final editing and approval from my participants.

I also was able to identify key players in this history through the written records of student organizations and print media. In sum, I interviewed sixty-five university administrators, faculty, and alumni about their perspectives and involvement developing Asian American resources on campus. Broken down, I spoke with nineteen faculty/ administrators and forty-six alumni. Locating administrators was relatively easy even as several were retired, as the majority still resided in Urbana-Champaign and were located using the phone book or through the assistance of current university staff. Alumni were gathered using a "snowball sample"—once I interviewed one alumnus, I was able to gather several names of others to interview. I was impressed at how well connected Asian American alumni were. Once I found one alumnus, I could literally find a dozen more, as they were still all close friends. This close-knit connection was true even for Asian American alumni of the 1970's who were less savvy in using social networking websites such as Facebook or My Space than the alumni of the 1990's were. Their

continued friendships over the decades testify to the significance of the Asian American social and political spaces they created at UIUC.

The chapters in this study develop in the following way. Chapter two reviews the higher educational historiography for racialized non-white groups (African Americans, Latina/os, Native Americans, Asian Americans, Jewish students) along issues of access and campus life. This history reveals that colleges and universities were exclusive institutions from their inception, and that widespread access for marginalized populations (including for women and for those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds) did not develop until after World War II. Asian American access to higher education before the 1980's was limited despite the current perspective of them as model minorities.

Chapter three examines the history of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's minority programs. It begins with the late 1960's, in particular examining the campus' Special Educational Opportunities Program (SEOP), also known as "Project 500," which was established in 1968 to recruit disadvantaged (especially black) students to campus.⁵⁶ The primary focus of SEOP was on African American students; however, administrators began paying more attention to Latina/o students' needs in the 1970's due to student activism. The presence of Asian American (or "Oriental" as they were called then) students in the program was minimal. Nevertheless, interviews and documents reveal a significant Asian American student movement at UIUC for academic courses in Asian American Studies and in protest of the Vietnam War in the 1970's. The first pan-Asian American student organization, the Asian American Alliance, was established at UIUC in 1971 and created an important space for Japanese and Chinese American students from Chicago, children of pre-1965 Asian immigrants.

⁵⁶ Williamson, *Black Power on Campus*.

Chapter four extends into the 1980's and early 1990's, when Asian American student presence and visibility at Illinois increased. A new cohort of Asian American students (whose parents immigrated to the US after 1965) began to coalesce, and this synergy created new opportunities to work together and define a shared Asian American identity as well as new challenges given the increased diversity of the population. New Asian American organizations began to come together to address the racial hostility that was rampant on college campuses in the late 1980's, and Asian American students began to critique their exclusion from minority programs at UIUC.

Chapter five examines the early to mid-1990's and the push for an Asian American cultural center and Asian American Studies program. Student activism at UIUC flourished at this time for other students of color, widening racial discourse beyond a narrow black-white racial lens. For example, Latina/o students were vocal in pushing for their programs and staged a sit-in of the administration building in 1992 (a critical event that would have repercussions on administrative responses to other groups after 1992). In addition, the early 1990's saw an emerging movement by Native American students for visibility and for the elimination of the racist school mascot Chief Illiniwek. After 1992, Asian American students began to push administrators to create institutional resources through their own forms of activism, which included behind-the-scenes actions such as petitions, activist programming, and even the consideration of legal strategies to pressure the university to recognize their minority experience.

Chapter six, the conclusion, analyzes the progress made that led to the creation of an academic program in Asian American Studies in 1997 and an Asian American cultural center in 2005. It identifies factors that led to the gains, the strategies Asian American students used, and

returns to critique the goal of statistical parity as the sole measure in assessing minority student experiences.

Limitations of the Study

As a broad interpretive history of Asian American students at UIUC has not yet been attempted, I face a daunting task. How do I document an important historical moment in a way that provides interpretive lenses without falling into the dangers of stereotyping or essentializing a diverse student population? Asian American students at UIUC are diverse, just as they are everywhere else, and many of them did *not* participate in any movements for Asian American programs, courses, or support services (and some were against such movements, viewing them as self-segregationist). This study focuses on the Asian American student leaders who did participate in such movements—those who headed student organizations, passed out petitions, met with administrators, wrote editorials, and created educational programs. However, it also highlights the tensions among UIUC Asian American students to reconcile differing perspectives and political views.

Acknowledging this focus then, this study centers only a select sample of leaders who are part of the historical record and who also were willing to speak to me through oral history interviews; of course there were dozens of other students who were less visible in this history who also propelled the movement along, and it is not my intent to overlook their roles. It is my hope that this study provides an important *starting point* and a lens of one strand of student activism, without belittling alternative forms that were not as visible or documented or an Asian American experience on campus that was not focused on these issues. As I and other scholars

uncover the educational histories of Asian American students, I hope that continued nuanced and complex histories can emerge and build off each other.

In addition, I want to reiterate that the Asian American population is diverse, with scholars showing that there are segments that still struggle with access and retention in higher education.⁵⁷ Many scholars and administrators working with Asian American students point out these disparities and argue that a university cannot write off this population as model minorities, even if *in the aggregate* they appear to be doing well. I acknowledge the important work of my colleagues who seek to disaggregate Asian Pacific American data, with a focus on giving voice to those overlooked Asian American groups who still struggle in higher education.

However, the student leaders in this study, especially those in the 1980's and 1990's whose parents benefited from the 1965 Immigration Act, were primarily those from middle-class backgrounds who did well academically. This study focuses on Asian American students who *were* high achieving, those whose academic records validated an administrative view that Asian Americans did "just fine" and that they did not need extra services or support. This study does not take on a class analysis by centering students who did not fit the model minority myth in these ways. But by not focusing on socioeconomic disadvantage, this study seeks to complicate a narrative about minorities as only those groups that are underrepresented or under-privileged. This very group of high achieving middle-class, mostly East and South Asian American students critiqued parity and achievement as the sole measures of a minority experience. They articulated that the campus was *not* meeting their educational needs, and that overrepresentation did not mean they did not have a minority experience. Thus, while underrepresentation is a serious issue for African American, Latina/o, Native American, and some Asian American ethnic subgroups,

⁵⁷ Hune and Chan, *Special Focus: Asian Pacific American Demographic and Educational Trends*.

achieving overrepresentation does not mean that a racialized non-white group experiences an equitable campus climate.

In other words, studies that focus only on disaggregating Asian Americans to highlight underrepresented groups reify a problematic theory of minority definitions based solely on underrepresentation or economic disadvantage. A racialized non-white group on campus, despite its academic measures or socioeconomic status, still struggles with racial and cultural conflicts, as the Asian American students in my study testify. Yet, this ideological and political re-positioning is a challenge, as Asian American students' class backgrounds and seeming privileges fuel model minority expectations. Alumna Vida Gosrisirkul (BS, Broadcast Journalism 1994; JD, 1997) articulated this situation at UIUC in 1997: "The University is unclear about Asian Americans. Administrators are really good at being vague. It is hard to get people to be sympathetic (about Asian Pacific Americans) because a lot of Asian families come (to America) with higher education than other immigrants."⁵⁸ Thus, this study examines the contestation over Asian American minority status and pushes for a more complex view of assessing services and programs for Asian American students, even for those of middle-class backgrounds.

Some Notes on Terminology

Some scholars might hesitate to attempt to write any kind of history of a group as diverse as Asian Americans. I acknowledge that the racial category "Asian American" is one that has been constructed through racial laws in the United States (and political activism in response to these laws). Building a pan-Asian American movement is always a struggle given the vast

⁵⁸ Quoted in Anita Banerji, "Getting Involved," Academic paper for Journalism 380, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 30 April 1997, p. 4, Folder: Asian American Cultural Center Activism, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

diversity under that umbrella term. Within the field of Asian American Studies, scholars have critiqued how the term "Asian American" has come to center East Asian American voices, at the expense of South Asian, Filipino, and Southeast Asian Americans.⁵⁹ Yet, as Yen Le Espiritu and William Wei show, documenting Asian American movements is important, as doing so demonstrates an important political activism in response to issues that affect many individuals along broad racial categories.⁶⁰

Yet, even scholars who write about Asian American issues disagree on which terminology to use. For instance, in discussing this community, should one use the term "Asian American" or "Asian Pacific American"? Pacific Islanders, another constructed pan-ethnic category, have often been included with Asian Americans, such as in the 1990 US Census special report on "Asians and Pacific Islanders in the United States."⁶¹ While some argue that using a term that joins Asian American and Pacific Islander experiences is a move towards political unity and inclusion, others disagree—in particular, some Pacific Islander scholars resist the conflation, as the overarching term further marginalizes them.⁶² On some campuses where there is a strong or significant Pacific Islander presence, whether it be in the student body or in

⁵⁹ Shilpa Davé, Pawan Dhingra, Sunaina Maira, Partha Mazumdar, Lavina Shankar, Jaideep Singh, and Rajini Srikanth, "De-Privileging Positions: Indian Americans, South Asian Americans, and the Politics of Asian American Studies," *Journal of Asian American Studies* 3:1 (2000): 67-100; Lavina Shankar and Rajini Srikanth, eds. *A Part Yet Apart: South Asians in Asian America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998); Joanne Rondilla, "The Filipino Question in Asia and the Pacific: Rethinking Regional Origins in Diaspora," in *Pacific Diaspora: Island Peoples in the United States and Across the Pacific*, eds. Paul Spickard, Joanne Rondilla, and Debbie Hippolite Wright (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), 56-68; Helen Toribio, "The Problematics of History and Location of Filipino American Studies within Asian American Studies," in *Asian American Studies After Critical Mass*, ed. Kent Ono (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 166-76; Aihwa Ong, *Buddha Is Hiding: Refugees, Citizenship, the New America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). These issues are also discussed for Asian American college student movements in Edmund Lee, "Unity Now, Sensitivity Later?" *A. Magazine*, April/ May 1998, pp. 31-35.

⁶⁰ Yen Le Espiritu, *Asian American Panethnicity: Bridging Institutions and Identities*; William Wei, *The Asian American Movement*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993).

⁶¹ US Department of Commerce Economics and Statistics Administration, Bureau of the Census, "Asians and Pacific Islanders in the United States," 1990 CP-3-5, Washington DC, <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen1990/cp3/cp-3-5.pdf> (accessed August 11, 2009).

⁶² Vicente Diaz, "To 'P' or not to 'P': Marking the Territory between Pacific Islander and Asian American Studies," *Journal of Asian American Studies* 7 (1994): 183-208.

faculty research in the area, programs bear the term "Asian Pacific American Studies."⁶³ At UIUC, the Pacific Islander population is small.⁶⁴ Thus, throughout this study, I use the term "Asian American," as I am not addressing Pacific Islander American experiences, and I do not want to conflate the two. However, student organizations and student leaders at UIUC have used the term "Asian Pacific American" (APA) in their events, programs, and organizational names. When I quote from these students or organization's names, I use the term as they did.

A second note relates to hyphenation. Should the term "Asian American" have a hyphen or not? While seemingly a minute detail, Maxine Hong Kingston once noted her own personal distaste of the hyphen because it connoted a split identity, one that was 50 percent Asian, 50 percent American. This term also implies that Asian Americans are and will always be somewhat wholly un-American. On the other hand, the term "Asian American" (sans hyphen) centers the term *American*, using Asian as a grammatical adjective used to describe a certain *kind of* American. Kingston writes, "And lately, I have been thinking that we ought to leave out the hyphen in 'Chinese-American,' because the hyphen gives the word on either side equal weight, as if linking two nouns. It looks as if a Chinese-American has double citizenship, which is impossible in today's world. Without the hyphen, 'Chinese' is an adjective and 'American' a noun; a Chinese American is a type of American."⁶⁵

⁶³ For example, see the University of Michigan's Asian/ Pacific Islander American Studies program, <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/ac/apia/> (accessed August 11, 2009).

⁶⁴ Ad-hoc Committee on Asian Pacific American Campus Life, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Final Report, 30 April 2003, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center, Director's files; David W. Chih (Asian American Cultural Center Director, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign), interview with Sharon S. Lee, 26 July 2007 in Urbana, Illinois. Because UIUC does not disaggregate racial data by ethnicity, the exact numbers of Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander students is uncertain. However, a 2003 campus survey of 761 Asian American students reported no Pacific Islander populations, and Student Affairs administrators working with Asian American students recall no visibility of Pacific Islander American issues or student activities.

⁶⁵ Maxine Hong Kingston, "Cultural Mis-readings by American Reviewers," in *Asian and Western Writers in Dialogue: New Cultural Identities*, ed. Guy Amirthanayagam (London: Macmillan, 1982), 60.

While some scholars in Asian American Studies are moving towards a more transnational and diasporic perspective that includes Asian perspectives, and while I am not denying the connections (historical, cultural, contemporary) that Asians in the United States maintain with Asia, I place myself in an intellectual camp that centers American experiences. The removal of the hyphen is an important marker of this stance; as Sau-Ling C. Wong writes, "As I understand it, dropping the hyphen from Asian-American in the cultural nationalist period was meant to affirm the indivisible integrity of the Asian American experience, that is, to minimize any negative connotation associated with bilaterality."⁶⁶

This study is situated within the context of Urbana-Champaign, among a predominantly second-generation Asian American student body that critiqued anti-Asian racism that was premised on a "forever foreigner" view of them as un-American. Yet, sometimes in using the term Asian American, these students (as well as newspaper reports and university documents and memos) used the hyphenated phrasing "Asian-American." In my own writing I do not use a hyphen for "Asian American" but defer to the ways the hyphen is used when quoting from sources.

The third note on terminology is the use of the term "minority." Claiming a minority status may come with a sense of being "less than" or disadvantaged. UIUC Student Affairs staff expressed this notion in a strategic plan in 1991. A task force recommended replacing the term "minority" with "multicultural," "because the current language does not serve us well and the terms 'minority' and 'majority' are inadequate and pejorative."⁶⁷ The report went on to cite dictionary definitions of minority as the smaller of a group or one that is different from others,

⁶⁶ Sau-Ling C. Wong, "Denationalization Reconsidered: Asian American Cultural Criticism at a Theoretical Crossroads," *Amerasia Journal* 21 (1995): 7.

⁶⁷ Student Affairs Task Force Report, "Strategic Plan for Multicultural Programs and Services for Student Affairs at UIUC," 9 September 1991, p. 14, Record series 41/1/21, Box 12, Folder: Multicultural Programs, Strategic Plans, 1991, 1993-94, 1996-98, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

and majority as being greater or superior. In this study, however, I frame minority status as a *political strategy* that comes with benefits. As minority groups mobilized around historical and persistent discrimination, minority rights have been one way to gain compensation and assistance through policies such as affirmative action, particularly in the 1960's and 1970's. For Asian American students in my study, being acknowledged as minorities was critical to gaining university resources.

Conclusion

Asian American students at UIUC challenged simplistic measures of adjustment and success and pushed the racial and minority discourse beyond underrepresentation, the model minority myth, and a black-white racial paradigm. In doing so, they showed that racial and cultural differences continued to affect their experiences on campus, despite their high rates of academic achievement and socioeconomic status. In this way they revealed different arenas of racialization and marginalization, arenas that have historical roots and persist today. An examination of Asian American students in the Midwest warrants special consideration, presenting a different and overlooked model of campus policies based on regional context. It is through understanding the contestation of minority student status that one can push beyond statistical parity alone and see how race operates in the daily lives of Asian American college students. By centering their histories and voices, Asian American student experiences can ultimately become *seen* and *heard*.

CHAPTER TWO

THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF HIGHER EDUCATIONAL ACCESS FOR RACIALIZED NON-WHITE COMMUNITIES IN THE UNITED STATES

Having a college degree, and a prestigious one at that, is becoming a prerequisite in today's knowledge-based society.* Studies have shown that attending an elite institution positively affects one's post-college earnings.¹ Given this reality, access to higher education is an important policy issue. Even more importantly, history shows us that institutions of higher learning have not been universally accessible in the United States.² Throughout US history, colleges and universities struggled with the issue of access, particularly for non-white groups. As James D. Anderson points out, ideologies of racialized groups as inferior and uneducable justified societal and educational discrimination. He writes, "Racism was imbedded in the nation's foundations, affecting its major institutions, including the institutions of higher education."³

In order to contextualize the rise of programs aimed at improving access and support for racial minority students at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC), one must understand the larger educational history. This chapter will chart the historical development of

* Portions of this chapter have been published previously. Sharon S. Lee, "The De-minoritization of Asian Americans: A Historical Examination of the Representations of Asian American in Affirmative Action Admissions Policies at the University of California," *Asian American Law Journal* 15 (2008): 129-152. Copyright owned by author.

¹ William Bowen and Derek Bok, *The Shape of the River: Long Term Consequences of Considering Race in College and University Admissions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

² James D. Anderson, "Race in American Higher Education: Historical Perspectives on Current Conditions," in *The Racial Crisis in American Higher Education, Revised Edition—Continuing Challenges for the Twenty-first Century*, ed. William A. Smith, Philip G. Altbach, and Kofi Lomotey (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 3-21.

³ Ibid., 4.

access for racialized non-white groups (African American, Latina/o, Native American, Jewish, and Asian American students) to US colleges and universities from the colonial era to the present day, with a particular focus on the gains made in the 1960's. Research shows that access to college (especially to elite institutions such as private Ivy League universities) did not widen until after World War II, mainly through policies such as affirmative action and federal financial aid.⁴ Concomitantly, access continues to be denied with the repeal of affirmative action in college admissions in the 1990's. In addition this chapter will examine the ways that Asian Americans were removed from minority eligibility in affirmative action programs in the 1970's and 1980's at the University of California; Asian American students and community members contested these shifts and struggled over their minority status.

The Colonial Era and the Development of Higher Education

Historians of higher education document how colleges in the United States emerged as selective institutions that opened their doors to a more diverse student body only through time. Based on an Oxford-Cambridge model and classical curriculum, colonial colleges varied in admissions standards, in part due to the lack of a clear system of preparatory education at the elementary and secondary levels. However, one thing remained clear: colonial colleges were exclusive and not viable options for the majority of early settlers due to larger familial needs for labor.⁵ Frederick Rudolph states, "Nothing about colonial America suggested that the college was going to become a characteristic American institution, nor that in time it would be a popular

⁴ Higher educational access has also been obstructed along gender and socioeconomic lines, which I will mention in this chapter. My focus primarily, however, is on the experiences of racial and ethnic minorities.

⁵ John Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004).

American institution."⁶ The social origins of the college in the United States were such that only a small minority (mainly white males) could afford to attend. John Thelin notes that the historical record shows no commitment of colonial colleges to educating black students or women.⁷

A few colonial colleges (in particular Harvard, Dartmouth, and William and Mary) incorporated a focus on educating Native Americans as part of their educational and religious missions. In fact, Cary Carney notes that the colonial period was the high point of interest in Native American higher education until the 1960's.⁸ Yet, this early focus concentrated on assimilating and converting Indian youth to Christianity and was met with Native American resistance.⁹ For example, funds were raised to establish an Indian college, Henrico College, outside Jamestown in 1619, but on 22 March 1622, an Indian uprising quashed the idea. In addition, after the Revolutionary War, educators focused more on vocational training for Native Americans in order to assimilate them into lower levels of society, turning them away from higher education. Native Americans still resisted, and some tribes established their own schools.¹⁰ However, after the Dawes Act of 1877 removed land from tribal control and the Curtis Act of 1898 abolished tribal governments, tribes lost control over their schools.

Colleges and universities grew in number and size in the early nineteenth century and varied by local context in terms of access. While higher education expanded and diversified, it remained segregated. Separate institutions evolved (colleges for women, African Americans, Catholics, and other religious groups) to open up educational opportunities for marginalized communities in the first half of the nineteenth century. Still, these separate schools held their

⁶ Frederick Rudolph, *The American College and University: A History* (New York: Vintage Books, 1962), 20.

⁷ Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education*, 30.

⁸ Cary Michael Carney, *Native American Higher Education in the United States* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1999).

⁹ Bobby Wright, "The 'Untameable Savage Spirit': American Indians in Colonial Colleges," *The Review of Higher Education* 14 (1991): 429-452.

¹⁰ Carney, *Native American Higher Education*.

own standards for access.¹¹ Women's colleges were exclusive and replicated societal privileges along race and class.¹² At this time, a college education was not a prerequisite to a profession, as apprenticeships played a greater role. Enrollments remained low, and college was not critical to upward mobility. As the idea of higher education changed, access became a more significant issue.

Changes in the Mid-nineteenth Century: The Morrill Land Grant Act

The mid-nineteenth century saw significant changes in higher education. For one, the Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862, passed during the Civil War, held implications for access and new ideologies of the role and significance of a college education. A response to increasing industrialization and the need for agricultural training, the Morrill Act provided incentives for states to sell lands and to use funds for agriculture, mechanics, mining, and military instruction.¹³ The act not only diversified the institutional landscape by establishing or funding already-existing state public universities, it also expanded the college curriculum into a utilitarian focus and created opportunities for more students to attend college. Of its significance, Clark Kerr wrote in 1963: "The land grant movement was also responsive to a growing democratic even egalitarian and populist, trend in the nation. Pursuing this trend, higher education was to be open to all qualified young people from all walks of life. It was to serve less the perpetuation of an elite class and more the creation of a relatively classless society, with the doors of opportunity open to all through education. This was a dramatic break with earlier American traditions in

¹¹ Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education*, 96.

¹² Linda Perkins, "The African American Female Elite: The Early History of African American Women in the Seven Sister Colleges, 1880-1960," *Harvard Educational Review* 67 (Winter 1997): 718-756. Linda Perkins documents how the Seven Sister Colleges were not widely accessible to African American women and had segregated dormitory facilities.

¹³ Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education*, 76.

higher education."¹⁴ The land grant movement created more institutions and offered opportunities to an increasingly diverse populace. Still, the Morrill Act was not singularly driven by a vision of access. Thelin points out that while the Morrill Act left a legacy of creating an accessible state university with a broader curriculum, the real issue at hand was that of the use of federal land; providing it for educational purposes was preferred over commercial expansion.

The education of African Americans in the antebellum era was strictly limited. Colleges and universities excluded black students before the Civil War with the exception of a few schools such as Oberlin College and Berea College.¹⁵ With laws in many southern states outlawing teaching slaves how to read and write, educational opportunities emerged slowly and often came through private institutions supported by philanthropists. James D. Anderson notes that from Reconstruction through World War II, African American students were largely enrolled in private black colleges and universities. From 1900 to the 1920's, 99 percent of blacks in colleges were in private schools.¹⁶ In addition, black students in the North did not fare much better due to racial hostility and inferior black secondary schools. Joy Ann Williamson notes that between 1826-1890, only thirty African Americans graduated from white colleges.¹⁷ Resistance to African American admission to these colleges was strong in the South through the 1960's.

A subsequent Morrill Act of 1890 provided for annual appropriations, and while it denied funds to schools that had racially discriminatory admissions policies, it overlooked these policies if schools had separate but equal facilities for blacks.¹⁸ Thus, "The establishment of the black land-grant colleges illustrated both the gains and limits of higher education in the Progressive

¹⁴ Clark Kerr, *The Uses of the University, Fifth Edition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 36.

¹⁵ Cally L. Waite, "The Segregation of Black Students at Oberlin College After Reconstruction," *History of Education Quarterly* 41 (2001): 344-364. Though Cally Waite shows that segregation increased at Oberlin College in extracurricular activities, dormitories, and dining halls during Reconstruction.

¹⁶ James D. Anderson, "Race in American Higher Education," 9.

¹⁷ Joy Ann Williamson, *Black Power on Campus: The University of Illinois, 1965-1975* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 8.

¹⁸ Rudolph, *The American College and University*, 254.

era; it extended access and services to blacks yet did so only within the framework of racial separation."¹⁹ While the 1890 Morrill Act extended funding to create black land-grant colleges, black colleges remained significantly underfunded and were less able to conduct advanced research. For example, James D. Anderson cites a 1917 survey of former slave states that found only one of sixteen black land-grant schools offered collegiate courses.²⁰

Unlike the development of separate colleges for African Americans, Hispanic colleges were not created. Higher education for Mexican Americans became an issue when the United States acquired southwestern lands through the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848). With this treaty and the Gold Rush scramble for western lands, "Higher education participation during this era thus arose in a context in which the rights and status of many Southwestern Hispanics were eroding."²¹ There were some gains towards access for Latina/os at the University of California, which included a preparatory department called the Fifth Class from 1870-1872. However, when the Fifth Class was abolished, the Spanish-surnamed presence declined and remained low until the 1970's.²² There is also some evidence of the presence of middle-class Hispanic students at Catholic colleges, and some were able to attend college with the assistance of churches and the Young Men's Christian Association.²³

California, home to many Asian immigrants during the mid- to late nineteenth century, struggled with anti-Asian sentiment and access. The University of California held a commitment to admit students who reflected the diversity of the state; however, the state struggled with anti-

¹⁹ Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education*, 135-136.

²⁰ James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 238.

²¹ Victoria-Maria MacDonald and Teresa Garcia, "Historical Perspectives on Latino Access to Higher Education, 1848-1990," in *The Majority in the Minority: Expanding the Representation of Latina/o Faculty, Administrators, and Students in Higher Education*, ed. Jeanett Castellanos and Lee Jones (Sterling, VA: Stylus, 2003), 19.

²² Ibid.

²³ Carlos Munoz Jr., *Youth, Identity, Power: The Chicano Movement, Revised and Expanded Edition* (New York: Verso Press, 2007).

Asian segregation and discrimination, such as in the case of alien land laws barring Japanese immigrants from land ownership. Still, John Aubrey Douglass notes that the University of California never adopted racial or ethnic exclusions or formal quotas.²⁴ Rather, minority students' numbers remained low due to state laws that excluded Chinese and Japanese students from public schools. For instance, in 1874, the state Supreme Court ruled that segregating black children violated the thirteenth and fourteenth amendments but made no similar provisions for Chinese and Japanese children. Restrictive zoning laws also segregated blacks, Asians, and Latina/os into certain neighborhoods, leading to segregated schools.

In the mid-nineteenth century, the German university model influenced higher education, and many college builders sought to focus more on research, advanced degrees, and admissions selectivity in the 1870's and 1880's. The reality at this point, however, was that without a system of preparatory education, low enrollment demand, and the need for tuition, many institutions could not afford to be selective in their admissions requirements. Doctorate programs began to be established at more established schools such as Yale (granting its first PhD in 1861) and with the founding of Johns Hopkins University in 1876, though these were exceptions until the twentieth century.

Higher Education at the Turn of the Century: The Turn to Standardization

The years surrounding the turn of the twentieth century in higher education were influenced by Progressive ideas of order, efficiency, and professionalization. While there were regional variations, common developments in higher education included increased large-scale philanthropic gifts by industry, the increased visible role of the university president as well as

²⁴ John Aubrey Douglass, *The Conditions for Admission: Access, Equity, and the Social Contract of Public Universities* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 61.

professors as professional experts in their fields now ranked by position and tenure, and the rise of graduate programs. In addition, concerns about standards led to the founding of the Association of American Universities in 1900, whose fourteen university president participants sought to address these issues.

Education in general also became more systematized and coordinated. The movement for common schools emerged in the 1830's-1840's, predominantly in the Northeast. Advocated by Horace Mann, secretary of Massachusetts' Board of Education from 1837-1848, common schools offered free and universal primary education. There evolved greater state involvement in education and the creation of public high schools as a capstone of common schools. During the Progressive Era at the turn of the century, greater centralization emerged for school systems away from the common school model; urban schools created an age-based system (versus all students educated in one room), with uniform curriculum at each level. With greater bureaucratization in curriculum and staffing, a sequential educational system began to emerge from kindergarten to the university.²⁵ Frederick Rudolph charts this development to create public high schools in the Midwest as college preparatory institutions. This movement also took place in the East so that by 1895, 41 percent of students admitted to colleges and universities were graduates of public high schools.²⁶

Higher education also began to change in its importance for social standing by the early twentieth century. While enrolments were still low in 1870, John Thelin notes a change with the idea of college being fashionable and important for social networking to gain social status. Yet, college remained out of reach for students from different backgrounds, and higher education

²⁵ Wayne J. Urban and Jennings L. Wagoner, *American Education: A History, Third Edition* (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2004).

²⁶ Rudolph, *The American College and University*, 284.

remained less accessible for women.²⁷ Most families could not afford tuitions, despite their relatively low cost.²⁸

African Americans also remained marginalized at elite institutions. Enrollment at black colleges and universities rose during the 1920's from 2,132 in 1917 to 13,580 in 1927.²⁹ But at the turn of the century, the development of African American higher education faced numerous debates over purpose. James D. Anderson notes that missionary philanthropists supported the idea of offering a classical liberal curriculum in black colleges as a way to educate a "talented tenth." However, in the 1880's, a movement focusing on industrial education for blacks gained momentum, and colleges such as Hampton Institute and Tuskegee focused on agricultural and industrial education for its students to appease philanthropists. This ideology would persist until the 1920's with the Harlem Renaissance, black leadership (such as Marcus Garvey), and student resistance at Hampton and Fisk. The 1930's would be a time of African American resistance to segregated higher education through legal battles, detailed later in this chapter.

²⁷ Barbara Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985). Women remained marginalized at elite schools—colleges in the Northeast additionally tended to be gender exclusive. Even on campuses in the Midwest and West, women were excluded from campus organizations and clubs and discouraged from entering certain fields. Just like women faculty, female students were second-class citizens.

²⁸ Steven Brint and Jerome Karabel, *The Diverted Dream: Community Colleges and the Promise of Educational Opportunities in America, 1900-1985* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); Marlene Griffith and Ann Connor, *Democracy's Open Door: The Community College in America's Future* (Portsmouth, NH: Boynton Cook Publishers, 1994); Debra Bragg, "Community College Access, Mission, and Outcomes: Considering Intriguing Intersections and Challenges," *Peabody Journal of Education* 76 (2001): 93-116; Thomas Bailey and Vanessa Smith Morest, eds. *Defending the Community College Equity Agenda* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006). Prestigious colleges in the Northeast drew many students from elite boarding schools, maintaining socioeconomic homogeneity. It was during the early twentieth century when the two-year college emerged, as outlined by Steven Brint and Jerome Karabel. Two-year institutions began as a movement by four-year institutions that desired a greater focus on research and graduate training, along the German university model. In this vision, the first two years of college would be separated into a "junior college." While perhaps widening access in a way, this move was primarily to divert students away from the senior college who had a more serious dedication to research. Brint and Karabel show how the development of junior colleges during the Progressive era reinforced class privileges. As student demands for higher education increased after World War I, university leaders supported the idea of two-year institutions as a way to divert students away from universities and towards terminal education. However, other scholars reiterate the important ways that community colleges provide access to groups of students who would not otherwise gain access to higher education; hence, as critical vehicles of access, they require greater financial support and attention.

²⁹ Williamson, *Black Power on Campus*, 9.

During the height of Asian immigration to the United States from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century, most Asians attending colleges and universities were international students.³⁰ The second generation, American-born Asian population was small in number, and their admission to prestigious east coast schools in particular did not pose a visible threat. Marcia Graham Synnott writes of the early twentieth century: "The admission of Chinese and Japanese to Harvard did not arouse fear of a yellow peril, because the percentage of American-born Orientals [*sic*] living in the eastern United States was very small and because almost all of these students were foreign-nationals. Instead the education of Orientals [*sic*] appealed to American altruism and belief in the 'White man's burden.'"³¹

The push for standards in higher education at the turn of the century focused on what John Thelin terms both the "vision and myopia" of Progressivism. Thelin assesses the limitations of these reforms: "Reforms between 1880 and 1910, for example, championed the expansion of higher education but with no apology for discrimination on the basis of race, gender, and class."³² Thus, college was thus still restricted to white males.

The Interwar Period: The Expansion of Higher Education

Higher education was not widely accessible until the years between the world wars. At the start of the twentieth century, only about 2 percent of eighteen- to twenty-four-year-olds went

³⁰ Eileen Tamura, "Asian Americans in the History of Education: An Historiographical Essay," *History of Education Quarterly* 41 (2001): 58-71. As Eileen Tamura points out, the landscape of Asian American educational history is sparse; in a review of the number of essays and book reviews published by the *History of Education Quarterly* from 1990-1999, she found only one essay and one book review on Asian Americans (both published by herself or on her work). Such an absence led to a special issue on Asian American educational history by the *History of Education Quarterly* in 2003 (43:1).

³¹ Marcia Graham Synnott, *The Half-Opened Door: Discrimination and Admissions at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, 1900-1970* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979), 53.

³² Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education*, 150.

to college.³³ And as late as 1913, fewer than one in twenty attended, with even prestigious universities seeking students.³⁴ Higher education enrollments grew though during the interwar period and, as David O. Levine points out, "indeed, it was during the 1920's and 1930's that American schools of higher education moved into the mainstream of American economic, social, and cultural life."³⁵

World War I changed the role of US higher education; faculty offered expertise during the war, and colleges promised to prepare graduates for technical and management jobs after the war. The creation of the Student Army Training Corps (SATC) was a collaboration between the military and colleges. The army trained participants in the corps on college campuses, and colleges received funds for tuition, room, and board for students. As a result, college enrollments increased during the war, after an initial drop between 1915-1918.³⁶ In addition, the Progressive era's emphasis on efficiency led colleges to be seen as training grounds for society's experts. College credentials became more important for upward mobility, while still remaining limited to those who could afford it.

As public secondary schools expanded after World War I and colleges and universities grew in size, the seeds of mass higher education were planted. Thelin notes that between the world wars, college enrollment rose more than five times—from 250,000 to 1.3 million. In 1917, fewer than 5 percent of Americans aged eighteen to twenty-one attended college, but this figure increased to 15 percent over the next twenty years.³⁷ Junior colleges, teachers' colleges, women's

³³ David O. Levine, *The American College and the Culture of Aspiration, 1915-1940* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 13.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 16.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 17.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education*, 205.

colleges, regional state colleges, and business schools also grew during this time.³⁸ While not nearly as large as the post-World War II boom, Levine assessed this growth after World War I as the "United States' first era of mass higher education."³⁹ Higher education now began to be seen as essential to upward mobility and a sign of social prestige.

At the same time, access contracted for some groups. Tuition increased after 1920 through the 1930's. Thelin points out that by the mid-1930's northeastern prestigious schools charged twice as much as private universities in the Midwest.⁴⁰ Without federal financial aid policies and widespread institution-based scholarship aid, tuition still kept students out; the majority of increasing college enrollments at the turn of the century came from middle and upper middle-class families.⁴¹

Levine thus concludes that while higher education enrollment boomed in the 1920's and 1930's, a growth that included the expansion of urban and public institutions, it was also limited to a certain type of student. On one hand, higher education access expanded, offering new opportunities for mobility, but it also contracted in the sense that admissions became selective and considered family background. Levine writes, "Between 1915-1940 American educational institutions reinforced the barriers that enabled young people from the 'best' homes to strengthen their numerical predominance at the best schools and in the most prestigious professions."⁴²

Thus, during the 1930's, the growth in the public sector of higher education surpassed the

³⁸ Christine A. Ogren, *The American State Normal School, "An Instrument of Great Good"* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). Access to higher education and social mobility were available to marginalized groups through these alternative institutions; Christine Ogren outlines the ways that normal schools provided this opportunity for racial minorities and for women in the late nineteenth century.

³⁹ Levine, *The American College*, 39.

⁴⁰ Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education*, 251.

⁴¹ Levine, *The American College*; Brint and Karabel, *The Diverted Dream*. Levine uses census figures to show that wealthier students were overrepresented at the most prestigious institutions. This pattern also existed at state universities, especially in states with traditions of private higher education. Students who worked on campus were also marginalized and unable to take part in prestigious social activities. Junior colleges provided some access, though Brint and Karabel note that administrators tried to shift the focus of their educations to terminal degrees, despite persistent student interest in transferring to four-year institutions.

⁴² Levine, *The American College*, 21.

private. Expansion occurred in public junior colleges, and public universities overtook private education for the first time in 1933-1934.⁴³ Levine attributes this growth due to class biases of the system that kept out ethnic and poor students through quotas and tuition.

Access continued to be more limited for women, blacks, and ethnic minorities. While female enrollment increased between the wars, their proportion of student bodies declined from 50 percent to 40 percent in this time.⁴⁴ While women's colleges earned their own reputations for prestige, some of them also remained closed off to black women who, even when admitted, were marginalized on campus and subject to campus policies that segregated them in living and dining facilities. In co-educational schools, women were restricted in extracurricular leadership positions and kept from pursuing advanced degrees. Serious students were stigmatized as "grinds" in the 1920's, where campus culture focused on peer relations and exclusive social clubs.

Higher education also remained less of an option for Latina/os and African Americans. While the historical record on Latina/o access to higher education from 1920-1950 remains sparse, Victoria-Maria MacDonald and Teresa Garcia note that a small number of exceptional Mexican students in the Southwest and Midwest and Puerto Ricans in Chicago and New York entered college, in part due to support from community and philanthropic organizations.⁴⁵

While black college enrollment increased after World War I, this percentage lagged behind whites. As Thelin points out, just before World War II, a white college-aged student was four times more likely to attend college than an African American student.⁴⁶ Even in northern institutions, African American students had to live in segregated dorms and were not integrated

⁴³ Levine, *The American College*, 191.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 125.

⁴⁵ MacDonald and Garcia, "Historical Perspectives on Latino Access."

⁴⁶ Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education*, 232.

into mainstream extracurricular life and began to establish separate fraternities and sororities. At Harvard, for instance, controversy erupted in 1922 when President Abbott Lawrence Lowell denied African American students entry to dormitory living, believing that integration in the halls would lead to increased racial tensions among students. Levine writes, "The 1,500 blacks who did go to 'integrated' colleges in the 1920's and 1930's were essentially pariahs: at some places they were not welcome in the dormitories, in the bathrooms, or at the annual school prom.... Blacks were clearly more victimized than even the least desirable white ethnic student."⁴⁷

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's (NAACP) Legal Defense Fund was active in the 1930's through 1950's challenging racial segregation in graduate and professional admissions. Many states did not have African American educational facilities at this level, and the NAACP argued that by not providing separate but equal facilities, these schools must admit black candidates. In the 1930's and 1940's, the focus of African American education was on equalizing separate racial facilities.⁴⁸ For instance, black Texans wanted a black branch of the University of Texas Austin, greater financial support for the black college Prairie View, and state-supported funding for blacks seeking education out of state.

In 1938, the NAACP filed *Missouri ex rel. Gaines v. Canada* on behalf of Lloyd Gaines who had been denied admission to the University of Missouri Law School. As the first such lawsuit to reach the Supreme Court, the justices ruled that Gaines (who refused to leave the state for his education) was entitled to be admitted to the University of Missouri law school in the absence of a black law school. Building off the Gaines case, in *Sipuel v. Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma* (1948), the Supreme Court also ruled that Ada Sipuel be admitted to the

⁴⁷ Levine, *The American College*, 159.

⁴⁸ Amilcar Shabazz, *Advancing Democracy: African Americans and the Struggle for Access and Equity in Higher Education in Texas* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

university's law school. And in 1950, two cases *Sweatt v. Painter* (where Heman Sweatt was admitted to the University of Texas law school because the black law school was not equal to the white one) and *McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents of Higher Education* (where the Supreme Court ruled that a school could not socially segregate a black student in a white school within its facilities) provided more advancement for African American access to higher education. However, in these legal challenges, the Supreme Court did not strike down *Plessy's* principle of "separate but equal."

The Rise of Selective Admissions and Jewish Quotas

As enrollments increased in the decade after World War I, a number of small liberal arts colleges had the luxury of becoming selective in admissions for the first time and limited their student body size. Selectivity boosted a school's prestige as it competed with other institutions for students. Before World War I, admissions was fairly open, as colleges sought students.⁴⁹ With postwar improvements in transportation, a nationwide competitive search could develop for students now attending growing high schools across the country. Enrollments increased, and several institutions sought to cap their numbers and move towards selectivity. While a majority of institutions could not afford this luxury, selective admissions did develop at the most prestigious schools that had national influence. Administrators at Dartmouth College, the first to establish a comprehensive selective admissions plan in 1921, called for an "aristocracy of brains," reinforcing the view of higher education as a privilege.⁵⁰

Embracing a vision of molding future society's leaders, racial and ethnic biases flourished in the 1920's-1930's. While Catholic and black students were kept out of institutions, their

⁴⁹ Levine, *The American College*.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 141.

numbers were fairly small. Instead, many admissions quotas arose to address the "Jewish problem."⁵¹ Admissions decisions were not solely based on merit but on prejudice. This was also an era when women were tracked into "feminine fields," and African American leaders wrestled with education's industrial and vocational foci that limited their upward mobility.⁵²

Jewish quotas also began to develop at private elite liberal arts colleges in the Northeast such as Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Columbia, and Dartmouth.⁵³ Marcia Graham Synnott shows how the early movement to limit Jewish student admissions occurred on campuses in New York city where Jewish numbers were rising. Columbia, the first to develop an Office of Admissions in 1910, created criteria based on social characteristics, asking applicants to report birthplace, religion, and father's background as well as submit photographs and participate in interviews. New York University followed suit, changing its policies in 1919. Concerns about Jewish students also grew at the "Big Three" universities—Harvard, Yale, and Princeton. Synnott cites rising Jewish numbers as a sign for concern: in 1900, 7 percent of Harvard's freshmen were Jewish while in 1922, that number had grown to 21.5 percent. At the same time, Yale's Jewish enrollment rose from 2 percent in 1901 to 13.4 percent for the class of 1925, and Princeton's numbers grew from six Jewish students in 1900 to twenty-five (or 4 percent) in 1922.⁵⁴

Before the twentieth century, the Big Three admitted students almost entirely on academic criteria. If an applicant passed subject-based entrance examinations, they could generally gain admission. However, Jerome Karabel notes that the 1920's saw significant

⁵¹ Levine, *The American College*, 137.

⁵² Julie Reuben and Linda Perkins, "Introduction: Commemorating the Sixtieth Anniversary of the President's Commission Report, Higher Education for Democracy," *History of Education Quarterly* 47 (2007): 265-276.

⁵³ Sherry Gorelick, *City College and the Jewish Poor: Education in New York, 1880-1924* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1981). Sherry Gorelick describes how the City College of New York provided an alternative route to upward mobility for Jewish students to obtain a tuition-free public college education.

⁵⁴ Synnott, *The Half-Opened Door*, 19.

changes in admissions criteria.⁵⁵ In a context of immigration, urbanization, and industrialization (accompanied by rising anti-immigrant sentiment, the Red Scare, and other reactionary movements), university administrators created a new admissions system in an attempt to limit the number of undesirable students. Changing definitions of merit now included notions of "character" and masculinity (the "ideal college man" who was athletic and not a "greasy grind"), penalizing Jewish students (and Catholic and blacks) who were seen as lacking character and having no place at an institution whose mission was to train the nation's future elite leaders. Hence, a more flexible system emerged that allowed administrators discretion in making admissions decisions, an opaque system shielded from public scrutiny.

At Harvard, the movement for a Jewish quota was led by President Abbott Lawrence Lowell (president from 1908-1933) who, unlike his predecessor Charles Eliot, wanted to restrict the number of Jewish students to a set percentage of the freshman class.⁵⁶ Despite some faculty resistance, there was significant alumni support for Lowell's stance. While an outright quota was rejected, Lowell discretely sought to address the issue by limiting the size of Harvard's incoming freshmen class to 1,000, achieved in 1924. In addition, admissions standards were adopted that introduced selection based on character and fitness, and applications began to ask for religious affiliation and ethnic identity through the 1930's. Synnott notes that while an exact annual quota on Jewish students is unknown, one can deduce it fluctuated between 10 to 12 percent of each freshmen class from the late 1920's through the 1930's.⁵⁷

Yale President James Angell did not advocate for a quota as Lowell did but did face alumni and faculty pressure. In 1923, Yale's admissions policy included limiting the entering

⁵⁵ Jerome Karabel, *The Chosen: The Hidden History of Admission and Exclusion at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2005).

⁵⁶ Synnott, *The Half-Opened Door*, 57.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 112.

class to 850 students and the introduction of character tests, with evidence that one reason for this change was to restrict the number of Jewish students.⁵⁸ While it is unknown if a formal quota existed, there is evidence of an informal quota limiting Jewish students, whose numbers began to decline in the early 1930's. Between 1926-1936, Jewish enrollment fluctuated from 8.2 percent to 13.3 percent and remained around 10 percent until World War II.⁵⁹

Princeton had a reputation for being an unwelcoming place for minority groups. Blacks were excluded (the first African American student earned an undergraduate degree there in 1947), as were women. Native Americans were accepted, though their numbers were very small; Catholic enrollment grew slowly after 1900. Catholic numbers were greater than Jewish students, and Synnott asserts that a Jewish quota was probably instituted in 1924. However, the primary mode of excluding Jewish students from campus life was through Princeton's social eating clubs that dominated undergraduate life in the 1920's. If a club did not accept a student, he was marginalized on campus. While then university president Woodrow Wilson sought to abolish clubs in 1906, the clubs persisted through the late 1950's.

As Princeton's example shows, admission did not mean full access to extracurricular life for Jewish students. Synnott notes that Jewish students were absent from social club rosters, athletics, debating societies, music clubs, and the like (though at Yale, some Jewish students were able to gain access to clubs). Jewish students developed their own clubs such as Jewish fraternities. At Harvard, Jewish students were also often excluded from residential houses and created a committee to express their concerns in the 1930's.

Turned away from these colleges, Jewish students began to seek admission to other colleges across the country and faced rejection, such as when the University of North Carolina

⁵⁸ Synnott, *The Half-Opened Door*, 151.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 156.

instituted quotas on out-of-state students.⁶⁰ Some colleges continued these quotas through the 1950's. Levine notes that regional quotas ultimately worked to exclude the "socially undesirable student," in favor of upper middle-class white Protestant males. He writes, "Despite the rhetoric about academic and democratic values, institutional prestige apparently depended on the social homogeneity of a school's student body."⁶¹ Thus, the rhetoric of egalitarian education in this time period did not play out in reality.

The discourse about admissions revolving around merit took place during the 1930's through the postwar era. Some innovations included Harvard President's James Bryant Conant's full-aid admissions policies and the use of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). Under Conant, Jewish quotas persisted but were softened (Harvard admitted more Jews than Yale or Princeton at this time, though from 1935-1941 this ranged from 14 to 16 percent of freshmen).⁶² Despite this shift, however, the reality was graduates from elite private schools, alumni, and athletes still received wide favor in the admissions process.

The Public University's Social Contract: The University of California

Jerome Karabel frames these selective admissions changes that excluded undesirable students as the "iron law of admissions"—that a "university will retain a particular admissions policy only so long as it produces outcomes that correspond to perceived institutional interests."⁶³ Institutional interests abounded for private institutions dealing with fiscal limitations such as shrinking endowments and a reliance on alumni good will. In this regard, Karabel's study of private Ivy Leagues contrasts with John Aubrey Douglass' study of public universities and

⁶⁰ Levine, *The American College*, 157.

⁶¹ Ibid., 146.

⁶² Karabel, *The Chosen*, 173.

⁶³ Ibid., 2.

their "social contract," the obligation to admit all eligible students in the state. The Ivies never embraced this kind of obligation to meet demand for access but instead took steps to protect institutional interests.

Public universities' issues with access developed in a different context. Public universities differed from the private northeastern colleges at this time. As John A. Douglass notes,

The purpose of public universities was more grand and populist, and more complex: Their assignment was to meet the social and economic needs of the states that chartered them, to open their doors to a broad swath of society, and to build departments and programs that both taught a classical curriculum and promoted scientific inquiry intended to develop and support local economies. Public universities were also an essential part of a larger cause; they were to help build a state system of public education, stretching from the local primary school to the university, and thereby fundamentally reshape social and economic opportunity.⁶⁴

Access was highlighted at public universities such as Indiana State, Michigan, and Wisconsin.

Chartered in 1868 as a land-grant university, the University of California (UC) served as a model for public institutions of higher education. UC created the first coherent public higher education system (through a tripartite system of junior colleges, state schools, and the university) and was the first multi-campus university in the nation.⁶⁵ Throughout its development, UC held onto important principles that outlined an admissions process free from secular or political influence, provided for a broad geographic representation across the state, ensured access free of financial constraints (it was tuition free for its first 120 years), and admitted women on equal terms as men. UC also strove to be a selective institution.

California's tripartite system articulated admissions standards at each level and transfer agreements within them. Junior colleges began to emerge in the early 1900's to meet growing

⁶⁴ Douglass, *The Conditions for Admission*, 4-5.

⁶⁵ John A. Douglass, *The California Idea and American Higher Education: 1850 to the 1960 Master Plan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

demand but also kept access to the UC system exclusive. Access was also maintained at the university, through "admissions by exception" that gave consideration to WWI veterans, students with exceptional talents, and students from rural and disadvantaged areas. Admissions thus developed through a process of regular and special action admissions.⁶⁶ Special action grew in importance at UC in the 1930's as a way of maintaining its social contract and at Berkeley and UCLA in the 1950's due to the increase of GI Bill students; Douglass notes that special action students were 35 percent to 45 percent of freshman admissions at these two campuses during World War II.⁶⁷ As a public university, UC also maintained broadly democratic admissions standards aside from race or nationality, in contrast to the anti-Jewish and patriarchal policies that developed at private institutions. Because of this stance, UC "provided an important route for Asian Americans as well as Jews and other minority groups."⁶⁸

World War II and Changing Ideologies of Access

Higher educational access, especially to prestigious research universities, was pointedly blocked for one racial group during World War II—Japanese Americans. Incarcerated Japanese Americans during World War II who were able to leave internment camps to attend colleges in the nation's interior were limited in their options.⁶⁹ Allan Austin documents how these students were pioneers in Nikkei (Japanese American) resettlement. Among this group, 4,000 Japanese Americans enrolled in over 600 colleges and universities, through the assistance of the National Japanese American Student Relocation Council, which functioned from 1942-1946.⁷⁰ The

⁶⁶ Douglass, *The Conditions for Admission*.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁶⁹ Allan Austin, *From Concentration Camp to Campus: Japanese American Students and World War II* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004); Gary Okhiro, *Storied Lives: Japanese American Students and World War II* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999).

⁷⁰ Austin, *From Concentration Camp to Campus*, 1.

Council gathered student data, selected qualified students, secured necessary releases, contacted colleges, placed students, raised scholarship monies (through foundations, churches, and interned Nikkei fund-raising drives), and facilitated student adjustment. Still, despite these efforts, college administrators resisted admitting Japanese American students, and most large, prestigious universities were not open to Nikkei. Even for schools who admitted these students, most set quotas to limit their numbers due to concerns about a racial backlash. Thus, access to prestigious research universities was hampered for this group during World War II.

After the war, differing ideas of access emerged. World War II ushered in a new era of higher education on two main fronts: one, wartime collaboration solidified connections between the federal government and university scholars in pursuing applied research projects. Secondly, the GI Bill and its educational benefits to returning veterans sparked rising enrollments and changed views of access to college. In 1939-1940, college student enrollment nationally was about 1.5 million; this grew to almost 2.7 million by 1949-1950.⁷¹ It was not until this era, as Levine points out, that higher education began to be seen as a right, not a privilege. After fighting a world war in the name of democracy, democratic values such as equality also held more weight and became more politically important during the Cold War as the United States sought international support for democracy from newly independent Third World nations.⁷²

Primarily concerned with returning veterans in a postwar economy and seeking to avoid the political catastrophe of World War I veterans who protested unemployment, President Franklin Roosevelt began to examine the issue before the war's end. With political support from the American Legion, Congress passed the Serviceman Readjustment Act (the GI Bill) in 1944, which offered one year of schooling for veterans who had served at least ninety days, with

⁷¹ Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education*, 261.

⁷² Derrick Bell, *Silent Covenants: Brown v. Board of Education and the Unfulfilled Hopes for Racial Reform* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

additional benefits equal to time on active duty. The act covered tuition, fees, and supplies up to \$500 per school year and a monthly subsistence allowance.⁷³ A portable entitlement, veterans could attend any accredited institution, avoiding federal control and maintaining an institution's policies. As Thelin points out, the act had two main innovations: it was an entitlement to all eligible veterans (it was not competitive or "first come first serve"), and it was portable so veterans could choose their college or university from a list of institutions approved by the government through voluntary accreditation associations.

Based on several army surveys, planners did not expect more than 8 to 12 percent of veterans to take advantage of the educational benefits provided by the bill.⁷⁴ However, by 1946, GI Bill college enrollments exceeded one million.⁷⁵ As a result of the increased and sudden demand, admissions began to incorporate standardized testing. The testing industry, led by the College Entrance Examination Board, boomed (though this also led to arguments about the validity of test scores based on socioeconomic status). The rising demand for admission also extended to the most prestigious schools as veterans sought out the best schools. Keith Olson points out that in the fall of 1948, the majority of veterans were at private institutions, compared to non-veterans: "Veterans flocked to the Ivy League schools, the state universities, and the better liberal arts colleges and technical schools."⁷⁶

While many hail the GI Bill as widening access and changing views of higher education as an entitlement (with many veterans choosing to attend prestigious universities), scholars have also shown the limitations of the bill's benefits, along race, gender, and sexuality. To a certain

⁷³ Keith W. Olson, *The GI Bill, the Veterans, and the Colleges* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1974), 17. An amendment to the bill in 1945 increased subsistence and removed some restrictions for eligibility.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁷⁵ Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education*, 263.

⁷⁶ Olson, *The GI Bill*, 45.

degree, the GI Bill benefited those who may not have needed it: Olson estimates, for instance, that at least 80 percent of veterans would have gone to college without the GI Bill's benefits.⁷⁷

Black veterans were eligible for the bill's benefits, but because the bill did not outlaw segregation, exclusionary policies still kept them from entering white institutions. Ira Katznelson points out that the bill was tailored to accommodate Jim Crow segregation.⁷⁸ While the bill had no explicit clause excluding African Americans, its local administration kept in tact private institutions' policies (such as at banks and colleges) that discriminated by race. Staffed primarily by white employees, local Veterans Administration centers disbursed loans, unemployment benefits, college admissions, and job placement opportunities. Despite high hopes for the bill by black veterans, such barriers kept them from reaping its full benefits.

African American students could not gain access to white colleges and universities outside the South. Black enrollments in the North and West were small, never exceeding 5 percent in the late 1940's; 95 percent of black veterans attended historically black colleges and universities.⁷⁹ These schools were smaller, had limited resources, lacked doctoral programs and accredited engineering departments, and could not accommodate all eligible black veterans. By 1947, black colleges and universities turned away 15,000 to 20,000 black veterans due to space limitations.⁸⁰ In addition, black colleges and universities did not reap as many benefits of postwar funding to expand campus resources. While black colleges did benefit from the increase in funding to expand housing and educational facilities, as the poorest schools they remained at the bottom on the educational hierarchy. Katznelson concludes, "On balance, despite the

⁷⁷ Olson, *The GI Bill*, 109.

⁷⁸ Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action Was White: An Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: WW Norton and Company, 2005).

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 130.

⁸⁰ David H. Onkst, "'First a Negro ... Incidentally a Veteran': Black World War Two Veterans and the GI Bill of Rights in the Deep South, 1944-1948," *Journal of Social History* 31 (1998): 530.

assistance that black soldiers received, there was no greater instrument for widening an already huge racial gap in postwar America than the GI bill."⁸¹

Female enrollments in higher education also dropped percentage wise after the GI Bill. Thelin points out that female undergraduate enrollment stood at 40 percent in 1939 but dropped to 32 percent in 1950.⁸² And while female veterans took advantage of the benefits offered by the bill, the reality was that the bill "masculinized the postwar campus "in terms of rising male enrollments particularly in the fields of engineering and business."⁸³ Thus, while the bill opened up opportunities along socioeconomic status, it did not do so for gender or race.⁸⁴

Despite these limitations, the GI Bill increased college enrollments and attendance rates and expanded college size. In addition, the bill prompted the establishment of the Presidential Commission on Higher Education, appointed by President Truman in July 1946. As the first executive body to examine national educational issues, the commission expressed new ideas about expanding college access. Julie Reuben and Linda Perkins point out the Commission's report, *Higher Education for Democracy*, or the Zook report, is "viewed as a harbinger of mass higher education in the United States,"⁸⁵ calling for an expansion of public two-year colleges (though focused also on terminal degrees there), federal financial aid, and the end of religious and racial quotas. The Commission was before its time, and its recommendations were prematurely progressive, but its concepts would be revisited in the 1960's under Presidents Kennedy and Johnson.⁸⁶

⁸¹ Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action Was White*, 121.

⁸² Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education*, 267.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 267.

⁸⁴ Margot Canaday, "Building a Straight State: Sexuality and Social Citizenship Under the 1944 GI Bill," *The Journal of American History* 90 (2003). In addition, Margot Canaday notes that administrators implemented the bill in such a way that denied veterans benefits if they had been discharged based on homosexual acts or tendencies—thus denying benefits of home ownership and education to those who did not fit a heterosexual norm.

⁸⁵ Reuben and Perkins, "Introduction: Commemorating the Sixtieth Anniversary," 265.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*; Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education*.

The Cold War and the Emerging Civil Rights Movement

During World War II, the increased cooperation between the federal government and university researchers strengthened their relationship. During the Cold War, the federal government became a key source of funding for university research.⁸⁷ Federal involvement in higher education also increased with the 1964 Civil Rights Act, as discussed later in this chapter.

The Cold War and the 1957 launching of Sputnik sparked national concern and increased the federal government's financial involvement in higher education through government contracts and funds. In addition, a discourse of the necessity to utilize all talent in the United States in the race against the Soviets pervaded, and the notion of discriminating and losing out on this talent was problematic. Added to this discourse was the emerging civil rights movement that challenged discrimination in a post-World War II world. Due to rising political pressures from African Americans (and later other minority groups and women), and the numerous urban uprisings in the late 1960's, university administrators began to consider boosting African American enrollments.

Need-blind admissions became a reality, and administrators began to make admissions changes at the Big Three.⁸⁸ For instance, Yale (under Inky Clark) gave less preference to private schools and legacies and shifted more towards academics as well as a consideration of how disadvantage affected SAT scores of black applicants (as did those at Princeton). Both Princeton and Yale also expanded recruitment for other underrepresented groups, including Asian Americans. Harvard, with the best reputation as being most accessible to blacks throughout its history, involved more African Americans in recruitment and gave admissions flexibility in

⁸⁷ Roger Geiger, *Research and Relevant Knowledge: American Research Universities Since World War II* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2004). Roger Geiger outlines the rise of federal research funding from the 1940's to 1980's and the pressures this placed on research foci.

⁸⁸ Karabel, *The Chosen*.

considering background criteria. The civil rights movement and urban unrest shifted admission's consideration of merit to include backgrounds and disadvantage for these groups; while never being pure academic meritocracies, the Big Three were now using non-academic criteria in an effort to be more inclusive. Thus, in the 1960's, elite constituencies began to see their privilege erode at the Big Three, with the exception of legacies.

Access Widens: The Civil Rights Movement

Despite the gains made in widening access to prestigious schools after World War II, barriers still persisted for African American students. Thelin notes that after the war, seventeen southern states had legally segregated public educational systems.⁸⁹ Desegregation was volatile and slow moving. African American students remained concentrated at black colleges and universities that remained, for the most part, underfunded, understaffed, and less able to benefit from federally funded research grants in sciences and engineering.

The 1954 landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* case, which banned racial segregation in education, struck down the concept of separate but equal set forth by *Plessy* in 1896. A year later, schools were instructed to take "all deliberate speed" in desegregation, though compliance was left to federal district courts, which meant that southern judges monitored southern states' desegregation plans.⁹⁰ *Brown* was a watershed moment but also was resisted. Higher education in Texas was a significant battleground for civil rights after *Brown*, even leading to white lawsuits against the NAACP, crippling the organization in the late 1950's.⁹¹

Brown was part of a civil rights movement that included the NAACP legal struggles of the 1930's-1950's. Universities across the country were slowly beginning to open their doors to

⁸⁹ Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education*, 304.

⁹⁰ Urban and Wagoner, *American Education: A History*, 299.

⁹¹ Shabazz, *Advancing Democracy*.

black students. In 1954, only 4,000 African American college freshmen were in white institutions across the country.⁹² Joy Ann Williamson notes that access began to open in the 1940's in the North and in the 1950's in border states but not until the 1960's in the South, after much resistance. Resistance occurred despite legal victories for integration; for instance, despite court orders for the admission of African American students at the University of Alabama in 1956 and the University of Mississippi in 1962, white violence and riots occurred. The *Brown* ruling was tested in higher education in 1956 in the case of *Florida ex rel. Hawkins v. Board of Control*, as African American students sought admission to the University of Florida Law School. Striking down the segregated law school system in the state, the Supreme Court ruled that state universities must not discriminate by race, extending *Brown* to higher education.⁹³

African American students played an integral part in the civil rights movement, as Williamson points out, and challenged university policies. Student activists propelled change in the 1960's and 1970's on college campuses. Not only were students active in anti-Vietnam War, feminist, and free speech movements, students of color advocated for change in the curriculum, hiring, admissions, and support services. Williamson highlights the centrality of African American students at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in effecting change, often going against administrators and parents. MacDonald and Garcia also show how Latina/o students protested the underrepresentation of Chicano students and lack of bilingual training at San Jose State College in 1968. Such actions led to the 1969 conference on Latina/o college youth and the formation of the Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan (MEChA).⁹⁴ The

⁹² Williamson, *Black Power on Campus*, 12.

⁹³ Charles Teddlie and John Freeman, "Twentieth Century Desegregation in US Higher Education—A Review of Five Distinct Historical Eras," in *The Racial Crisis in American Higher Education, Revised Edition—Continuing Challenges for the Twenty-first Century*, ed. William A. Smith, Philip G. Altbach and Kofi Lomotey (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 77-99.

⁹⁴ MacDonald and Garcia, "Historical Perspectives on Latino Access."

Third World Liberation Strikes in 1968 at San Francisco State and in 1969 at the University of California Berkeley created the first schools of Ethnic Studies in the United States.⁹⁵

Federal policies in affirmative action and financial aid were essential to widening access to higher education in the 1960's and 1970's as well. The Higher Education Act of 1965 increased financial assistance for higher education through grants, loans, and work-study opportunities, which widened access for students including African Americans.⁹⁶ Federal financial aid finally became a reality in the 1970's. Levine writes, "Only in the 1960's did the federal government recognize that broad-based student financial support was essential to the democratization of American higher education."⁹⁷

As a result of these policy changes, racial minority college student enrollments began to increase. Between 1954-1969, African American enrollments at private black colleges increased from 25,569 to 48,541; enrollments of black students at predominantly white colleges in the South also increased four times between 1947 and 1964.⁹⁸ Black undergraduate enrollment continued to rise through the 1970's (with smaller increases at the graduate level). The 1960's and 1970's were also a watershed of access for Latina/o and Native American college students. Some Native American tribes established their own community colleges, such as Navajo Community College in 1968, the first college controlled by Indians that received federal support in 1971 through the Navajo Community College Act. Over the next twenty-five years, thirty

⁹⁵ Karen Umemoto, "'On Strike!' San Francisco State College Strikes, 1968-1969: The Role of Asian American Students," in *Contemporary Asian America: A Multidisciplinary Reader*, ed. Min Zhou and James Gatewood (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 49-79.

⁹⁶ Williamson, *Black Power on Campus*.

⁹⁷ Levine, *The American College*, 201. Students also lobbied Congress in the early 1970's, working outside university boards, advocating for federal financial aid. Their efforts resulted in the creation of Basic Educational Opportunities Grants (BEOG) or "Pell Grants," in 1972 as an amendment to the 1964 Higher Education Act. Like the GI Bill, these grants were entitlements and were portable, awarded to individual students and not to institutions. Now universities had to compete for Pell Grant students. The grants increased federal regulation (in exchange for accepting funds) and thus affected universities' attention to access.

⁹⁸ Beatriz Clewell and Bernice Anderson, "African Americans in Higher Education: An Issue of Access," *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations* 21 (1995): 66-67.

tribally controlled colleges were founded.⁹⁹ Additional acts assisting Native American students included the Higher Education Act of 1978, which increased financial aid for Native American students and grants for Native American Studies and programs, and the Tribally Controlled Community College Act of 1978, which established direct federal support to higher education institutions for Native Americans.

Asian American enrollment in higher education in the 1970's through the 1980's also rapidly increased. In 1976, there were 198,000 Asian Americans at all levels of higher education. In 1988, that figure increased to 497,000. Put another way, Asian Americans representation in higher education grew from 2 percent to 4 percent in that time.¹⁰⁰ This growth occurred at competitive private and public institutions—from 1976-1986, the proportion of Asian Americans in freshman classes grew from 3.6 percent to 12.8 percent at Harvard, from 5.3 percent to 20.6 percent at MIT, from 5.7 percent to 14.7 percent at Stanford, and from 16.9 percent to 27.8 percent at Berkeley.¹⁰¹

There are many factors that explain this growth. Demographically, the population of Asians in the United States increased after the 1965 Immigration Act, which abolished national origins quotas and enabled widespread immigration from Asia. The growth of Asian Americans in higher education hence was part of their demographic growth; Don T. Nakanishi cites that between 1970 and 1980, Asian Americans had increased from 1.5 million to 3.5 million, making them America's fastest growing group at that time.¹⁰² The children of post-1965 Asian immigrants also reached college age in the early 1980's; these children often were from families

⁹⁹ Carney, *Native American Higher Education*, 6.

¹⁰⁰ Eugenia Escueta and Eileen O'Brien, "Asian Americans and Higher Education: Trends and Issues," *Research Briefs* 2 (1991): 1. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED381103).

¹⁰¹ Sucheng Chan and Ling-chi Wang, "Racism and the Model Minority: Asian-Americans in Higher Education," in *The Racial Crisis in American Higher Education*, ed. Philip G. Altbach and Kofi Lomotey (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 53.

¹⁰² Don T. Nakanishi, "A Quota on Excellence? The Asian American Admissions Debate," *Change* (1989): 38, 41.

who benefited from 1965 legislation, which favored the entry of professional and educated groups.¹⁰³ In addition, Asian Americans benefited from affirmative action programs in the 1960's, especially at private universities and in the Ivy League.¹⁰⁴ Asian American inclusion in affirmative action programs would change however in the 1980's, as outlined later in this chapter.

The Development of Affirmative Action

Terry Anderson traces the development of affirmative action policies in the 1960's in the context of the civil rights movement.¹⁰⁵ President Kennedy's Executive Order 10925 in 1961 established the President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity, which instructed contractors to take "affirmative action" to ensure equal employment regardless of race, creed, color, or national origin.¹⁰⁶ While an important first step, Terry Anderson points out the Executive Order's limitations, in that the president's committee could only hold hearings and advise federal agencies; in addition, the order did not define discrimination or how to prove it had taken place. President Kennedy then issued Executive Order 11114 in 1963, taking the concept of affirmative action beyond contracting to federal funds. This "included 'grants, loans, and other forms of financial assistance' to state and local governments."¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ Meyer Weinberg, *Asian-American Education: Historical Background and Current Realities* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 1997).

¹⁰⁴ Chan and Wang, "Racism and the Model Minority."

¹⁰⁵ Terry Anderson, *The Pursuit of Fairness: A History of Affirmative Action* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). Terry Anderson's history of affirmative action provides a view of the beginnings of affirmative action policy in the 1930's under Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal programs. FDR's Executive Order 8802 called for non-discrimination in employment in defense industries and the government, premised on the concept that taxpayer monies funded government contracts; thus, contractors accepting government funds must employ all taxpayers, regardless of race, creed, color, or national origin.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 60.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 72.

Lyndon Johnson continued to build on affirmative action after Kennedy's assassination. His proposed Civil Rights Act included various titles that would desegregate public schools and public places, prohibit discrimination based on race, color, or national origin in federally funded programs (Title VI), and end discrimination based on race, national origin, sex, or religion in employment (Title VII). However, the lax enforcement of compliance agencies and slow pace of equal rights increased frustration. In 1965, Johnson delivered his famous commencement speech at Howard University where he pointed out the limitations of current civil rights legislation: "You do not take a person who for years has been hobbled by chains and liberate him, bring him up to the starting line of a race and then say 'You are free to compete with all others,' and still justly believe you have been completely fair.... We seek not just legal equity but human ability, not just equality as a right and a theory but equality as a fact and equality as a result."¹⁰⁸ Starting in 1966, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) required employers with over 100 employees to fill reports listing employee's race and gender. Minorities included "Negro, Oriental, American Indian, and Spanish Americans."¹⁰⁹

Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act provided an important tool in addressing racial discrimination by denying federal funding to institutions that discriminated based on race. In addition, it ordered all colleges and universities to report racial and ethnic data of students, which provided consistent racial data for the first time.¹¹⁰ Title VII prohibited employment discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, or national origin. Universities began to actively recruit African American students and employees as a result. Administrators felt that past discrimination had excluded minorities, and they were taking affirmative action to compensate. Howard Ball notes, "In the minds of most university administrators across the

¹⁰⁸ Anderson, *The Pursuit of Fairness*, 88.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 99.

¹¹⁰ Williamson, *Black Power on Campus*, 26.

nation, past discrimination against minorities led to the exclusion of racial and ethnic minorities from participating in higher education. They compensated for this history by rapidly, affirmatively, hiring and promoting minorities and women—groups who had been traditionally underrepresented and underpaid."¹¹¹ The Office of Civil Rights required institutions of higher education to develop goal-specific affirmative action programs towards hiring qualified minorities and women. In terms of admissions, the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (DHEW) conducted desegregation compliance reviews of higher educational institutions.¹¹²

An assessment of Title VI's success in desegregating higher education reveals mixed results. John B. Williams points out that Congress gave little guidance regarding remedies for segregation found from Title VI violations. Findings of discrimination were usually based on an institution having pre-*Brown* policies of racial segregation or enrollment and employment patterns that showed racial concentrations.¹¹³

In 1968 and 1969, based on compliance reviews, DHEW sent letters to governors of ten states (Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, and Virginia) informing them of their violating the terms of the Title. The Office of Civil Rights dealt with each state separately and outlined desegregation criteria, which included reaching equivalent proportions of black high school graduates and black college freshmen; annually increasing the proportion of black students in white four-year colleges and universities; reducing the disparity between black and white college freshmen in white

¹¹¹ Howard Ball, *The Bakke Case—Race, Education, and Affirmative Action* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2000), 6.

¹¹² John B. Williams, *Desegregating America's Colleges and Universities: Title VI Regulation of Higher Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1988), 5.

¹¹³ John B. Williams, "Systemwide Title VI Regulation of Higher Education, 1969-1988: Implications for Increased Minority Participation," in *The Education of African Americans*, ed. Charles V. Willie, Antoine M. Garibaldi and Wornie L. Reed (New York: Auburn House, 1991), 110.

institutions by at least 50 percent by 1982-1983; achieving equal proportions of black and white graduate students; and increasing the proportion of white students at black institutions.¹¹⁴

However, there was inconsistent implementation; while many schools focused on recruitment and scholarship programs, "with few exceptions, compliance reports do not contain sufficient and appropriate details for understanding and evaluating campus-level programs and activities that were planned and undertaken to achieve enrollment and employment increases."¹¹⁵ In addition, several states refused to comply or did not implement proposed programs. The DHEW did not consistently enforce these violations in 1970.

As a result, the NAACP Legal Defense Fund filed a class action lawsuit, *Adams v. Richardson* (1973), to force DHEW to respond to plans, enforce proceedings, and monitor compliance.¹¹⁶ The US District Court of the District of Columbia ruled in their favor, and new desegregation plans were submitted in several states. Additionally, plaintiffs appealed for further relief in 1977 when reports showed inadequate progress. In 1977 *Adams v. Califano* established guidelines for higher education desegregation—a full thirteen years after Title VI was implemented.¹¹⁷ These included equal proportionate enrollments of African American and white students entering higher education and increases in blacks attending predominantly white institutions and white students attending black colleges, as well as increasing minority hiring among faculty and staff and continued evaluation.¹¹⁸ Still, states continued to resist; for example, in 1979, North Carolina filed suit to block enforcement of guidelines, as did Mississippi, Louisiana, Ohio, and Alabama.¹¹⁹ Williams describes, "Most states affected by Title VI

¹¹⁴ Williams, "Systemwide Title VI Regulation of Higher Education, 1969-1988," 112.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 112.

¹¹⁶ Williams, *Desegregating America's Colleges and Universities*, 8.

¹¹⁷ Teddlie and Freeman, "Twentieth Century Desegregation in US Higher Education."

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ Williams, *Desegregating America's Colleges and Universities*, 13.

appeared, on the other hand, to have reacted passively, adopting a strategy of seeming to comply, of submitting plans as required, of undertaking some commitments made in the plans, but of doing little on the whole to really accomplish desegregation objectives."¹²⁰ Thus, despite the legal significance of Title VI, its enforcement was contested.

Affirmative Action: From Opportunity to Parity

Affirmative action as a program remained unclear; employers were encouraged to hire minorities, a process that considered race and went against the original colorblind intent of Title VII. Johnson's successor Richard Nixon in his early years in office advanced affirmative action through the Philadelphia Plan, which established target ranges for contractors and unions based on percentages of workers in an area. In addition, in 1970, Secretary of Labor George Schultz signed Order No. 4, which expanded the requirement of having affirmative action plans to businesses with a \$50,000 federal contract and over fifty employees.¹²¹ "This meant that these businesses were to have hiring goals and timetables based on 'the percentage of the minority workforce' in the city with the aim of correcting any 'underutilization' of minorities 'at all levels' of employment."¹²² Terry Anderson writes: "Order No. 4 was of profound significance. It directly linked the ratio of minorities in a locale with those working on contracted employment, which subsequently established proportional hiring as a way to prove compliance with affirmative action. It protected four minority groups who could receive affirmative action remedies: 'Negro, Oriental, American Indian, and Spanish Surnamed Americans.'"¹²³

¹²⁰ Williams, *Desegregating America's Colleges and Universities*, 13.

¹²¹ Anderson, *The Pursuit of Fairness*, 125.

¹²² Ibid., 125.

¹²³ Ibid., 125.

This shift from equal opportunity to equality of results with proportional hiring as a goal is one "irony of affirmative action" as John Skrentny points out. Originally, colorblind policies were the foci of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, yet racial classifications overcame this taboo. Skrentny outlines some main reasons for the shift in the affirmative action discourse away from color blindness to color consciousness.¹²⁴ For one, the civil unrests of the late 1960's depicted a crisis of traditional civil rights leadership that had focused on non-violence and equal opportunity. Opportunities were not living up to their promise for equality, and frustration mounted in the face of continuing poverty and unemployment. Thus, race-conscious hiring was a way to address the crisis of urban unrest. By 1967-1968, business elites were also supporting racial hiring as a way to prevent violence. No longer was intent to discriminate a focus either. In 1971, the Supreme Court ruled in *Griggs v. Duke Power Company* that employment tests that had no relation to job performance had a disparate impact on African American job candidates. Such a test that negatively affected a racial group, regardless of intent or equal treatment, was discriminatory. Taking a proactive stance to quell the riots was also necessary on a world-wide stage during the Cold War and Vietnam War. Skrentny describes that "every riot was a Communist victory in the Cold War," as proof of enduring racial injustice in the United States.¹²⁵

Secondly, Skrentny points out how proportionate hiring became a strategy of administrative pragmatism, a way to operationalize and define the problem of discrimination. He writes, "Throughout the 1950's and 1960's, agencies in search of a useful tool for fighting discrimination were continually led to the affirmative action approach, monitoring numbers and percentages of African-Americans hired as a measure of discrimination."¹²⁶ The problem began

¹²⁴ John David Skrentny, *The Ironies of Affirmative Action: Politics, Culture, and Justice in America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996).

¹²⁵ Ibid., 108.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 115.

to be described as one of underutilization of citizenry. When the EEOC began racial reporting on its forms in 1966, underutilization could now be identified. While some debated the use of forms and racial categories (seeing the civil rights movement as an attempt to end racial demarcation), the reality was that records would lend to efficient reporting and documentation of racial representation. As Skrentny notes, "There was also a more positive attraction to the racial approach. The logic of pragmatism stressed the need to operationalize discrimination in terms of numbers. Since the 1940's, government officials had been speaking of the need for an accurate and consistent measure of discrimination, and this seemed to lead ineluctably to notions of numerical representation."¹²⁷ With this focus, agencies could gather information, define goals, and use statistics to show progress, thus enhancing their legitimacy.

Thus, the concept of parity or proportionate representation became one measure of affirmative action's progress. Yet, this also raised issues for groups that were exceeding their parity. For instance, Jewish organizations spoke out against affirmative action, remembering the quotas that kept Jewish students and faculty out of colleges in the 1920's and 1930's. In 1972, Columbia's President William McGill pointed out that Jewish faculty were overrepresented on many college campuses. Thus, "affirmative action goals or quotas or whatever you call them ... can only convince Jewish faculty that an effort is afoot once more to exclude them from universities and that simple excellence no longer counts in matters of university appointments."¹²⁸ Issues of overrepresentation would also plague Asian American students, as will be discussed further in this chapter.

The 1978 *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* case brought issues of quotas in university admissions to the forefront of the affirmative action debate. Allan Bakke, rejected

¹²⁷ Skrentny, *The Ironies of Affirmative Action*, 131.

¹²⁸ Anderson, *The Pursuit of Fairness*, 143.

from the University of California Davis' medical school, charged that his rejection was due to affirmative action policies that set aside admissions slots to minority candidates. The high court struck down the use of such set-aside quotas, though it still affirmed the flexible use of race as one factor in admissions decisions. Affirmative action would continue to be challenged in various legal court battles through the 1990's, ending an important tool in maintaining access for historically underserved populations.

Affirmative Action Efforts at the University of California in the 1960's-1970's

During the 1960's and 1970's, public institutions such as the University of California (UC) implemented affirmative action policies to maintain access. At the same time, the UC system remained selective and elite. UC officials, other higher education administrators, and state legislators created the 1960 California Master Plan, which restricted UC eligibility to the top 12.5 percent of high school graduates. It also set California State University eligibility to the top 33.3 percent of high school graduates, shifting 50,000 students to the state's community colleges.¹²⁹ These changes meant that higher education widened at the community college level and constricted at the top two tiers of the system.

UC administrators, concerned with improving minority enrollment in the 1960's (especially after adopting the SAT in freshman admissions in 1968), established Educational Opportunity Programs (EOPs), initiated in 1964 and implemented on all campuses by 1968, that sought to increase enrollment rates of low-income and minority students through community

¹²⁹ Douglass, *The Conditions for Admission*, 80.

outreach, junior high school recruitment, and college tutoring.¹³⁰ EOPs targeted disadvantaged students primarily from racial minority backgrounds.

Sensing the need to go beyond outreach initiatives to promote minority enrollment, UC administrators moved towards special action admissions policies, whereby applicants' demographic backgrounds—namely, their membership in racial minority groups—could be considered as supplemental criteria. In this effort to improve minority numbers, the UC Board of Regents agreed in 1967 to raise the cap of special action admissions from 2 percent to 4 percent, then to 6 percent in 1979.¹³¹ Additionally, in 1973, the state legislature reviewed the Master Plan and recommended that, "Each segment of California public higher education (should) strive to approximate by 1980 the general ethnic, sexual, and economic composition of the recent California high school graduates."¹³² Admissions committees could employ flexible criteria for the purpose of attaining a student body that reflected the racial composition of the state.

Because minority enrollments still lagged, all UC campuses instituted new outreach and tutoring programs in 1975. At this time, administrators shifted towards a more narrow focus on minority students in EOPs. In addition, post-1975 efforts took the form of Student Affirmative Action programs that focused on serving minority students.¹³³ Then in 1978 the Supreme Court handed down the *Bakke* ruling that affirmed the consideration of race as one factor in admissions. Accordingly, as of 1979, UC President David Saxton instructed UC chancellors that they could consider race and ethnicity in regular as well as special action admissions.

¹³⁰ John Aubrey Douglass, "Anatomy of Conflict: The Making and Unmaking of Affirmative Action at the University of California," in *Color Lines: Affirmative Action, Immigration, and Civil Rights Options for America*, ed. John David Skrentny (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001).

¹³¹ Douglass, *The Conditions for Admission*, 118.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 105-106.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

During this time, Asian Americans were included among the minority groups targeted by affirmative action programs at UC Davis and UC Berkeley. However, this inclusion would end by the mid-1980's, due to rationales based on their statistical overrepresentation as well as ideologies of Asian Americans as model minorities. This is a significant historical time period—one that shows how ideological and policy constructions of Asian Americans as "minorities" shifted and changed. The University of California began to remove Asian Americans from minority considerations ("de-minoritizing" them), and Asian American students and community organizations contested these changes, arguing that they still had minority experiences.¹³⁴

Are Asian Americans Minorities? Arguments in the *Bakke* Case

With the visible rising statistical presence of Asian Americans at the University of California, the late 1970's was a time of changing university policies. For instance, in 1970, the UC Berkeley law school (Boalt Hall) established an Asian special admissions program due to Asian American student activism. However, just five years later, the Asian American Law Students Association was forced to defend it, faced with the news of a proposal submitted by the law faculty to eliminate and reduce the school's "special admissions" program for Asian Americans "on the grounds that Asians have 'made it' in American society and that sufficient numbers of Asians were being admitted through the regular process."¹³⁵

The students submitted an eighty-three page report in protest of faculty assumptions that Asian Americans did not need special admissions consideration. Students challenged the model minority image and pointed to the segments of the Asian community that still struggled with

¹³⁴ Sharon S. Lee, "The De-minoritization of Asian Americans: A Historical Examination of the Representations of Asian American in Affirmative Action Admissions Policies at the University of California," *Asian American Law Journal* 15 (2008): 129-152.

¹³⁵ Asian American Law Students' Association, "Report of the Boalt Hall Asian American Special Admissions Project," *Amerasia* 5 (1978): 24.

poverty and faced pressing issues with immigration law, housing, labor, and limited English proficiency. Asian Americans were also underrepresented among the nation's and San Francisco area's attorneys, and Asian communities needed bilingual and bicultural attorneys to serve them. Despite these efforts, Boalt Hall faculty members adopted a policy in 1975 that eliminated Japanese Americans from special admissions and limited Chinese, Korean, and Filipino applicants to less than 3 percent of special admits of each year's entering class.¹³⁶

The issues raised at Boalt Hall—those of Asian American success in regular admissions (hence no longer needing special admissions consideration) and Asian American protest against a simplistic model minority rationale—re-emerged in fuller detail during the *Bakke* case. While Asian Americans were not the key constituent group during this case, they appeared in several documents during deliberation and were questioned as beneficiaries of affirmative action policies due to their rising numbers.

In preparation for deliberation of the Supreme Court case, sixty-one amicus briefs were filed. One of those briefs was filed by the Asian American Bar Association (AABA) of the Greater Bay Area, in support of the University of California Davis.¹³⁷ The AABA argued that affirmative action was important to diversifying the legal profession, stating their concerns thusly: "AABA's interest in this case stems from its concern for the integration of what has been, and may yet continue to be, a nearly all-White legal profession in the country and especially in California. It is AABA's belief that the California Supreme Court's decision, if affirmed here, will all but ensure that minority groups, *including Asian Americans*, will continue to be grossly

¹³⁶ Asian American Law Students' Association, "Report of the Boalt Hall Asian American Special Admissions Project," 25.

¹³⁷ Brief for Asian American Bar Association of the Greater Bay Area, as Amicus Curiae Supporting Petitioners, *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*, 438 US 265, (1976) (No. 76-811).

and perhaps permanently underrepresented in legal education and in the bar."¹³⁸ The AABA cited that only 1,000 of the 2.09 million Asian Americans counted in the 1970 census were attorneys. Asian Americans were less than 1 percent of the total population and yet only 0.33 percent of the nation's total lawyers.¹³⁹ Citing instances of historical and persistent discrimination, the amicus brief argued for the constitutionality of race-conscious admissions policies at UC Davis, which should *include* Asian Americans, a population in dire need of attorneys able to address their legal and social needs.

The Justice Department filed its own amicus brief in the *Bakke* case, and Solicitor General Wade McCree made oral arguments before the court, representing the government's position in support of the University of California's race-conscious admissions policies.¹⁴⁰ In the process, the government singled out Asian Americans in their participation of minority programs because Asian Americans were excelling in the regular admission process. The government compared Asian Americans with other minority groups, with Asian Americans (Japanese, Chinese, and Filipinos) doing quite well, statistically speaking. The government cited statistics that supported a claim that there appeared to be "no apparent under-representation of Asian-American persons" as physicians—according to the 1970 census, Asian Americans were approximately 0.75 percent of the US population but constituted 3.6 percent of all physicians.¹⁴¹ Asian medical school entrance exam scores and grade point averages were also higher than their white peers.¹⁴²

¹³⁸ Brief for Asian American Bar Association of the Greater Bay Area, 2. Emphasis mine.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁴⁰ Brief for the United States of America, as Amicus Curiae Supporting Petitioners, *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*, 438 US 265, (1978) (No. 76-811), in *Bakke vs. Regents of the University of California*, ed. Alfred A. Slocum (Dobbs Ferry, NY: Oceana Publications, Inc., 1978).

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 52.

The government acknowledged that Asian Americans had faced historic discrimination, whose effects may continue in the present. However, it remained unclear why Asians were still included in the special admission programs at UC Davis medical school. In outlining unresolved questions from the trial court, the government argued:

It is not clear from the record why Asian-American persons are included in the special program. There is no doubt that many Asian-American persons have been subjected to discrimination. But although we do not know the application rates for Asian-Americans at Davis, the available evidence suggests that Asian-American applicants are admitted in substantial numbers even without taking special admissions into account. In 1973, 13 of the 84 regular admissions places in the class were filled by Asian-American students, although no more than six percent of the young college graduates in California are Asian-American. Other data also suggest that Asian-American applicants compete successfully for professional school admission without the assistance of special consideration. Although it may well be that disadvantaged Asian-American persons continue to be in need of the special program to overcome past discrimination, the record is silent on that question.¹⁴³

Several Asian American groups were troubled by the government's brief. The Asian and Pacific American Federal Employee Council (APAFEC) challenged these interpretations of Asian American parity by submitting a fact sheet to US Attorney General Griffin Bell (carbon copied to Solicitor General McCree) on 30 September 1977. The APAFEC was concerned with how the government would represent the issue of Asian special admissions during the October 1977 oral arguments and raised the fact that the government's involvement posed a critical moment. They wrote:

By filing its amicus brief, the Government has become the first participant in a case of the Bakke type to single out Asian/ Pacific Americans from other minority groups for a constitutional challenge to their participation in a minority program. An unfavorable decision towards Asians in Bakke could gravely jeopardize Asian and Pacific American participation not only in minority admissions but also in minority programs affecting every sector of American life. Even in the absence of such a decision, the brief casts doubt upon the Administration's support for including Asian/ Pacific Americans in these programs.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ Brief for the United States of America, as Amicus Curiae Supporting Petitioners, 75-76.

¹⁴⁴ Asian and Pacific American Federal Employee Council, *Government's Amicus Brief: The Bakke Case and Asian/Pacific Americans* (Washington DC ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED154057, 1977), 1.

The APAFEC argued that the government had used misleading statistics. For instance, the fact that more Asians had completed college than whites did not translate into income parity, Asian unemployment was understated due to the undercounting of limited English proficient unemployed persons, and while there was a high percentage of Asians in professional, managerial, and administrative positions, few were in policymaking positions.

Additionally, many Asian physicians were educated prior to their immigration to the United States; thus, "For anyone to assert that foreign born and educated doctors reflect opportunities for Asian/ Pacific Americans for medical education in America would be absurd."¹⁴⁵ The government's amicus brief also revealed little insight into Asian American subgroups of Koreans, Asian Indians, Samoans, Vietnamese, Hawaiians, Pakistanis, and Cambodians. The Council foreshadowed: "By singling out Asians as not needing one minority program, the Government opens the possibility that Asian/Pacific American participation in any or all minority programs could be eliminated."¹⁴⁶ This elimination would make it extremely difficult to meet the continuing needs for this community.

In the end, the Supreme Court did not decide on the status of Asian special admissions at Davis, leaving the question unresolved. Still, in his deciding opinion, Supreme Court Justice Lewis Powell remarked on the ability of Asian Americans to gain admission without the aid of special admissions programs. UC Davis medical school's special admission program in 1974 defined members of a "minority group" (eligible for special admissions consideration) as "Blacks," "Chicanos," "Asians," and "American Indians."¹⁴⁷ However, Powell raised the fact that Asian Americans were succeeding through regular admissions. He continued, "For example, the

¹⁴⁵ Asian and Pacific American Federal Employee Council, *Government's Amicus Brief*, 3.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁴⁷ The United States Supreme Court, "*Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*, 438 US 265," (1978), <http://caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/scripts/getcase.pl?court=us&vol=438&invol=265#f1> (accessed January 20, 2010), paragraph 5.

University is unable to explain its selection of only the four favored groups—Negroes, Mexican-Americans, American Indians, and Asians—for preferential treatment. The inclusion of the last group is especially curious in light of the substantial numbers of Asians admitted through the regular admissions process."¹⁴⁸

While these difficult questions remained unanswered, deliberations through the *Bakke* case signaled a shift in the understanding of Asian Americans' unquestioned inclusion in affirmative action admissions, with the introduction of the idea that Asian Americans had "outgrown" the need for affirmative action protections due to their statistical representation. Asian American groups protested this presumption and the ideological underpinnings of the model minority myth that collapsed the experiences of a diverse community.

UC in the 1980's: Asian American De-Minoritization and the Admissions Controversy

Colleges and universities learned from *Bakke* that quotas were unconstitutional, but that race could still be considered as one factor in the admissions process. The University of California continued to support policies to foster diversity in admissions and outreach. The 1980's, however, witnessed an increasing selectivity in student admissions. For the first time, a large number of eligible students were turned away from UC campuses, primarily UC Berkeley and UCLA, which were rejecting approximately two out of every three eligible applicants.¹⁴⁹ This increase in demand was facilitated further by the 1986 change in admissions policy enabling students to apply to multiple UC schools, generating an increased application flow to individual campuses.

¹⁴⁸ The United States Supreme Court, "*Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*, 438 US 265," paragraph 45 n.45.

¹⁴⁹ Douglass, "Anatomy of Conflict," 127.

Asian American numbers at UC, like at other institutions, had grown since the 1970's. John Aubrey Douglass notes that Asian Americans were overrepresented at Berkeley by at least 1950, when Asian Americans were almost 8.5 percent of undergraduates while constituting only 3 percent of the state.¹⁵⁰ By 1980, Asian Americans represented 54 percent of UC's total undergraduate minority enrollment.¹⁵¹ Given limited admissions slots, Berkeley administrators decided that their goal was "general parity between the racial and ethnic composition of the undergraduate enrollment and that of the state population in general."¹⁵² Increasingly, administrators equated underrepresentation with disadvantage. Based on this concept of parity, Douglass notes that, "In 1984, the admissions office stopped considering Asian Americans eligible for special consideration outside of academic achievement because, in short, their numbers at Berkeley far exceeded their proportional share of the available undergraduate pie. They had become over-represented, and hence no longer a 'disadvantaged' group."¹⁵³

Prior to 1984, Berkeley policies defined Asian Americans as an underrepresented group, which bestowed on them special admissions considerations and minority-oriented outreach and support programs. But afterwards, they were removed, and most Asian American groups were no longer considered in Educational Opportunity Programs (EOP) and special consideration admissions.¹⁵⁴ This decision was difficult for administrators who were seeking to meet several needs focused on parity.

As a result of the 1984 policy change at Berkeley, the admission rates of Asian American students began to decline. With the redefinition of Asian Americans as no longer a

¹⁵⁰ Douglass, *The Conditions for Admissions*, 74.

¹⁵¹ Douglass, "Anatomy of Conflict," 138.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 128.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 128.

¹⁵⁴ Matt Grace, "Asians Suffer Under Model-Minority Myth," *Daily Bruin*, September 22, 1997, <http://dailybruin.com/news/1997/sep/22/asians-suffer-under-model-mino/>, paragraph 57. Filipinos remained under affirmative action recruitment and retention programs until 1985 at UCLA and 1989 at UC Berkeley.

"disadvantaged" group, Asian American applicants were no longer protected from redirection to UC Santa Cruz as other EOP (black, Hispanic, and Native American) applicants.¹⁵⁵ Originally, EOP programs had protected UC eligible applicants based on their disadvantaged socioeconomic status; however, they shifted their foci to become race-based programs that did no longer included Asian Americans. The change disproportionately affected Asian American EOP students—in 1983, there were 62 white and 248 Asian American EOP students; one year later there were 55 white and 136 Asian American EOP students; in 1985 there were 24 white and 83 Asian American EOP students.¹⁵⁶

A decline in Asian American admissions occurred at other institutions across the nation. Between 1983 and 1986, despite the growing Asian American college applicant pool, figures revealed that declining percentages of Asian American students were being admitted to prestigious universities. In response, Asian American professors, students, and activists levied charges that these universities were setting quotas on the number of admitted Asian American students. Major controversies and investigations ensued at Brown, Harvard, Stanford, Princeton, UCLA, and Berkeley. The charges centered around two basic issues—the admission rate for Asian Americans was lower than that for whites, and Asian American enrollments had not risen in proportion to their sharp increases in the applicant pool. Activists at Berkeley also charged that Berkeley administrators had instituted policy changes such as weighting of supplemental criteria that hurt Asian Americans.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ Ling-chi Wang, "Meritocracy and Diversity in Higher Education: Discrimination Against Asian Americans in the Post-Bakke Era," *The Urban Review* 20 (1988): 189-209.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 196.

¹⁵⁷ Dana Takagi, *The Retreat From Race: Asian-American Admissions and Racial Politics* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992); Wang, "Meritocracy and Diversity in Higher Education"; Nakanishi, "A Quota on Excellence?"

Administrators responded to allegations of quotas by using statistics—in short, Asian Americans were "overrepresented" at Berkeley. In a 12 December 1986 *Associated Press* story, UC President David P. Gardner stated: "Asian students have been so successful they have become overrepresented at the university."¹⁵⁸ Changes in admissions policy were needed because Asians comprised more than 20 percent of the undergraduate enrollment at UC campuses but made up only 6 percent of the state's population. This "overrepresentation" and "racial imbalance" were of concern to Gardner who stated that they created new racial tensions and signaled for the reconsideration of policies that called for enrollment patterns that accurately reflected the state population.¹⁵⁹

Asian American overrepresentation was also measured by the standards established by the California Master Plan, which sought to establish access to the University of California for the top 12.5 percent of California's high school graduates. A group was disadvantaged if it met eligibility rates at lower than 12.5 percent, and conversely, any group whose members qualified at rates exceeding 12.5 percent were overrepresented. In 1983, the percentage of California public high school graduates eligible for entry to UC were 3.6 percent for African Americans, 4.9 percent for Chicano/Latina/o, 15.5 percent for whites, and 26.0 percent for Asians (with the latter two groups exceeding the 12.5 percent eligibility bar).¹⁶⁰

In frustration, Berkeley's Assistant Vice chancellor for Undergraduate Affairs Bud Travers expressed the constraints of a parity model: "We are supposed to service the top 12.5 percent of high school students and have affirmative action programs. Take these two things and add the fact that Asian-Americans are at Berkeley in numbers four times higher than they

¹⁵⁸ Michael Scott-Blair, "Ethnic Imbalance Shifts at UC," *San Diego Union*, December 1, 1986, A1.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., A37.

¹⁶⁰ Douglass, "Anatomy of a Conflict," 137.

graduate from high school, and you have a model that is unworkable."¹⁶¹ Because Asian Americans were overrepresented in high school eligibility according to the Master Plan, the goal for parity left Berkeley administrators with a difficult model. Other universities faced such challenges when, while they did not subscribe to quotas or caps, they focused on a parity goal. As admissions became more competitive, affirmative action policies began to be criticized.¹⁶²

Backlash and the Repeal of Affirmative Action

Higher education was hard hit by economic stagflation in the 1970's, with rising inflation and declining production in the economy. In addition, a declining birthrate and internal migration patterns led to the decline in higher education enrollment by 175,000 in 1975.¹⁶³ By 1970, three-fourths of college students were attending public institutions, lured by lower tuitions.¹⁶⁴ While the economic situation improved in the mid-1980's, the Reagan administration shifted support away from federal grants to loans. This shift affected access as well: "The change in aid structure was a major contributing factor to declines and/or small gains, causing lower access for African Americans, especially low income students, and low degree attainment."¹⁶⁵

In the 1970's, due to changing economic contexts and increased support from foundations, the federal government, and businesses, vocational education yielded gains. Between 1970-1977, the proportion of students in occupational programs rose from one-third to over one-half.¹⁶⁶ The community college student body also changed to older, part-time, disadvantaged, and low ability students, forces that furthered the move towards vocational

¹⁶¹ Douglass, "Anatomy of a Conflict," 129.

¹⁶² Takagi, *The Retreat From Race*. While no university admitted to wrong doing, several admitted to a serious problem and unconscious bias in the admission of Asian American students.

¹⁶³ Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education*, 321.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 322.

¹⁶⁵ Clewell and Anderson, "African Americans in Higher Education," 74.

¹⁶⁶ Brint and Karabel, *The Diverted Dream*, 103.

courses. Despite this shift, some communities (particularly African Americans) protested the focus on vocational curriculum as a way to further obstruct them from equal educational opportunities.

The 1980's also saw a regression in affirmative action policies. President Reagan represented the movement against government regulation and federal funding for social programs. Affirmative action programs were also viewed with suspicion, and businessmen charged that EEOC paperwork was inefficient and encouraged frivolous charges. Appointed leaders of the EEOC and Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs opposed racial preferences, and enforcement slowed and budgets were cut; regulations were exempted for smaller businesses and contracts, and officials spoke of affirmative action as "reverse discrimination."¹⁶⁷ The concept of proportional results of affirmative action also began to be questioned and reversed in the 1980's. In 1989, the Supreme Court ruled in *City of Richmond v. JA Croson* that the only legitimate reason for racial preferences was to remedy past discrimination. In addition, any racial preferences must pass strict scrutiny, or the hardest judicial standard. In addition, the Supreme Court case *Wards Cove Packing Co. v. Antonio* overturned *Griggs'* premise of disparate impact in 1989. No longer was underrepresentation of a minority group proof of possible discrimination, but now employees had to prove there was a discriminatory hiring process. This ruling reversed the burden of proof back onto employees instead of employers.¹⁶⁸ In addition, in *Adarand Constructors v. Peña* (1995), the Supreme Court expanded strict scrutiny to *all* federal set-aside programs.

¹⁶⁷ Anderson, *The Pursuit of Fairness*, 172.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 212. In the 1991 Civil Rights Act, burden of proof went back to employers and reaffirmed disparate impact; however the meaning of the Act was confusing and "job-related" tests were left up to the courts to hash out.

Gaining momentum as racial preferences were questioned, affirmative action opponents made strides in the mid-1990's. California led the way, when in 1995, the University of California regents passed Special Policy 1 and 2, which ended affirmative action in admissions and employment (respectively), making it the first public university in the United States to do so. SP-1 also set a limit of no less than 50 percent and no more than 75 percent of an entering class be admitted solely on basis of academics.¹⁶⁹ This shift towards academic qualifications and test scores would mean a decrease in diversity along other factors and "potentially formed a profound paradigm shift in the historical purpose of public universities."¹⁷⁰

Proposition 209 passed in California in 1996 by state ballot, banning affirmative action in public hiring, contracting, and education. Washington would follow with Resolution I-200, which ended affirmative action policies in admissions and financial aid. That same year, in *Hopwood v. Texas*, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the University of Texas Law School had no compelling justification to give some racial groups preference and thus reversed *Bakke*, stating that race could not be a factor in admissions in Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas.

The Supreme Court 2003 Michigan cases *Grutter v. Bollinger* and *Gratz v. Bollinger* raised the issue of affirmative action admissions further. In the former, Barbara Grutter, a white female applicant to the University of Michigan law school, sued the university on the basis of racial discrimination, claiming that the law school gave unfair advantages to African American, Latina/o, and Native American applicants. In the latter case, Jennifer Gratz, a white female, filed a class action suit claiming that Michigan's undergraduate admissions process illegally gave "bonus points" on an admissions scale to underrepresented minority groups. The court struck

¹⁶⁹ Douglass, *The Conditions for Admission*, 180; Robert A. Rhoads, *Freedom's Web: Student Activism in an Age of Cultural Diversity* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998). The 1990's were also a time of student activism on behalf of multicultural efforts, as outlined by Robert Rhoads.

¹⁷⁰ Douglass, *The Conditions for Admission*, 181.

down the undergraduate program as too mechanical and insufficiently tailored but reaffirmed the law school's policies that considered applicants as individuals and affirmed diversity as a compelling state interest. Still, the Supreme Court cautioned on the potential dangers of using race, with Justice Sandra Day O'Connor stating she expected that twenty-five years from the ruling that racial preferences would no longer be necessary. In November 2006, Michigan voters passed Proposal 2, or the Michigan Civil Rights Initiative, ending affirmative action in public colleges and government contracting.

The Current Context

Institutions of higher education still struggle with minority underrepresentation (in undergraduate enrollment, graduate enrollment, and faculty positions), campus climate, a Eurocentric curriculum, and the uncertain future of affirmative action. Student enrollment is plagued by persistent racial gaps. While black matriculation rose after the 1964 Civil Rights Act, it stalled from 1974-1984 despite the growth of black high school graduates. Explanations for this drop include rising costs, lowered financial aid, and the failure to enforce Title VI.¹⁷¹ In 1996, college graduation rates differed by racial group: whites graduated from college at a rate of 59 percent, Asians 64 percent, Latina/os 45 percent, blacks 38 percent, and American Indians 37 percent.¹⁷² On average, African Americans have lower SAT scores, college grades, and college graduation rates than whites. (Scholars posit some explanations that include lower socioeconomic status, financial needs, poorer K-12 preparation, and difficulty adjusting to campus).

¹⁷¹ Teddlie and Freeman, "Twentieth Century Desegregation in US Higher Education."

¹⁷² James D. Anderson, "Race in American Higher Education," 14.

These numbers severely hamper the pipeline for minority entry to graduate school and upper-level occupations. Despite initial gains in enrollment, African American enrollment in graduate education fell by over 22 percent between 1976-1984.¹⁷³ Lewis Solmon, Matthew Solmon, and Tamara Schiff report that in 1997, most African American doctorates were in education, with fewer in physical science and engineering, and Latina/o doctorates were concentrated in education and social sciences above any other field. Asian American doctorates were primarily in the physical and life sciences and engineering with fewer in the social sciences, humanities, and education, and doctorates awarded to Asian international students exceeded those awarded to Asian Americans. Native Americans received the fewest PhDs in 1997 of any group.¹⁷⁴ This imbalance results in fewer minority faculty across disciplines who can mentor and support minority undergraduate and graduate students to become future scholars.

What happens when affirmative action admissions policies and support services are repealed? Not only do actual numbers plummet, but a cycle of re-segregation occurs. A "chilling effect" has taken place at many campuses, which are now perceived to be unwelcoming to students of color. In the wake of *Hopwood*, the proportion of black and Latina/o applicants declined at law schools and at Texas A&M. The results of these repeals of affirmative action can also be seen at the University of California. After SP-1, the total underrepresented freshmen enrollment at UC fell from 20.8 percent to 15.1 percent.¹⁷⁵ Two years after Proposition 209,

¹⁷³ Kenneth W. Jackson, "Black Faculty in Academia," in *The Racial Crisis in American Higher Education*, ed. Philip Altbach and Kofi Lomotey (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 138.

¹⁷⁴ Lewis C. Solmon, Matthew S. Solmon, and Tamara W. Schiff, "The Changing Demographics—Problems and Opportunities," in *The Racial Crisis in American Higher Education, Revised Edition—Continuing Challenges for the Twenty-first Century*, ed. William A. Smith, Philip G. Altbach and Kofi Lomotey (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 67, 70.

¹⁷⁵ Douglass, *The Conditions for Admission*, 210.

black admissions fell 51 percent and Latina/o admissions 41 percent at Berkeley.¹⁷⁶ At Berkeley's law school in 1996, the number of African American admits fell from seventy-five to fourteen (with not a single applicant matriculating that year), and the Chicana/o admission rate fell from fifty-three to twenty-seven, with only six enrolling.¹⁷⁷ In the wake of affirmative action's repeal, John Aubrey Douglass notes that institutions chose three reforms in admissions: increased outreach programs; percent plans, where the top percentage of state high schools were guaranteed a space in public universities; and comprehensive review of applicants. While these reforms helped to recover some African American and Latina/o numbers in the precipitous drops after Proposition 209, they were still lower than pre-1995 figures.¹⁷⁸

Abolishing affirmative action considerations in admissions, many argue, will mean the return to segregation-era enrollment levels. As William Bowen and Derek Bok argue, race-sensitive policies give admissions officers greater flexibility in considering qualified minorities. Race-neutral policies change the terms of "qualification" by looking strictly at test scores and grades. In this scenario, colleges and universities have to compromise academic standards in an even greater way if they want to maintain racial diversity.¹⁷⁹

Conclusion

The historical record shows that higher education, particularly at the highest and most prestigious levels, has for a long time been inaccessible to non-white racial and ethnic minorities. In many ways, higher education has followed the pattern identified by Harold Wechsler as the

¹⁷⁶ William Tierney and Jack Chung, "Affirmative Action in a Post-Hopwood Era," in *The Racial Crisis in American Higher Education, Revised Edition—Continuing Challenges for the Twenty-first Century*, ed. William A. Smith, Philip G. Altbach and Kofi Lomotey (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 278.

¹⁷⁷ Jerome Karabel, "The Hopwood Chill: How the Court Derailed Diversity Efforts at Texas A&M," in *Chilling Admissions: The Affirmative Action Crisis and the Search for Alternatives*, ed. Gary Orfield and Edward Miller (Cambridge: Harvard Education Publishing Group, 1998), 44.

¹⁷⁸ Douglass, *The Conditions for Admission*, 211.

¹⁷⁹ Bowen and Bok, *The Shape of the River*.

"inverse of Gresham's law of academic relations," namely that officials and students perceive new groups entering colleges and universities as a "threat to an institution's stated and unstated missions (official fear) or to its social life (student fear)."¹⁸⁰ This reaction to perceived threat manifests itself in exclusionary policies and segregation on college campuses.¹⁸¹

Even with gains made with affirmative action and in financial aid, the rollbacks in the 1990's have left administrators seeking to establish racial diversity on college campuses. Private institutions, as well as public institutions such as the University of California in their search for prestige and selectivity, have struggled with providing access while also balancing institutional missions.

But even gaining access to an institution does not mean higher education is a supportive space for a racialized non-white group. Access does not end with matriculation. History also shows us that students have faced segregation, alienation, ostracism, and backlash on campus due to their race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Current research on campus climate continues to show that racial minority students perceive campus climate differently than white students. Particularly at predominantly white institutions, minority students report higher levels of alienation and dissatisfaction.¹⁸² Inhospitable campus climate also affects minority students'

¹⁸⁰ Harold Wechsler, "An Academic Gresham's Law: Group Repulsion as a Theme in American Higher Education," *Teachers College Record* 82 (1981): 567.

¹⁸¹ Derrick Bell, "Application of the 'Tipping Point' Principle to Law Faculty Hiring Practices," *Nova Law Journal* 20 (1986): 319-327. Derrick Bell also describes a similar phenomenon with regards to hiring minority faculty: that an institution will resist crossing a "tipping point," from which the institution's racial demographic changes significantly, akin to public housing's resistance to tipping over a black/ white ratio that will stimulate white flight from a transitional area. Higher education's avoidance of this tipping point takes form in quotas and backlash against increasing diversification of its student body.

¹⁸² Julie R. Ancis, William E. Sedlacek, and Jonathan J. Mohr, "Student Perceptions of Campus Cultural Climate by Race," *Journal of Counseling and Development* 78 (2000): 180-185; Sylvia Hurtado, "The Campus Racial Climate: Contexts of Conflict," *The Journal of Higher Education* 63 (1992): 539-569; Institute for the Study of Social Change, *The Diversity Project: Final Report* (University of California Berkeley, 1991); Amanda E. Lewis, Mark Chesler, and Tyrone A. Forman, "The Impact of 'Colorblind' Ideologies on Students of Color: Intergroup Relations at a Predominantly White University," *The Journal of Negro Education* 69 (2000): 74-91; Chalsa M. Loo and Garry Rolison, "Alienation of Ethnic Minority Students at a Predominantly White University," *Journal of Higher Education* 57 (1986): 58-77; Katherine E. McClelland and Carol J. Auster, "Public Platitudes and Hidden

sense of belonging, integration, and persistence and adds psychological stressors.¹⁸³ Issues of campus climate also go beyond numerical assessments. Although this is not clearly resolved in the literature, numerous studies show that social alienation exists even for high achieving minority students who persist or express academic satisfaction at their institution.¹⁸⁴ This finding is particularly salient for Asian American students who persist through college at higher rates than other groups and reveals that race continues to matter.

Historical movements also reveal that Asian American students, while seeming to be model minorities who were so successful that their numerical overrepresentation justified their removal from affirmative action and minority protections at the University of California in the 1980's, continue to have a racialized experience in higher education. Asian American students and community members protested the ways that university policies and legal briefs questioned their minority status, arguing that they were still underrepresented in the pipeline and still

Tensions: Racial Climates at Predominantly White Liberal Arts Colleges," *The Journal of Higher Education* 61 (1990): 607-642; Cornel Pewewardy and Bruce Frey, "Surveying the Landscape: Perceptions of Multicultural Support Services and Racial Climate at a Predominantly White University," *The Journal of Negro Education* 71 (2002): 77-95; Landon Reid and Phanikiran Radhakrishnan, "Race Matters: The Relation Between Race and General Campus Climate," *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology* 9 (2003): 263-275; Daniel Solorzano, "Critical Race Theory, Race and Gender Microaggressions, and the Experience of Chicana and Chicano Scholars," *Qualitative Studies in Education* 11 (1998): 121-136; Daniel Solorzano, Miguel Ceja, and Tara Yosso, "Critical Race Theory, Racial Microaggressions, and Campus Racial Climate: The Experiences of African American College Students," *The Journal of Negro Education* 69 (2000): 60-73.

¹⁸³ Christine Bennett and Alton Okinaka, "Factors Related to the Persistence Among Asian, Black, Hispanic, and White Undergraduates at a Predominantly White University: Comparisons Between First and Fourth Year Cohorts," *The Urban Review* 22 (1990): 33-60; Christine Cress and Elaine Ikeda, "Distress Under Duress: The Relationships Between Campus Climate and Depression in Asian American College Students," *NASPA Journal* 40 (2003): 74-97; Jairo Fuertes and William Sedlacek, "Using the SAT and Noncognitive Variables to Predict the Grades and Retention of Asian American University Students," *Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling and Development* 27 (1994): 74-85; Kenneth Gonzalez, "Campus Culture and the Experiences of Chicano Students in a Predominantly White University," *Urban Education* 37 (2002): 193-218; Terry Huffman, "The Experiences, Perceptions, and Consequences of Campus Racism Against Northern Plains Indians," *Journal of American Indian Education* 30 (1991): 25-34; Sylvia Hurtado, Deborah Faye Carter, and Albert Spuler, "Latino Student Transition to College: Assessing Difficulties and Factors in Successful College Adjustment," *Research in Higher Education* 37 (1996): 135-157; Kathleen Morley, "Fitting in by Race/ Ethnicity: The Social and Academic Integration of Diverse Students at a Large Predominantly White University," *Journal of College Student Retention* 5 (2003): 147-174; Brian Smedley, Hector Myers, and Shelly Harrell, "Minority-Status Stressors and the College Adjustment of Ethnic Minority Freshmen," *The Journal of Higher Education* 64 (1993): 434-452.

¹⁸⁴ Bennett and Okinaka, "Factors Related to Persistence"; Loo and Rolison, "Alienation of Ethnic Minority Students"; McClelland and Auster, "Public Platitudes and Hidden Tensions"; Solorzano, Ceja, and Yosso, "Critical Race Theory, Racial Microaggressions, and Campus Racial Climate."

experienced racial barriers. In addition, the admissions controversy in the 1980's showed that universities may have used certain strategies that limited the admission of Asian American students, to the benefit of white students. Thus, despite Asian American success in higher education, there are still elements of fallacious model minority stereotypes that overlook continued educational needs and racial backlash against Asian Americans.

Is higher education a privilege or a right? David Levine notes that the idea of higher education as a right emerged after World War II, as veterans sought educations at prestigious institutions. Demand for admission to private institutions remains high, as well as to public flagship universities. For private colleges, institutional interests often compete with access, as legacy admissions and other applicants receive special consideration.¹⁸⁵ Public universities have a different obligation, however. As William Tierney writes, "Public higher education has a responsibility greater than admitting those who score highest on a standardized test. Public higher education is a public good. The radical reinterpretation of the public sector as a sphere solely for individual competition may or may not be justified in multiple arenas, but it is unjustified in institutions that we have traditionally defined as vehicles for upward mobility for all people, not merely the privileged few."¹⁸⁶ Public higher education is a critical path to upward mobility for middle and lower-income students.¹⁸⁷ As public institutions face challenges of declining state budgets and rising tuition, access is affected.

Affirmative action emerged as a response to compensate for historical discrimination and disparities. Tierney notes that historical arguments for justifying affirmative action, however, have not legally been successful, as they raise issues of liability of injury of majority group

¹⁸⁵ Daniel Golden, *The Price of Admission: How America's Ruling Class Buys its Way into Elite Colleges—and Who Gets Left Outside the Gates* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2006).

¹⁸⁶ William Tierney, "The Parameters of Affirmative Action: Equity and Excellence in the Academy," *Review of Educational Research* 67 (1997): 192.

¹⁸⁷ Douglass, *The Conditions for Admission*.

members who may have not personally be responsible for historical harms. Compensation is thus the most often challenged rationale for affirmative action in admissions.¹⁸⁸ Yet, the history of educational access and campus climate in the United States *must* be considered in order to fully understand the continuing racial disparities in higher education today. Without affirmative action or racial considerations, what policy tools are available? While access has indeed increased since World War II, disparities and racial tensions persist. I will examine these issues for the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, in regards to the development of minority programs, policies, and services in the 1960's through the 1990's.

¹⁸⁸ Tierney, "The Parameters of Affirmative Action."

CHAPTER THREE

THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN'S MINORITY PROGRAMS AND THE INVISIBILITY OF ASIAN AMERICAN STUDENTS (1968-1975)

As outlined in the previous chapter, colleges and universities were inaccessible to racialized non-white populations throughout US history. It was not until the civil rights movement as advances towards racial equality began when higher education administrators began to focus on the recruitment and retention of African American students. This was the case at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC), the public flagship and predominantly white university of the state. This chapter will document the rise of minority programs at UIUC, starting with the Special Educational Opportunities Program (SEOP) in 1968. UIUC administrators focused their early efforts on African American students and only began to widen their understanding of minority students' needs due to protest by Latina/o students. Asian American students, on the other hand, were completely overlooked. Instead, a small but vibrant Asian American community created their own spaces on campus to articulate an Asian American identity and experience.

When examining minority statistics of the three largest racial minority groups at UIUC (African American, Latina/o, and Asian American), one can see that the numbers of students of color were very low in the 1960's and 1970's, with growth in the 1980's and 1990's. The self-reported statistics also show that, compared to the state population of Illinois, there have been a few notable patterns: the first is that, as on many campuses across the country, African American and Hispanic students have always been underrepresented at UIUC compared to their numbers in

the state. Second, also as on many campuses across the country, Asian American students have always been overrepresented at UIUC compared to the state. Representation in the state aside, the third observation is that African Americans composed the largest minority population at UIUC until the mid-1980's, when Asian American student growth surpassed them (table 1).

Table 1 Percentage of African American, Hispanic, and Asian Americans in the state of Illinois, compared to their percentage in UIUC undergraduate student enrollment.

Year	African American		Hispanic		Asian American	
	Illinois	UIUC	Illinois	UIUC	Illinois	UIUC
1967	10.0% ^a	1.0%	...	0.1%	0.2% ^a	0.6%
1970	13.0%	3.8%	3.2% ^b	0.5%	0.42%	1.3%
1980	15.0%	3.9%	5.5% ^c	1.4%	1.5%	3.1%
1990	14.8%	7.1%	7.7%	4.3%	2.5%	9.7%
2000	15.1%	7.0%	12.3%	5.7%	3.4%	13.2%

SOURCE: Gibson and Jung, "Historical Census Statistics on Population Totals by Race"; University of Illinois Office of Equal Opportunity and Access, "Undergraduate Enrollment by Racial/ Ethnic Category"; US Department of Commerce Illinois Census Data (1960, 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000).

^a Taken from the 1960 Illinois census.

^b "Spanish Language" population in the 1970 Illinois census.

^c "Spanish Origin" population in the 1970 Illinois census.

Thus, even though African American students' issues warranted significant attention given their underrepresentation in the state, other groups such as Latina/os and Asian Americans were severely marginalized on campus, composing a small number at UIUC until the late 1980's and early 1990's. These students advocated for curriculum and support services that were overlooked by the university's definition of "minority" students as primarily African American. This policy lens focus is evident in the university's first coordinated effort to recruit minority students, the Special Educational Opportunities Program.

The Special Educational Opportunities Program at the University of Illinois

The University of Illinois and the surrounding Urbana-Champaign community have a history of racial segregation. Campus residence halls were not open to black students until 1945, and black students could not eat in university dining halls until the Illini student union opened in 1942.¹ Racial segregation in restaurants and theaters was the norm in Urbana-Champaign until the mid-1960's. These racist policies and practices did not begin to change until student activists protested campus-approved minstrel shows and segregated facilities in the 1950's.

UIUC began to recruit racial minority students in the 1960's. Students on the campus organized chapters of the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE) in 1966, the same year as a three-day race riot in Chicago. In 1967, the Black Students Association (BSA) formed to push the UIUC administration to increase the number of black students on campus to reflect state population statistics and to improve campus racial climate.² The BSA also demanded more black professors, a black cultural center, and equal wages for all university staff.

The 4 April 1968 assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. energized black power sentiment at Illinois and intensified the need for more aggressive affirmative action programs. UIUC policies had begun to address racial inequities as early as 1963, but it was not until King's assassination that efforts increased, leading to the creation of the Special Educational Opportunities Program (SEOP) in 1968, a program that removed the word "special" from its title in 1971.³ The program's goal was to "recruit more disadvantaged students, *especially blacks*, to

¹ Carrie Franke, "Injustice Sheltered: Race Relations at the University of Illinois and Urbana-Champaign, 1945-1962" (PhD diss, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1990).

² Joy Ann Williamson, *Black Power on Campus: The University of Illinois, 1965-1975* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

³ ET Sanford, Director of Student Financial Aid to Staff Members, 18 October 1971, Record series 41/2/14, Box 4, Folder: SEOP, 1970-72, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives. According to internal memos, the SEOP changed its name to the Educational Opportunities Program (EOP) effective in October 1971.

the campus."⁴ The goal that summer was to recruit 500 students for the program, an ambitious goal for the time period, with the assistance of BSA; hence, the program was also known as "Project 500."

While Project 500 began with a focus on African American students, administrators framed the program as open to all racial groups. For instance, a Faculty Letter newsletter from the Office of the President dated 3 February 1969 described the goals of the program as "increasing the number of minority group students" and assisting students "from disadvantaged backgrounds," although the newsletter did not specify which minority groups this meant. In addition, admission to the program was based on financial need.⁵ Administrators presented the SEOP as a program to serve economically and educationally disadvantaged students writ large.

Project 500 was not only a black recruitment program. Smaller groups of Latina/o, Asian American, and poor white students from inner-city Chicago high schools also participated. However, from the beginning, black students *were* the primary population served. An all-university committee on admissions met on 17 May 1968 to discuss the admission of disadvantaged students to the Chicago circle, medical center, and Urbana-Champaign campuses and recommended that "minimum admission goals for disadvantaged students shall be no less than 15 percent at each campus, and of this number at least two-thirds should be Negro."⁶ This focus is supported by statistics in the 1970's and early 1980's. For instance, a memo listed the estimated racial breakdown of EOP students as of 16 March 1972 as: 85 percent black, 7 percent

⁴ Williamson, *Black Power on Campus*, 57. Emphasis mine.

⁵ "Educational Assistance Programs at the University of Illinois," Faculty letter from the Office of the President, University of Illinois, No. 171, 3 February 1969, p. 3, Record series 41/2/14, Box 1, Folder: Research, Background Materials, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives. Financial need meant qualification for federal Educational Opportunity Grants or requiring a set amount short of university expenses.

⁶ Recommendation to the All-University Committee on Admissions Regarding the Admission of Disadvantaged Students to the Chicago Circle, Medical Center, and Urbana-Champaign Senates, 16 June 1968, Record series 41/2/14, p. 1, Box 3, Folder: SEOP Project 500 1 of 3, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

Spanish-speaking, 5 percent white, and 3 percent "other."⁷ In an April 1977 report on minority student programs, written by the Office of Academic Affirmative Action, it was noted that since the SEOP's founding, 601 students had earned degrees from the university, of which 90 percent were black, 6 percent were Latina/o, 1 percent were Asian American, and 3 percent were Caucasian.⁸ In the fall of 1981, the program served a reported 712 black, 178 Latina/o, 121 Asian, and 28 white students.⁹

SEOP letters and publications also articulated a focus on black students. In a letter regarding events for black Mother's day in 1971, SEOP Director Clarence Shelley wrote, "Although the SEOP has a multi-ethnic population including Puerto-Rican Americans, Mexican Americans, Indian Americans, Asian Americans, and White Americans, the largest minority represented are the Black Americans."¹⁰ In addition, other materials described minorities as those who were underrepresented. An undated SEOP brochure listed admissions eligibility as such: "You are eligible for consideration if you have had limited economic or educational opportunities, and if your cultural heritage is greatly under-represented on this campus. The composition of this group will be primarily Afro-American, Hispanic-American and American Indian."¹¹

Thus, it is important to note that UIUC's minority programs, starting with SEOP, were never *solely* limited to African Americans. Any group (including Asian Americans and whites)

⁷ Minority Fall Semester Enrollment, Urbana-Champaign Campus, 16 March 1972, Record series 41/2/14, Box 1, Folder: Admissions 71-72, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

⁸ Joseph Smith, "Report on the Minority Student Programs Urbana-Champaign Campus," April 1977, p. 9, Record series 24/9/2, Box 5, Folder: Minority Student Programs—Reports, 1977, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

⁹ Michael Jeffries, "Educational Opportunities Program Annual Report, 1981-82," 16 July 1982, p. 31, Record series 41/64/40, Box 2, Folder: Committee on Minority Student Affairs, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

¹⁰ Clarence Shelley to Bob Evans, re: News Release on SEOP, 12 May 1971, Record series 41/2/14, Box 2, Folder: SEOP staff, 1970-72, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

¹¹ Special Educational Opportunities Program Brochure, no date, Record series 41/2/14, Box 6, Folder: SEOP info, booklets, 1972-74, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

could participate in SEOP if it met qualifications based on socioeconomic need and disadvantage. This policy remained true for subsequent minority programs that developed under the Office of Minority Student Affairs (OMSA). However, at the same time, UIUC minority programs began with a specific focus on African Americans. Recruitment efforts targeted high schools with black (and then later Latina/o) populations; if an Asian American student happened to attend that targeted high school, s/he could also hear about minority programs. However, no concerted effort was made to specifically recruit Asian Americans. The fact remained that the highest proportion of students (as well as graduate student counselors and administrators) in SEOP were African American. While the university emphasized that SEOP eligibility was based on socioeconomic disadvantage rather than race, and "that African Americans would dominate the program only because their economic situation was worse than any other group's," the perception would persist that SEOP was *only* for black students.¹² In this way, Joy Ann Williamson notes that the terms "minority," "disadvantaged," and "African American" became conflated, leading to a racialization of programs such as the SEOP at UIUC.

Latina/o Students in the Midwest

The numbers of Latina/o students at the University of Illinois (both Urbana and Chicago Circle campuses) were low in the late 1960's. By the early 1970's, Latina/o students began to articulate their educational needs and tokenism in SEOP, among other minority services.

Despite a historical concentration of Mexican Americans in the US Southwest, the Midwest is also a site of Mexican settlement. According to the 2000 US census, Chicago and its surrounding area claimed the second largest Mexican origin population in the country, second

¹² Williamson, *Black Power on Campus*, 66.

only to Los Angeles.¹³ Ricardo Parra documents how Mexican immigration to the Midwest began during the Mexican Revolution of 1910-1921, and Mexicans found jobs in factories in Chicago, Detroit, Gary, and Kansas City.¹⁴ In the 1940-1970's, Mexican American farm labor migrated to the region from Texas, so that by the 1950's, the Mexican American community in Chicago grew to 35,000 and then to 56,000 by 1960.¹⁵ From 1990-2000, the Latina/o population grew in the Great Lakes states, increasing 66.2 percent in the decade, with Illinois having the largest Latina/o population in the Midwest.¹⁶

Other Latina/o groups also came to Illinois. Puerto Ricans began to come to Chicago in the 1950's; in 1950 they numbered 8,000, but in 1960 grew to 32,000 and by 1970 to 78,000.¹⁷ In 2000, the census showed that Latina/os were 27 percent of Chicago's population and 12.5 percent of its suburbs—Mexicans made up 75 percent of this number, Puerto Ricans 11 percent, and Central and South Americans 14 percent.¹⁸

Given this history, numerous Latina/o organizations formed midwestern chapters, such as the League of United Latin American citizens (LULAC) in the 1950's, the Farm Labor Organizing Committee in 1967, and the Midwest Council of La Raza in 1970. Chicago is home to Latina/o community groups such as the Mexican American Council of Chicago established in 1949 and a Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF) office established in 1980. Chicago has also been site of Latina/o activism—in June of 1966, Puerto Ricans

¹³ Gilberto Cardenas, editor, *La Causa: Civil Rights, Social Justice, and the Struggle for Equality in the Midwest* (Houston: Arte Publico Press, 2004), xi.

¹⁴ Ricardo Parra, "Latina/os in the Midwest: Civil Rights and Community Organization," in *La Causa: Civil Rights, Social Justice, and the Struggle for Equality in the Midwest*, ed. Gilberto Cardenas (Houston: Arte Publico Press, 2004), 1-18.

¹⁵ David A. Badillo, "From La Lucha to Latina/o: Ethnic Chicago, Political Identity, and Civil Rights in Chicago," in *La Causa: Civil Rights, Social Justice, and the Struggle for Equality in the Midwest*, ed. Gilberto Cardenas (Houston: Arte Publico Press, 2004), 39.

¹⁶ Parra, "Latina/os in the Midwest," 2.

¹⁷ Badillo, "From La Lucha to Latina/o," 39, 42.

¹⁸ Parra, "Latina/os in the Midwest," 14-15.

protested police brutality in the Division Street Riot that included three days of demonstrations, and during the national grape strike led by the United Farm Workers in 1968, strikers came to Chicago to march.

Latina/o educational needs gained recognition in the state in the 1970's, especially at the University of Illinois, on both Urbana and Chicago Circle campuses. Latina/o representation on these campuses emerged as a result of new minority outreach programs, but the beginnings were not easy, and Latina/o students had to struggle to ensure their needs were met.

Latina/os in the Special Educational Opportunities Program

There is some evidence that the focus on African American students affected non-black SEOP students. In December 1970, Diann Geronemus of the School of Social Work wrote a paper examining the experiences of Latin American and white students in the SEOP. Geronemus interviewed Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, and white students from Chicago, whom she termed to be "minority groups within a minority group program."¹⁹ (In the report, she noted that participants' ethnic breakdown was not available through SEOP records; she recruited her sample through SEOP staff contacts). Most of the students interviewed viewed SEOP as primarily for black students, though they expressed a range of feelings about this, from acceptance to resentment. Some felt that non-blacks were marginalized in the program and observed the predominance of SEOP black administrators, advisors, and graduate assistants. Geronemus concluded, "It is important to recognize the intra-group differences within the SEOP. The program must serve the varying needs of black, white, and Latin-American students." In

¹⁹ Diann F. Geronemus, "Perspective: Latin American and White Students in the Special Educational Opportunities Program," December 1970, p. 4, Record series 41/2/14, Box 2, Folder: Latin American Students—General Information, 1972, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives. It is unclear Ms. Geronemus' position at the university; the paper resembles a course paper, so she may have been a graduate student at UIUC.

addition, some Latin American students "feel that they are the forgotten students in the program. They want an SEOP dean and advisors representing their own interests and needs, their cultural heritage, their background, and their values. Such a person would be better able to view and understand the problems they face in the university."²⁰

In the absence of these staff and assistants, Latin American students began helping each other in the program. Geronemus wrote, "they have banded together in good times and bad, support each others endeavors, and feel responsible for helping acquaint newly arriving students and making them feel at home."²¹ They had also begun forming an organization along these lines. The Urban Hispanic Students for Involvement registered as a student organization in September of 1970 with an academic, cultural, and social purpose: "to form an organized student body for the improvement culturally, academically, athletically of Latin American students."²² The Urban Hispanic Students organization changed its name in March of 1974 to La Colectiva Latina and continued to represent Latina/o students.²³

Latina/o students in the SEOP began to mobilize for greater services and representation in the early 1970's. Luis Esquilin was appointed assistant dean of EOP, assigned to work with Hispanic students during the 1970-1971 and 1971-1972 academic years. On 27 October 1971, Esquilin wrote a memo to Barry Munitz in the Office of University Vice president and Provost. In it, he outlined the challenges facing Latina/o students, which included an Anglo-centered curriculum that regarded Latina/os as culturally deficient, the lack of bilingual college admissions or financial aid information, very few courses on Puerto Rican or Mexican

²⁰ Geronemus, "Perspective: Latin American and White Students in the Special Educational Opportunities Program," 16-17.

²¹ Ibid., 17.

²² Request for University Recognition of a New Undergraduate Student Organization Not Maintaining a House Form, for Urban Hispanic Students for Involvement, 17 September 1970, Record series 41/2/41, Box 6, Folder: La Colectiva Latina, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

²³ Application for Registered Student Organization Status, La Colectiva Latina, 11 March 1974, Record series 41/2/41, Box 6, Folder: La Colectiva Latina, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

experiences, low numbers of Latina/o students at the undergraduate, graduate, and faculty/ staff level, and poor funding of Latina/o student organizations on campus.²⁴ Shortly thereafter, Chancellor Jack Peltason wrote a memo to EOP Director Clarence Shelley, dated 29 November 1971. In it, he expressed concern: "I would appreciate it if you would take positive steps to insure that our Special Educational Opportunities Program is made known to more Latin-American students whose impoverished backgrounds place them at a disadvantage in the larger society. Although we have quite properly concentrated our efforts upon programs for Afro-Americans who needed help, I believe that without decreasing these efforts we can broaden them to include larger numbers of Latin-Americans."²⁵ Thus, by late 1971, the administration began to acknowledge the need to widen minority programs to meet the needs of Latina/os, in addition to African Americans. Yet the students would have to push them hard to meet these needs.

The Push for a Latina/o Recruiter and Counselor

Esquilin announced his resignation for the fall of 1972, to attend law school full time. The Urban Hispanic Students Organization (UHO) and other students wrote letters of concern to EOP Director Shelley and to Dean of Students Hugh Satterlee, expressing marginalization in the EOP, as well as requesting the right to search, interview, and select Esquilin's replacement.²⁶ Satterlee responded on March 29, apprising the students that the division of the Dean of Students

²⁴ Luis Esquilin to Barry Munitz, 27 October 1971, Record series 41/2/14, Box 6, Folder: Latina/o Students, 1971-73, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

²⁵ JW Peltason to Clarence Shelley, 29 November 1971, Record series 41/2/14, Box 6, Folder: Latina/o Students, 1971-73, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

²⁶ Urban Hispanic Students Organization to Dean Hugh Satterlee, 28 February 1972, Record series 41/2/14, Box 3, Folder: Action on Hispanic Students, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

was undergoing a "severe budget reduction," and that the likelihood of hiring someone from off campus was "very slight."²⁷

Undaunted, the UHO outlined a set of six demands to Clarence Shelley on 3 May 1972. These demands included that specifically 30 percent of the minority students admitted under the EOP be of Spanish surname with Illinois state residency; that a full-time Latin recruiter be hired with equal voice in recruitment; that two more Latin junior recruiters be hired; that more Latina/o personnel participate in summer and junior recruitment orientation; that a complete list of Spanish-surnamed applicants be sent to the student organization for outreach purposes; and that any Latin students who were rejected be sent to the student group so they could assist them in seeking alternatives. The UHO fully embraced their status as minority students, stating, "We feel that all demands must be met in order for the EO Program to function properly as a program for the aid of *minority* students; that any refusal on any demand would be in complete contradiction with the original idea of the program."²⁸

EOP Director Shelley responded to the UHO's demands in a memo dated May 12. Generally supportive, he acknowledged the need for more Latina/o recruiters and personnel involvement in orientation programs and was open to giving lists of Spanish-surnamed applicants to the UHO. However, he rejected the premise of a percent-based quota for EOP students along on any characteristic and explained that the hiring of a full-time Latina/o recruiter would be under the jurisdiction of the Office of Admissions and Records (OAR), which would be informed of the issue.²⁹ The chancellor concurred and wrote to the UHO on June 1, urging the

²⁷ Dean Hugh Satterlee to Urban Hispanic Students Organization, 29 March 1972, Record series 41/2/14, Box 3, Folder Action on Hispanic Students, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

²⁸ Urban Hispanic Organization to Clarence Shelley, 3 May 1972, Record series 41/2/14, Box 3, Folder: Action on Hispanic Students, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives. Emphasis mine.

²⁹ Dean Clarence Shelley to Rodolfo Garcia of Urban Hispanic Organization, Re: Various Matters in Your Letter to me of May 3, 1972, 12 May 1972, Record series 41/2/14, Box 6, Folder: Latina/o Students, 1971-73, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

cooperation of students. He informed them that Dean Hugh Satterlee, Shelley, and Miriam Shelden, associate vice chancellor for Affirmative Action, recommended the hiring of one *half-time* graduate assistant to work with Latina/o students. He also assured students that despite budget constraints, Dean Shelden would give top priority to the future hiring a full-time staff person to assist Latina/o students.³⁰

When the fall 1972 semester resumed, the staffing issue was still at the forefront of Latina/o students' minds. The recruiter position was still unresolved, and the appointment of Esquin's replacement in EOP by full-time student, Genaro Lara, troubled them. In the campus student newspaper the *Daily Illini*, a headline read: "Latina/os in EOP Protest Tokenism." Ben Reyes of the UHO stated that Lara was hired without UHO input and that students needed a full-time staff person for the job. He stated, "We need a full time professional who is not tied down by graduate study to recruit more Latina/os into the program."³¹ The UHO continued to argue for the need for full-time staff people, demanding a full-time advisor in EOP, a full-time Latina/o recruiter, additional Latin graduate assistants, and input in the selection of such staff for the 1973-1974 academic year.³²

The students were right—Lara resigned from his position as advisor to the Latina/o students in EOP after only one semester, on 31 December 1972, citing his need to focus full time on his graduate studies.³³ By February 1973, Latina/o students were growing even more restless; Rodolfo Garcia and Maria Gonzalez met with James Ransom of the Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity Office on February 6 to express their continuing concerns of the lack of

³⁰ Chancellor Peltason to Rodolfo Garcia of Urban Hispanic Organization, 1 June 1972, Record series 41/2/14, Box 6, Folder: Latina/o Students, 1971-73, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

³¹ Tom Dickey, "Latina/os in EOP Protest Tokenism," *Daily Illini*, September 23, 1972.

³² Urban Hispanic Organization to Clarence Shelley, 2 November 1972, Record series 41/2/14, Box 3, Folder: Latina/o Student Affairs, 1972-73, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

³³ Genaro Lara to Clarence Shelley, 1 December 1972, Record series 41/2/14, Box 3, Folder Latina/o Student Affairs, 1972-73, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

recruitment of Latina/o students in SEOP and for what they felt was administrative neglect.

Ransom wrote in a memo about the students: "They went on to say that unless something positive was done in the way of additional recruitment and a positive response to their demands for more Latin students and faculty that they would, of necessity, have to resort to some form of protest to dramatize their plight. They mentioned the protest might possibly take on the form of the black protests as carried out in the 1960's. They mentioned there might be some resort to violence or whatever means that was felt necessary in order to dramatize and secure relief from what they feel is a very unfair situation."³⁴

Intensifying pressure, the UHO presented an even longer list of nineteen demands to the administration. Rudy Garcia, president of the UHO, stated, "In dealing with minority student programs, minority is defined (by the university) as black."³⁵ But students argued that the EOP should be for *all* minorities. Latina/o students met with administrators on 16 February 1973 to present their demands.³⁶ They invited administrators to meet again with them on March 2.

It appears that the university administration was growing weary of the UHO's threats of protest. In a letter to the UHO, university President John E. Corbally Jr. stated that he would not be able to attend the March 2 meeting. He wrote to the UHO,

The very real problems to which your "demands" speak cannot be solved by meetings nor by exchanges of "demands" and "responses to demands." Publicity does not create either programs or money and the framework in which your meeting of March 2 has been placed in the press cannot, in our view, lead to real progress. If the past few years of history on university campuses reveals anything, it is that the "demand" approach leads to "Band Aid" cures rather than to sound and permanent results. Campus administrators of the University of Illinois have our full support both in working to solve real educational

³⁴ James Ransom, Jr. to Campus Council on Equal Opportunity, 19 February 1973, Record series 41/2/14, Box 6, Folder Latina/o Students, 1971-73, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

³⁵ "Latin Students to Present Demands," *Daily Illini*, February 16, 1973.

³⁶ Jackie Wolf, "Latin Students Present Demands," *Daily Illini*, February 17, 1973.

problems and in doing so within the sound and proven channels of campus academic decision-making processes.³⁷

On 2 March 1973, about sixty Latina/o students and supporters from across the state's universities (Chicago Circle, Eastern Illinois University, Northwestern University, Illinois State University, Southern Illinois University), the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the US Commission on Civil Rights protested with a two-hour march around the campus quad and a sit-in at the student union on Founder's Day, celebrating the university's 105th birthday. Protestors waved signs that read, "We're celebrating the birthday of a racist institution," and they reiterated demands for recruitment and support. University President John Corbally was quoted as saying, "Their demands don't impress me, the basic concern is that they are a minority and the University has overlooked them."³⁸

Who's a Minority? Latina/os Demand to Be Included

The overlooking of Latina/o students was a serious issue, despite the fact that it did not seem to impress President Corbally at the time. Latina/o students pushed for the expansion of the university's understanding of "minority" students, which up until that point in EOP had focused on black students. Others reflected on the need for this expansion as well. Editors of the *Daily Illini* declared, "Hispanics Left Out" in an editorial on 29 September 1972. They wrote, "EOP has been successful in bringing many black students to campus, but has largely ignored the other major racial minority in Illinois—Hispanic students. We believe the EOP program should be expanded to include more Hispanics.... Simple justice demands that Illinois' underprivileged Hispanic people be offered the same opportunity for a college education as the state's

³⁷ John E. Corbally, Jr. to Urban Hispanic Organization, 26 February 1973, Record series 41/2/14, Box 6, Folder: Latina/o Students, 1971-73, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

³⁸ Bob Sheppard, "Latina/os Protest University Racism," *Daily Illini*, March 3, 1973.

underprivileged blacks."³⁹ In addition, administrators began to acknowledge the different but equally important needs of Latina/o students. At a meeting on 9 January 1973, Chancellor Peltason acknowledged Latina/o students' complaints with EOP and articulated the need "to deliver more programs related to the Latina/o's and more responsible to all minorities, not just the Black minorities."⁴⁰

This pushing of a minority = black discourse was also happening nationally. Carlos Munoz Jr. notes that while Educational Opportunity Programs provided an important venue for college access for minority students, the focus had been on African American students, even in states with high Latina/o populations such as California. EOPs were dominated by African American administrators, and the Chicano Coordinating Committee on Higher Education was founded in California in 1968 as a state-wide network to pressure campus administrators to expand EOPs' foci to include Mexican Americans.⁴¹

Across the US, Latina/os were pushing traditional civil rights public policies that centered African Americans. Latina/os protested desegregation and civil rights legislation that lumped them with blacks. In a series of court battles in Texas over Mexican American rights, the Supreme Court ruled in *Keyes v. School District Number One* (1973) that Mexican Americans were an identifiable minority group for desegregation.⁴² Craig Kaplowitz also shows how under the Johnson and Nixon administrations, federal policies began to acknowledge Latina/o needs

³⁹ Editorial, "Hispanics Left Out," *Daily Illini*, September 29, 1972.

⁴⁰ Memorandum to the file, from Vice chancellor Hugh Satterlee, Subject: Discussion with Chancellor JW Peltason, 9 January 1973, dated 17 January 1973, Record series 41/2/14, Box 3, Folder: Latina/o Student Affairs 1973-73, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

⁴¹ Carlos Munoz Jr., *Youth, Identity, Power: The Chicano Movement, Revised and Expanded Edition* (New York: Verso Press, 2007).

⁴² Guadalupe San Miguel Jr. and Richard R. Valencia, "From the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo to Hopwood: The Educational Plight and Struggle of Mexican Americans in the Southwest," *Harvard Educational Review* 68 (Fall 1998): 353-412.

apart from African Americans.⁴³ Organizations such as the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) lobbied for Mexican Americans to be recognized as having a distinct identity for minority policies, an ironic turn away from their earlier strategies in the 1930's and 1940's that focused on assimilation and recognition that Latina/os were "white" to avoid Jim Crow legislation. LULAC argued that Mexicans were different from blacks and needed new remedies, with LULAC President Alfred Hernandez arguing for Mexican American leadership in Washington DC in the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and describing Mexicans as President Lyndon Johnson's "step children of this Great Society."⁴⁴ LULAC articulated that Mexican Americans experienced discrimination that involved issues of language and culture. By the late 1960's, issues such as bilingual education received more attention, and Mexican Americans were seen as a distinct disadvantaged group. These changes set the groundwork for later policies that recognized Latina/os' needs, including the 1990's designation of Hispanic Serving Institutions under its own separate title in the amendments of the Higher Education Act of 1998.⁴⁵

The Administration Responds—With Limits

Latina/o students at UIUC were arguing for an expansion of minority definition, in recognition of their own experiences. In response to the February set of demands and protests, Hugh Satterlee, now vice chancellor for Campus Affairs, wrote to the UHO on 2 March 1973. In the letter he asserted efforts to expand minority enrollment (including Latina/os), plans to follow up on Latina/o recruitment, and a commitment to employing a full-time Latina/o counselor once

⁴³ Craig A. Kaplowitz, "A Distinct Minority: LULAC, Mexican American Identity, and Presidential Policymaking, 1965-1972," *The Journal of Policy History* 15 (2003): 192-222.

⁴⁴ Kaplowitz, "A Distinct Minority," 200.

⁴⁵ Victoria-Maria MacDonald, John M. Botti, and Lisa Hoffman Clark, "From Visibility to Autonomy: Latina/os and Higher Education in the US, 1965-2005," *Harvard Educational Review* 77 (Winter 2007): 474-504.

funds were available. Welcoming UHO input, Satterlee also announced the establishment of three task forces: a task force on academic courses for the Latina/o student; a task force on freshman English and Speech; and a task force on supportive services, which all submitted reports in the spring and summer.⁴⁶

By September 1973, a new EOP staff member was announced, Elena de los Santos Mycue, who was hired to help and counsel Latina/o students.⁴⁷ In October, Satterlee wrote to Chancellor Peltason apprising him of the task forces' progress. He urged greater recruitment coordination between EOP and the Office of Admissions and Records (OAR) and mentioned the continued student desire for a Latina/o cultural center for educational and counseling support. Satterlee urged Peltason that any delay would be perceived as lack of commitment and that Latina/o students desired faster progress. One of the task forces recommended that a Latina/o recruiter be hired; in the winter of 1973, a half-time Latina/o recruiter position was finally created in OAR—a gain, though as it was not a full-time gain, it remained a sticking point for Latina/o students.

While cooperation seemed to ebb and flow regarding Latina/o recruitment, struggles within OAR resurfaced a year later during the spring 1975 semester. Ivan Ruiz, the half-time recruiter who had been hired in 1973, expressed concern to OAR Director Jane Loeb on 3 February 1975, regarding her denial of meeting privately with him and her directing him to his immediate supervisor. He wrote,

Being responsible for the Latina/o recruitment effort of the Office of Admissions, I find that your unwillingness to confer with me individually demonstrates a lack of sensitivity on your behalf towards Latina/o recruitment. Your prescribed method of communication puzzles me, since prior to having been placed under my present supervisor I enjoyed

⁴⁶ Hugh M. Satterlee to Benjamin Reyes, Chairman of Urban Hispanic Organization, 2 March 1973, Record series 41/2/14, Box 6, Folder Latina/o Students, 1971-73, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

⁴⁷ EOP Newsletter, v. VI, no. 1, September 1973, Record series 41/2/14, Box 4, Folder: SEOP, 1970-72, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

unconditional access to your office, and was pleased to find that even you stimulated this contact. At this point in time, it appears that those factors which justified the position of Latina/o Recruiter are no longer amongst the priorities of the Office of Admissions. It further seems that progress made during the past year in the area of Latina/o involvement in the Admissions process is gradually coming to a stalemate.⁴⁸

While Loeb reiterated OAR's commitment to Latina/o recruitment, she did not change her position on the issue of direct access to her office. Ruiz brought the issue up again in a memo a few days later on February 6.⁴⁹ La Colectiva Latina also wrote to Loeb on February 6, expressing continued concerns over the lack of a full-time recruiter. They wrote, "We find the present situation in OAR to be inconsistent with previously set priorities and unless commitments previously made are carried out, in terms of a full-time Latina/o Admissions Officer, the University cannot espouse concern for increasing the Latina/o enrollment on this campus."⁵⁰ Latina/o students met with Loeb on February 13 to request a full-time Latina/o staff member in OAR in addition to Ruiz's half-time position. They also requested that this new position have direct access to Loeb, a privilege still denied to Ruiz. While this meeting resulted in the administration's commitment to hiring a full-time Latina/o recruiter, this recruiter would still not have direct access to the OAR director, and Ruiz's half-time position was terminated.⁵¹ As a result, about twenty-five members of La Colectiva Latina picketed the administration building on April 25, demanding both staff positions and direct access.⁵²

The result of these exchanges with OAR is unclear. In a progress report, OAR reported that the full-time Latina/o student recruiter was expected to begin by 21 August 1975 and listed a number of efforts to increase Latina/o recruitment including increased high school visits with

⁴⁸ Ivan L. Ruiz to Jane Loeb, re: Latina/o Recruitment, 3 February 1975, Record series 41/64/40, Box 2, Folder: Correspondence, 1974-76, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

⁴⁹ Ivan L. Ruiz to Jane Loeb, 6 February 1975, Record series 41/64/40, Box 2, Folder: Correspondence, 1974-76, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

⁵⁰ La Colectiva Latina to Jane Loeb, Subject: Latina/o Recruitment, 6 February 1975, Record series 41/64/40, Box 2, Folder: Correspondence, 1974-76, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

⁵¹ La Colectiva Latina, "Forum: The Need for Latina/o Recruiters," *Daily Illini*, May 6, 1975.

⁵² Bob Cook, "Full Time Latina/o Recruiter Needed, Protestors Claim," *Daily Illini*, April 26, 1975.

large Latina/o populations and working with Latina/o community organizers for applicant referrals.⁵³ At the same time, La Colectiva Latina sent a brief memo to Loeb expressing a boycott of serving on the search committee for the recruiter, perhaps due to the access issue. They wrote, "We will not allow any member to sit in on the search committee for the Latina/o recruiter. To do so would be defeating our purposes set forth in our last meeting. While you have seemingly conceded to our demands of having a full-time Latina/o recruiter, you have not taken into consideration the necessary criteria for an effective recruiter."⁵⁴

A Latina/o Cultural Center: La Casa Cultural Latina

While Latina/o students pushed for improved recruitment through OAR and counseling through EOP, they also expressed a desire for a cultural center. On 23 April 1974, La Colectiva Latina submitted a proposal for a Latina/o cultural center to the administration. They wrote, "The House would give Latina/os, with our distinct culture, language, and customs, a viable role in the university life, academic and social. The House would stimulate the Latina/os' own creativeness in respect to art, literature, drama, and other aspects of our own individual culture."⁵⁵ The center would serve the entire university as a space for intellectual and cultural activity and be a site for a Latina/o library, tutorial services (an extension of EOP tutoring), informal counseling and advising, seminars for faculty and students, speakers, and events of the College of Education's Bilingual-Bicultural program. Such activities would also support curriculum development on Latina/o experiences, foster solidarity among students, and enhance recruitment efforts.

⁵³ Summary of Progress Efforts Aimed at the Recruitment and Retention of Latina/o Students 1974-75, Record series 41/64/40, Box 1, Folder: Bilingual/ Bicultural Programs, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

⁵⁴ La Colectiva Latina to Jane Loeb, 21 April 1975, Record series 41/64/40, Box 2, Folder: Correspondence, 1974-76, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

⁵⁵ Latina/o Cultural House Proposal Submitted to the University Administration via Vice chancellor Hugh M. Satterlee, 23 April 1974, Record series 41/2/14, Box 6, Folder: Latina/o Students' Proposal; Recruitment; Student Status, 1974-75, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

As Arisve Esquivel points out in her MA thesis, the political climate concerned administrators.⁵⁶ In two letters of support for the cultural center proposal, Henry Trueba, director of the Bilingual-Bicultural program, and Dan Perrino, dean of Campus Programs and Services, assured administrators that the new cultural center would not be a hotbed of political activity. Trueba wrote, "In my opinion, a cultural house for Latina/o students would be the least likely place to organize a revolution. Latina/o students are serious and hardworking young people, thoroughly committed to their academic work. They are aware of the social problems of minorities in this country and that is the reason why they are preparing themselves at the U of I. If they have some suggestions to make to the administration, they will make them following the dictates of reason and in the proper manner."⁵⁷ Similarly, Perrino wrote to Satterlee of Latina/o students: "They are not politically militant, yet want an opportunity to express concerns which they believe to be of extreme importance."⁵⁸

Political rabble rousing was on the minds of UIUC administrators in the spring of 1974, given recent Latina/o activism at UIUC's sister campus at Chicago Circle (UICC). In the spring of 1973, Latina/o students expressed their concern for the very low numbers of Puerto Rican students at Circle campus. On 27 September 1973, thirty-nine Latina/o students were arrested for occupying an administration building.⁵⁹ Following the arrests, a number of meetings took place to discuss the issues, including a meeting of the University of Illinois Board of Trustees on 20 March 1974 in Urbana. Latina/o representatives attended and sent a memo responding to UICC Chancellor Warren B. Cheston's progress report on Latina/o recruitment. In the memo, the Latin

⁵⁶ Arisve Esquivel, "Creando una Casa: Embracing Space, Containing Space in the Definition of a Latina/o Community at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign" (MA thesis, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2001).

⁵⁷ Henry T. Trueba, "The Latina/o Cultural House," no date, Record series 41/64/40, Box 2, Folder: Correspondence, 1974-76, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

⁵⁸ Daniel J. Perrino to Hugh M. Satterlee, re: Latina/o Cultural Center, 23 April 1974, Record series 41/64/40, Box 2, Folder: Correspondence, 1974-76, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

⁵⁹ Tom Frisbie, "Latina/os Arrested at Circle Campus," *Daily Illini*, September 28, 1973.

American Community Advisory Committee rejected Cheston's message that progress was being made and that the administration was open to collaboration.⁶⁰

Such activity on the Chicago campus seemed to propel administrators to investigate space for a potential Latina/o cultural center in Urbana. Satterlee wrote to Chancellor Peltason on April 29 (six days after La Colectiva Latina's proposal was written), informing him that a vacant property on campus on Armory street was a possible space and would act as a symbol of good faith efforts. He reminded Peltason,

Several months ago when discussing some of the difficulties that Chancellor Cheston and the administration at the Circle Campus were having with Latina/o students and the Latina/o community of Chicago, you told me, "Don't let that sort of thing happen here." So far, with the help of Dean Perrino, Elena Mycue, Dr. Trueba, and the nebulous and moderate leadership of our Latina/o students we have kept turmoil and controversy out of the campus, at least insofar as our Latina/o relations are concerned. Now we are at a point where we can make some real steps forward, not just to avert difficulty, but to add some penicillin, not a band-aid.⁶¹

In September of 1974, the *Daily Illini* announced that the Latina/o cultural center La Casa Cultural Latina, located at 510 East Chalmers, was in operation.⁶² In its first year, La Casa sponsored lectures, a steel-drum band workshop, bilingual-bicultural workshops, visits by Latina/o high school students, receptions, "Latina/o Day," outreach programs, fund raising for student scholarships, and student publications.⁶³

⁶⁰ Latin American Community Advisory Committee, Complaint of Discrimination Against the Latin Community of Chicago in the Admissions Policies and Procedures of Circle Campus, revised and expanded, 8 March 1974, Record series 41/1/21, Box 14, Folder: Publications and Reports: Race and Education—Latina/o Students, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives. The committee also planned to file a lawsuit against UICC under the federal Civil Rights Act. Paperwork outlined discriminatory admissions policies such as an over-reliance on the standardized admissions test, the ACT, despite the fact the faculty senate declared the ACT discriminated against disadvantaged applicants. The Admissions office also had failed to recruit from major Latina/o schools in the city and under-employed minority staff.

⁶¹ Hugh M. Satterlee to Chancellor JW Peltason, 29 April 1974, Record series 41/64/40, Box 2, Folder: Correspondence, 1974-76, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

⁶² Robbye Hill, "Latina/o Student House Opens on Campus," *Daily Illini*, September 14, 1974.

⁶³ "Summary of Progress Efforts Aimed at the Recruitment and Retention of Latina/o Students, 1974-75," Record series 41/64/40, Box 1, Folder: Bilingual/ Bicultural Programs, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

However, the recurrent plague of temporary, part-time staff fell on the cultural center. In the beginning there was no full-time director, but co-directors.⁶⁴ Funding also appeared tight, as Dean Perrino requested and was granted \$150 for the house from the Undergraduate Student Association Steering Committee, money that kept the center open.⁶⁵ The lack of a full-time director and a full-time secretary hampered the functions of the new center. In an exchange with Latina/o students, Perrino recommended the creation of a single two-thirds-time appointment for the director who would be a graduate student.⁶⁶ Benjamin Rodriguez began in this position in the fall of 1975.

Rodriguez continued to push for improved resources and staffing for the center. In a letter to the Board of Trustees in October, he described that La Casa greatly assisted in Latina/o student retention, but he pointed out the problems of the staff: himself as two-thirds-time graduate assistant as coordinator, a quarter-time graduate assistant as programmer, three work study students, and a half-time student employee as secretary.⁶⁷ In a few short months, Rodriguez made more specific requests to Dean Perrino for added funds and staffing. In a memo dated 17 February 1976, he requested that the two-thirds-time coordinator be changed to a full-time position and requested a full-time secretary. He wrote, "The position of a Coordinator *is* a full time proposition. The Coordinator must be in constant communication with the students. This means paying visits late at night, and spending time to build relationships, not only with the students but with those who can enrich their lives while here on campus.... A full time Director

⁶⁴ "Latina/o House Opens," Student Affairs, December 1974, Office of the Vice chancellor for Campus Affairs, Record series 41/64/40, Box 1, Folder: Bilingual-Bicultural Programs, 1973-76, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

⁶⁵ Mary Beth Balika, "UGSA Grants Funds For Latina/os," *Daily Illini*, November 21, 1974.

⁶⁶ Daniel Perrino to Eva Fuentes, Ivan Ruiz, and Tony Perez, 23 May 1975, Record series 41/64/40, Box 2, Folder: Correspondence, 1974-78, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

⁶⁷ Benjamin Rodriguez to Board of Trustees, 10 October 1975, Record series 41/64/40, Box 2, Folder: Correspondence, 1974-76, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

can play a more significant role with Admissions, EOP, and other Academic Units. The *full potential* of La Casa Cultural Latina depends on a *full time Director*."⁶⁸

When these requests were rejected, Rodriguez submitted his resignation in protest. Due to increasing academic pressures and competing demands as a graduate student, Rodriguez exhorted Perrino to change the part-time coordinator graduate assistant position to a full-time staff or else be caught in a cycle of resignations. He also noted that as a graduate student, he lacked credibility with faculty and administrators on campus. He described the feelings of students:

The Latina/o students feel that by creating this situation the University acted in a discriminatory fashion. They compare our part-time staffing and budget with the budget and staffing of the Afro-American Cultural center. The students do make comparisons and see the following: full time Black administrators and women administrators at different levels of institutional life. They see curricula designed for blacks and women, and see a lack of courses designed to motivate the Latina/o students. The conclusion reached by a majority of our students is that the University does not really care to give us an equal opportunity to succeed.⁶⁹

In an article in the *Daily Illini*, Vice chancellor for Academic Affairs Morton Weir described the poor budget situation that denied support to multiple units, not just La Casa. Yet Rodriguez's resignation did spur efforts to reallocate funding for a full-time director for fall 1976.⁷⁰ Funds in the amount of \$2,000 from the university Affirmative Action program also assisted in contributing to the salary of a new full-time director.⁷¹ La Casa Cultural Latina's first full-time director, Phillip A. Llamas, and its first full-time secretary, Veronica Livesay, began at La Casa in the fall of 1976.

⁶⁸ Benjamin Rodriguez to Daniel Perrino, subject: Request for Added Funds, 17 February 1976, Record series 41/64/40, Box 1, Folder: Bilingual-Bicultural Programs, 1973-76, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives. Emphasis in original.

⁶⁹ Benjamin Rodriguez to Daniel J. Perrino, 25 March 1976, Record series 41/64/40, Box 2, Folder: Correspondence 1974-76, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

⁷⁰ Susan J. Smith, "La Casa Latina/o Coordinator Resigns in Protest," *Daily Illini*, April 15, 1976.

⁷¹ Susan J. Smith, "Officials Raising Funds for La Casa Director," *Daily Illini*, May 12, 1976.

The final establishment of a full-time director however, was not the end of staffing issues. La Casa would struggle with a string of directors and interim directors starting from its inception. Even with Llamas' permanent position created, no director stayed on longer than three years until the mid-1980's. From 1975 to 1991, there were eleven people who served in the position, usually serving one year before moving on.⁷² In a sobering assessment of the program, Joseph H. Smith, assistant vice chancellor for Academic Affairs, noted in a January 1983 report that the La Casa director was assuming too many responsibilities (including academic programming and counseling) that exceeded his duties. He wrote, "In short, experience tells me that La Casa probably suffers the throes of 'orphanitis': it exists but feels rootless and without status."⁷³

As a result of Latina/o student activism, by 1974, administrators at numerous universities in the state began to hear their concerns. A 1974 report to the Board of Higher Education regarding special support services at select university campuses listed changing minority student demographics and needs of Latina/o students as prime concerns. Programs for minority and disadvantaged students at the University of Illinois Chicago Circle Campus, Northern Illinois University, UIUC, Illinois State University, and Western Illinois University were highlighted. All of them asserted the need for more Spanish-speaking staff, recruiters, counselors, and efforts to increase Latina/o enrollments in the face of a poor economy and state budget. UIUC's section of the report stated about the EOP: "However, the program is confronted by a new challenge, a challenge to expand its services to minority group persons other than Afro-Americans,

⁷² "La Casa Cultural Latina History," La Casa Cultural Latina Registered Student Organization Information Packet Contents 1994-1995 Academic year, Record series 41/64/40, Box 5, Folder: Programs and Activities, 1994-95, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives. The directors included: Benjamin Rodriguez (1975-76); Jose Tellez (interim summer 1976); Phillip Llamas (1976-1978); vacant (1978-79); Modesta Garcia (1979-1980); Norma Ramirez (1980-81); Juan C. Gonzalez (1981-82); Rose Mary Cordova (interim 1982-83); Agapito Mendoza (1983-March 1986); Marco Antonio Garcia (interim until fall 1986); Judith Martinez (August 1986-June 1991); Giraldo Rosales (1991-2004).

⁷³ Joseph H. Smith to William A. Savage, 12 January 1983, p. 2, Record series 41/64/40, Box 2, Folder: Committee on Minority Student Affairs report, 1983, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

specifically to the Hispanic population in Illinois. To do so, as was previously alluded, would require an increase in resources available to the program i.e., funds to enhance recruitment and to provide such ongoing services as necessary to facilitate the retention of those students who ultimately enroll at the University."⁷⁴ This recognition, though still a struggle in years to come, revealed that a shift had occurred in UIUC's understanding of minority student from just African American. Latina/o students articulated that they too were minority students, ones that required recognition and support just as African Americans were receiving. Little by little, they gained inclusion in EOP advising, in OAR recruitment, and support with the creation of La Casa Cultural Latina.

Asian American students had a different struggle on campus. Faced with a different situation that they were not technically underrepresented along measures of admission and retention, the experiences of Asian American students were more invisible to administrators, who often thought of them as foreign students. While the numbers of Asian American students at UIUC were very low in the early 1970's, a vibrant community emerged outside of institutional spaces and allowed for the expression of Asian American issues. If Latina/o students pushed minority definitions from the margins of EOP and OAR, Asian American students worked from the margins *of the* margins to articulate an Asian American identity and educational needs.

⁷⁴ Jacob Jennings Jr., Assistant Director Research and Governmental Relations, Illinois State Board of Higher Education, Special Support Services Programs at Selected Illinois Institutions of Higher Education, A Report, Section C: University of Illinois-Urbana Educational Opportunities Program (EOP), 1974, p. 8, Record series 1/1/13, Box 1, Folder: IBHE State Board Meetings, July-November 1974, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

Asian Americans in Chicago

Asian American history is often perceived of as rooted on the west coast and in Hawaii. Historians have documented the immigration of Chinese laborers to the United States during the 1840's during the Gold Rush and in the 1860's to work on the transcontinental railroad.⁷⁵ Japanese immigrants also arrived in Hawaii and on the west coast in the 1880's and 1890's to labor on sugar plantations and in agricultural industries. However, there was a substantial secondary migration of Chinese and Japanese settlers to Chicago before 1965 legislation liberalized immigration from Asia. These communities laid down roots in the windy city, giving rise to a US-born second generation of Asian Americans who would attend colleges throughout the state, such as the University of Illinois.⁷⁶

Due to the increase of anti-Chinese sentiment on the west coast during the late 1870's (which ultimately led to the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act), Chinese immigrants began looking for alternative employment opportunities in Chicago, New York City, and Boston. The 1893 Chicago Columbian Exposition attracted a number of Chinese laborers for service industries such as laundry and restaurants, giving rise to the city's first Chinatown in the 1880's, south of the downtown area on Clark and Van Buren. By 1900, there were 1,209 Chinese in Chicago, and the community continued to grow in the 1920's and 1930's.⁷⁷ During the 1933 Century of Progress Exposition world fair, Chinatown members participated in a major parade, "the first

⁷⁵ Sucheng Chan, *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991); Ronald Takaki, *Strangers From a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (Boston: Back Bay Books, 1998).

⁷⁶ While there is a history of other Asian groups in Chicago (most notably Filipinos), I focus here on Chinese and Japanese American history because these were two visible ethnic groups of Asian American students at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign in the 1960's and 1970's.

⁷⁷ Susan Moy, "The Chinese in Chicago: The First One Hundred Years," in *Ethnic Chicago: A Multicultural Portrait*, ed. Melvin G. Holli and Peter d'A. Jones (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 379.

time that the full Chinese community of Chicago had asserted itself as the equal of every other ethnic community, parading in front of other Chicagoans and visitors from the entire world."⁷⁸

Chicago's Chinatown provided an important hub for Chinese American life in the Midwest, serving as a center for Chinese business supplies and information to surrounding cities such as Minneapolis, Duluth, Indianapolis, Milwaukee, and St. Louis.⁷⁹ The majority of the Chicago Chinese American community worked in laundries or restaurants. The laundry business was a viable option, prevalent on the west coast as well, given low requisite start-up capital, the demand for services, and the lack of competition with European immigrants. The first Chinese laundry in Chicago opened in 1870; by 1883, there were 200 laundries due to increased migration from California.⁸⁰ In 1928 there were 794 Chinese laundries in the city, though this number declined by the 1960's.⁸¹ Susan Moy estimates that in the early period of Chinese immigration to Chicago, 90 percent of men worked in the laundry business.⁸²

As the central business district expanded and rents rose in Chicago, Chinatown moved two miles south to Archer and 22nd Street in 1912. Adam McKeown notes that this new location was more isolated; now surrounded by railroad lines and vacant lots, the Chinatown business elite began to exert greater control over the community. The On Leong Association crafted a public image of Chinatown to tourists, marketing what McKeown terms a "mild oriental exoticism," where Chinese restaurants served American chop suey and fortune cookies.⁸³ Chinatown continued to grow during the twentieth century. Spurred by international events such as the communist takeover of China in 1949, a new wave of immigration doubled the Chinese

⁷⁸ Chuimei Ho and Soo Lun Moy, *Images of America: Chinese in Chicago 1870-1845* (Chicago: Arcadia Publishing, 2005), 123.

⁷⁹ Adam McKeown, *Chinese Migrant Networks and Cultural Change: Peru, Chicago, Hawaii, 1900-1936* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), 50.

⁸⁰ Moy, "The Chinese in Chicago," 394.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 396.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 396.

⁸³ McKeown, *Chinese Migrant Networks and Cultural Change*, 219.

population in Chicago from 3,000 to 6,000.⁸⁴ Another wave of immigration drew ethnic Chinese from Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War, fueling Chicago's Chinese population to 12,000 by 1970.⁸⁵

Before World War II, there was also a small Japanese community in Chicago. Like the Chinese, the earliest immigrants came to work during the 1893 Columbian Exposition, to build the Japanese exhibit. In 1927, there were 300 Japanese nationals in Chicago, working in businesses and restaurants.⁸⁶ However, it would not be until the relocation of Japanese Americans from internment camps during World War II when the Japanese American community grew in Chicago. In 1940, there were 390 Japanese recorded in Chicago; this number grew to 10,829 by 1950.⁸⁷ Of the 110,000 Japanese Americans interned, nearly 30,000 moved to Chicago in the 1940's (though almost a half returned back to the west coast).⁸⁸ The relocated community was young in age; in 1945 half of the evacuees were younger than twenty-four years old.⁸⁹

Just as it stood as a safer environment for Chinese immigrants to settle, Chicago was a more racially tolerant place for Japanese Americans after the war and also offered plentiful jobs in domestic service, factories, offices, and small businesses. At the same time, workplace and housing discrimination were not uncommon. Japanese Americans congregated on the near north and south sides of the city, with suburban landlords unwilling to rent apartments to them. In separate studies, Charlotte Brooks and Jacalyn Harden discuss how Japanese Americans walked a complex racial line in a city dominated by white and black issues. Sometimes they were

⁸⁴ Moy, "The Chinese in Chicago," 383.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 384.

⁸⁶ Masako Osako, "Japanese Americans: Melting into the All-American Pot," in *Ethnic Chicago: A Multicultural Portrait*, ed. Holli and d'A. Jones, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 423.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 410.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 423.

⁸⁹ Alice Murata, "Stardust and Street of Dreams: Chicago Girls Clubs," *Chicago History* (Spring 2001): 24.

allowed into mainstream white spaces, yet other times they were denied the privileges of whiteness.⁹⁰

Asian American College Students in the US and at the University of Illinois

Colleges and universities in Illinois, including UIUC, have a history of welcoming Asian international students. Barbara Posadas and Roland Guyotte document the case of Filipino students who attended universities in Chicago and eventually settled in the United States.⁹¹ Many of these early students were pensionados, students sponsored by the Philippine government to obtain an American education for future government positions upon their return. Between 1903-1907, the Philippine government sponsored about 200 men and a dozen women to attend colleges in the United States.⁹² Filipino students formed associations for cultural fellowship in midwestern cities such as Chicago. Posadas and Guyotte document that in 1917, forty-five Filipino students were attending schools in the Chicago area.⁹³

In addition, UIUC welcomed Chinese international students. In 1920, UIUC had 300 Chinese students and 150 Japanese students, more foreign students than any other state university.⁹⁴ UIUC's first Chinese student graduated in 1909, and its first Chinese student received a PhD in 1910. In addition, in 1908, twelve students arrived at UIUC from the Philippines. Carol Huang notes that the majority of these students had scholarship support and were perceived by the administration as foreign students, who welcomed them with an eye to

⁹⁰ Charlotte Brooks, "In the Twilight Zone between Black and White: Japanese American Resettlement and Community in Chicago, 1942-1945," *The Journal of American History* 84 (2000): 1644-1687; Jacalyn D. Harden, *Double Cross: Japanese Americans in Black and White Chicago* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).

⁹¹ Barbara M. Posadas and Roland Guyotte, "Unintentional Immigrants: Chicago's Filipino Foreign Students Become Settlers, 1900-1941," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 9 (1990): 26-48.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 28.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁹⁴ Carol Huang, "The Soft Power of US Education and the Formation of a Chinese American Intellectual Community in Urbana-Champaign, 1905-1954" (PhD diss, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2001), 52.

improving international diplomacy rather than domestic race relations.⁹⁵ As a result, Chinese American students (American born or resident aliens) were viewed as foreign students. Huang writes, "In this sense, they were assumed to be the prestigious foreigners and were treated in the preferential category."⁹⁶ Huang also notes that a few Chinese American students from Honolulu and San Francisco attended UIUC in the early twentieth century.

Nationally, Asian American college student numbers did not grow until the 1960's. Due to exclusion laws that restricted the immigration of Chinese and Filipino women in particular, the rise of a second generation was slow.⁹⁷ Due to segregated schooling and discrimination, Asian Americans did not have many educational opportunities until after World War II. As a US-born generation grew and racial discrimination was outlawed in housing and employment, the opportunity for Asians Americans to live and attend school together increased. By 1960, two-thirds of the Asian population in California was born in the United States.⁹⁸ By 1970 there were 107,366 Asian Americans enrolled in college, 83 percent of whom were Chinese or Japanese American.⁹⁹ This demographic rise facilitated the coalescing of an Asian American student movement. For the first time, Asian American students began joining pan-Asian organizations that transcended ethnic lines, on the coasts at Berkeley, San Francisco State, Yale, and Columbia. The Midwest was also a site for Asian American student organizations in the early

⁹⁵ Mark Brower, "Union Hosts International Fair: Over 70 Countries Feature Exhibits," *Daily Illini*, December 12, 1969. UIUC also highlighted international cultures through its annual International Fair, which began in 1952 and featured foreign students' cultures, often showcasing Asian dances and performances.

⁹⁶ Huang, "The Soft Power of US Education," 89.

⁹⁷ Takaki, *Strangers From a Different Shore*. Immigration legislation worked against Chinese women's immigration, leading to a skewed gender ratio and a delayed development of families and a second generation; the largest wave of Chinese women's immigration occurred after the 1943 repeal of Chinese exclusion and the War Brides Act of 1945, which allowed Asian wives and children of servicemen to enter as nonquota immigrants. This act facilitated immigration of Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and Filipina wives.

⁹⁸ Yen Le Espiritu, *Asian American Panethnicity: Bridging Institutions and Identities* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), 26.

⁹⁹ William Wei, *The Asian American Movement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 2.

1970's such as in Minneapolis, Oberlin, Madison, Ann Arbor, and Urbana-Champaign.¹⁰⁰ A new sense of Asian American identity emerged in these spaces, and students raised new challenges to university administrators' understandings of minority student needs.

UIUC was a predominantly white campus (and still is today); thus, racial equality and sensitivity were hard to come by during the 1960's and 1970's, not only for African American students. Asian American undergraduate student numbers were very low until the mid-1980's, never reaching over 1,000 until 1982.¹⁰¹ While anti-Asian racism was not as institutionalized or legalized as Jim Crow segregation for African Americans, Asian Americans encountered racial ignorance on campus and in the community. The local communities did not have much awareness of Asian or Asian American issues, evidenced by the nearby town of Pekin, Illinois, whose high school claimed an athletics mascot and nickname of the "Pekin Chinks."

The small town of Pekin, Illinois lies just south of Peoria, less than 100 miles northwest of Urbana-Champaign. The town was surveyed in 1829 and named Pekin after China's city Peking (now Beijing).¹⁰² James Loewen identifies Pekin as a "sundown town," a town that kept African Americans and other minorities from living in it and had rules (written and unwritten) keeping African Americans out of the city after sunset.¹⁰³ Sundown towns emerged through the Midwest after Reconstruction, and residents employed a number of techniques to keep their towns white that included zoning, ordinances, harassment, and violence. Pekin was a center for the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920's. Pekin Community High School began to use the term "Chinks"

¹⁰⁰ Wei, *The Asian American Movement*.

¹⁰¹ University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Office of Equal Opportunity and Access, "Undergraduate Enrollment by Racial/ Ethnic Category, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Fall 1967 to Fall 2008," <http://oeoa.illinois.edu/Undergraduate%20Enrollment%20by%20Race.pdf> (accessed October 15, 2009).

¹⁰² City of Pekin website, "The History of the City of Pekin," <http://www.ci.pekin.il.us/history.asp> (accessed October 15, 2009).

¹⁰³ James Loewen, *Sundown Towns: A Hidden Dimension of American Racism* (New York: The New Press, 2005).

as a name for their athletic team in the 1940's, though the exact origins of the term are unclear.¹⁰⁴ Students represented the "Chinks" through costumes as part of athletic team events, and school publications featured drawings of the mascot dressed in conical hat, robe, and a queue hairstyle.¹⁰⁵

The Pekin Chinks received national attention when the boy's basketball team won the Illinois state championship in 1964 and 1967; Chinese Americans began to complain about the offensive name in 1970.¹⁰⁶ In particular, the Organization of Chinese Americans (OCA)'s founder KL Wang traveled to Pekin in August and October 1974 to demand the name change, and his efforts included a teach-in with students.¹⁰⁷ Despite these efforts, the name did not change until 1980 to "Pekin Dragons" and only after considerable protest by students, alumni, and community members.¹⁰⁸

Before the late 1960's, the number of Asian American students at UIUC was minimal. Ross Harano (BS, Finance, 1965) recalls those days. A third generation Japanese American from Chicago, Harano had a social network with the few American-born Asians (mostly Chinese and Japanese Americans from Chicago) on campus. Estimating their numbers to be around 100, UIUC was nearly all white at that time, and he recalled that Asian Americans were viewed as a

¹⁰⁴ Dan Mergens, "The Pekin Mascot Controversy: A Closer Look at Institutional Racism in a 'Sundown Town'", Senior thesis, Northern Illinois University, December 2007, Folder: Pekin Chinks, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

¹⁰⁵ Various Pekin Chinks Clippings, Folder: Pekin Chinks, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

¹⁰⁶ "Big Stink Over 'Chink'", Folder: "Pekin Chinks," University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

¹⁰⁷ Rick Baker, "Delegation Still Pressuring to Rename Pekin 'Chinks'", *The Bloomington-Normal Pantagraph*, October 8, 1974.

¹⁰⁸ Mergens, "The Pekin Mascot Controversy." Loewen, *Sundown Towns*. Interestingly, James Loewen points out that the term "Dragons" is also a reference to the Ku Klux Klan.

"novelty," given their small numbers.¹⁰⁹ While he did not recall any blatant anti-Asian racism on campus, he described, "Most of these folks from southern Illinois had never seen an Asian!"¹¹⁰

At the time, the terms "Oriental," "Jap," "Gook," and "Chink" were not viewed as derogatory and were commonly used in conversations. Harano recalled the feelings of shock when learning about the Pekin "Chinks" basketball team during the state high school basketball tournament competition held in Urbana. He recalled, "I was walking down Green Street and there were all these signs in the store windows saying 'Welcome Pekin Chinks!!' And nobody had a clue! I would walk into a store and say, 'What's with the sign?' They thought I was nuts!! So I couldn't organize anything, it was just everybody was oblivious to it."¹¹¹ In the late 1960's, Asian Americans and Asian American experiences were invisible on campus and in the surrounding community.

Asian Americans in the Special Educational Opportunities Program

As Asian Americans were invisible at UIUC, they were also never targeted specifically for inclusion in SEOP or other minority programs. A few Asian Americans were part of the SEOP, but it seems that their presence was coincidental more than anything else, as when they attended predominantly black high schools where UIUC recruiters visited. Clarence Shelley, SEOP director from 1968-1972, said of this time period, "Asian American students were almost like a non-entity."¹¹² They were not identified as a pool of students to recruit.

¹⁰⁹ Ross Harano (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign alumnus), interview by Sharon S. Lee, 4 November 2008 in Urbana, Illinois.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Clarence Shelley (founding Director of University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Special Educational Opportunities Program), interview by Sharon S. Lee, 22 March 2007 in Urbana, Illinois.

Some anecdotal evidence sheds some light on this. Rose Moy (BS, Marketing, 1974) related to me that she was a part of SEOP "by accident." Moy had grown up in the Austin area of Chicago and attended Austin high school, a school that was predominantly black by the time she graduated in 1970. Her immigrant parents ran a Chinese laundry, where the family lived in back of the storefront, and she was the first person in her family to go college. Moy had applied to UIUC but had been rejected based on her poor American College Testing (ACT) scores. (Her brain would freeze up every time she had to take a standardized test). Regardless, she managed to graduate in the top 15 percent of her senior high school class. She had heard about SEOP from a classmate:

It was like the day before graduation. I was sitting in the lunch room with my usual friends, and one of them was Lithuanian, she told me she went to a U of I orientation. They were looking for minorities, for what they called the SEOP program at the time. And she said, "well did you hear about it Rose?" I said "no." So the counselor told her about it, but no one bothered to tell me about any special college admissions programs that were available.... But I thought about it and went to see my counselor, whom I probably saw maybe twice my whole lifetime there in high school. And so he gave me some information, I filled out the form ... I don't know. I guess I somehow was accepted, but I know I was originally rejected through the regular U of I admission process.¹¹³

After reapplying to UIUC through SEOP, Moy gained admission to the College of Business and matriculated in the fall of 1970. Her memory of the program was one that was predominantly black as well. She remembers of her incoming SEOP cohort, "When I arrived on campus, and I went to the first orientation, I was really surprised. It was black. It was all blacks, and they had a few Hispanics. Not too many at that time. Mostly black. It had one other white Polish girl. And I think I was the only Asian, period!"¹¹⁴ In retrospect, she describes her admission to SEOP as "just luck," of being in a high school where recruiters were targeting

¹¹³ Rose Moy (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign alumnus), interview by Sharon S. Lee, 20 November 2008 in Chicago, Illinois.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

African American students and hearing of the program through a friend, not through a counselor or recruiter.

The Asian American Alliance

With little institutional space, Asian American students came together to discuss their experiences and needs. In January of 1971, a US-born Asian American population met to create the Asian American Alliance, the first pan-Asian *American* student organization at UIUC, which articulated the political, social, and cultural concerns of a US generation who were navigating a campus that had just begun to consider "minority" issues, though through a limited black-white lens. While the Alliance only existed for about four years (records of the organization fade after 1975), it was an important space for Chinese and Japanese American students to discuss identity issues, articulate their educational needs, and to take part in the political issues of the time.¹¹⁵

Alliance alumni credit the founding of the organization to Paul Wong and Patricia Hirota (Wong), a then married couple who had been involved in the Third World Liberation Front strike for Ethnic Studies at the University of California, Berkeley in 1969. In the fall of 1970, Wong came to UIUC as an assistant professor of Sociology and Asian Studies. Having been involved in the Asian American movement in California, the couple became aware of the presence of Asian American students on campus from Chicago as well as a few students from Hawaii. Wong recalled, "As soon as we got there, Patty and I felt that wow, there were quite a few Asian

¹¹⁵ Alumni recalled that most members of the Asian American Alliance were either Japanese or Chinese American, with very few Korean Americans. No one remembered Filipina/o or South Asian ethnic groups represented. This is not to say that these other Asian American subgroups were not present on campus, nor involved in community building. There is a long history of Asian organizations at UIUC such as the Philippine Student Association and the Indian Student Association; while these groups engaged more international students, US-born members of these ethnic groups may have been involved as well. This history needs to be documented.

American students. And then there were already Asian clubs for foreign students. But there was no organization of Asian Americans."¹¹⁶

Hirota (Wong)'s adjustment to the Midwest motivated her to help bring an Asian American community together. As she had been born and raised in Berkeley, she had always grown up with a strong network of extended family and a Japanese American community. Also at Berkeley, she had been involved in the Asian American Political Alliance, which was part of a larger coalition of students who went on strike for Ethnic Studies in 1969. Coming to the Midwest was like "culture shock," to now live in a rural midwestern, predominantly white town where there was one Asian market and one Chinese restaurant. She felt an urge to help create an Asian American space for support.¹¹⁷

Hirota (Wong) posted a letter in the *Daily Illini*, on 19 January 1971 with the heading "Asian Students." In the letter to the editor, she wrote,

At a campus with over 400 Asian Americans registered, I find it strange that there is not one organization for and of this ethnic group. Could it be that Asian-Americans here do not consider themselves different so do not find a need for any "special" organizations or services? Have they really "melted" into the American pot and lost the unique features of their people? I hope this is not so, but rather than [*sic*] Asian-Americans have never had an opportunity to express or define their differences.... Asians all over this country are coming together to relate to their common problems and to discover the beauty of being Asian. They are reaching out to each other and to their black, brown, and red brothers and sisters in struggle. We here cannot afford to sit idle. Anyone interested in forming an Asian alliance call me.¹¹⁸

Several students contacted her upon reading this call, including three Asian American Engineering majors from Chicago who were seniors and friends—Michael Imanaka (Japanese American), Frank Bing, and Herman Moy (both Chinese American). Bing and Herman

¹¹⁶ Paul Wong (former University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign professor of Sociology and Asian Studies), phone interview by Sharon S. Lee, 3 October 2008.

¹¹⁷ Patricia Hirota (co-founder of Asian American Alliance), phone interview by Sharon S. Lee, 12 March 2009.

¹¹⁸ Patricia Hirota Wong, letter to the editor, *Daily Illini*, January 19, 1971.

Moy recalled contacting Hirota (Wong) and meeting to discuss plans for a group. Soon thereafter, they established the Asian American Alliance as a registered student organization. The request form, dated 24 January 1971, listed the purpose of the organization as, "To stimulate awareness of the history, contributions, and travails of Asian Americans in the United States," with Michael Imanaka as president and Patricia Wong as treasurer.¹¹⁹ The university recognized the Asian American Alliance as a new student organization on 29 January 1971.

The small group proceeded to make flyers announcing the formation of the organization and inviting others to join; they also passed out flyers to students during spring registration on February 3-5.¹²⁰ Hirota (Wong) announced the new group in the *Daily Illini* on February 16. She wrote, "The Asian American Alliance has been formed to provide Americans of Asian ancestry with a vehicle for expressing that part of themselves which is uniquely Asian.... This is the first organization on campus formed expressly for and by Asian Americans."¹²¹ She also announced the first meeting of the Alliance, which took place on 17 February 1971 and featured four film shorts on San Francisco's Chinatown.

The Alliance met approximately monthly in the spring of 1971. the *Daily Illini* listed meetings on March 17, March 28, May 2, and May 8 of that semester.¹²² Word spread beyond the listings in the campus paper. When I asked how members found each other, there was a mix of informal networks based on previous friendships from high school and dorm assignments. While Asian American students hailed from a variety of schools in Chicago, the ones who came to UIUC already steeped in an Asian American social network came from two main high

¹¹⁹ Request for University Recognition of a New Undergraduate Student Organization Not Maintaining A House, Asian American Alliance, 24 January 1971, Record series 41/2/41, Box 3, Asian American Alliance, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

¹²⁰ Asian American Alliance Spring 71 Calendar, ca. 1971, Record series 41/68/157, Folder: Asian American Alliance, 1971, 1974, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

¹²¹ Patricia Hirota Wong, letter to the editor, *Daily Illini*, February 16, 1971.

¹²² *Daily Illini* Notices, February 17, 1971; March 17, 1971; March 27, 1971; May 1, 1971; May 8, 1971.

schools: Lane Technical High School, at that time an all-male magnet school with a focus on science located at Addison and Western avenue (near north side) and Senn High School on the northeast side. Thus, some Asian Americans came to campus with other Asian American friends they had known in school, already with established networks to socialize and support each other.

It is striking that for those who grew up *not* knowing other Asian Americans on campus before coming to UIUC, simply being Asian American elicited a connection, often one that was initiated by strangers. Warren Nishimoto (BA, History, 1972) transferred to UIUC from the University of Hawaii in 1970 and recalled learning about the Alliance during registration: "I was in the Armory, they were having an orientation there, and I was kind of wandering around. Then Mike Imanaka came up to me, and he says, 'Excuse me, are you an Asian brother?' I never batted an eyelash and said 'yeah'.... He told me they were starting up an Asian American Alliance and asked if I was interested coming to the meeting. That's how I joined the group."¹²³

For Asian American students coming from suburban Chicago or cities outside of Chicago, having an Asian American community was not the norm growing up. Steve Lee (BS, Chemistry, 1975) attended high school in suburban Evanston, in a predominantly white and black neighborhood; he interacted with very few Asian Americans before college. He recalled that on his first night on campus he met another Chinese American student from Chicago, Doug Lee. He recalled, "He and I were both kind of homesick and looking for anyone who looked familiar. And he walked up to me ... and he said, 'Are you Chinese?' I said 'yeah.' He said, 'I am too.' So we kind of hung out and we helped each other adjust in the first weeks of college.... Doug knew folks from Chinatown, which really really, really helped me to adjust. And that

¹²³ Warren Nishimoto (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign alumnus), phone interview by Sharon S. Lee, 23 March 2009.

eventually helped me too because he introduced me to some of those folks, and that's how we eventually joined the Asian American Alliance."¹²⁴

In another example, Suzanne Lee Chan (BS, Biology, 1972), a Chinese American student from Peoria, also approached other Asian American students. Growing up in a predominantly white area, she did not have an Asian American network before college. She recalled, "I know when I talked to some other people who were Asian, because they were from Chicago, it wasn't so unique. But for me, certainly it was (laugh). And so that was the first thing I did, when I was at the dorms, I saw two people that were out on Allen hall and it was Lynn Ishida and Anne Shimojima (two Japanese American students). And I made a point of going to introduce myself, because I said 'wow! There's somebody like me!' It was really nice."¹²⁵

Alliance members made concentrated efforts to find new members. Several alumni said that Herman Moy (BS, Engineering, 1971) called them from the student directory; Herman recalled that Alliance members would go through the student directory and call students based on their surname.¹²⁶ In addition, the Alliance had informational tables at orientation where they told students about the organization. It was also obvious in some regards to find each other. Wanda Kawahara Lee (BS, Microbiology, 1975) recalled that in a big dorm of about 700 students, there were only five Asian American students, and she could count them on one hand by name. Thus, Asian American students would easily see each other in the dorms or cafeteria.¹²⁷ They began to meet together to discuss similar experiences.

¹²⁴ Steve Lee (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign alumnus), phone interview by Sharon S. Lee, 4 April 2009.

¹²⁵ Suzanne Lee Chan (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign alumnus), interview by Sharon S. Lee, 6 June 2009 in Fremont, California.

¹²⁶ Herman Moy (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign alumnus), phone interview by Sharon S. Lee, 18 March 2009.

¹²⁷ Wanda Kawahara Lee (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign alumnus), interview by Sharon S. Lee, 8 February 2009 in Chicago, Illinois.

The new organization had a broad mission, which was reflected in discussions about what to name the group. Wong and Hirota (Wong) had been part of the Asian American Political Alliance at Berkeley. Conscious of building an inclusive Asian American space, Wong recalled, "We actually thought about, should we call this an Asian American *Political* Alliance, or should we just call it an Asian American Alliance? At that time we thought we shouldn't use 'political' because some people might be scared away from an Asian American Political Alliance. So we made it an Asian American Alliance—so it was political but also cultural and social."¹²⁸ Hirota (Wong) also noted it was important to "cast as broad a net as possible" for this new community.¹²⁹ The Alliance created a wide range of activities for members. According to 17 March 1971 Alliance meeting minutes, five committees were formed: social (coordinating picnics and dinners); political/ historical (protesting the Vietnam War, discussing Asian American history, gathering information about the lettuce boycott to support farm workers); service (tutoring Asian children, gathering library resources); culture (planning demonstrations of martial arts and flower arranging); and awareness (facilitating discussions on discrimination, assimilation, gender).¹³⁰ Throughout its existence, Alliance members participated in social events such as potlucks, parties, and picnics, as well as intramural sports, forming powder puff football teams and baseball teams.

The open-ness and flexibility of the organization were noted by Ty Unno, a faculty sponsor of the group, a professor who taught Japanese Buddhism, and a family friend of Hirota (Wong). Unno wrote,

One basic reason for AAA's success in its brief history I feel, is the flexibility demonstrated by the organization and its leadership. Since it had no explicit goal at the

¹²⁸ Paul Wong interview, 3 October 2008.

¹²⁹ Patricia Hirota interview, 12 March 2009.

¹³⁰ Asian American Alliance Meeting notes, 17 March 1971, Record series 41/68/157, Folder: Asian American Alliance, 1971, 1974, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

beginning, was not dominated by a single viewpoint, we were able to explore various suggestions and attempt a variety of activities.... This openness is crucial, if AAA is to continue and to grow, because the magnetic force that created the AAA is the need for each one of us to become completely himself, to become truly human, within the dominant white culture which has done and continues to do violence, intentionally and unintentionally, to the Asian-American psyche. The importance of the AAA is that it provides the arena in which we can gather and discover ourselves, and from which we can draw strength to fight the injustices inflicted upon us.¹³¹

This articulate commentary noted the importance of inclusivity and support for the newly formed community in the face of white racism.

A Shared Asian American Identity

While the Alliance was open to numerous activities, it was also founded with a critical view of racism and an urgency to embrace a pride in being Asian American. Fostering an Asian American identity was an important starting point. In an early flyer, dated 5 February 1971, a call was made to fellow Asian Americans, critiquing the melting pot ideal of assimilation and pointing out that Asians in Chinatown suffered poverty and that Japanese Americans were interned during World War II. The flyer challenged a complacent identity to its Asian American readers:

You may say, "But I'm American. My friends accept me as I am." Let's not fool ourselves. Our color difference is always noticed. We are constantly reminded of our difference by people who ask, "Are you Chinese, Japanese, or Filipino?" Do you feel embarrassed when your friends see you with your Oriental friends? Do you feel better dating a Caucasian than an Oriental? Are you Asian or are you American—or are you both? Why reject your heritage, your mother culture? Are you ashamed of the American stereotype of the docile, humble Chinese, the laundry-restaurant people? Are you embarrassed of your Issei grandparents? Do you know the contributions of our people have [*sic*] to America? We must become aware of them!! Asian pride and self respect are

¹³¹ Ty Unno, "The Importance of AAA," ca. 1971, Record series 41/68/157, Folder: Asian American Alliance, 1971, 1974, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

synonymous. We are Americans, but we are different and should be proud of it! BE YOURSELF!!—BE ASIAN AMERICAN!!¹³²

The need for a community was also felt. An undated flyer (circa 1971) states, "For many years most of us on campus have been wanting a place where we could meet other Asian-Americans and to really *relate*. Well, this is it. Let's make it and let's make it good!"¹³³ Wong also recalled, "I think that most of the people were looking for a sense of community, a sense of identity. There was just nothing else there in Champaign-Urbana at that time for Asian Americans. So some of the students actually had belonged to Chinese clubs for foreign students and things like that."¹³⁴ Such was the case for Herman Moy and Frank Bing, who had been socializing with Chinese international students before the Alliance was formed. Frank Bing (BS, Engineering, 1971) recalled missing the Asian American community he had grown up with in Chicago, where he had played basketball with Chinese and Japanese American friends in church and high school. Thus, seeking an Asian American space was a continuation of a Chicago-based Asian American social scene that included school, sports, drum and bugle corps, and church life. Bing recalled, "That was what was missing when we went to school because there was nothing like that at school. So when it formed, it filled back in the void. Because I think my first three years there we didn't have that. So Herman (Moy) and I hung out with the Taiwan kids. So it was nice having a bunch of second generation kids to hang out with again (laugh) like back home."¹³⁵ Herman Moy also recalled playing sports such as basketball, kung fu, and baseball with the overseas Chinese graduate students and being the disc jockey for their parties. He had already

¹³² "Fellow Asian Americans" Flyer, Asian American Alliance, 5 February 1971, Record series 41/6/840, Box 5, Folder: Asian American Alliance, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives. Emphasis in original.

¹³³ Asian American Alliance, "Brothers and Sisters" Flyer, ca. 1971, Record series 41/68/157, Folder: Asian American Alliance, 1971, 1974, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives. Emphasis in original.

¹³⁴ Paul Wong interview, 3 October 2008.

¹³⁵ Frank Bing (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign alumnus), interview by Sharon S. Lee, 9 November 2008 and 8 February 2009 in Chicago, Illinois.

known some Chinese students from his church in Chinatown before coming to campus. While these friendships continued after the Alliance formed, Herman Moy and Bing recognized the need for an Asian *American* space, which did not exist at the time.

Organizations for Asian ethnic groups at UIUC had existed for some time; often, these organizations began as a support for Asian international students but also were spaces for US-born Asians. University records show a history of Asian student clubs at UIUC including the Chinese Student Club (roots as early as 1911); Hawaii Club (1953); Indian Student Association (1948); Japanese Student Association (1976); Korean Students Association (1956); The Philippine Illini (1919), which became the Filipino Students' Association in 1962; and a Thai Student Association (1978).¹³⁶ There was some interaction between Asian and the Asian American students. In particular, some Chinese American Alliance members were involved with the Chinese Students Association (CSA), even though the latter organization conducted their meetings in Mandarin, was composed more of graduate, international students, and focused on Chinese issues. The Alliance and CSA interacted in social dances, basketball tournaments, and "China Night" in 1974, which featured Chinese culture, music, and dance and involved students from mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong.¹³⁷ In an undated flyer, there is also some evidence of the Alliance's collaboration with Asian international students, detailing that the Alliance had "helped to elect a Chinese Student Association President who would be more responsive to the needs and desires of American born Chinese."¹³⁸

¹³⁶ Record series 41/2/41, Box 6, Folder: Chinese Student Club; Record series 41/2/41, Box 11, Folder: Hawaii Club, 1953-60; Record series 41/2/41, Box 13, Folder: Indian Students Association 1948; Record series 41/2/41, Box 14, Folder: Japanese Student Association; Record series 41/2/41, Box 15, Folder: Korean Students Association; Record series 41/2/41, Box 19, Folder: Philippine Association; Record series 41/2/41, Box 19, Folder: Philippine Illini Club; Record series 41/2/41, Box 25, Folder: Thai Student Association, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

¹³⁷ Steve Lee interview, 4 April 2009.

¹³⁸ "Asian American Alliance" flyer, no date (ca. 1973-74), Record series 41/6/840, Box 5, Folder: Asian American Alliance, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

Yet, the Asian American Alliance primarily focused on US issues and identity struggles, forming a bond across Japanese and Chinese ethnic lines, to build a pan-Asian American community based on shared racial experiences. One of those shared experiences was a response to the unjust Vietnam War, which members of the Alliance protested along racial lines.

Protesting the Vietnam War

Aside from building a social and cultural support space, Asian American Alliance members took on two major political issues in the 1970's: protesting the Vietnam War and pushing for curriculum and program in Asian American Studies (AAS) at UIUC. College students across the country were active in the antiwar movement of the 1960's and 1970's, staging protests, burning draft cards, walking out on classes, and traveling to marches in Washington DC. As Charles DeBenedetti and Charles Chatfield outline, a post-World War II peace movement in the United States began in the mid-1950's, as organizations formed to protest the Cold War and nuclear testing.¹³⁹ College students, who were already becoming involved in the civil rights movement (Greensboro sit-ins, Freedom Rides, Mississippi Summer), shaped a New Left movement at this time as well; in 1960, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) formed, with founders seeking to create networks between college campuses.

Students were also active in protesting the war in Vietnam. US involvement in Vietnam increased in the early 1960's; in August of 1964 President Johnson acquired unprecedented support against North Vietnam with the Gulf of Tonkin resolution. In March 1965 students at the University of Michigan Ann Arbor initiated the "teach-in," inspired by freedom schools of the South. Discussion groups, debates, and lectures against the war flourished, with thirty-five other

¹³⁹ Charles DeBenedetti and Charles Chatfield, *An American Ordeal: The Antiwar Movement of the Vietnam Era* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1990).

campuses following suit within the same week.¹⁴⁰ DeBenedetti and Chatfield describe the teach-ins as significant because they helped to legitimize antiwar activities during this time.

Terry Anderson notes that the movement of the 1960's began in the South and spread east and west, with the Midwest having a different tone, calling it "less aggressive" than on the coasts.¹⁴¹ Still, he points out that activism spread to liberal midwestern cities with large universities: Ann Arbor, Bloomington, Chicago, Columbus, Madison, East Lansing, and Minneapolis.¹⁴² While Terry Anderson does not list Urbana-Champaign, it, too, was a hub of antiwar activism, which became increasingly violent and confrontational over time. For example, on 27 September 1967, the Committee to End the War in Vietnam organized a demonstration to protest the use of the Illini student union by the armed services, where more than 200 students gathered to protest the university's role in the war.¹⁴³ A month later, more demonstrations occurred: on October 16, the Draft Resistance Union sponsored draft card burnings and a sit-in against the Selective Service Draft board, and Champaign police arrested ten people.¹⁴⁴ A few days later, on October 25, more than 200 demonstrators staged a five-hour sit-in in the Chemistry building, protesting campus recruitment by Dow Chemical Company, a producer of napalm. As a result, campus recruitment was cancelled.¹⁴⁵ Seven undergraduate students were expelled but were later reinstated and placed on academic probation.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁰ DeBenedetti and Chatfield, *An American Ordeal*, 108.

¹⁴¹ Terry H. Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties: Protest in America from Greensboro to Wounded Knee* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), xvii.

¹⁴² Student activism against the war and for free speech at Ohio State and Indiana University are outlined in *Protest! Student Activism in America*, eds. Julian Foster and Durward Long (New York: William Morrow & Company, Inc., 1970).

¹⁴³ Roger Simon, "UI Students Protest War, US Marines," *Daily Illini*, September 29, 1969.

¹⁴⁴ Roger Simon, "10 Arrested During Sit-In: Action Taken at Draft Office; Two Burn Cards Near Union," *Daily Illini*, October 17, 1967.

¹⁴⁵ Roger Simon, "Protestors End Dow Visit: Company Cancels Recruiting After Massive Demonstration," *Daily Illini*, October 26, 1967.

¹⁴⁶ Roger Simon, "Reinstate Seven Students: Faculty Senate Committee Puts Students on Probation," *Daily Illini*, December 12, 1967.

The explosive year 1968 is noted for protest and violence nationwide. Racial tensions erupted with the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. in April, with race riots in over 110 cities.¹⁴⁷ Robert Kennedy was assassinated in June. Numerous antiwar teach-ins, marches, and protests of Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) and recruitment visits from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and Dow Chemical Company took place on college campuses. The Democratic National convention in Chicago in August was the site of protest and police violence. On 15 October 1969, a national moratorium on business as usual took place across the country with a wide variety of antiwar activities that called for a withdrawal of forces from Vietnam by 1 December 1970 through rallies, prayer services, candle light processions, teach-ins, leafleting, and picket lines. An estimated 100,000 participated in the moratorium in Chicago.¹⁴⁸ College students organized numerous of these events, including at UIUC, where 9,000 staged a peaceful march in support of the moratorium.¹⁴⁹

Another round of massive protest at UIUC took place the following spring, this time increasing in violence. On 2 March 1970, twenty-one people were arrested in protests and rallies against campus recruiting by the General Electric Company in opposition to their contracts with the Defense department. Protestors marched into campus streets, blocked traffic, and broke windows of campus buildings and campus town businesses. In sum, damage was done in three nights of demonstrations that resulted in a curfew, additional arrests, and the introduction of 300 national guardsmen called by local police. Estimated damages ranged between \$20,500 to \$21,000.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ DeBenedetti and Chatfield, *An American Ordeal*, 218.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 256.

¹⁴⁹ Jim Hopwood, "Masses Protest Vietnam Policy: 9,000 Stage Peaceful March to Downtown Champaign Park," *Daily Illini*, October 16, 1969.

¹⁵⁰ Karen Dowler, "Damage Over \$20,000," *Daily Illini*, March 5, 1970.

Shortly thereafter, the shootings at Kent State University (four killed) on 4 May 1970 and at Jackson State University (two killed) on May 14 rocked already-unsteady college campuses. Students numbering 1.5 million left classes and shut down one-fifth of colleges across the US for various periods during the year.¹⁵¹ Activism at UIUC continued. On May 5, a group of 2,000 demonstrators marched through campus, smashing buildings' windows and throwing stones at police cars. At least two firebombs were attempted, a fire was started in the Foreign Languages building, and when Chancellor Peltason drove through the area, students threw stones at his car.¹⁵² On May 15, renewed protests flared up as the news of the Jackson State shootings spread; students inflicted more damage to buildings, and attempted fires and firebombs hit campus buildings.¹⁵³

National protests against the war also became a staple in Washington DC through the 1960's and 1970's. On 17 April 1965, SDS led a march of 20,000 in Washington, "the largest single antiwar demonstration yet organized in America."¹⁵⁴ By 24 April 1971, this number was eclipsed by an estimated 200,000 to half a million protestors in Washington, including a growing group of Vietnam War veterans who testified to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and returned their war medals and ribbons.¹⁵⁵ These events were part of a week of demonstrations in San Francisco as well as Washington DC in peaceful protest of the war, organized by the National Peace Action Coalition.¹⁵⁶ A few days later on May 3, protestors took on a more direct

¹⁵¹ DeBenedetti and Chatfield, *An American Ordeal*, 280.

¹⁵² "Protests Explode Into Violence: One Arrested, Policeman Hurt as 2,000 March for Strike," *Daily Illini*, May 6, 1970.

¹⁵³ "Jackson Killings Spark More Protest: 2 Arrested, Minor Damage to UI Buildings," *Daily Illini*, May 16, 1970.

¹⁵⁴ DeBenedetti and Chatfield, *An American Ordeal*, 112.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 304.

¹⁵⁶ Barbara Roth, "Peaceful Marches Set for Coasts," *Daily Illini*, April 17, 1971.

form of mass civil disobedience, disrupting traffic and business in the nation's capital; 7,000 were arrested with additional numbers growing on May 4.¹⁵⁷

UIUC students were involved in this flurry of events in April and May of 1971. While planners worried about the possible low attendance at the Washington DC march by UIUC students,¹⁵⁸ those who did attend were part of the May demonstrations. Over sixty members of the Illinois delegation were arrested on May 3, attempting to block traffic in Washington DC.¹⁵⁹

Asian American students and community members were also involved in the April 1971 national protest, with Asian contingents convening on the nation's capitol. Paul Wong notes that during the April 1971 march in Washington, the coordinating committee refused to adopt the Asian contingent's antiracist statement for the march; thus, the Asian contingent marched as its own separate group.¹⁶⁰ UIUC Asian American Alliance meeting minutes record that ten members planned to march on Washington.¹⁶¹ There, they met with other Asian contingents from across the country.

Alliance member Warren Nishimoto (BA, History, 1972) recalled how being involved with other Asian contingents protesting the war in Washington DC facilitated his own Asian American identity process, an identity he had not thought about when he grew up in Hawaii. Being a part of an Asian American group also helped him feel a stronger sense of purpose. He described,

I felt we were really doing something, so it wasn't just a bunch of students going out to protest the war, which is okay, of course. But going out as part of the Asian contingent, part of this Asian American Alliance that had just started at U of I, I really felt personally involved in it, because hey I'm Asian American, right? And a lot of these issues relating

¹⁵⁷ DeBenedetti and Chatfield, *An American Ordeal*, 305.

¹⁵⁸ Polly Anderson, "April 24 March Draws Few Here," *Daily Illini*, April 14, 1971.

¹⁵⁹ Gary Raether, "Over 60 Illinois Delegation Members Arrested in DC," *Daily Illini*, May 4, 1971.

¹⁶⁰ Paul Wong, "The Emergence of the Asian-American Movement," *Bridge* 2 (1971): 36.

¹⁶¹ Asian American Alliance, meeting minutes, ca. April 1971, Record series 41/68/157, Folder: Asian American Alliance, 1971, 1974, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

to the war *did* relate to Asian Americans. So again, it was all part of the identity building process, the identity educational process for me. It started by me articulating who I am from Hawaii and it sort of evolved into more or less, hey I'm Asian American, the issues confronting American society relate directly to Asian Americans and other minorities. And so I felt a stronger sense of purpose being Asian and being part of an Asian American contingent, then if I wasn't.¹⁶²

A few days after the national protest, UIUC students took part in a number of events on campus in support of a two-day student strike against the war. First, there was a large local march against the war, on 5 May 1971, where more than 1,000 demonstrators marched from campus to Champaign's Westside Park for speeches, music, and theater performances.¹⁶³ The march commemorated the first anniversary of the invasion of Cambodia and the shootings at Kent State and Jackson State. A rally followed in the evening. On May 6, students taught liberation classes on the quadrangle, held more meetings, and picketed numerous campus buildings. University police arrested thirty-nine antiwar protestors that day for occupying a marine recruiting station in the student union.¹⁶⁴

The May 5 march was organized by an antiwar coalition, of which the Alliance was a member. The group requested to lead the march to address racist issues in the war, which were overlooked in the antiwar movement.¹⁶⁵ As an organization, the Alliance was now only three months old, but they led the march holding specific Asian-related signs reading: "Stop the Racist War," "Asian Lives are Not Cheap," "Stop Killing Our Yellow Brothers," "This is a Gook ... Is it True What They Do to People Who Look Like Me?" and a yin-yang peace sign.¹⁶⁶ This racial critique was part of new discourse against the war that was taking place across the nation. In an article describing the emergence of the Asian American movement, Paul Wong wrote, "White

¹⁶² Warren Nishimoto interview, 23 March 2009.

¹⁶³ G. Robert Hillman, "1,000 March in War Protest," *Daily Illini*, May 6, 1971.

¹⁶⁴ Mary Dubin, "39 Arrested in Union," *Daily Illini*, May 7, 1971.

¹⁶⁵ Paul Wong interview, 3 October 2008.

¹⁶⁶ *Daily Illini*, May 6, 1971.

protests had signs 'give peace a chance' or 'Bring the GIs home.' The Asian-American movement, in contrast, emphasizes the *racist* nature of the war, using such slogans as 'Stop killing *our* Asian brothers and sisters,' and 'We don't want *your* racist war.'"¹⁶⁷

A flyer for the event urging Alliance members to join the Champaign march also powerfully articulated a racial critique of the war. It read, "As Asians and Asian Americans we have the duty to speak out against the brutal slaughter of Asian men, women, and children. The time has come for the 'quiet Asian American' or the 'nice Asian' to end his passive acceptance of this *racist* and genocidal war.... The Asian American Alliance feels it is appropriate for us Asians to head the campus antiwar march. After all, they are killing people that look like you and me."¹⁶⁸ The flyer argued for the right of Asian countries for self-determination, the need to support Southeast Asian people, and that racism was at the root of the war.

Nationally, people of color also began to infuse a racial critique of the war, of the imperialist role of the United States against a Third World country, and on the drafting of African American and Latina/o men who lacked the resources to get out of the military. Organizations such as the Black Anti-Draft Union and Afro-Americans Against the War in Vietnam formed in the mid-1960's. In the summer and fall of 1970, Chicano activists protested the high proportion of Hispanic casualties among soldiers and a discriminatory draft. Stokely Carmichael declared that the draft was "white people sending black people to make war on yellow people in order to defend the land they stole from red people."¹⁶⁹ In an April 1967 march in New York, a small group of Native American protestors held a sign reading, "Americans—Do

¹⁶⁷ Wong, "The Emergence of the Asian-American Movement," 36. Emphasis in original.

¹⁶⁸ Asians and Asian Americans Come March With Us! Asian American Alliance Flyer, Wednesday, 5 May 1971, Record series 41/68/157, Folder: Asian American Alliance, 1971, 1974, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives. Emphasis in original.

¹⁶⁹ DeBenedetti and Chatfield, *An American Ordeal*, 158.

not do to the Vietnamese what you did to us."¹⁷⁰ Asian Americans were also involved in the antiwar movement, forming organizations such as the Bay Area Asians Coalition Against the War in 1972, which had sister groups in Los Angeles, New York, and Sacramento.

The connection of the Vietnam War with anti-Asian racism writ large was something new to the antiwar movement. The war united Asian Americans because of shared experience of being called a "gook"—a racial slur used against Asian nations during times of war. William Wei writes, "'Gookism' made no distinction between the Vietnamese, Laotians, and Cambodians (among other Asians) encountered overseas and Asian Americans at home just as no distinctions had been made between Japanese and Japanese Americans during World War II. The term was even used to refer to Asian Americans serving in the US military."¹⁷¹ The slaughter of Asian bodies, shown on nightly television reports, also conveyed the message that Asian lives held no value. Alliance member Terry Shintani (BS, Business Administration, 1972), a Japanese American student from Hawaii, recalled that members began talking about the war: "We started talking about how the Vietnam War had taken on an insidious racist feature. No one could imagine American soldiers going to a European town and gunning down white children, the way they wasted everyone including women, children, and elderly at My Lai. We reasoned that the soldiers were being influenced by the military's support or condoning of looking at the Asian-faced enemy as 'gooks,' subhuman beings whose lives weren't worth much."¹⁷²

These activists connected racism against Asians in America with that on the international front. Thus, as Yen Espiritu notes, "In sum, Asian American emphasis on race and racism

¹⁷⁰ Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties*, 164.

¹⁷¹ Wei, *The Asian American Movement*, 38-39. See also Norman Nakamura, "The Nature of GI Racism," in *Roots: An Asian American Reader*, ed. Amy Tachiki, Eddie Wong, Franklin Odo, and Buck Wong (Los Angeles: The Regents of the University of California, 1971), 24-27; Evelyn Yoshimura, "GI's and Asian Women," in *Roots: An Asian American Reader*, ed. Amy Tachiki, Eddie Wong, Franklin Odo, and Buck Wong (Los Angeles: The Regents of the University of California, 1971), 28-29.

¹⁷² Terry Shintani (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign alumnus), phone interview by Sharon S. Lee, 13 August 2008.

differentiates their antiwar protest from that of whites. In characterizing the Vietnam War as a racist act against Asians, Asian American activists proclaimed racial solidarity not only with each other but also with the Vietnamese people, their 'Asian brothers and sisters.'"¹⁷³ Alliance member Debbie Shikami Ikeda (BS, Elementary Education, 1974) connected the problematic issues of US involvement in a civil war in Asia with racism in the United States. She described, "Actually, the war itself, there were a lot of racist cartoons going on at the time. There were anti-Asian ... so I think the Asian (American) movement that started on the west coast at that time really started to kick into gear in the Midwest."¹⁷⁴

The Early Push for Asian American Studies at UIUC

The war was a driving force of activism during the 1960's and early 1970's, though other issues also concerned students. Antiwar activism began dying down once Saigon fell to the North in 1975. As university enrollments grew due to the GI Bill, student loan programs, and funding from the 1957 National Defense Education Act in response to Sputnik, the university took on multiple roles and became what Clark Kerr termed the "multiversity."¹⁷⁵ Students struggled with bureaucracy, long lines, large classes, and sterile identification punch cards. The traditional role of the college and university of "in loco parentis" meant there were strict rules for student behavior including visitation limits for female students in their dorms and curfews, as well little student input on curriculum, extracurricular life, and university regulations. Students protested these rules, such as at Berkeley during the Free Speech movement in 1964. Demands

¹⁷³ Espiritu, *Asian American Panethnicity*, 44.

¹⁷⁴ Debbie Shikami Ikeda (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign alumnus), phone interview by Sharon S. Lee, 5 March 2009.

¹⁷⁵ Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties*.

for Ethnic Studies also became an important movement in the late 1960's, culminating at San Francisco State College and Berkeley in 1968 and 1969.

The Third World Liberation Front (TWLF) at San Francisco State College led the call for an autonomous Ethnic Studies program, the support for hiring and retention of minority faculty, and admissions of students of color. In the spring of 1968, the TWLF formed, advocating for the right of an education for all third world students.¹⁷⁶ A student strike began that lasted from 6 November 1968 to 27 March 1969, culminating in police arrests and violence but ultimately led to the founding of the first school of Ethnic Studies in the country. Berkeley also saw a third world strike from 19 January 1969 to 19 March 1969. Other campuses followed suit. Activists at City College of New York staged a three-day takeover in March of 1971 on the issue of access for Asian American students, which resulted in establishing Asian American Studies (AAS) courses.

The Asian American movement articulated a distinct Asian American identity, and a relevant curriculum was part of that goal. Education would challenge stereotypes and reclaim an ignored history. Raising awareness about the Asian American experience was also a part of the Alliance's activities. From its inception in spring 1971, the organization showed numerous films about Asian American experiences—on March 4, they showed the film "Nisei: The Pride and the Shame," on the internment experience and on April 20 showed films about Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and the US war in Vietnam.¹⁷⁷ Rap groups during potluck dinners also took place to discuss Asian American experiences. At a potluck dinner on 8 May 1971, small groups discussed issues

¹⁷⁶ Karen Umemoto, "'On Strike!' San Francisco State College Strikes, 1968-1969: The Role of Asian American Students," in *Contemporary Asian America: A Multidisciplinary Reader*, ed. Min Zhou and James Gatewood (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 49-79.

¹⁷⁷ Asian American Flyers, "The Asian American Alliance Presents Nisei: The Pride and the Shame," 4 March 1971, and "Hiroshima Nagasaki, Time of the Locust, Hunger in America," 20 April 1971, Record series 41/68/157, Folder: Asian American Alliance, 1971, 1974, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

regarding Asian stereotypes, cultural values among different generations of Asians and Asian Americans, interracial marriage, racial discrimination, and women's liberation.¹⁷⁸

Asian American students had wanted courses at UIUC that reflected their histories and experiences. These histories were invisible particularly in the Midwest. Herman Moy (BS, Engineering, 1971) recalled the efforts that Alliance members took to ask for a course on Asian American experiences. They researched information from other universities that had similar courses, something that was "nonexistent" in the Midwest. He also recalled approaching various departments such as Asian Studies and Anthropology to sponsor a class on Asian American experiences.¹⁷⁹

One such course had been offered by Professor Bill MacDonald of the Center for Asian Studies under Asian Studies 199 in fall 1972, as a course overload. UIUC offered courses under the 199 rubric for areas that were not covered in the traditional curriculum; these courses needed only a sponsoring instructor and permission from a department head.¹⁸⁰ Approximately twenty students had enrolled in Asian Studies 199 and wanted more courses. In the spring 1973 semester a similar course was proposed, but there was no instructor to teach it.

With their desire for courses and for a permanent structure, the Alliance proposed a formal Asian American Studies program on 1 February 1973. It wrote:

The university has an obligation to provide an opportunity for the educational growth of its students. This obligation can be fulfilled by offering appropriate educational programs. One program, the Ethnic Studies Program, has been neglected by traditional public education and university curricula. . . . There is a definite [*sic*] need for an adequate Asian American Studies Program to be developed. Several students have indicated that they wish to major in Asian American Studies. Unfortunately, there is no existing

¹⁷⁸ Asian American Alliance Handout, "Suggested Discussion Topics," 8 May 1971, Record series 41/68/157, Folder: Asian American Alliance, 1971, 1974, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

¹⁷⁹ Herman Moy interview, 18 March 2009.

¹⁸⁰ Rick Pope, "199 Courses Penetrate Many Areas," *Daily Illini*, February 4, 1972.

curriculum in Asian American Studies at this university, or at any other university in the Midwest for this purpose. The Program must be researched and a curricula developed.¹⁸¹

The Alliance requested that one-half staff line be released to the Asian American Studies program for instruction and curriculum development and that \$5,000 be released for acquiring necessary materials such as ethnic newspapers, journals, films, and reference books.¹⁸²

While no formal program was established, some headway was made for a course. In the fall 1973 semester, the course continued under the sponsorship of the Anthropology department. Clark Cunningham, professor and head of Anthropology from 1972-1975 and from 1980-1982, collaborated with Bok-Lim Kim, a faculty member in the department of Social Work, in teaching Anthropology 199: "The Asian-American Experience" in the fall 1973 semester. This course had twenty-five students enrolled.

In the spring of 1974, the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare announced funding for Title IX of the Elementary and Secondary Education (ESEA) Act of 1965 titled the "Ethnic Heritage Studies Program." The purpose of the title was to "provide assistance designed to afford students opportunities to learn about the nature of their own cultural heritage and to study the contributions of the cultural heritages of other ethnic groups of the nation."¹⁸³ Grants would finance educational institutions for programs that would develop curriculum on ethnic groups; funds were to be used between 1 July 1974 and 30 June 1975 with \$2,375,000 available for fiscal year 1974 to applicants.¹⁸⁴ Both Cunningham and RB Crawford, director of the Center

¹⁸¹ Asian American Alliance, Proposal for an Asian American Studies Program, 1 February 1973, Record series 41/6/840, Box 5, Asian American Alliance, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

¹⁸² It is unclear at this point to whom the proposal was submitted and/or what the official response was.

¹⁸³ The Ethnic Heritage Studies Program Preliminary Information Sheet, 8 February 1974, Folder: Asian American Studies UIUC—Early Documents, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

for Asian Studies, inquired about the guidelines; Crawford carbon copied students Rumi Ueno and Debbie Shikami (Ikeda) in a memo to update them on the program.¹⁸⁵

There was some excitement about the possibility of grant money and the future of more AAS courses. In a memo dated 15 March 1974, Cunningham apprised Robert Rogers, dean of Liberal Arts and Sciences, of the future of the course and the growing interest in Asian American Studies courses and growing numbers of Asian American students on campus. In the memo, he proposed offering the Anthropology 199 course again under graduate student Edwin Almirol's lectureship and requested funds from the college for Almirol during the 1974-1975 year, as Asian Studies and Anthropology budgets could not fund him. In the letter, Cunningham made a modest request, referring to the grant:

Given the fact that we do have a large clientele of interested Asian-American students—and that the numbers of this group in the Chicago area has increased so greatly over the past decade—we feel that we are well justified in making such a course an Illinois offering. We need not think of programs or anything grandiose ... but there is ample academic justification for such a course. Almirol's appointment (perhaps equivalent to a 0.50 teaching assistant salary to offer the course once each semester) would be temporary. However, in that period he could lay the groundwork for the course which might then be the base for securing funds from the Ethnic Heritage grant program for assistance to some unit in continuation of the work ... with the Ethnic Heritage program now being funded and more-and-more Asian-American students on campus, the experience which we would gain via Alimorl's teaching might help attract an Asian-American social science professor to campus.... If we are seeking wherever possible to relate teaching to Illinois constituencies and problem areas, this would seem a worthwhile effort, particularly given the fact that Illinois has become a major area of Asian-American settlement outside of California, Washington state, and New York City.¹⁸⁶

The outcome of these discussions is unclear, however. Title IX of the ESEA Act of 1965 was signed into law on 23 June 1972, authorizing \$15 million for fiscal year 1973 for Ethnic Studies programs. However, there was a note about possible limitations in summer of 1973: "The actual

¹⁸⁵ RB Crawford to various faculty and students, 18 March 1974, Folder: Asian American Studies UIUC—Early Documents, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

¹⁸⁶ Clark Cunningham to Robert Rogers, 15 March 1974. Folder: Asian American Studies UIUC—Early Documents, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

program implementation is however contingent upon Federal appropriations. To this date these appropriations have not been forthcoming and admittedly the possibility for such appropriations seems rather dim."¹⁸⁷ There is no record of the AAS course continuing at UIUC past spring 1974 or if the Ethnic heritage studies program was pursued. Alliance alumni recalled the struggles of establishing the course with no full-time faculty committed to offering the course and the lack of widespread administrative support.

The Asian American Alliance Fights the Foreigner Stereotype

Despite the awareness of Asian American issues that the Alliance sought to raise at UIUC through various events, letters to the student newspaper, and activism, the perception of them as foreign students persisted, limiting the ways the administration understood their experiences. Paul Wong, then assistant professor of Sociology and Asian Studies, recalled that, "At that time, the university was used to having foreign students, a lot of students from Asia. So they looked at Asians as all pretty much foreign. So the concept of 'Asian American' was not in their minds at all. You know, they had no understanding of what that was."¹⁸⁸

This lack of knowledge played out on many levels across campus. For instance, the *Daily Illini* incorrectly described the Alliance several times as a foreign student organization, much to the dismay of Alliance members. In March of 1971, the student paper announced that the Undergraduate Student Association funded the organization \$75.00 in support of their activities, under the description of money given to "foreign students."¹⁸⁹ A few months later in coverage of the local march in May, the *Daily Illini* described "foreign student representatives" who spoke at

¹⁸⁷ "The Ethnic Heritage Studies Act," *International Migration Review* 7 (Summer 1973): 193-194.

¹⁸⁸ Paul Wong interview, 3 October 2008.

¹⁸⁹ Kathy Reinbolt, "Five Groups Get Money: UGSA Releases Funds," *Daily Illini*, March 16, 1971.

the antiwar rally. On 18 May 1971, Patricia Hirota (Wong) wrote a letter to the editor, objecting to the paper's representation of Asian American students as foreigners. She wrote:

For the second time The Daily Illini reported the Asian American Alliance as a "foreign students organization." An article May 8th stated that the speakers at the May 5th rally included Blacks, a veteran, and "foreign students representatives," which I assume referred to me, since besides the Iranian student, I was the only other speaker who could have been taken for a foreigner.

I suppose this mistake was due to the ignorance of the fact that there are hundreds of thousands of Asians who were born in America, descendents of the Chinese who built the railroads in the 19th Century and the Japanese who made California the rich agricultural state it is. Many of us are third or fourth generation, which should make us as American as anyone else. Still, we of yellow skin are asked, "Where did you come from?" or "How did you learn English?" and are considered foreigners because we do not look "American."

The Asian American Alliance, as the name implies, is composed mainly of Asians born in America. We feel deep bonds with the peoples of Asia, but we are different from them, and we want to be recognized. We must stop this form of racism. America is not just Black and White.¹⁹⁰

Sometimes UIUC staff did not know what to do with Asian American students, who were presumed to be foreign. Terry Shintani (BS, Business Administration, 1972) recalled seeking office space for the Alliance, as the Black Students Association (BSA) had office space in the student union. He recalled, "Because BSA was given office space, I thought I was justified in asking for the same thing for the Asian American Alliance. When I went to the Student Affairs office, I asked for similar space. The clerk there immediately told me that the foreign student's office was across the hall. When I explained that I was American, the clerk did not know what to do and said they would call me back—which they never did." For Shintani, coming from Hawaii, this experience was new. He explained, "Asian Americans from Hawaii are different from Asian Americans on the mainland in that Asian Americans are a plurality in Hawaii and are not

¹⁹⁰ Patricia Hirota Wong, letter to the editor, *Daily Illini*, May 18, 1971.

accustomed to being treated like foreigners or being looked at in a strange way."¹⁹¹ Asian American experiences seemed to be barely on the radar of administrators, and there was little discussion as to their "minority" experiences and needs.

Who's a Minority? Asian Americans Don't Fit

African American and Latina/o students fit the university's definitions of minority students because they were underrepresented along some measure. A harder rationale came for Asian Americans. Were Asian Americans a minority on campus? UIUC followed guidelines of the US Department of Health, Education and Welfare, which defined four main minority groups as African American, Latina/o, Asian American, and American Indian. Racial data on these groups were kept in concordance with these categories. However, the focus had been on black and Latina/o students because of their interest in such programs.¹⁹² Reporting on the four groups and having university *recognition* of minority status were two different things, as this recognition led the way to gaining services such as recruitment and retention as well as student services like counselors, cultural centers, and advisors. Since UIUC's focus was on underrepresentation, technically Asian Americans did not qualify, despite their miniscule numbers on campus in the 1970's and 1980's. Thus, unlike at the University of California, which de-minoritized Asian American groups in the 1980's, UIUC never targeted Asian American students for inclusion in minority programs or services.

When I asked Alliance alumni if they felt they were a minority during their time at UIUC, the consensus was in the affirmative. Alliance documents also reveal concerns about navigating a predominantly white campus. At a potluck dinner on 8 May 1971, small groups

¹⁹¹ Terry Shintani interview, 13 August 2008.

¹⁹² Ellen Ferber, "U of I Searches for Qualified Minority Students," *Daily Illini*, November 10, 1976.

talked about issues specific to racial comfort, with the following questions posed: "How do you feel when attending an all-white social function? Do you act the same or different with white friends as you do with friends of the same racial/ ethnic backgrounds? Do you have friends among other minority groups? How do you feel when being among them?"¹⁹³ It is clear that members were concerned and aware of navigating white spaces.

Alumni also recalled it was obvious they were a minority given their small presence at UIUC and its predominantly white nature. Debbie Shikami Ikeda (BS, Elementary Education, 1974) reflected that she hadn't really realized she was a minority until she joined the Alliance. She said, "I remember going to a meeting, and someone said look around your classes—are there other people that look like you? And it dawned on me that there weren't, particularly in the College of Education, there were *very* few of us. In fact, I remember looking around the classroom, and it was all white people!"¹⁹⁴ Frank Bing (BS, Engineering, 1971) also described the situation succinctly on campus: "I mean we're smaller than a minority. At (the number) 300, you're not even a minority, you're the background noise!"¹⁹⁵

On the administrative side, not only was "minority" conflated with black (and then pushed to include Latina/o), it also centered on issues of underrepresentation in admissions and retention. On these measures, Asian Americans did not fit. George Yu, founding director of the Asian American Studies program and professor emeritus of Political Science, commented that Asian Americans at UIUC were not seen as "deprived," and that "Asian American 'success' in higher education could be said to have prevented us from being seen as a minority."¹⁹⁶

¹⁹³ Asian American Alliance handout, "Suggested Discussion Topics," 8 May 1971, Record series 41/68/157, Folder: Asian American Alliance, 1971, 1974, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

¹⁹⁴ Debbie Shikami Ikeda interview, 5 March 2009.

¹⁹⁵ Frank Bing interview, 8 February 2009.

¹⁹⁶ George T. Yu (founding Director of University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Studies Program), interview by Sharon S. Lee, 1 March 2007 in Urbana, Illinois.

According to Gary Engelgau, who worked in the Office of Admissions and Records from 1967-1988 and was director of the office from 1981-1988, identifying underrepresented students for recruitment was primarily based on data from the census and on the pool of test takers. Groups were identified as underrepresented based on the percentage of who were taking college standardized tests like the ACT and Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) in comparison to the applicant and matriculation pool at UIUC. Looking at these measures, black students were the most underrepresented, followed by Hispanics. In addition, the political context of student activism added pressure for recruitment of these groups.¹⁹⁷ In particular for the EOP, Clarence Shelley explained, "We focused so much on enrollment that I think it may have hurt our efforts to work with Asian American students in terms of programming and support because enrollment numbers for Asian American students were never an issue. Because they were never an issue, serving them was not an issue either. We were never called to account for that."¹⁹⁸

For Alliance alumni, there were recollections of the greater awareness of African American and Latina/o students' issues during this time and the barriers to Asian American visibility. While the Asian American student community was diverse (with not all Asian American students coming from middle-class backgrounds), their visibility was lessened by a sense of their academic success. Steve Lee (BS, Chemistry, 1975) recalled, "I think our situation was kind of different because not as many of us came from disadvantaged backgrounds, and we tended to be more successful academically, so it was kind of hard for them to think of us as special-needs group in the same vein as African Americans and Latina/os."¹⁹⁹ Debbie Shikami Ikeda (BS, Elementary Education, 1974) also noted, "I think we were such a small group that

¹⁹⁷ Gary Engelgau (former University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Director of Admissions, 1981-1988), interview by Sharon S. Lee, 5 April 2007 in Urbana, Illinois.

¹⁹⁸ Clarence Shelley interview, 22 March 2007.

¹⁹⁹ Steve Lee interview, 4 April 2009.

administrators really didn't know our history at all. Whereas the black student groups and the Latina/o groups, there seemed to be more general knowledge about their struggles. And I think they had that whole model minority myth, and that was one of the things we would talk about in our (AAS) class. And so there was not a recognition that there were any issues for Asian Americans."²⁰⁰

At the same time, visibility for African Americans and Latina/os was greater because of the forms of organizing and protest that these groups took on, forms that were uncomfortable for some Asian American students. Steve Lee (BS, Chemistry, 1975) described,

There was a strong African American and Hispanic presence on campus, so there was kind of a desire to emulate what they were doing ... back then, I think that atmosphere was such that those two groups had more of a voice but they were also more ... rigorous in trying to seek recognition from the university and they got that. In fact, one of the things we used to joke about was, maybe because of our cultural upbringing, we were just not into confrontation and being demanding. And, it was just not comfortable for us. I think that our parents being more recent immigrants, certainly there was a Confucian ideals of respecting authority and civil disobedience, it just wasn't part of the cultural makeup. In fact, my parents, I remember, were alarmed that I was with a group that had any *possible* social-political agenda, because their recollection was when you're in China, that the government would crack down even before the communists, that civil disobedience was NOT a smart thing to do, so they kind of passed that down to me. They'd say don't make waves.²⁰¹

Thus, Asian American students were less prone to embrace more vocal forms of activism at the time, and these cultural pressures would continue to affect Asian American students in the 1980's and 1990's.

There were other challenges to Asian American visibility as well, including the youth of the Alliance as a student organization, its struggles to build unity among other Asian American students (many of whom did not want to identify as Asian American), and the lack of

²⁰⁰ Debbie Shikami Ikeda interview, 6 June 2009.

²⁰¹ Steve Lee interview, 4 April 2009.

administrative support. For instance, Steve Lee (BS, Chemistry, 1975) recalled obstacles to advocating for an Asian American cultural center and saying,

One thing was we didn't have faculty support. For example, there wasn't a lot of Asian American faculty. Most of the faculty were immigrants themselves and I don't think they necessarily saw themselves as relating to our goals and needs, it's kind of hard to get an engineering professor, for example, to see that as something he'd want to take on, whereas he's probably more research oriented. Or a chemistry or physics professor. For that reason, that sort of doomed us because you really need faculty support to sponsor you and also advocate for you and help you negotiate the system in terms of who do you talk to.²⁰²

Thus, Alliance members struggled to navigate campus life on their own without institutional support. Their activism also was new and paled in visibility compared to black and Latina/o students. These factors kept Asian American experiences invisible at UIUC.

Asian American Movements in the Midwest

In the 1970's, the Alliance was young and carving out its own space on campus; thus, protesting for an Asian American cultural center or for inclusion into minority programs that focused on African American students was premature. Asian American activism at this time at UIUC reflected a different type of activism in the Midwest, compared to the west coast. Particularly for Paul Wong and Patricia Hirota (Wong), this change of scenery was blatant, having come from Berkeley and having been involved in the Third World Liberation Front. Hirota (Wong) commented on her impressions of the differences between Berkeley's Asian American movement and the one that was forming in Illinois. She recalled of the Berkeley group:

They were so much more advanced politically, they had read all these things and they had been involved with things like the Young Socialist Alliance and the Black Panther Party. So they had been politically around for much longer and they were more sophisticated in so many different ways. And their whole sense of being Asian and being a revolutionary

²⁰² Steve Lee interview, 4 April 2009.

was really very strong. And then moving to the Midwest, it just felt more like ... it was like finding who they were. The whole identity thing was a huge part of it, that's why the sports and the cultural events were really important because we were isolated away from where we had grown up. So it just felt like a much more, in a way, innocent, less sophisticated group. But then, that was really important, in a way it was more virgin territory from where I came out of, from the bay area. So I felt like the whole social part was more important there than in Berkeley.²⁰³

Alliance members from Chicago also commented that Wong and Hirota (Wong) seemed to have a more advanced knowledge on the issues. Hailing from California, they came to the Midwest with a stronger sense of pride in being Asian American, having grown up around a larger Asian American community. In addition, their involvement in the Third World Liberation Front and push for Ethnic Studies at Berkeley connected them directly to the Asian American Studies movement. Californians had connections to resources for curriculum and information on how to start Asian American Studies programs, information that was not readily available in the Midwest.

For Asian Americans from Hawaii, the Midwest also opened their eyes to a new Asian American identity framed in mainland United States racial categories. Warren Nishimoto (BA, History, 1972) hailed from Hawaii and had never had to think about an Asian American identity, having grown up in a multi-ethnic neighborhood and school, with neighbors and classmates who were Hawaiian, Japanese, Chinese, Korean, and Filipino. Coming to Illinois was a new experience, and Nishimoto described that his initial impression of campus life was one that was more "white and black," with everyone else marginalized in between.²⁰⁴ When other students in the dorms inquired about his background, he had to articulate a whole string of identities for the first time: he had to explain that he was from Hawaii (but not ethnically Hawaiian), that he was Japanese American (not from Japan, he was a US citizen), and he also had to outline the history

²⁰³ Patricia Hirota interview, 12 March 2009.

²⁰⁴ Warren Nishimoto interview, 23 March 2009.

of Asian labor migration to Hawaii in order to explain why there were so many Japanese Americans in Hawaii. He described that the process forced him to articulate who he was for the first time, which in the long run was a positive thing because it helped him think about his identity in a new place with other Asian Americans.

The Midwest was a new site of Asian American identity and activism, one that began later than in California. As William Wei writes in his assessment of the Asian American movement in the Midwest, "Except for those living and laboring in such places as Chicago's Chinatown, most Midwestern Asian Americans had disappeared into suburbia. Without a physical community to relate to, Midwestern Asian Americans found it difficult to start and sustain an ethnic-consciousness movement. Accordingly, Asian American activism started later in the region and Asian American groups had a harder time recruiting and retaining members."²⁰⁵ Despite these challenges, Asian American students formed Asian American student organizations on campuses such as Oberlin College, the University of Minnesota Minneapolis, the University of Wisconsin Madison, and the University of Michigan Ann Arbor, along with UIUC.

In addition, Asian American student groups began convening at midwestern regional conferences in 1974; the first was held in Chicago on 12-14 April 1974. As a result of the first regional conference, students from the Madison Asian Union issued *Rice Paper*, a resource packet to serve as a voice to help unify Asian Americans in the Midwest. In its first issue, editors wrote, "Certainly one of the great obstacles in organizing Asians in the Midwest is our geographic and spiritual isolation. Our invisibility is so total that Asian Americans are not thought to exist in this 'vast banana wasteland.' As of yet there has been no coherent analysis defining our regional identity. This void not only stunts our individual understanding of our role

²⁰⁵ Wei, *The Asian American Movement*, 30.

in the Midwest, but also greatly handicaps the Asian American Movement in general."²⁰⁶ A list of contacts included those at the universities of Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota, as well as Michigan State, Washington University (St. Louis), Northwestern, Carleton College, Bowling Green State University, Oberlin College, and community groups in Chicago.

A second midwestern conference was held in Madison, Wisconsin from 26-29 September 1974, with the theme of "Getting Beyond Identity," covering issues such as Asian American sexuality, community activism, and Asian American college student experiences. Over seventy Asian American students and professionals attended, including members of the Alliance.²⁰⁷

The Decline of the Asian American Alliance

Records of the Asian American Alliance fade after 1975. There is some evidence as to the reasons behind the organization's end. A few Alliance members from UIUC attended the midwestern conferences; for the second one in Madison, the Alliance had a position paper included in *Rice Paper*. In it, Steve Lee (BS, Chemistry, 1975) reported on the challenges facing the Alliance. He wrote, "Externally, there is a failure to attract concerned Asians. Internally, the group lacks direction. Cohesiveness is lacking among the members and communication is poor. The burden of holding A³ (Asian American Alliance) together and promoting it has fallen on too few concerned Asians. As a result, the group is in the midst of reorganization and an assessment of itself." He went on to describe that few Asian American students were interested in Asian American educational activities (such as promoting the Asian American Studies course and

²⁰⁶ Rice Paper Collective, *Rice Paper*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1974, Folder: Midwest History, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

²⁰⁷ *Rice Paper*, vol. 1, no. 2, winter 1975, Folder: Midwest History, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

program) and concluded, "These efforts have been limited by, once again, our lack of concerned Asians willing to devote the time towards these activities."²⁰⁸

This concern over leadership of Asian American-related events (aside from those just social), revealed itself even earlier, in a 1972 letter to the *Daily Illini*. The Asian American Week Planning Committee wrote an open letter to Asian Americans, describing the Alliance's history (now one year old) and a desire to plan an Asian American Awareness Week for April 1972. However, the Committee expressed frustration:

But, our attempts at organizing this event have been disappointing because there has not been a significant number of Asian Americans willing to help organize such a program. We do not know if the apathy and indifference among the members of the Asian American Alliance towards a week of speeches and discussions on Asia and Asian Americans is due to ignorance or indolence. But whatever the reason for the past nonparticipation and noninvolvement, those of us interested in planning such a week of activities are asking that you show some interest in yourself as an Asian American now.²⁰⁹

Alliance leadership was particularly an issue by the end of the spring 1974 semester. By this time, a large cohort of active members graduated. The last record of the organization's registration on campus was dated September 1974, and the last public listing of an Alliance meeting was on 6 November 1974 in the *Daily Illini*.²¹⁰ In addition, on 22 January 1976, Campus Programs and Services published a notice in the *Daily Illini* to all student organizations that had not re-registered before the 15 October 1975 campus deadline, warning them that they would become inactive by 31 January 1976. The Alliance was listed as one of these organizations.²¹¹ Alliance alumni, especially those of the class of 1974, recalled the challenges in building new

²⁰⁸ Stephen Lee, "University of Illinois—Asian American Alliance," Position paper, 24 September 1974, *Rice Paper*, vol. 1, no. 2, winter 1975, p. 7, Folder: Midwest History, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

²⁰⁹ Asian American Week Planning Committee, letter to the editor, *Daily Illini*, February 16, 1974.

²¹⁰ Application for Registered Student Organization Status for period July 1, 1974 to October 1, 1975, for Asian American Alliance, 10 September 1974, Record series 41/2/41, Box 3, Asian American Alliance, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

²¹¹ Campus Programs and Services, "UIUC Official Notice," *Daily Illini*, January 22, 1976.

leadership before graduation, as outlined by Steve Lee in *Rice Paper*. Members recalled struggling to pass on leadership positions with little success. The momentum built up by Asian American students in the Alliance between 1971-1974 had begun to fade.

Conclusion

Given the locale and time, the Asian American movement at UIUC focused on identity and community building and was limited in size (the Asian American undergraduate student population in the 1970's at UIUC ranged about 300). Taking on large-scale Asian American issues on campus such as protesting for a cultural center or for inclusion into minority programs may have been premature. While the small numbers of Asian American students may have been "background noise" on campus, their coming together to create an Asian American space and articulate Asian American issues (nationally with the Vietnam War and on campus with the desire for AAS curricula) is significant for the time and region. In the process, they provided an important community of support to foster a sense of an Asian American identity. For those who had not had this kind of support, the Alliance was a critical space. Steve Lee (BS, Chemistry, 1975) recalled that his experience in the Alliance was significant because it provided him a community he had never had: "It meant a lot to me because being out in the suburbs, you could count on one hand how many other Asians were in your high school class. In fact, in my class, I think there might have been two other people, out of a class of 1,000. So that was really meaningful for me. So for my perspective being a suburban Chinese American, that made a *big* difference."²¹²

Recognition of minority needs at UIUC came from students who pushed the envelope, challenging university policies. The push first came from the Black Students Association who

²¹² Steve Lee interview, 4 April 2009.

was involved in the efforts for what would become SEOP and the recruitment of African American students. Then the push came from Latina/o students who sought a bilingual recruiter, staff, and a cultural center of their own. Asian American students also pushed for AAS courses, raised awareness on campus for Asian American issues, and protested the Vietnam War—operating in marginal spaces outside of EOP and OAR.

There is some evidence that UIUC administrators began re-examining "minority" definitions in the mid-1970's. On 22 November 1975, the Housing division sponsored a panel discussion on "What Is A Minority?" held in Allen hall. Panelists included Ben Rodriguez, graduate assistant of Campus Programs, and Oliver Tzeng, a professor of Psycholinguistics, as well as other representatives speaking on discrimination against Jews, African Americans, and women. Numerical representation was not the sole measure of minority status, they discussed, rather it was one of access to political and economic power. Tzeng asserted, "The Chinese problem is one of economic and social status, not whether we're a minority or a majority." He described the continued glass ceiling for Chinese technicians.²¹³ Sydney Kronus, assistant professor of Sociology, described that, "Any group that doesn't conform to majority ideas or doesn't look the same as the majority can be considered a minority."²¹⁴ According to this definition, the concept of a minority could be more open and flexible to recognize other students of color on campus, not just African Americans. In these important ways, a more expansive view of minority students could start to make room for Latina/o and Asian American students, who would continue to push for their needs at UIUC through the 1980's and 1990's.

²¹³ Howie Anderson, "Redefinition of Minority Status Suggested," *Daily Illini*, November 22, 1975; Memo from Mark Goldstein, "What is a Minority?" Program, 13 November 1975, Record series 41/64/40, Box 2, Folder: Correspondence, 1975-1976, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

²¹⁴ Anderson, "Redefinition of Minority Status Suggested."

CHAPTER FOUR

BUILDING A NEW ASIAN AMERICAN STUDENT COMMUNITY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES (1975-1992)

Campus records of Asian American student life between 1976-1986 at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) are sparse. However, this archival silence does not mean that Asian American students were not conversing with each other or struggling with issues of identity or campus adjustment. The few documents located from this time period reveal aspects of Asian American experiences at UIUC and in the Urbana-Champaign community. For instance, after the fall of Vietnam in 1975, a Southeast Asian community began resettling in the area with the help of church sponsorship, and their experiences (along with their children's experiences, some of who would become students at UIUC) were featured in the campus student newspaper the *Daily Illini*.¹

Another instance was an editorial written by Asian American community member Eunice A. Kambara to the *Daily Illini* in 1979. Kambara described her experiences with racism in Urbana-Champaign. She wrote,

Unless you have experienced this type of discrimination, you cannot really know what it feels like or what it really is. It is walking down the street and being stared at, hearing laughter directed at you. It is standing in a crowded elevator and having someone say to you, "hongy bong-won-wong-song," followed by laughter or spit. It is receiving cracks about being compact, like everything else made in Japan. It is being propositioned by strangers who claim to have "never had had an Oriental before." ... These examples are not fictitious. They have happened to me in Chicago, in small towns, in different states, on a "liberal" campus.... I am an American. I am proud of it. I am proud of my heritage. I

¹ Paula Thomas, "South Vietnamese Refugee Family Arrives in Champaign," *Daily Illini*, July 11, 1975; Leslie Doi, "Two Refugees Tell of Communist Takeovers: Survivors Leave Family, Friends to Reach Freedom," *Daily Illini*, May 8, 1985.

don't celebrate the bombing of Pearl Harbor. I don't eat French fries with chopsticks. I don't pad about my apartment or around campus in bound feet and a kimono, bowing as I go. Sadly enough, I cannot even speak Japanese. And yes, I can see perfectly well out of my slanted eyes. It saddens me to think that many people will never consider me an American, no matter what my beliefs are, or how many generations of my family have lived in this country. That ill is harbored against me for being a "foreigner."²

In addition, during the early 1980's, there was some campus visibility of Yukiko "Yuki" Llewellyn, a Japanese American administrator who had worked at UIUC since 1965 and who became the executive director of the Mothers Association and assistant dean of students in 1977.³ As a young girl, Llewellyn and her mother were relocated from their home in Los Angeles and were incarcerated in Manzanar during World War II. A famous photograph of Llewellyn was taken as she waited to board the train to the camps and was circulated during the Japanese American redress movement in the 1980's. Llewellyn was featured in the *Daily Illini* in November 1980.⁴ She was featured again in November 1987 as the Senate debated HR Bill 442, which would award monetary reparations to surviving Japanese American internees and establish a fund for educational materials about the internment.⁵ During her work with the Mothers Association, Llewellyn recalled that Japanese American parents sought her out on behalf of their children. She got to know several Japanese American students from Chicago in the late 1970's and early 1980's, students who would come to her house to eat "real rice."⁶ In 1983, Llewellyn became the director of Registered Organizations/ assistant dean of students and became a key administrator working with students writ large. She also became a critical ally and advocate for Asian American students in the 1980's and 1990's.

² Eunice A. Kambara, "Bigotry Still Exists in Melting Pot," *Daily Illini*, February 2, 1979.

³ Yuki Llewellyn (former University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Assistant Dean of Students), interview by Sharon S. Lee, 26 April 2007 in Urbana, Illinois.

⁴ Cheryl terHorst, "Assistant Dean's Memories Fresh," *Daily Illini*, November 20, 1980.

⁵ Andrew Garner, "Wounds of War: Detained Japanese Americans," *Daily Illini*, November 30, 1987.

⁶ Yuki Llewellyn interview, 26 April 2007.

Rising Asian American Enrollments at UIUC and the Model Minority Myth

Though Asian American visibility was low on campus during the 1980's, a few things are clear about this population. During the early 1980's, the enrollment of Asian American students at UIUC grew, nearly tripling in size. In 1976 there were a reported 392 Asian Pacific Islander American undergraduate students (1.6 percent). In 1985 this figure rose to 1,508 or 5.5 percent.⁷ In 1982, Asian American student numbers outnumbered African American students for the first time, when there were 981 African American undergraduate students (3.7 percent) compared to 1,043 Asian Americans (4.0 percent).

The Asian American model minority image was still going strong in the 1980's. In 1987, *Time* Magazine touted images of successful Asian American students and a cover title, "Those Asian-American Whiz Kids." While David Brand's feature article provided a more critical analysis of the model minority image—pointing out the problems of the stereotype that all Asian Americans excelled in math and science, the consequences of pressure from Asian parents to meet high educational expectations, and anti-Asian backlash—he concluded the story by reinforcing the model minority message that anything was achievable through hard work, comparing Asian American success to the struggles of Hispanics and African Americans. He stated, "If assimilation and other trends mean that the dramatic concentration of super-students has peaked, talented young Asian Americans have already shown that US education can still produce excellence. The largely successful Asian-American experience is a challenging

⁷ University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Office of Equal Opportunity and Access, "Undergraduate Enrollment by Racial/ Ethnic Category, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Fall 1967 to Fall 2008," <http://oeoa.illinois.edu/Undergraduate%20Enrollment%20by%20Race.pdf> (accessed October 15, 2009).

counterpoint to the charges that US schools are now producing less-educated mainstream students and failing to help underclass blacks and Hispanics."⁸

Asian American success in Illinois also reified the model minority image. An Associated Press story ran in the *Daily Illini* on 24 October 1988, describing the educational achievements of Asians in the state. It read, "Asian-Americans make up less than 2 percent of the state's population. But they account for 14 percent of the undergraduate class at the University of Illinois at Chicago, and last month at least 15 percent of all National Merit Scholarship semifinalists for the Chicago area were Asian-Americans.... While their national cultures and traditions diverge, there are certain common traits that have contributed to Asian-Americans' overall success—a devotion to hard work, a strong sense of the individual's obligation to family and society, and respect for education and teachers, experts say."⁹

As noted in chapter two, the demographic rise of Asian American students in higher education in the 1980's and 1990's was a result of the liberalization of immigration laws in 1965, as well as the decline of residential segregation, fueling the growth of Asian American student communities. Thus, as the numbers of Asian American students increased in the 1980's, life on college campuses was very different from the 1960's and 1970's. As William Wei points out, Asian American college students were now more ethnically diverse than those whose parents had immigrated before 1965. In addition, their parents benefited from 1965 legislation that favored professional groups; thus, more came from families with educational and professional training (with the exception of Southeast Asian refugees).¹⁰

⁸ David Brand, "The New Whiz-Kids: Why Asian-Americans are Doing So Well, and What it Costs Them," *Time Magazine*, August 31, 1987, vol. 130 no. 9, p. 51.

⁹ "Asians Find Success Easy to Get in Illinois: Achievements Show National Trend," Associated Press, *Daily Illini*, October 24, 1988.

¹⁰ William Wei, *The Asian American Movement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993).

These changes were reflected in demographic shifts in Illinois. While there were long histories of some Asian groups in Chicago (as noted in chapter three), after the 1965 Immigration Act and the fall of Vietnam, Asian immigration and refugee resettlement to Illinois increased dramatically. Before the 1960's, the major Asian American groups in Chicago were Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino. After the 1960's, there was significant growth in Chicago of Bangladeshi, Cambodian, Indian, Indonesian, Korean, Laotian, Nepalese, Pakistani, Thai, Tibetan, and Vietnamese communities, as well as continued immigration from China and the Philippines. By the end of the 1980's, there were 285,000 Asian Pacific Americans (APAs) in Illinois; by 1990, that number grew to 292,421.¹¹

Asian American numbers not only increased in the state, they also reflected a greater ethnic diversity than pre-1965 Asian American communities. This diversity posed challenges for working together in pan-Asian American groups. But the recognition of the necessity of collaboration facilitated a growing pan-Asian American movement. In Chicago, pan-Asian American organizations began to form in the 1980's such as the Asian-American Coalition in 1983 that coordinated a Lunar New Year celebration and gave political voice to the larger community.¹² In 1992, the Asian American Institute in Chicago formed as a "think tank" that publishes research and policy reports and had a founding governing board representing Vietnamese, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, Pakistani, and Asian Indian Americans.

Similar groups began to come together at colleges and universities. While the 1960's and 1970's movements for civil rights, anti-war, and Ethnic Studies had faded on a large scale, a new awareness and activism began to take shape. Wei notes that the post-1970's Asian American

¹¹ Asian American Institute, *Asian American Compass: A Guide to Navigating the Community*, 3rd Edition (Chicago: 2006), 10.

¹² Melita Marie Garza, "Asians Gain Clout as Ranks Grow," *Chicago Tribune*, Section: Chicagoland, March 4, 1990.

generations came to college with a sense of social justice, garnered from the gains made in the 1960's. Thus, a strong spirit of Asian American student activism began to grow on college campuses such as UIUC in the 1980's and 1990's.¹³

UIUC Minority Programs and a Focus on Underrepresentation

While Asian American student demographics were changing, some things remained the same. UIUC still did not acknowledge Asian Americans as a minority group; in fact, the growing numbers of Asian Americans and their aggregate academic success on campus reinforced a model minority stereotype. University minority programs still maintained their focus on improving the academic success of students along enrollment and retention. This focus should not be criticized per se, since this was always the mission of these programs, and it was always critical to improve enrollment and retention figures for populations such as African Americans and Latina/os.

However, this focus left Asian Americans in a murky racial space in campus minority programs. For instance, the ways in which Asian American students were discussed in the Educational Opportunities Program (EOP) require further investigation. Clearly, they were a small number of students served by the program, as they were not aggressively recruited. While small numbers of Asian American students did participate in EOP, there is some evidence that by the 1980's their academic achievement raised questions as to their inclusion. In an anonymous draft memo dated 2 June 1983, EOP eligibility was discussed in particular relation to "Oriental" students in the following way:

Clearly, one of the designated goals of this program has been to increase the representation of those ethnic groups under-represented on campus, and as we look at data from the 1980 census, its clear that (those who) are under-represented as we look at

¹³ Wei, *The Asian American Movement*, 151.

the proportion on this campus to the proportion in higher education in Illinois, or more directly the proportion of the population in Illinois, are blacks and Hispanics. One could argue that even American Indians are proportionately represented on this campus. *The unfortunate part is just that the percentages is soo small all around it is clear who is over-represented on this campus specifically in higher education compared to the portion of the population, are Oriental students. This has been a difficult, growing concern of those persons working in the Educational Opportunities Program area, as I understand it....* What we wish to clarify in this issue is that essentially they are over-represented.... In other words, when we are under those constraints, the question would be what type of a break should we be giving Oriental students because they "are not under-represented."¹⁴

While the author and context of this memo are unclear, the message in the early 1980's was one that identified blacks and Hispanics as underrepresented and well served by EOP and "Oriental" or Asian American students as overrepresented and hence questionable beneficiaries of the program. Because of this measure of population parity, Asian Americans did not fit in minority programs.

A focus on African Americans and Latina/os continued as the EOP expanded. As the EOP grew, the need for a permanent campus program to develop its services became clear. In 1988, the EOP was renamed the Office of Minority Student Affairs (OMSA).¹⁵ Its mission today reads: "The Office of Minority Student Affairs is responsible for providing leadership in developing, implementing, and coordinating student support services and activities designed to assist underrepresented students' personal development, academic achievement, and graduation."¹⁶ The office serves students admitted through OMSA programs but also three underrepresented student populations writ large: "The department serves African American, Latino/a, and Native American undergraduates, as well as students from all backgrounds who are admitted through (OMSA) programs such as the Educational Opportunities Program, the

¹⁴ No author, 2 June 1983, pp. 2-3, Record series 25/2/5, Box 3, Folder: EOP Brochures, Correspondence, Memos, 1980-1984, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives. Emphasis mine.

¹⁵ Stanley R. Levy to Deans, Directors, and Department Heads, Subject: Office of Minority Student Affairs, 10 February 1988, Record series 41/1/6, Box 112, Folder: Minority Student Affairs, 1987-1988, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

¹⁶ Office of Minority Student Affairs, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, <http://www.omsa.uiuc.edu/mission.aspx> (accessed September 28, 2009).

President's Award Program, and the Liberal Arts and Sciences' Transition/ Bridge Program."¹⁷

OMSA programs did not exclude any group based on race, nor did they set quotas; thus, they complied with the *Bakke* decision of 1978.¹⁸

Through the 1980's, OMSA oversaw a number of programs focused on outreach, recruitment, and retention of underrepresented students. These included EOP (academic and counseling support); the President's Award program (established in 1984 to attract high-achieving black and Hispanic students through need-based grants); and student support services through federally funded programs such as TRIO and Upward Bound. OMSA also provided an orientation program, tutoring and skills classes, and referrals to other campus units such as the Counseling Center and Career Development office.¹⁹ While some individual Asian American students could partake of OMSA services if they were admitted through its programs based on socioeconomic qualifications, in general the focus was on African American and Latina/o students because of their underrepresentation.²⁰

From a broader policy perspective, state legislation defined "minority" populations more broadly and did include Asian Americans. For instance, in 1985, the Illinois General Assembly

¹⁷ Office of Minority Student Affairs.

¹⁸ Jim Andrews, "University Aims for Diversity by Recruiting Minorities," *Daily Illini*, December 6, 1978; Jim Dray, "Gerberding Sees No Bakke Effect," *Daily Illini*, June 29, 1978.

¹⁹ Office of Minority Student Affairs Program Description, 5 October 1987, Record series 41/1/6, Box 112, Folder: Minority Student Affairs, 1987-1988, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

²⁰ Elaine Copeland, Director of Minority Student Affairs Office to Executive Head of Departments, Subject: Recruiting Minority Graduate Students, in April 1977 Report on the Minority Student Programs, Urbana-Champaign Campus, 4 April 1977, Record series 24/9/2, Box 5, Folder: Minority Student Programs and Report, 1977, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives; Minority Student Affairs Office, Graduate College at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, "A Listing of Educational Grants for Minority Students from Selected Foundations, Funds, and Individuals," Record series 41/1/6, Box 112, Folder: Minority Student Affairs, 1987-88, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives; Summary of Graduate College Efforts to Increase Enrollment of Under-represented Minority Students at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Record series 41/1/6, Box 81, Folder: Report by the Ad-hoc Committee on Minority Student Affairs, 1983, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives. A Minority Student Affairs Office of the UIUC Graduate College, established in 1969, began with a focus to reach American Indians, Black Americans, Latina/os, and Asians. Graduate college fellowships for underrepresented minority groups included Asian Americans. However, by 1983 in a status report, the office did *not* include any enrollment figures or updates for Asian American graduate students while doing so for black, Hispanic, and Native American students. It is unclear when or why Asian Americans disappear from the Graduate College minority discourse, and additional research is needed on this front.

passed Public Act 84-726 requiring public institutions of higher education to develop plans to increase the participation of underrepresented groups, including women and the disabled. This act was amended in 1988 by Public Act 85-283 and outlined the following:

To require public institutions of higher education to develop and implement methods and strategies to increase the participation of minorities, women and handicapped individuals who are traditionally under-represented in education programs and activities. For the purpose of this Section, minorities shall mean persons who are citizens of the United States and who are: (a) Black (a person having origins in any of the black racial groups in Africa); (b) Hispanic (a person of Spanish or Portuguese culture with origins in Mexico, South or Central America, or the Caribbean, regardless of race); (c) Asian American (a person having origins in any of the original people of the Far East, Southeast Asia, the Indian Subcontinent or the Pacific Islands); or (d) American Indian or Alaskan Native (a person having origins in any of the original people of North America).²¹

Illinois statute 9.16 also held the same wording. The statute required public institutions to report to the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) on their programs for underrepresented groups.

While the Illinois law defined Asian Americans as a minority group (which Asian American students would emphasize in the 1990's), the IBHE focus was on African American and Latina/o students. For instance in 1986, an IBHE annual report cited that racial and ethnic minorities included black, non-Hispanic; Hispanic; Asian or Pacific Islander; and American Indian or Alaskan. However, the report read, "These categories have been established and defined by the federal government for purposes of various policies and data reports. *For purposes of this report, data about Black and Hispanic groups are highlighted because these two groups are most under-represented in Illinois higher education compared to their proportions in the state population.*"²² The report pointed out that, "Black and Hispanic individuals are not as well represented proportionally in most aspects of higher education as they are in the state's

²¹ Public Act 85-283 (Senate Bill No. 1101) in *Laws of the State of Illinois Eighty-Fifth Assembly 1987, Public Act 85-1 Thru Public Action 85-1009*, 1606-1607.

²² State of Illinois Board of Higher Education 1986 Report on Minority Participation in Illinois Higher Education, 8 July 1986, p. 1, Record series 41/1/6, Box 111, Folder: Minority Retention IBHE, 1989-1990, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives. Emphasis mine.

population as a whole and in public elementary and secondary education."²³ Additional findings were that black and Hispanic students' representation declined at each educational level; they were better represented in community colleges; and they did not complete their degrees at equivalent rates to their enrollment.

In the following year's IBHE report, there was an additional explanation of why black and Hispanic students were the focus. The report read: "In the 1980 census, Asians or Pacific Islanders accounted for 1.4 percent of the state's population and American Indians or Alaskans accounted for 0.1 percent. These groups are represented to this extent or greater in most aspects of Illinois higher education."²⁴ UIUC Chancellor Morton Weir was also quoted in the *Daily Illini* regarding why the focus of such efforts was on African Americans and Latina/os. He stated, "We try to spend money where there is clear underrepresentation. Native Americans are not underrepresented on this campus."²⁵ And in 1990, a campus report read, "Given the significant representation of Asian students on campus and the very small proportion of American Indians in the state's population (0.1 percent to 0.2 percent for the campus), UIUC has targeted its minority recruitment efforts on increasing Black and Hispanic enrollments."²⁶

Because the Native American population in the state was so low, its low figures in enrollment did not signal underrepresentation; thus, they were not a focus population for UIUC minority programs. Asian Americans, clearly overrepresented in enrollment figures compared to state population statistics, were also overlooked. There were additional cited measures showing

²³ State of Illinois Board of Higher Education 1986 Report on Minority Participation in Illinois Higher Education. 1, 3.

²⁴ State of Illinois Board of Higher Education, 1987 Report on Minority Student Participation in Illinois Higher Education, Part A, p. 1, Record series 24/9/2, Box 6, Folder: Allerton Conference: 1988—"The Role and Responsibility of the U of I for the Education of Minorities," University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

²⁵ Sabrina L. Miller, "The 80's Mark Strides in Minority Enrollment," *Daily Illini* Finals Edition, 1989.

²⁶ Institutional Plan to Improve the Participation and Success of Minority, Female, and Disabled Students and Staff at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1990, p. 1, Record series 41/1/6, Box 111, Folder: Minority Retention IBHE, 1989-90, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

that Asian American academic success outpaced their representation in the study body. For instance, through the 1980's Asian Americans enjoyed high retention rates—as high as white students. In 1988, William Savage, then assistant chancellor and director of Affirmative Action, cited the following retention statistics: after five years, the retention rate for blacks was 45 percent; 55 percent for Hispanics, 72 percent for Asians, and 75 percent for non-minorities.²⁷ In 1990, a UIUC report found nearly 60 percent of blacks and Hispanics graduated or were still enrolled in pursuit of their degrees by the end of five years. These rates were far below the 81 percent rate of whites and Asians.²⁸

As Gary Engelgau, director of the Office of Admissions and Records from 1981-1988, noted in chapter three, another measure of underrepresentation was a racial comparison of the percentage of high school graduates and American College Test (ACT) takers in the state of Illinois to those enrolled at UIUC. In 1989, the black undergraduate population was 6.7 percent at UIUC, a figure that was lower than its 15.1 percent in the state, 15.2 percent of high school graduates, and 11.4 percent of ACT test takers. That same year, the Hispanic undergraduate population was 3.7 percent of UIUC, lower than its 6.5 percent in the state and its 4.5 percent of high school graduates, but on par with its 3.7 percent of ACT test takers.²⁹

While Asian American students were not, writ large, included in university minority programs, they *were* included in some reports and forms that tabulated minority student populations at UIUC. This inclusion followed federal guidelines established by the US Office of Education and the US Office of Civil Rights, which outlined racial/ ethnic categories in the late

²⁷ Lisa Kernek, "A Sea of Many Colors: Campus Offers Social Groups, Counseling for Minorities," *Daily Illini* New Student Guide, August 1988.

²⁸ Institutional Plan to Improve the Participation and Success of Minority, Female, and Disabled Students and Staff at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1990, 2.

²⁹ Office of the Chancellor Affirmative Action Office, Affirmative Action Report and Reference Source, Minority Students, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, February 1990, pp. 52, 53, Record series 25/2/5, Box 6, Folder: Minority Admissions Committee, Memos and Reports, 1990, 1 of 2, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

1960's as American Indian, Black American, Oriental American, Spanish surnamed, and Caucasian, revised in 1976 as American Indian or Alaskan Native; Black Non-Hispanic; Asian or Pacific Islander; Hispanic; and White Non-Hispanic.³⁰

Thus, this inconsistent definition of Asian Americans as minorities was confusing—they were included in data reports on minority students but not targeted for services in the same way as underrepresented minority groups were. For instance, in a 1986 *Daily Illini* article about minority student numbers, then vice president for Academic Affairs Morton Weir cited that minority students made up 11.6 percent of undergraduates (though broken down, 5.5 percent of that number was Asian Americans).³¹ In a 1990 university report, administrators reported that minority enrollment was on the rise in the 1980's, with Asians enjoying "the most rapid growth and represent the largest minority group at 8.5 percent in 1989."³² The inclusion of Asian Americans in minority student tabulation inflated the total numbers and made the campus appear diverse, yet there were no diversity programs or resources targeted for Asian American students.

This inclusion in reports that recognized and grouped Asian Americans with other minority groups ran counter to UIUC policies that did not offer any Asian American-specific services or support. When turned away from OMSA, Asian American students in the 1980's and 1990's did not have an alternative institutional space, and they began to question why the university counted Asian Americans as minorities in name but not in practice. They even began to question if minority program funding from the state or federal governments were being garnered through "inflated" minority numbers but were not being funneled down to Asian

³⁰ DJ Wermers, Assistant Director, University Office of School and College Relations, "Enrollment at the University of Illinois by Racial Ethnic Categories, Fall Terms 1967-1975," Folder: Misc. Student Affairs Memos re: Asian Americans, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

³¹ Robin Gareiss, "Minorities: How Successful are UI Recruitment and Retention Efforts?" *Daily Illini*, September 30, 1986.

³² Institutional Plan to Improve the Participation and success of Minority, Female, and Disabled Students and Staff at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1990, p. 1, Record series 41/1/6, Box 111, Folder: Minority Retention IBHE, 1989-90, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

American students, a criticism that was part of a growing Asian American movement on campus. This challenge emerged as students pushed for services, as I will discuss in the next chapter.

The Asian American Association

Ironically, a focus on numerical representation haunted Asian American students when they were both small *and* large in number at UIUC. In the 1970's, there were too few to garner administrative attention. In the 1980's and 1990's, their high numbers lent weight to the sense that they needed nothing special or unique. At the same time, the prospect of the mobilization of the large numbers of Asian American students in the later era *did* move administrators to pay them more attention. Forming a new pan-Asian American community began to take on a greater importance in the 1980's and 1990's, as students desired social support and increased their political advocacy.

After the Asian American Alliance folded, Asian American students did not come together again as a registered organization at UIUC until 1986, when they created the Asian American Association (AAA). Asian American students in the 1980's and 1990's were now more likely to be children of post-1965 immigrants as opposed to those in the Alliance in the 1970's. In 1986, two Chinese American students Loretta Chou (BS, Chemical Engineering, 1989) and Rebecca Li (BS, Chemical Engineering, 1989) founded AAA, the second pan-Asian American student organization at UIUC. According to its constitution, AAA's purpose was to "act as a support group of Asian Americans at the University of Illinois." Its objectives were to provide social activities and cultural awareness for Asian American students and to promote awareness of Asian American issues to the campus community.³³ The need for such an organization was

³³ Constitution of the Asian-American Association, University of Illinois, 26 June 1986, Folder: AAA Archives, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

clear, just as the absence of an Asian American space prompted the creation of the Asian American Alliance in 1971. Co-founder Loretta Chou recalled thinking of the idea for the organization after visiting friends at the University of Michigan Ann Arbor, which had its own Asian American Association. She said,

I was kind of intrigued because at the time when we were at the University of Illinois, there was nothing for Asian Americans. There was a Chinese association, which consisted primarily of new immigrants. These were students who identified more with the Chinese culture. There was a Korean association and a couple of other (Asian ethnic) groups. But there was nothing for people born in the US yet were Asian and raised between two cultures: American and Asian. When I heard about this Asian American Association at the University of Michigan, I thought how it's interesting that the University of Illinois has been around for so long and has such a huge population of Asian Americans, but they don't have anything like this group.... So Rebecca and I started exploring ideas and talking to people about how to actually start up a club.³⁴

AAA held its first informational meeting on 10 April 1986 to discuss plans for the new organization that included social dances, movies, picnics, sports activities, ski trips, and a banquet. One idea included having speakers come to talk about Asian American issues.³⁵ Officers included President Loretta Chou and Vice president Rebecca Li, along with a co-vice president, secretary, art and graphics chair, publicity chair, social chairs, and a sports coordinator. AAA's first advisor was Yuki Llewellyn.

In their first newsletter in April 1986, the Association acknowledged the Asian American Alliance as an important part of UIUC history and presented the need for a new organization for Asian American students:

Ten years ago there was an organization called the Asian American Alliance at the University of Illinois. Unfortunately, because of administration problems, it ended a couple of years later. Since then the more than 1,000 Asian-Americans on campus have gone without such a group. We all feel that there still is a need for a similar group on

³⁴ Loretta Chou (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign alumnus), phone interview by Sharon S. Lee, 17 June 2009.

³⁵ "A Brief Overview of the Meeting," Asian-American Association Newsletter, AAA News, April 1986, Issue #1, Champaign-Urbana, p. 1, Record series 41/2/40, Box 10, Folder: Asian American Association Newsletters 1986-1998, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

campus which would provide opportunities for Asian-Americans to interact and socialize with one another. Although there exist many specific Asian nationality groups on campus, there is no one organization that encompasses these and brings them together. With the support and encouragement of many of our friends, we founded the Asian-American Association.³⁶

However, despite the acknowledgement of and awareness of the Alliance, there was no direct connection between the Alliance and AAA (despite even sharing the same acronym). Rather, the Association had more of a direct lineage to its parallel student organization at Michigan; Chou recalled modeling UIUC's group's constitution and by-laws from Michigan's model.³⁷

During its first semester, AAA hosted a picnic and a "spring tango" dance. In the next few years, the group hosted other social activities such as dances, sports outings (bowling, ice skating), cooking lessons, picnics, and a fashion show.³⁸ AAA's early years had a social focus. Chou recalled, "AAA was very small when we first started, we weren't even sure that it would continue. So at that point we were doing more social things to attract groups of Asian Americans together and to network from there. And I think it really took off after that when people started to raise other Asian American issues. But in the first year we didn't have any of that. Ours was really just about social networking."³⁹ Still, this social networking was an important basis from which to build a new Asian American student community at UIUC, one that had the new challenge of transcending more Asian ethnic lines that the Asian American Alliance had not had to face. As AAA grew, its diversity also grew. For instance by 1991, five years after its founding,

³⁶ "How We Started," Asian-American Association Newsletter, AAA News, April 1986, Issue #1, Champaign-Urbana, p. 1, Record series 41/2/40, Box 10, Folder: Asian American Association Newsletters 1986-1998, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

³⁷ Loretta Chou interview, 17 June 2009.

³⁸ "Remember When," AAA 10th anniversary commemorative packet, Folder: AAA Historical Resources, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

³⁹ Loretta Chou interview, 17 June 2009.

AAA had around 370 members, representing Chinese, Taiwanese, Korean, Filipino, Vietnamese, Thai, Japanese, and East Asian Indian American backgrounds.⁴⁰

Emerging Asian American Racial Awareness

Political, cultural, and educational issues did begin to emerge within AAA by the late 1980's, as revealed by the involvements of its leaders. For instance, in March of 1988 AAA President Eugene Hsu spoke on a university panel discussion about racism. According to AAA's tenth anniversary packet, "At a panel discussion, Eugene stated, 'the 'model-minority' image is misleading. He continued by saying that Asian-Americans' incomes are just as diverse as any other minority group."⁴¹ In addition, in the spring of 1989, AAA coordinated important awareness activities including an Asian Awareness Day and the first annual Midwest Asian American Students Conference (MAAS, which I will discuss in greater detail later in this chapter).

This shift reflected a new development of what co-founder Loretta Chou had envisioned. Jody Lin (BS, 1991, Bioengineering), president of AAA from 1989-1991, described this new shift in the AAA newsletter in September of 1989:

A little bit about Asian-American Association—for those of you who received a flyer during Quad Day, you already know that AAA was formed in 1986, mainly as a support group (i.e. social club) for Asian (American) students at the University of Illinois. AAA quickly gained a reputation for holding great dances and exciting sporting events, but in the areas of Asian-American awareness and culture, there were few events, if any, of which to speak. Last year, however, in response to a rise in racial incidents on college campuses across the nation, Asian-American Association took steps to expand Asian

⁴⁰ Midwest Asian American Students Conference 1991 Booklet, p. 12, Folder: MAAS/ MAASU Early Programs, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

⁴¹ "Remember When," AAA 10th anniversary commemorative packet.

awareness on campus and to sponsor more events dealing with Asian culture and Asian-American perspective.⁴²

Announcements and articles in AAA newsletters reflected this shift in focus around this time; while the group continued to hold social gatherings, sports tournaments, and parties, there were also more articles related to anti-Asian racism, pressures of the model minority myth, and inter-generational and inter-cultural conflict between Asian immigrant parents and their US-born children.

Lin's mention of the rise of racial incidents referred to a growing awareness and documentation of anti-Asian violence in the 1980's. Most infamous of these attacks was the 1982 beating death of Chinese American Vincent Chin in Detroit. Two white automobile factory workers Ronald Ebens and Michael Nitz accosted Chin on the night of his bachelor party. Ebens and Nitz called Chin a "Jap" and declared he was the reason for the unemployment of Detroit's autoworkers, referring to the backlash of Japan's auto import industry during the city's economic recession. A fight ensued, with Ebens and Nitz beating Chin with a baseball bat and killing him. Ultimately the men were sentenced to three years probation and fined \$3,780.⁴³ These unjust sentences mobilized a pan-Asian American movement and coalition, American Citizens for Justice (ACJ). As awareness of Chin's murder grew, Asian American coalitions in New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Chicago began to speak out about anti-Asian violence in their communities. The ACJ pushed for a civil rights investigation and in November 1983, a federal grand jury indicted Ebens and Nitz for violating Chin's civil rights; in June a jury found Ebens guilty. However, due to errors, the case was retried in 1986 in Cincinnati where a jury found

⁴² Jody Lin, "Welcome," *The Dynasty*, Newsletter of the Asian-American Association, volume IV, no. 1, September 1989, p. 1, Folder: AAA Newsletters, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

⁴³ Helen Zia, *Asian American Dreams: The Emergence of an American People* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2000).

Ebens not guilty. Vincent Chin has become an important figure and symbol of anti-Asian violence and represents the ways that all Asian American groups can be racially targeted during times of economic or military crisis, as they are presumed to be foreign and disloyal despite generations of citizenship in the United States.⁴⁴

Though most high profile, Chin's murder was unfortunately not an isolated case. Other incidents of anti-Asian violence took place in the 1980's and 1990's. Following the stereotype of Asians as foreigners, anti-Japanese sentiment emerged in 1989 when Japan purchased stock of Rockefeller Center, with newspaper columnists complaining of a "Japanese take over." Helen Zia notes that these feelings were reflected in a rise of anti-Asian incidents; in a two-week period in December of 1989, at least nine Asian Americans were attacked in New York City.⁴⁵ In 1987 in New Jersey, a hate group calling themselves the "Dotbusters" formed, and a rash of assaults and vandalism occurred against South Asian Americans.⁴⁶ Also in January 1989 in Stockton, California, Patrick Purdy opened fire on Cleveland elementary school, which was 70 percent Asian American, killing five Southeast Asian American children and wounding thirty others.⁴⁷ Subsequent investigation discovered that Purdy resented Asians, and a racial motive was probably the cause. The rise of violence led to the creation of the Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence in New York in 1986.

Attacks and racial harassment also occurred against Asian American college students. In December of 1987, a group of eight Asian American students at the University of Connecticut Storrs were spit upon and racially harassed by white students on a bus on the way to and during a

⁴⁴ Historical examples include the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II for fear of espionage and the backlash against South Asians after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001.

⁴⁵ Zia, *Asian American Dreams*, 90.

⁴⁶ United States Commission on Civil Rights, *Civil Rights Issues Facing Asian Americans in the 1990's* (Washington DC: United States Commission on Civil Rights, February 1992).

⁴⁷ Zia, *Asian American Dreams*, 91.

Christmas dance.⁴⁸ In 1989, Chinese American Jim Ming Hai Loo, a student in Raleigh, North Carolina, was killed by two white brothers Lloyd and Robert Piche who hurled racial slurs at Loo and blamed him for the death of US soldiers in Vietnam.

Hate crime data collection was spotty before the 1990 Hate Crime Statistics Act, but some local statistics showed the extent of anti-Asian violence in the 1980's. For instance, a US Commission on Civil Rights report noted that in 1988, Asians were victims of 20 percent of hate crimes in Philadelphia despite being under 4 percent of the city. In Los Angeles between 1986 and 1989, 15.2 percent of hate crime victims were Asian. And in Chicago, the Asian Human Services organization reported thirty bias crimes against Asians in 1989, an increase from twenty in 1988.⁴⁹ In the 1990's, the National Asian Pacific American Legal Committee (NAPALC) conducted an audit of violence against APAs and found 458 anti-Asian incidents in 1995, an increase from 452 in 1994 and a 37 percent increase of 335 incidents in 1993.⁵⁰ In 1996, NAPALC found a 17 percent increase of 534 incidents.⁵¹

The story of Vincent Chin and the documentary film profiling the case produced in 1988 titled *Who Killed Vincent Chin?* had an impact on Asian American student leaders. The film was shown at UIUC in May 1989, December 1990, December 1991, and December 1997. Student leaders described the significance of the film in raising awareness that racism existed against Asians. Ho Chie Tsai (BS, 1994, Electrical Engineering) recalled, "When we viewed the *Who Killed Vincent Chin?* documentary, that was the defining moment for me. When I walked out after the film was over, I realized that as a community, we really had to do something bigger and

⁴⁸ *Civil Rights Issues Facing Asian Americans in the 1990's*, 41-44.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 46-47.

⁵⁰ National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium, "Audit of Violence Against Asian Pacific Americans: The Consequences of Intolerance in America, Third Annual Report," p. 1, http://www.advancingequality.org/files/1995_Audit.pdf (accessed September 13, 2009).

⁵¹ National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium, "Audit of Violence Against Asian Pacific Americans: The Violent Impact on a Growing Community, Fourth Annual Report," p. 1, http://www.advancingequality.org/files/1996_Audit.pdf (accessed September 13, 2009).

better."⁵² Likewise, Karin Wang (BS, 1992, Finance) described the impact of the documentary on her own personal and professional development: "I know I became much more interested in the political issues after we did a showing of the *Who Killed Vincent Chin?* video. For me, the Vincent Chin case was part of the transformation process, about wanting to go to law school. When I saw that video, I was astounded that something like that had happened, and that I didn't know about it, and even worse, that the perpetrators, who really didn't deny that they committed the crime, walked away."⁵³

In light of this disturbing trend of anti-Asian racism and violence, AAA President Jody Lin, along with other leaders, pushed the young organization into a more educational role. By fall of 1990, Lin articulated the goals of AAA in the newsletter. He acknowledged AAA's social aspect but also emphasized the need for greater awareness and coalition building, writing, "This year, there are several general goals we would like to accomplish: 1) involve the members more in the planning and execution of programs, 2) maintain our solid reputation as a fun, social club, 3) provide even more awareness and culture programs, and 4) reach out to organizations of our ethnic groups through various programs."⁵⁴ That year, a new position in AAA was created called "Special Projects," which Ho Chie Tsai (BS, 1994, Electrical Engineering) helped fill. Tsai explained that this position was created to expand AAA beyond a social group: "When Jody and Karin were officers, they wanted to make sure AAA had bigger scope, so they essentially created a 'special projects' chair. At that time, it was our job to figure out some fundraising projects and tackle other issues aside from just social events. As we tried to figure out other ways we could

⁵² Ho Chie Tsai (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign alumnus), interview by Sharon S. Lee, 28 July 2008 in Manchester, Indiana.

⁵³ Karin Wang (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign alumnus), phone interview by Sharon S. Lee, 8 September 2008.

⁵⁴ Jody Lin, "Letter From Jody," *The Dynasty*, Newsletter of the Asian-American Association, volume V, no. 1, September 1990, p. 1, Folder: AAA Historical Resources, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

grow AAA, we asked ourselves many questions: How can we do more educational things? How can we do more cultural things so that people can appreciate their identity? How can we learn to really bond as a stronger pan-Asian American community?"⁵⁵

By the fall of 1991, an additional AAA officer position was created titled "Awareness," further expanding this move. Then AAA president Karin Wang urged members to become aware of Asian American issues and identified the lack of resources on campus. In the AAA newsletter, she wrote, "Unfortunately YOU have to make the first move since there is no Asian American studies curriculum currently implemented here, no Asian American studies library, etc. Several of the AAA officers have lent their own books and files of newspaper & magazine clippings to the AAA office, so that is one place to start. AAA also has an Awareness Committee that through discussions, writing, & programs, seeks to raise awareness of both Asian American students and the University community overall."⁵⁶ The first Awareness chair was Jessica Chen (BS, 1994, Chemical Engineering).

As Special Project and Awareness chairs, Ho Chie Tsai and Jessica Chen took it upon themselves to learn more about Asian American Studies (AAS). Hungry for AAS course material, Tsai decided to take a class in Asian American history at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) during the summer of 1991. Going on his own (with no external funding), Tsai recalled the impression the course made on him:

The Asian American Studies course was eye opening, and I completely enjoyed the content and experience. In my memory, it was both intimidating and exciting to be a part of a structured Ethnic Studies program. However, when most other students in the class appeared to be just fulfilling some sort of credit requirement, I really could feel how meaningful it was to discover our history documented in textbooks and writings. I was so happy to be there and learning about my history.

⁵⁵ Ho Chie Tsai interview 28 July 2008.

⁵⁶ *Horizons: The Newsletter of the Asian American Association*, volume 1, no. 1, October 1991, p. 1, Folder: AAA Historical Resources, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

Also, I'll never forget the feeling of walking through the "stacks" of the AAS department. I couldn't believe how many resources were archived there! I was completely in awe that there were so many professors and graduate teaching assistants in the department. I'm quite sure I fell into the bright-eyed timid student category—a country mouse lost in awe of the bright lights, big city. I absorbed the experience. I knew there were lessons to be taken home to Champaign-Urbana.⁵⁷

The following summer, Tsai encouraged Chen to return to UCLA for another AAS class. Tsai recalled, "She decided in less than five minutes to do it. Our plan would be to try to learn what we could, but more importantly, 'research' their AAS program and bring back resources and syllabi."⁵⁸

The Growth of Other Asian Ethnic and Asian American Student Organizations at UIUC

The late 1980 and 1990's were a time when Asian ethnic and other Asian American organizations, along with AAA, began to develop and re-form at UIUC. There was the Philippine Student Association (PSA, with roots in the 1940's, reorganized in 1985 to focus on undergraduate student members), the Korean Undergraduate Students Association (KUSA, established in 1979 and changed its name to Korean American Students Association or KASA in 1995), the Vietnamese Student Association (VSA, established 1983), the Indian Student Association (ISA, registered as a group in 1987, with roots from the 1940's), and the Taiwanese American Students Club (TASC, established 1991).⁵⁹

Because of the proliferation of Asian ethnic organizations, building community *across* ethnic lines was difficult in the late 1980's. A sense of competition infused the groups, even in competing over visibility as the best social organization. Though AAA had a diverse ethnic

⁵⁷ Ho Chie Tsai interview 28 July 2008.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ "About the Asian American Student Community at the U of I," *Perspectives: A Special Publication of the 1994 MAAS Conference*, pp. 39-41, Folder: MAAS/ MAASU Early Programs, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

membership, it tended to be East Asian (Chinese and Taiwanese American). Each organization had its own focus and mission. Ho Chie Tsai (BS, 1994, Electrical Engineering), who came to join almost every Asian organization on campus in an effort to build trust and connections, recalled each of the organization's predominant focus at the time, describing how memberships rarely crossed organizational lines.

There was a Chinese Student Association for the graduate students, but there wasn't a Chinese American Student Association. The other organizations on campus at that time included the Indian Student Association, which was very large, but again, slightly invisible. They tended to do a lot of cultural events like "India Night." The Vietnamese Student Association was very big, but they were also quiet and tended to focus on their annual Family Night program spending most of their year planning for that; it was primarily focused on the Vietnamese community from Champaign and from the Chicago suburbs. The Hong Kong Student Association was around but very small. The Korean Undergraduate Student Association was large, but they were very much tied to the church groups. In some respects, they were a relatively closed community, but they were known for hosting competitive sports tournaments. I think volleyball and basketball were their main sports events back then.⁶⁰

Despite the predominance of ethnic-specific Asian groups, there was also a growth of pan-Asian American organizations at UIUC beyond AAA in the 1990's that began to articulate a larger Asian American awareness. Asian American student organizations began working together to sponsor events and advocate for Asian American issues. This coalition building was difficult at times but was critical to raising awareness of Asian American experiences, in particular challenging the model minority myth, articulating that Asian American students had a racial experience, and advocating for resources, namely an Asian American cultural center under Student Affairs and an academic Asian American Studies program. Such resources were denied, students felt, because the administration did not recognize Asian American students as minorities.

⁶⁰ Ho Chie Tsai interview 28 July 2008.

The Asian Council

While the establishment of AAA signaled an important first step in community building in this period, the increasing needs and interests of Asian American students led to the formation of additional pan-Asian American organizations. One such organization was the Asian Council, formed in the spring of 1990 by Ramesh Subramani (BS, 1991, Chemical Engineering). Subramani was a member of AAA as well as the Indian Student Association (ISA) and was interested in building better working relations among the different Asian American ethnic groups. The Asian Council was also more of an advocacy organization, compared to AAA. Subramani described the differences in the organizations this way: "The genesis of AAA was to bring together Asian American students into social events. A number of ethnic-specific organizations started around the same time for Koreans, Indians, and other Asian groups, which to a certain degree competed with AAA. The Asian Council started to bring together all the various Asian groups to focus their voice on issues specific to the collective community."⁶¹ In addition, building a new organization could help create coalitions. Subramani recalled, "Because there were a number of different campus Asian organizations already, it was easier to start something new with a specific focus, versus expanding the focus of AAA."⁶²

In an effort to serve as an umbrella group for Asian American organizations, the Asian Council was formed in the spring of 1990, with a mission to achieve the following: "1. Provide a medium through which the Asian (American) groups on campus can communicate and cooperate to address Asian (American) issues and 2. To support Asian (American) programming."⁶³ Group

⁶¹ Ramesh Subramani (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign alumnus), phone interview by Sharon S. Lee, 12 August 2009.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ "Asian Council News," *The Dynasty*: the Newsletter of the Asian American Association, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, vol. 5, no. 3, October 1990, p. 7, Folder: AAA Newsletters, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

membership was not gained by individuals but was composed of a council of presidents of the Asian American student organizations. Council membership consisted of the presidents and vice presidents of AAA, the Philippine Student Association (PSA), the Korean Undergraduate Students Association (KUSA), the Indian Student Association (ISA), and the Hong Kong Students Association (HKSA).

Working together was critical to mobilizing support for the advancement of Asian American issues on campus; in particular, Subramani resisted the university's notion that Asian Americans were not minorities, a premise that denied Asian Americans equitable resources. He described that Asian American issues were new to administrators:

The challenge was that the *idea* was, for whatever reason, new to the office of Student Affairs—the notion that Asian Americans are a minority with specific issues and needs that weren't being supported by the university. When I sat down with the university leaders at the time, it seemed like they were open to the idea, but they were almost like "oh we never heard about this." I think also the way that it works is that African Americans and Latinos were receiving the bulk of funding for minority student affairs, and there were probably general allegiances to continue to work with those groups. So there weren't internal, structural resources available dedicated to non-Latino, non-African American issues.... I wouldn't say there was an overt negative reaction by the administration ... I'm describing it more that it was an "error of omission" that the university hadn't been focused on Asian American issues, and we were trying to recalibrate the university to focus on and recognize Asian Americans.⁶⁴

The Asian Council coordinated and sponsored several programs in the 1990-1991 academic year including Asian American involvement in a Minority Organization Fair in September of 1990 (coordinated by the Office of Minority Student Affairs) and coordinating an independent career conference in November 1990, encouraging employers to see Asian Americans as possible minority employees. The Council also planned UIUC's first Asian American Awareness Month in March 1991, now an annual recognition each spring.⁶⁵ The

⁶⁴ Ramesh Subramani interview, 12 August 2009.

⁶⁵ Asian Council Minutes, 17 September 1990, Folder: Asian Council, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

month featured dances, an Asian variety show at the Illini Union, film showings, dinners, lectures, and sports events.⁶⁶

Another important issue that the Council worked on was Asian American-specific counseling resources. Subramani worked to raise support for this need. He said,

I think probably the biggest issue that became a little bit of a rallying point among all Asian groups were issues related to stress and what was perceived to be at the time a higher suicide rate among Asian Americans. And that was one issue I thought cut across a lot of Asian organizations. Asian Americans were being neglected by the university from the perspective that they weren't training their dorm counselors to be aware of these issues with Asian kids. They weren't having separate student health services to focus on those issues. And there weren't easily accessible and customized counseling programs for Asian Americans. There weren't Asian American counselors or people with direct professional experience dealing with issues. So none of that was at that time available to the student body.⁶⁷

As a result, the Asian Council organized a wellness program on Asian American mental health issues in conjunction with the Counseling Center. The series was titled, "The Cultural Tight Rope: A Conversation Series on Asian-American Issues," and the first event in the series focused on Asian parents' expectations of their children on 18 October 1990.⁶⁸

The Asian-Pacific American Coalition to Combat Oppression, Racism, and Discrimination (ACCORD)

Just as AAA was starting to address Asian American cultural, political, and educational issues and the Asian Council formed, there were other UIUC students doing the same thing, with an even more pointed purpose. AAA was moving into a more political arena but still maintained

⁶⁶ Asian Awareness Month 1991 flyer, Folder: Asian American Awareness Month, 1991, 1995-97, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

⁶⁷ Ramesh Subramani interview, 12 August 2009.

⁶⁸ Cultural Tightrope announcement, *The Dynasty*, the Newsletter of the Asian-American Association, volume V, no. 3, October 1990, p. 11, Folder: AAA Newsletters, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

a strong social element, with many students joining for the parties, sports, and fashion shows the group offered.

For Asian American students who sought a space to fight racism and injustice, the Asian-Pacific American Coalition to Combat Oppression, Racism, and Discrimination (ACCORD) fit the bill. Originally named the Asian-Pacific American Student Alliance, ACCORD was a student organization with a specific agenda: working together to fight racism against Asian and Pacific Americans (especially combating the model minority myth); supporting other Asian Pacific American (APA) social, cultural, and political groups; examining Asian American history; acting on APA political issues; opposing all forms of oppression (racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism); and promoting understanding within the APA community and with other communities of color.⁶⁹ ACCORD clearly identified as people of color and as Asian Americans who had a racialized minority experience. They stated, "We do not tolerate the assumption that Asian-Americans and Pacific-Americans are 'honorary whites.'"⁷⁰ Thus, ACCORD provided an alternative space from which to take Asian American political issues head on.

ACCORD formed in the spring of 1991, committed to educating the campus and giving voice to Asian American issues and concerns.⁷¹ In November 1991, ACCORD sponsored three campus workshops with a title challenging their campus invisibility. The series was called, "Shedding Silence: Asian/ Pacific Americans Striving Towards Self-Empowerment." The first workshop was "Perpetuating Silence: The Fake and the Real," held 6 November 1991 on

⁶⁹ Asian-Pacific American Student Alliance newsletter, vol. 1, no. 1, September 1991. Folder: ACCORD (Asian-Pacific American Coalition to Combat Oppression, Racism, and Discrimination), University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

⁷⁰ Asian-Pacific American Coalition to Combat Oppression, Racism, and Discrimination (ACCORD) flyer, ca. 1991, Folder: ACCORD (Asian-Pacific American Coalition to Combat Oppression, Racism, and Discrimination), University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

⁷¹ Asian Pacific Coalition to Combat Oppression, Racism, and Discrimination, draft letter to the editor, 9 March 1992, Folder: ACCORD (Asian-Pacific American Coalition to Combat Oppression, Racism, and Discrimination), University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

Asian/Pacific Americans in literature and media. The second was "Conspiracy of Silence: A History of Racism," held November 13, on Asian American history. The third was "AIIIEEEE! Breaking Silence: Shattering the Windows of Our Oppression," held November 20 on the struggles of APAs on campus and in society.⁷²

ACCORD members highlighted the issues of anti-Asian violence and the model minority myth, important aspects of the Asian American experience. For Asian American students at UIUC, combating the model minority myth was an important part of articulating that they were not all super students who had successfully assimilated into the university. Instead, Asian American students asserted that they still faced racial and cultural barriers and that they had educational needs such as a requiring a relevant curriculum in the form of Asian American Studies courses and for support services under a cultural center.

Students in AAA and ACCORD challenged the model minority stereotype outright. In 1991, Jody Lin, AAA president, and Karin Wang, AAA external vice president, wrote an editorial to the *Daily Illini* titled, "'Model Minority' Tag Hurts Asian-Americans." In it they rejected the view of diversity as just a black-white issue and discussed the invisibility of Asian American experiences. They charged that the model minority myth ignored continued discrimination facing Asian Americans and fostered anti-Asian resentment and backlash. They wrote of this problem at UIUC and of the lack of resources to rectify it:

As applied to this campus, the effects of the "model minority" stereotype and the invisibility of Asian-Americans as people of color is painfully apparent. Even though Asian-Americans have been in the United States since 1763, one can find few courses that relate in any way to Asian-American history. No Asian-American studies course exists, and very few sociology, history, or literature courses at this University deal in any way with Asian-American history or contributions to American culture. There is also a very

⁷² Shedding Silence: Asian/ Pacific Americans Striving Towards Self-Empowerment," flyer, 1991, Folder: ACCORD (Asian-Pacific American Coalition to Combat Oppression, Racism, and Discrimination), University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

obvious lack of administrative and University support for Asian-American needs and concerns on this campus.⁷³

Lin and Wang also raised the issue of a double standard by the university, in claiming Asian Americans as minorities in certain instances but not in others: "The invisibility of Asian-Americans is almost a double standard at this University. On the one hand, the administration considers Asian-Americans as a minority when reporting minority-student enrollment figures to the federal government, but when it comes to actual support services for Asian-Americans or supporting programs put on by Asian-American student groups, the administration offers little more than verbal support."⁷⁴ Thus, they began challenging the situational claiming of Asian Americans as minorities when reporting enrollment to state and federal agencies but not in providing minority services to Asian American students at UIUC.

ACCORD members also challenged the model minority myth, connecting it to the erasure of Asian American students' racialized experiences and needs. In 1991, Linus Huang (MS, Computer Science, 1993) dismantled the model minority myth in ACCORD's first newsletter, writing:

What images are conjured up when you think of the Asian American? The straight-A student. The model citizen. The master of an orchestra's worth of musical instruments. Asian Americans silently persevere when wronged instead of speaking out and God forbid, stirring up trouble. We are depicted as a minority without problems so that white society does not have to address our issues. Compared to African, Latino, and Native Americans, we aren't as often the victims of "overt racism" perpetrated by whites. Of course not! Whites love us—as long as we don't challenge the notion of white supremacy. You wince at that term, "white supremacy"? Melodramatic, do you think? Well consider. When we Asian Americans were growing up, what societal standards were forced upon us? We were taught that Asian was ugly and white was beautiful.... We were taught that Confucian and Buddhist doctrine unfortunately left us wimpy and unassertive.... So, Asian Americans, it is time to empower ourselves.... We must achieve a redefinition of what it means to be American that acknowledges and appreciates our non-European

⁷³ Jody Lin and Karin Wang, "'Model Minority' Tag Hurts Asian-Americans," *Daily Illini*, March 21, 1991.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

heritage and ideologies. Let us ally ourselves with and support other peoples of color and those engaged in the struggle for the right of cultural self-determination.⁷⁵

As these students argued, Asian Americans experienced anti-Asian racism, harassment, and the continued perceptions of them as foreigners, all of which the model minority myth obscured.

General Campus Climate in the Late 1980's and Early 1990's

Nation wide, campus climates were hostile for racialized non-white students in the late 1980's and early 1990's. As Philip Altbach notes, students protested racism in many forms during the 1980's including pushing universities to divest stocks from South Africa. Students also fought for a multicultural curriculum (with backlash from those who embraced Western civilization courses), and racial incidents were commonplace. Altbach attributes the racial tensions to the political climate and legacies of President Ronald Reagan, whose policies underfunded social and civil rights programs.

Altbach noted that there were over 200 racial clashes on college campuses between 1986 and 1988.⁷⁶ Another figure noted that from fall 1986 to December 1988, at least one incident of ethno-violence was reported at 250 colleges and universities.⁷⁷ Often times the incidents involved altercations between white and black students that involved racial epithets, racist threats posted through flyers and mailings, or racist caricatures. On many campuses, students protested these events and demanded an institutional response including improved recruitment, retention,

⁷⁵ Linus Huang, "Empower Yourself All Ye Asian Americans," Asian-Pacific American Student Alliance newsletter, vol. 1, no.1, September 1991, Folder: ACCORD (Asian-Pacific American Coalition to Combat Oppression, Racism, and Discrimination), University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

⁷⁶ Philip G. Altbach, "The Racial Dilemma in American Higher Education," in *The Racial Crisis in American Higher Education*, ed. Philip G. Altbach and Kofi Lomotey (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1991), 7.

⁷⁷ Alan Colón, "Race Relations on Campus: An Administrative Perspective," in *The Racial Crisis in American Higher Education*, ed. Philip G. Altbach and Kofi Lomotey (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1991), 69.

and hiring of minority faculty, staff, and students, as well as a more diverse curriculum that included Ethnic Studies.⁷⁸ Such events took place at Columbia (March 1987), Stanford (September 1988), Arizona State (1989), the University of Michigan (1987), Northern Illinois University (1987), the University of Massachusetts (1986), and the University of Wisconsin (1987).⁷⁹ UIUC was not immune to racial conflicts in this time period. For instance, racist and anti-Semitic flyers were posted in law students' mailboxes in November 1990, February 1991, and October 1994.⁸⁰

Racism against African American students was not new at UIUC (as noted in chapter three). Despite increased recruitment efforts, the numbers of African American students remained low through the 1980's—remaining at about 4 percent of undergraduate enrollment in the 1980's and about 7 percent during the 1990's.⁸¹ The campus was predominantly white, and African Americans sought separate spaces and support from the African American cultural house and black fraternities and sororities. The challenges of racial integration were raised in the student newspaper. In 1984 and in 1986, some African American students talked about being

⁷⁸ Tony Vellela, *New Voices: Student Political Activism in the 80's and 90's* (Boston: South End Press, 1988). Tony Vellela chronicles the movements led by students of color to combat the rise of racism on college campuses.

⁷⁹ Eric Hirsch, "Columbia University: Individual and Institutional Racism," in *The Racial Crisis in American Higher Education*, ed. Philip G. Altbach and Kofi Lomotey (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1991), 199-211; Sally Cole, "Beyond Recruitment and Retention: The Stanford Experience," in *The Racial Crisis in American Higher Education*, ed. Philip G. Altbach and Kofi Lomotey (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1991), 213-232; Leonard Gordon, "Race Relations and Attitudes at Arizona State University," in *The Racial Crisis in American Higher Education*, ed. Philip G. Altbach and Kofi Lomotey (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1991), 233-284; Millicent Hunter, "Colleges See Rising Number of Racist Incidents," *Daily Illini*, April 14, 1987; "Group Warns of Increase in Racial Incidents at Colleges," *Daily Illini*, March 7, 1988.

⁸⁰ Brian Martin, "Law Students Get Fiery Racial Mail: Supremacist Party Named on Fliers," *Daily Illini*, November 29, 1990; "Supremacist Takes Credit for Fliers at UI," *Champaign-Urbana News-Gazette*, November 30, 1990; KJ Schallert, "Law Students Find 'Hate Mail' Fliers in their Mailboxes," *Daily Illini*, February 20, 1991; "White Supremacy Party Claims UI Flier Distribution," *Champaign-Urbana News-Gazette*, February 21, 1991; Katherine Klimas, "More Racist Flyers Discovered: Culprit Unknown: Flyers Found in Several Buildings," *Daily Illini*, October 18, 1994. In the November 1990 and February 1991 incidents, a local leader of the American White Supremacist Party took credit for the flyers.

⁸¹ University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Office of Equal Opportunity and Access, "Undergraduate Enrollment by Racial/ Ethnic Category, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Fall 1967 to Fall 2008," <http://oeoa.illinois.edu/Undergraduate%20Enrollment%20by%20Race.pdf> (accessed October 15, 2009).

tired of being the only black student in a classroom, feeling excluded by white students, and not seeing any black faculty.⁸² There were also tensions with local police who were perceived as instituting harsher actions when responding to black students' events. Such conflicts took place on 23 April 1990 (and again in November 1990) outside of a campus bar and outside the house of a black football player on April 21. The student organization If Not Now, an African American empowerment group established in spring of 1990, held a rally to protest these incidents and led protests at the local bar.⁸³ A community-based organization also formed called Citizens Against Institutionalized Racism, articulating similar issues of racism in the community that included poor police-black relations.⁸⁴

At UIUC's sister campus, the University of Illinois Chicago (UIC), white-black conflict developed during November of 1990.⁸⁵ Racial attacks on black women took place in residential halls, slurs were written, and racial threats were made to black students. African American students marched to interim Chancellor James Stukels' office and submitted a number of demands including changes in course requirements; recruitment of more black and Latina/o faculty, staff, and students; and increased support for the African American cultural center.⁸⁶ About fifty students occupied the UIC administration building on December 4 until the administration provided a specific timetable meeting their demands.⁸⁷ In solidarity with UIC

⁸² Barbara Taylor, "Black Students Talk About Racism, Endorse Segregation, Integration," *Daily Illini*, May 3, 1984; Julio Ojeda, "Black Students at UI Confront 'Subtle' Racism," *Daily Illini*, April 28, 1986.

⁸³ Sridhar Chigurapati, "If Not Now to Hold Quad Rally Today," *Daily Illini*, May 2, 1990; Greg Kline, "UI Blacks Occupy Local Bar to Protest Racial Incidents," *Champaign-Urbana News-Gazette*, December 2, 1990.

⁸⁴ Peter Rooney, "UI and Community Aim to Ease Racial Tension," *Champaign-Urbana News-Gazette*, September 2, 1990.

⁸⁵ In 1982, the University of Illinois at Chicago Circle (UICC) and the University of Illinois Medical Center consolidated to become the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC). University of Illinois at Chicago, "History of the University of Illinois at Chicago Timeline," <http://www.uic.edu/depts/uichistory/index.html> (accessed February 28, 2010).

⁸⁶ Louis Hilton, "Ending Campus Racism Necessary, and Quickly," *Daily Illini*, November 29, 1990.

⁸⁷ Brian Martin, "50 UIC Students Occupy Building, Pressure Officials," *Daily Illini*, December 4, 1990.

students, approximately 500 UIUC students camped out on university President Stanley Ikenberry's front lawn in Urbana on 4 December 1990.⁸⁸

Racial Hostility Against Asian Americans at UIUC

Along with other students of color, Asian Americans faced racial hostility. Mirroring national trends, incidents of anti-Asian graffiti and racist name-calling were commonplace in the late 1980's and early 1990's at UIUC. For instance, in the spring 1988 semester, anti-Asian graffiti was scrawled in the men's bathroom of a campus building, Gregory Hall. After it was erased, more racist words and images reappeared the next day.⁸⁹ Anti-Asian racism also occurred in the surrounding community, such as the local radio station WZNF Z-95's morning show that featured a racist caricature "Chef Wang." In a heavy "Asian" accent, the buffoonish Chef Wang read ingredients of a recipe, to which callers tried to guess the mystery dish, asking "Whu-u-u-ud is misseryfoo?" (What is mystery food?)⁹⁰ While the radio station denied any racist intent, AAA leaders circulated a petition protesting the racist character in May 1991, with plans to send the petition to the Federal Communications Commission and local authorities.

ACCORD was also visible on campus raising awareness of anti-Asian sentiment. For instance, ACCORD held a rally with other anti-racist student organizations in response to the fiftieth anniversary observance of Japan's bombing of Pearl Harbor. On 6 December 1991, ACCORD sponsored a rally titled, "Beyond Barbed Wire: Asian Americans Speaking Out Against Racism—The Legacy of World War II: From Internment Camps to Vincent Chin."⁹¹ In a press release, the group explained that the reason for the rally was that media coverage of the

⁸⁸ "UI, UIC Students Join in Anti-Racism Protest," *Champaign-Urbana News-Gazette*, December 4, 1990.

⁸⁹ Carol Loretz, "Internment of Japanese Not A Debt to Mark 'Paid'", *Daily Illini*, June 24, 1988.

⁹⁰ As described by Michael Walker, "UI Example Abets Community Racism," *Daily Illini*, April 24, 1991.

⁹¹ ACCORD ad, "Beyond Barbed Wire," *Daily Illini*, December 5, 1991.

fiftieth anniversary of Pearl Harbor omitted the voices and histories of Japanese Americans—those who served in the military during WWII and those who were incarcerated in internment camps despite their United States citizenship. In addition, ACCORD pointed out the connection between this history and the present backlash against Asia's economic development.⁹² The rise of Japan bashing in the late 1980's led to the murder of Vincent Chin and the rise of anti-Asian violence. UIUC student MariCarmen Moreno was quoted in the *Daily Illini* as pointing out the persistence of anti-Asian racism, articulating, "People have to realize Asians are put in a rough position ... (Americans) have to understand that (Asian-Americans) do face racism, that they're not 'whitewashed' as a lot of people might think." She added, "I think it's about time that Asian- and Pacific-Americans bring this out to the public and out to the campus. Racism is an issue that affects all people of color and (the rally's) a start.... This is the start of something big."⁹³

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Vincent Chin's murder was a rallying point for Asian American students; a recurring event that raised awareness of anti-Asian violence was the screening of the documentary, *Who Killed Vincent Chin?* and the invitation of its filmmakers to campus. After the December 1991 showing, an Asian American graduate student wrote a letter to the *Daily Illini*. In it, he shared how he was thinking about Vincent Chin's murder after seeing the documentary. He wrote, "Walking back to my dorm, I was thinking about this when a white male in a pickup truck yelled out of the window, 'Hiya Gook.' My only reaction was to glance at the person who made this racial slur, but he and his cohorts sped away. As I continued, I thought how appropriate it was this incident happened on that particular night because I had just seen a movie on the plight of Asian-Americans in this country, but also because it was the 50th

⁹² "Press Release: Asian-Pacific-Americans Speak Out Against Racism," ca. 1991, Folder: ACCORD (Asian-Pacific American Coalition to Combat Oppression, Racism, and Discrimination), University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

⁹³ Anna Curry, "Demonstrators Protest Anti-Asian Attitudes," *Daily Illini*, December 9, 1991.

anniversary of the bombing of Pearl Harbor."⁹⁴ He called for the recognition that Asian Americans still faced racism.

Incidents of name calling, harassment, and intimidation were common experiences for Asian Americans at UIUC in the early 1990's. Chris Oei described some of these incidents in an ACCORD newsletter in 1991:

Twice on this campus so far, I've been called "Charlie" with a fake Chinese accent by groups of white students driving by. Once, they pretended not to see me and stopped just before hitting me.... When I ask my Asian friends if they've ever been called racially derogatory names, half of them answer yes. Many of the Asian women I talked to said that they have been subjected to sexual harassment in a racially derogatory manner from the men on this campus. Campus isn't a safe place for Asian Americans.... At the AAA booth at the Illini Union one day, a woman walked up and told the Asian student in the booth to go back to her own country. She believed that Asians are a privileged minority that doesn't pay taxes.... As Asians, we are all blamed for unemployment. As students, we are looked upon as antisocial. People think of us as workaholics who break the grading curve in our classes. We are not well-liked.⁹⁵

ACCORD initiated an effort to collect data on anti-Asian harassment at UIUC and in the larger community, soliciting information about incidents in their 1991 newsletters.⁹⁶ The purpose of the data collection was explained in an incident report form as, "Your response to this form will 1) help to validate the common experience of people of Asian/Pacific ancestry and 2) provide data to show the need for resources and services addressing the concerns of Asian/Pacific Americans."⁹⁷ In addition, AAA sent out a survey to members in fall 1991 and published some findings in its February 1991 newsletter. One question read "My discrimination

⁹⁴ Andy Thung, "Asians Suffer Racism," *Daily Illini*, December 13, 1991.

⁹⁵ Chris Oei, "Racial Violence and You," Asian-Pacific American Coalition to Combat Oppression, Racism, and Discrimination (ACCORD) newsletter, vol. 1, no. 2, December 1991, Folder: ACCORD (Asian-Pacific American Coalition to Combat Oppression, Racism, and Discrimination), University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

⁹⁶ "Anti-Asian and Anti-Pacific Peoples Alert!!!!" Asian-Pacific American Student Alliance newsletter, vol. 1, no.1, September 1991 and Asian-Pacific American Coalition to Combat Oppression, Racism, and Discrimination (ACCORD) newsletter, vol. 1, no. 2, December 1991, Folder: ACCORD (Asian-Pacific American Coalition to Combat Oppression, Racism, and Discrimination), University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

⁹⁷ "Asian/ Pacific Committee Against Anti-Asian Harassment and Violence Incident Report form," Folder: ACCORD (Asian-Pacific American Coalition to Combat Oppression, Racism, and Discrimination), University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

experiences include" and the findings were: 45 percent "names"; 38 percent "taunts"; 12 percent "none"; 2 percent "fights"; 2 percent "physical abuse"; and 1 percent "other/ being stereotyped."⁹⁸ Additional archives document incidents of Asian and Asian American students being harassed or over-hearing anti-Asian comments in the early 1990's (such as "go back to where you came from") made in campus-town restaurants and bars, during classrooms by professors, in the dorms, or walking on campus.⁹⁹

There were also numerous anecdotal instances of anti-Asian racism. An article in the *Daily Illini* multicultural magazine described one such experience: "Ho Chie Tsai went to a campus-town bar three weekends in a row, and each time he encountered a racial incident. Tsai says Asian Pacific American students need a place where they can feel 'totally comfortable' on campus. For him, the bar incidents are a constant reminder of the discrimination Asian Pacific Americans constantly face at the University."¹⁰⁰ Such incidents at UIUC were documented through the 1990's, such as a listing of the following in the 1994 Midwest Asian American Students Conference booklet:

My friends and I were crossing Green Street on the way to the Zone. A big fat white guy called out "F—ing Gooks" and we yelled back for him to come back.... Another time I was walking home from ISR (Illinois Street Residence Halls) to Six Pack and I passed by two drunk guys sitting in front of the Union. One guy came up to me and said in a Chinese mocking tone, "Ohhh, you rant to buy a bike? Onry fiftee dorrar."

I was walking down the street and someone drove by, yelled, "Gook!" and threw a soda bottle at me.

⁹⁸ "AAA Survey Results," *The Dynasty*, Newsletter of the Asian-American Association, vol. V, no. 6, February 1991, p. 2. Folder: AAA Newsletters, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives; *Horizons*: Newsletter of the Asian American Association at the University of Illinois at U/C, November 1992, Record series 41/2/41, Box 10, Folder: Asian American Association Newsletters 1986-1998, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives. There is some evidence that AAA and other organizations sought to gather information again regarding racially motivated anti-Asian incidents in 1992, with forms documenting such incidents in the AAA office. It is unclear what data emerged from these efforts.

⁹⁹ Documentation of Racial Incidents, Folder: Racism—Reports of Assault and Harassment, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

¹⁰⁰ Suzy Frisch and Jason Harris, "Wanted: A Sense of Identity—Asian Pacific American Students Strive to Form a Cultural Center," *Crossroads: The Multicultural Magazine of Daily Illini*, April 1, 1993.

I lived at FAR (Florida Avenue Residence Hall) last year, and during MAAS my friends and I were walking through the lobby and a few black guys started mumbling really loudly, "'You computer making Japanese.... Trying to take over our country and s---. Car making...."

I was walking down the hall and this guy who lived a couple doors down from me was making fun of my Chinese accent.¹⁰¹

Thus, Asian American students experienced racial hostility yet were presumed to be a model minority in no need of support. These students broke the silence surrounding their invisibility by sharing their stories and challenging the model minority myth.

Racism in the UIUC Greek System

During the 1980's and 1990's, UIUC's Greek system was one site identified as being unwelcoming to students of color. As Joy Ann Williamson documents, Urbana-Champaign would not let African American women live on campus until 1945; many black students lived in black fraternity or sorority houses or in the community.¹⁰² The black Greek organizations provided an important social space for African American students through the 1960's for support and ran independently of the university Interfraternity Panhellenic Council. Traditional white fraternities and sororities often excluded black students despite university policies against racial or religious restrictions.¹⁰³ Thus, although illegal for fraternities and sororities to discriminate, the UIUC Greek system was not well integrated.

¹⁰¹ Katherine Chu, "What's Your Experience?" *Perspectives: A Special Publication of the 1994 MAAS Conference*, p. 43, Folder: MAAS/ MAASU Early Programs, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives; Deborah Mora and Grace Uy, "UI Students Rally Against Racial attack," *Daily Illini*, November 14, 1996. In addition, white students racially harassed a South Asian student in October of 1996, sparking protests from the Asian American community.

¹⁰² Joy Ann Williamson, *Black Power on Campus: The University of Illinois, 1965-1975* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

¹⁰³ Williamson, *Black Power on Campus*.

Fraternities were common sites of racial incidents that sparked protest on campus by students of color. In spring of 1988, on a visit to the University of Wisconsin campus, new pledge members of the UIUC Acacia fraternity disrupted several university classes with staged fights, stink bombs, and in one instance, attack of a professor. At least two of the disrupted classes were African Studies courses, and an investigation ensued regarding racial motivations.¹⁰⁴

In another instance in spring of 1992, five minority male students claimed they were depledged from Pi Kappa Alpha (the "Pikes") fraternity based on race; this included Brian Thomas (half African American, half white); John Acosta (Filipino American); Salem Muribi (Lebanese American); John Nikkah (Persian American); and Michael Stuart (Filipino American).¹⁰⁵ Students of color discussed the persistence of racism on campus through these two incidents. In the case of Pi Kappa Alpha, then AAA president Karin Wang stated that the incident proved racism existed in the Greek system. She was quoted as saying, "It was interesting that two of the pledges were Asian-Americans.... It's important that people know that racism isn't just happening to African-Americans—it happens to Asian-Americans and anyone who is not Caucasian."¹⁰⁶

While eventually the university found the Pikes innocent, awareness of the racial issues in the Greek system was raised. One student Dave Eggers, a member of Pi Kappa Alpha, shared some insights into the problematic racial practices of the fraternity that, in effect, excluded those who were different. He wrote, "One great problem with many houses in the greek system is just this. Racism and bigotry are most often allowed, and sometimes condoned. In some houses,

¹⁰⁴ Catherine Spellman, "Acacia Pledges Cause Chaos on Trip: University, Federal Investigations Ensnare," *Daily Illini*, April 20, 1988.

¹⁰⁵ Suzy Frisch and Dorothy Puch, "Five Rejected Pledges Accuse Fraternity of Racism," *Daily Illini*, April 30, 1992.

¹⁰⁶ Quoted in Cattleya Pinyo, "Students Blast Racism at UI," *Daily Illini*, May 1, 1992.

racial slurs, jokes and stereotypes are shunned by its members. In others, like Pikes, this sort of behavior was, more or less, accepted. There are members of every house who believe it is their constitutional right to discriminate on whatever basis they choose."¹⁰⁷

Spring 1992 also saw a Greek racial incident against an Asian American student. On 5 March 1992, Alpha Tau Omega (ATO) fraternity members shouted racial epithets at Thai American student Ken Hriensaitong as he walked by the fraternity, who then challenged some members to a fight. Police charged fraternity member Christopher McPeck with assault and Hriensaitong with assault and unlawful use of a weapon (with the charges later dropped).¹⁰⁸ ACCORD led about thirty students outside of ATO on 26 March 1992 in protest, demanding an apology to Hriensaitong from the fraternity. The fraternity denied that the house was racist, invited protestors to meet with them, and described the rally as being "blown out of proportion." Hriensaitong agreed and was not aware that the protest had been planned.¹⁰⁹

Because of their own personal experiences as noted earlier in this chapter, Asian American students at UIUC did not feel these incidents were isolated cases. Just as they had been involved in documenting anti-Asian racism at UIUC, ACCORD members contextualized their ATO protest within a hostile campus climate, calling on administrators to address Asian American issues in a press release:

People on the U of I campus and in the surrounding community may believe that this is an isolated incident. As Asian Americans of diverse ethnic and social backgrounds, we can attest that this is just one example of incidents that happen on our campus. Every day people of Asian Pacific descent are targets of racism, ranging from taunts and racial slurs to verbal and physical threats. Our community has no recourse for addressing these issues. We have no counselors and few academic staff to whom we can bring our needs and concerns.... WE CONDEMN ALL RACIST ACTIONS DIRECTED AT ASIANS AND ASIAN AMERICANS. WE CALL FOR AN END TO ALL FORMS OF ETHNIC

¹⁰⁷ Dave Eggers, "Examine Discriminatory Rush Practices," *Daily Illini*, May 6, 1992.

¹⁰⁸ Elaine Richardson, "Protestors Confront Fraternity Members," *Daily Illini*, March 27, 1992.

¹⁰⁹ Michael Gray, "Scuffle at UI Leads to Racism Protest," *Champaign Urbana News-Gazette*, March 27, 1992.

INTIMIDATION AND HARASSMENT. WE CHALLENGE THE UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION TO ACT AND MAKE THIS CAMPUS A SAFE PLACE FOR ASIANS, ASIAN AMERICANS, AND ALL PEOPLE OF COLOR.¹¹⁰

Shortly after the ACCORD protest was featured in the press, ACCORD member Neena Hemmady (BS, 1994, Civil Engineering) recalled that her parents who lived in suburban Chicago received an anonymous phone call, threatening Hemmady's life if she did not leave Champaign.¹¹¹ While ultimately nothing happened, the call revealed the levels of tension and backlash against Asian American student protest. Hemmady recalled, "I think it created quite a splash because Asians were not really protesting about race before, that was really quite a new thing."¹¹² The protesters challenged the stereotypes of Asian Americans as model minorities who did not experience racism or, at the very least, did not complain when they did.

The ATO incident stirred feelings on both sides of the issue—those who spoke up in defense of Asian American issues and those who downplayed the incident. the *Daily Illini* editors called on the university to investigate the matter thoroughly or else convey a message that "boys will be boys." They also raised the importance of meeting Asian American needs:

But the incidence of racial slurs against Asian-Americans is not the only problem that this group faces on this campus. Asian-American students are also concerned that they do not have a cultural center of their own even though Asian-Americans comprise the largest percentage of students of color here. Like other students of color, Asian-American students are also asking for a greater voice in the University's administration. Racism will not be eliminated by just ending racial taunts, but in this case, the University's first step in ending racism toward Asian-Americans must be to thoroughly investigate the ATO fraternity.¹¹³

There were others, however, who felt ACCORD had overreacted, taking the issue of race to an unwarranted level. Some felt that the incident unfairly painted the Greek system as racist,

¹¹⁰ "For Immediate Release," ACCORD press release, ca. 1992, Folder: ACCORD (Asian-Pacific American Coalition to Combat Oppression, Racism, and Discrimination), University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives. Emphasis in original.

¹¹¹ Neena Hemmady (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign alumnus), interview by Sharon S. Lee, 20 July 2008 in Chicago, IL.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ "Investigate Fraternity's Racial Slurs," *Daily Illini*, March 31, 1992.

including Byung Kang, an Asian American member of ATO, who wrote a letter to the *Daily Illini* editor.¹¹⁴ Kang's letter sparked Angela Eunjoo Lee, a senior in Liberal Arts and Sciences (LAS), to write to the *Daily Illini* with the title, "ATO Asian Sells Out," where she called Kang a "sellout" who was "more concerned about humiliation and disgrace of his fraternity brothers when one of his Asian brothers was harassed verbally by these people."¹¹⁵

Racial lines began to be drawn and were revealed in subsequent letters to the *Daily Illini* on the ATO incident—with students refuting charges of racism that painted all white students as racist. Marc Sine, senior in LAS, wrote, "I truly believe that when people refer to others with respect to the color of one's skin, they are not only inciting bigotry and not recognizing that every person, regardless of color, has a heritage—even Caucasians."¹¹⁶ Jennifer Jeffress, senior in LAS, also charged the *Daily Illini* with biased reporting. She wrote, "Of course I realize that this incident between an Asian-American and a fraternity man is a godsend for the DI, and offers yet another opportunity to castigate the greek system." She attacked Angela Eunjoo Lee's letter as well: "Accusing Byung (Kang) of selling out because of his choice to participate in a social aspect of the college community only shows a lack of understanding of the precepts behind the fraternity system. From the outside, involvement in the greek system is chastised as assimilation, when in fact it offers a forum for a sharing between cultures that is not readily available in ethnocentric organizations."¹¹⁷

Weeks after the ATO protest and the flurry of letters to the *Daily Illini*, ACCORD rearticulated its position. It described that racism was institutional—not reduced to one incident.

¹¹⁴ Byung S. Kang, "Lah's Logic Lacking," *Daily Illini*, March 23, 1992.

¹¹⁵ Angela Eunjoo Lee, "ATO Asian Sells Out," *Daily Illini*, March 30, 1992.

¹¹⁶ Marc Sine, "Respect All Cultures," *Daily Illini*, April 2, 1992.

¹¹⁷ Jennifer Jeffress, "ATO Subject of DI Bias," *Daily Illini*, April 6, 1992.

Racism was infused in an assimilationist model that blamed the oppressed rather than the oppressors. They wrote,

Our point is that no one example constitutes an "isolated incident." Challenging racism is not about attacking a person's moral standards or behavior. It is about getting people to understand that racism is a phenomenon of social institutions, not personality defects, and that the hate crimes everyone sees in isolation are all products of this racist system.... The administration must actively confront racial oppression at the University. The members of ACCORD demanded that a comprehensive policy and plan be formed that takes positive steps toward eliminating racism in the campus community. We also demand the formation of an Asian-American culture/ resource center to serve as a focal point from which anti-racist efforts by Asian-Americans can spread.¹¹⁸

Thus, ACCORD contextualized the incidents in a larger institutional climate and pushed for improved resources for Asian American students.

Asian American Coalition Building

The ATO instance not only raised issues of anti-Asian racism, it revealed the challenges of building a pan-Asian American movement, as even Asian Americans disagreed over the interpretation of the incident and the climate of Greek organizations for minority students. Asian American coalition building on campus in the early 1990's was a monumental task. Building a pan-Asian American movement is always a struggle given the vast diversity under that umbrella term. As mentioned in the introduction, within the field of Asian American Studies, scholars have critiqued how the term "Asian American" has come to center East Asian American voices, at the expense of South Asian American, Filipino, and Southeast Asian Americans.¹¹⁹ Asian

¹¹⁸ ACCORD, "Racism is Pervasive," *Daily Illini*, April 14, 1992.

¹¹⁹ Shilpa Davé, Pawan Dhingra, Sunaina Maira, Partha Mazumdar, Lavina Shankar, Jaideep Singh, and Rajini Srikanth, "De-Privileging Positions: Indian Americans, South Asian Americans, and the Politics of Asian American Studies," *Journal of Asian American Studies* 3:1 (2000): 67-100; Lavina Shankar and Rajini Srikanth, eds. *A Part Yet Apart: South Asians in Asian America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998); Joanne Rondilla, "The Filipino Question in Asia and the Pacific: Rethinking Regional Origins in Diaspora," in *Pacific Diaspora: Island Peoples in the United States and Across the Pacific*, eds. Paul Spickard, Joanne Rondilla, and Debbie Hippolite Wright (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), 56-68; Helen Toribio, "The Problematics of History and Location of Filipino American Studies within Asian American Studies," in *Asian American Studies*

American students at UIUC struggled to build a movement that included representation from major Asian ethnic organizations. This shift to broaden their community was reflected in October 1991 when the AAA newsletter's name changed from *The Dynasty* to *Horizons*. The change was explained this way:

Notice anything different about the newsletter? The name perhaps? Well, the AAA newsletter now sports a new name. Since it was first published, the newsletter had been called *The Dynasty*. We felt, however, that this name reflected too much on Chinese or Japanese heritage rather than that of Asians overall. Many suggestions were brought forth, but, after much debate and discussion, *Horizons* was chosen since it best represents what we hope to reach.... The horizon represents the vastness and unity of the world. Asians and Asian Americans, as well as everyone across the world are all united by this line. No matter where you are or what you believe, you will see the same horizon.¹²⁰

Yet, as AAA leaders moved towards greater inclusion, they did not do so flawlessly. In December 1991—just a few months after AAA changed their newsletter name—AAA's Awareness Committee wrote a call for Asian American unity in the *Daily Illini*, describing common racial experiences of Asian Americans. They wrote,

"Top Ten Stupid Comments"

1. Do you know karate?
2. You speak English so well!
3. How do you like the US?
4. Are you related?
5. What are you?
6. Where's your camera?
7. Can you get from Japan to Hong Kong by train?
8. Do you see less because your eyes are smaller?
9. Hey look ... tourists!
10. You must be smart, all you people do is study.

After Critical Mass, ed. Kent Ono (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 166-76; Aihwa Ong, *Buddha Is Hiding: Refugees, Citizenship, the New America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). These issues are also discussed for Asian American college student movements in Edmund Lee, "Unity Now, Sensitivity Later?" *A. Magazine*, April/ May 1998, pp. 31-35.

¹²⁰ *Horizons: The Newsletter of the Asian American Association*, volume 1, no. 1, October 1991, p. 1, Folder: AAA Historical Resources, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

The saddest thing about those comments is that almost all of us have had at least one of those comments directed towards us. Obviously, racism exists.¹²¹

The committee continued to describe Asian racial stereotypes in the media and how Asian Americans were racialized as foreigners. They stressed the importance of unity and education in combating this racism:

One suggestion is to reach out, to plan activities for the general community which could relieve racial tensions. An important factor is to increase unity among Asians; it is wrong to attempt to dissociate yourself from a newcomer to the States by dismissing him or her as a "FOB" (Fresh off the boat) or to snipe at one another for lack of "Asianity." It is shameful for Asians to deny their heritage by, for example, selecting only white friends and avoiding anyone or anything Asian. Education is another important anti-racism solution. This means not only the inclusion of the history of Asians in the American past (usually more footnotes in sections about the early railroads or WWII internment campus) but also courses dealing with Asian culture. These classes are not meant solely for non-Asian consumption; we ourselves must learn our past, for when we consider it, there is very little that we do know.¹²²

Despite this call for unity, two South Asian American students critiqued AAA's letter because it focused on East Asian American experiences. Kiran Vasireddy and Sreenu Dandamudi (both sophomores in LAS) responded in the *Daily Illini*,

We would like to state that we are in agreement with the ideals of the committee in fighting racism directed towards Asians on this campus. However, we believe that there is another problem at hand; this is the problem which concerns the subtle racism which this Awareness Committee has directed toward South and West Asians (i.e. Indians, Arabs, others) by not including them within the term "Asian."

If the Awareness Committee claims to be fighting racism for Asians, then it should have represented all Asians in the their [*sic*] forum, not just East Asians, as was the case. However, if the Awareness Committee feels that it only needs to represent East Asians, then it should use the term East Asian-American Association Awareness Committee.

We are especially angered at the forum's specific examples of stereotypes which are only faced by East Asians, not all Asians.... Stereotypes faced by South and West Asians were completely ignored.

¹²¹ Asian American Association Awareness Committee, "Asian Unity Needed for Progress," *Daily Illini*, December 3, 1991.

¹²² Ibid.

In addition, the forum stated that one of the ways to fight racism is by educating young Americans of the histories of Asian-Americans, such as the Americans who labored for the railroads (Chinese-Americans) and those placed in WWII internment camps (Japanese-Americans). The Awareness Committee did not feel it was necessary to mention the histories of other Asian-Americans in the forum, such as Asian Indians, who can trace their history in the United States back to 1820.

We as Asian-Americans already face the problems of being an unrecognized minority. We do not need to further set ourselves back by failing to recognize all Asian-Americans.¹²³

Thus, despite AAA efforts, they had still inadvertently centered East Asian experiences over other ethnicities.

Despite these persistent challenges (those that would always accompany gains made, showing that coalition building is not an idealized smooth process), strides *were* being made. Several administrators confirmed the change in political activism as the students of different nationalities began to communicate with each other. Clarence Shelley, founding director of the Educational Opportunities Program and long-time campus administrator, reminisced, "Their working in coalition across ethnicities made a big difference in their productivity. Earlier efforts were much less successful because it seemed that historical national animosities made some groups unwilling or unable to work with other groups. Asian American student leaders came to believe that if they worked in coalition, they would accomplish more—a strategy that worked almost immediately."¹²⁴ Samira (Ritsma) Didos, a counselor at the Counseling Center who worked closely with Asian American students from 1986 to 1998, recalled the changing dynamics: "At first, there were significant inner conflicts amongst the groups. However, they learned that they had to work together and that they were not voting for somebody (for a student

¹²³ Kiran Vasireddy and Sreenu Dandamudi, "See All Asian Racism," *Daily Illini*, December 11, 1991.

¹²⁴ Clarence Shelley (founding Director of University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Special Educational Opportunities Program), interview by Sharon S. Lee, 22 March 2007 in Urbana, IL. Clarence Shelley served as assistant dean of students and director of the Special Educational Opportunities Program from 1969-1972; associate dean of students from 1972-1974; dean of students from 1974-1984; and associate vice chancellor from 1984-2001.

officer position) because of their particular Asian ethnic background, but voting for those who had the ability to be good leaders. The culture within the groups was changing, and they were coming closer together. That was very exciting!"¹²⁵

Coalition building was a new development for Asian American students and cannot be underemphasized. The creation of a student office space in the Illini student union facilitated this cooperation. In April 1992, a new Student Organization Complex opened in the student union, housing fifty-four organizations in cubicles and offices on the second floor. As a result, Asian American organizations such as AAA, the Indian Student Association (ISA), the Korean Undergraduate Students Association (KUSA), the Philippine Student Association (PSA), the Taiwanese American Students Club (TASC), and the Vietnamese Student Association (VSA) had offices, and the common space created opportunities to talk with each other.¹²⁶ Richard Chang, then sophomore in LAS and AAA member noted, "Before groups were scattered all over the place, while now it's more centralized. It's more convenient if you need to talk to someone from another group."¹²⁷ Bill Riley, dean of students from 1986 to 2008, also attributed the student complex as a significant facilitator of Asian American students working together: "When we restructured as a campus the second floor south of the Illini Union and created the student organization's complex and allowed each organization to have a cubicle at the beginning, and we put them all in there, and then the Asian American student groups started growing and talking to each other, that was a significant time in my mind when they came together. They saw each other, they met together and every day there was so much traffic and stuff going on.... It was like

¹²⁵ Samira Didos (former University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Counselor), interview with Sharon S. Lee, 4 September 2009 in Urbana, Illinois.

¹²⁶ Ho Chie Tsai, "The View From Here," Reprinted in Unseen/ Unheard program booklet, 2006, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center.

¹²⁷ Quoted in Kerri Scholl, "Organization Complex Provides Vital Offices: More Student Groups Now Have Headquarters," *Daily Illini*, April 14, 1992.

a programming center."¹²⁸ Coalitions would continue to grow through the mid-1990's, to great benefit for the Asian American movement, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

Backlash Against Asian American Organizing

As with any racial group, not all members agree on every issue. Asian American students argued about the importance of congregating in Asian American organizations and the significance of an Asian American identity. Were such racial and ethnic specific organizations and services critical to widening the university experience or were they separatist? Were Ethnic Studies programs diminishing a larger vision of a liberal arts curriculum or were they incorporating important multicultural contributions to scholarship? As racial conflict on college campuses heightened across the nation during the late 1980's and early 1990's, one demand was for Ethnic Studies courses. Hence, an intellectual debate ensued over multicultural curricula.

As universities such as Stanford began to reconsider its required curriculum to include non-European scholarship, academic traditionalists bemoaned the decline of the classic traditional liberal arts curriculum, or the "great works" approach, such as advocated by Allan Bloom. In *The Closing of the American Mind* (1987), Bloom argued that during the 1960's the civil rights movement shifted to Black Power separatism, a negative move away from universal individual rights. No longer content with assimilating into a larger American identity, blacks were now proud to be blacks, and courses in Black Studies promoted a new segregation. Bowing to political pressures, administrators abandoned the core curriculum based on European culture,

¹²⁸ Bill Riley (former University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Dean of Students), interview with Sharon S. Lee, 15 April 2009 in Urbana, Illinois.

and curriculum became more specialized and incoherent. Movements focused on difference held a propagandistic intolerance for western culture, fueling an ethnocentrism of its own.¹²⁹

In the 1990's, Arthur Schlesinger Jr. and Dinesh D'Souza agreed. In *The Disuniting of America* (1991), Schlesinger, while acknowledging racism in United States history, pointed to the necessity of a larger national identity and the importance of individual assimilation.

However, a new "cult of ethnicity" emphasized group identities, rejecting such a vision and posing a particular problem in schools and colleges. He wrote,

The debate about the curriculum is a debate about what it means to be an American. The militants of ethnicity now contend that a main objective of public education should be the protection, strengthening, celebration, and perpetuation of ethnic origins and identities. Separatism, however, nourishes prejudices, magnifies differences and stirs antagonism. The consequent increase in ethnic and racial conflict lies behind the hullabaloo over "multiculturalism" and "political correctness," over the iniquities of the "Eurocentric" curriculum, and over the notion that history and literature should be taught not as intellectual disciplines but as therapies whose function is to raise minority self-esteem.¹³⁰

D'Souza also argued against the watering down of western civilization curriculum, the curbing of free speech through anti-racist speech codes and censorship of faculty by cautioning them against potentially offensive words in the classroom, and the self-segregation of racial groups on campus.¹³¹

These scholars argued against specialized curriculum and the disuniting of student bodies. As racial and ethnic identities were embraced, students were losing sight of a larger national American identity. At UIUC, these debates also took place in public forums, even among Asian American students themselves, highlighting again the fragility and obstacles in building a pan-Asian American movement. For instance, in fall 1990 Stephen Lin (then senior in

¹²⁹ Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987).

¹³⁰ Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., *The Disuniting of America* (New York: WW Norton & Company, 1991), 17.

¹³¹ Dinesh D'Souza, *Illiberal Education: The Politics of Race and Sex on Campus* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992).

LAS) and Raymond Meredith (then sophomore in LAS) co-wrote an editorial in the *Daily Illini* arguing that while minority student organizations provided important cultural support, their tactics were not totally effective, as they often tended to isolate members versus interacting with the larger campus, pointing to the Asian Council as an example: "The recent formation of Asian Council shows the trend toward protection of minority rights in disregard of education of the populace." They wrote, "We can easily understand the desire to be among people of common ethnic backgrounds. However, this desire should not be allowed to suppress the need for cultural dialogue. Since minority-interest groups do not allow for a great deal of cultural interchange, this unfortunately leads to increased ignorance about racial issues. Dances, for example, sponsored by specific cultural groups quite often appear to attract only those of like background. While these functions are open to all, there is a visible tendency toward homogeneity among the participants."¹³²

The following semester, Minako Hashimoto, then senior in LAS, wrote an even more scathing critique pointed at AAA's claims that the university was ignoring them in its multicultural efforts. Hashimoto argued that AAA members were failing to promote multiculturalism by insulating themselves exclusively with other Asian Americans, writing,

Multiculturalism means interacting with members of other cultures. Yet a large proportion of undergrads belong to Asian-American organizations socialize, study, live and even go to church with almost exclusively other Asian-Americans. I am not condemning this behavior, but the AAA officers who wrote to the *Daily Illini* complaining about lack of effort on the part of the mainstream had better take a good look at themselves before they start slandering the rest of the world about racism ... it would be much appreciated if AAA members would start establishing multiculturalism instead of talking about it wistfully and blaming everyone else for its lack of existence.¹³³

¹³² Stephen Lin and Raymond Meredith, "Minorities Must Educate Others," *Daily Illini*, September 25, 1990.

¹³³ Minako Hashimoto, "Mix With Other Cultures," *Daily Illini*, April 24, 1991.

In response to Hashimoto's letter, Sharon Roth, then senior in LAS, and Patricia Chou, then senior in LAS and AAA member, co-wrote a letter to the *Daily Illini*, providing a different definition of multiculturalism, which included a collection of diverse experiences. They pointed out that AAA had participated in numerous activities to support community organizations and other campus groups of different racial backgrounds. They wrote, "The AAA, as well as other racial and ethnic groups on campus, contributes in acknowledging multiculturalism. How? By providing cultural programs, social events, speakers, and educational programs, the AAA is bringing Asian-American issues to view within the larger community setting. The AAA has and continues to welcome all people to participate in AAA activities. However, just as it is AAA's responsibility to make people feel welcome in the organization, members of the community need to take the initiative and participate in AAA and other cultural activities."¹³⁴

Another similar exchange occurred in the campus paper between Asian American students a few months later in the fall of 1991. *Daily Illini* columnist Kyung Lah critiqued Asian American students on campus who seemed to only socialize with other Asian Americans, calling Asian Americans the "most self absorbed groups" she'd ever seen, with organizations that promoted separatism. She wrote, "I see the need for unity within the Asian population and a definite need for the University to address issues relating to us. I see the need for representation in organizations that are not Asian in nature. Unfortunately, I see most Asians involved only with Asian organizations and themselves ... to have a significant political voice, there needs to be more campus involvement and a break from exclusive involvement with Asian organizations."¹³⁵ She urged Asian Americans to become more active in the student body's political organizations such as the Student Government Association (SGA).

¹³⁴ Sharon Roth and Patricia Chou, "AAA Multicultural," *Daily Illini*, April 30, 1991.

¹³⁵ Kyung Lah, "Asians Who Seek Power Must Accept Others First," *Daily Illini*, October 31, 1991.

Linus Huang, an ACCORD member, wrote in response, articulating that Lah's logic blamed Asian Americans themselves for their lot and lack of political voice. He wrote, "The grievously ill-conceived notion here is that Asian-Americans have only themselves to blame for their own shortcomings and that racism plays no role in their lack of political representation." And while Huang conceded the importance of Asian American involvement in SGA, he argued, "But real power comes from political unity. Asian-Americans represent an incredible cultural diversity unto themselves, but they share a common oppressor in anti-Asian racism; the most effective means of combating it is to ally themselves against it."¹³⁶ Raymond Chon, then sophomore in Commerce, also wrote to the *Daily Illini* to describe the important needs that Asian American organizations met:

Lah's idea that "traveling in packs" is a negative aspect of our function on campus is wrong. It is called a display of unity, something that groups like the Asian American Association and Korean Undergraduate Students Association provide. Even if these groups provide little political voice, they do provide forms of unity, ranging from cultural awareness to simply becoming acquainted with others of your own race.... The minute our people start to affiliate themselves with white-dominated groups is the first step towards losing our own identities. In a world that so persistently insists the white way is the right way, it is very easy to lose your own identity and self-respect.¹³⁷

Thus, despite charges of self-segregation, Asian American organizations and events provided essential spaces for students to come together, often for the first time. They allowed students to begin to investigate their identities and share common experiences. Such was the case for Karin Wang (BS, 1992, Finance), who was president of AAA in 1991-1992. She recalled:

In reality, I did feel somewhat isolated on campus. Except with the Asian American students. I think it was hard at the time because I remember now some of that backlash, people saying, "Asians self segregate, and they don't want to hang out with anyone else." And at the time I remember being really self conscious about it. But I think for me and for a lot of students who got involved in AAA, we were all very similar in the sense that many people didn't grow up Chinatown, they didn't grow up around other Asian

¹³⁶ Linus Huang, "Asian-Americans Find Strength in Unity," *Daily Illini*, November 6, 1991.

¹³⁷ Raymond Chon, "Asians Must Protect Identity," *Daily Illini*, November 11, 1991.

Americans. And college is a time when you find yourself. So I think for a lot of us, it was a comfort zone, a place where you feel you can speak out, and people support you.¹³⁸

These arguments and debates would continue through the 1990's as Asian American students pushed for an Asian American cultural center and an Asian American Studies program.

Asian American Students in the Midwest: UIUC's Movements in Larger Context

Regionally, UIUC students were not alone in raising awareness about Asian American experiences. Asian American college students have a long history of working together across their respective campuses. On the east coast, Asian American students at Yale University met in April 1977 to discuss how to support each other across universities, creating the Inter-Collegiate Liaison Committee (ICLC); at a conference at Princeton in March 1978, the East Coast Asian Student Union (ECASU) was formed. Simultaneously, Asian American students on the west coast formed the Asian Pacific Student Union in April of 1978.¹³⁹ Around this time, a Midwest Asian Pacific American Student Association Network (MAPASAN) was established as well; each network sought to improve communication across campuses and advance Asian American student interests.¹⁴⁰

As the example of AAA founders being influenced by their peers at the University of Michigan shows, Asian American student networking across midwestern campuses began to develop through the late 1980's and early 1990's. Asian American students at UIUC began working with others in the Midwest to coordinate the first annual Midwest Asian American Students (MAAS) conference held at UIUC in April 1989, with the title, "The Asian

¹³⁸ Karin Wang interview 8 September 2008.

¹³⁹ East Coast Asian American Student Union History, http://ecaasunational.org/site/?page_id=239 (accessed July 23, 2009).

¹⁴⁰ Wei, *The Asian American Movement*, 153. The history and origins of MAPASAN are unclear at this point—if it emerged from the Midwest Asian American Students conferences that took place in 1974, or if it had any connection to the Midwest Asian American Students Union that emerged in 1990; additional research is needed to outline the development of this network.

Connection," with about fifty students from five colleges in attendance.¹⁴¹ Students described that, "The largest accomplishment of MAAS '89, other than to educate the students who attended (on Asian American issues), was that it was the beginning of network-building by five large schools—University of Illinois, Indiana University, University of Michigan, Purdue University, and Washington University."¹⁴² AAA sponsored the MAAS conference at UIUC annually until 1996.

The idea of MAAS was inspired by the existing networks ECASU and the Asian Pacific Student Union. Patricia Chou Lin (BA, 1991, Sociology) was involved in AAA and coordinated the first MAAS. She recalled, "We saw the opportunity to create a midwest network similar to the east and west coast networks. We believed a conference would more easily bring Asian Pacific American students together to create necessary connections."¹⁴³

The second MAAS conference, held on 6-8 April 1990, revolved around the theme of "Bridging the Gap: Asians Headed for the Future" and featured panels and workshops on leadership challenges and professionalization, as well as cultural ceremonies, sports events, a fashion show, and a formal dance.¹⁴⁴ The conference directory listed attendees from UIUC, Northwestern, Miami University (Ohio), Michigan State, Purdue, Washington University, Ohio State, and Wright State University (Ohio). An estimated 150 participants attended from nine colleges and universities.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ Mark Allen, "Forum to Raise Awareness of Asian-American Culture," *Daily Illini*, March 1, 1991.

¹⁴² "MAAS History," MAAS 1993 conference booklet, "Empowerment Through Unity," April 9-11, 1993, Folder: MAAS/ MAASU Early Programs, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

¹⁴³ Patricia Chou Lin (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign alumnus), interview by Sharon S. Lee, 22 July 2008 in Naperville, IL.

¹⁴⁴ Bridging the Gap, Second Annual Midwest Asian-American Student Conference, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, April 6-8, 1990, Record series 41/2/40, Box 10, Folder: Asian American Association—Midwest Asian American Students Conference 1990-1993, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

¹⁴⁵ Third Annual Midwest Asian-American Students Conference, MAAS 1991, Folder: MAAS/ MAASU Early Programs, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

As UIUC's Asian American students were coordinating MAAS, other students were having similar conversations on the need to network in the region, articulating a specific midwestern Asian American identity. In October of 1989, members from six universities (Miami University, Michigan State, Oberlin College, Ohio State, Purdue, and the University of Michigan) met in Granville, Ohio to discuss the need for a regional organization to coordinate such efforts.¹⁴⁶ The Midwest Asian American Students Union (MAASU) was officially formed on 27 June 1990 with Charles Chang as the statutory agent of the new non-profit organization. MAASU elected its interim officers at a conference jointly held with Purdue University that fall.

Charles Chang's family immigrated to the US from Seoul, South Korea in 1970, when Chang was six years old. He grew up Granville, Ohio, a small area where his was the first Asian family in town. Growing up in a predominantly white town without a Korean or Asian American community to support him, Chang recalled the racial issues that emerged for him. He said,

I think since getting off the plane, I've always been somewhat aware of the race issue. At the beginning I was getting into a lot of fights because you know, they made fun of me, mostly of the way I talked because I couldn't speak English when I first got here. So I think race is always something that had been in the back of my mind, something I'd been trying to cope with understanding. And then later in high school I started to go through what a lot of kids go through— identity issues, trying to get who I was, as someone who was different from most of the other kids that I saw who were white.... Plus, not only that, I think I was trying to understand what it meant to be Korean because there were a few other Korean families in other towns I knew, but in terms of culture, I didn't really understand Korean culture either.¹⁴⁷

In 1984, Chang enrolled at Ohio State University and became involved in the Asian American Association, a similar type of organization as the AAAs at Illinois and Michigan. Chang was president of the organization from 1987-1988 and was involved in pushing for Asian American resources on campus, including heading a campaign for full-time Student Affairs staff

¹⁴⁶ "About MAASU," Midwest Asian American Students Union website, <http://www.maasu.org/history.html> (accessed July 20, 2009).

¹⁴⁷ Charles Chang (MAASU founder), phone interview by Sharon S. Lee, 8 October 2008.

position for Asian American students. As he grew in his leadership, Chang began to hear of similar midwestern Asian American student organizations that held conferences at Oberlin College, Michigan State, the University of Michigan, and UIUC. He recalled, "I guess at this time around 1988 I started to realize that around the Midwest there were various other student groups, and I think they were probably all kind of in the same boat, starting to find that there are other student groups ... being isolated in these universities with no Asian communities. For some of us, we felt the need to reach out to each other, to feel stronger, to feel like we're not so small, isolated, and to support each other, while we're doing the work that we're trying to do."¹⁴⁸ Seeing this presence and new growth on campuses made Chang realize that the time was ripe to start to organize Asian American students in the Midwest. He stated, "I envisioned what MAASU would want to do, to bring these student organizations together to feel some solidarity and make them feel like they're not as isolated as they were. And another thing I was thinking was that politically, because they were so small, if we worked together and united, we would have more political clout together than alone."¹⁴⁹

Information about the newly formed MAASU was made available at UIUC's third MAAS conference, held 1-3 March 1991. The year's theme was "Facing Our Reflections—A Discovery of Asian-American Identity." Its listed purposes were to: "1. Educate the university community on current and vital Asian American issues; 2. Serve as a basis for forming a support network of Asian American student organizations across the Midwest area. Also, to serve as a means for Asian American faculty and staff on this campus to network with their peers on other

¹⁴⁸ Charles Chang interview, 8 October 2008.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

campuses."¹⁵⁰ During the conference, MAASU held an informational session to structure the organization and elect officers. Karin Wang (BS, 1992, Finance), then external vice president of AAA and MAAS conference coordinator, described how the conference "hopes to promote the Midwest Asian Student Union."¹⁵¹ Reflecting a consistent annual growth, the 1991 conference hosted 230 students, as well as faculty and staff, from eighteen colleges. The conference also kicked off the very first Asian American Awareness Month coordinated by the Asian Council.

MAASU held its April 1991 conference at Michigan, and the year after, on 3-5 April 1992, MAASU held its conference jointly with UIUC's MAAS, which it would do again in March 1995.¹⁵² The 1992 conference had the theme, "Bringing the Point Home: Effectively Raising Campus Awareness." The MAAS/ MAASU collaboration was articulated in the conference booklet this way:

Since this is the first conference that the U of I has organized with the Midwest Asian American Students Union, we are excited about the diverse and innovative programming organized through this partnership. As a result of the hours of long-distance conversations, reams of email correspondence, late nights of sorting through registration, and countless excuses to instructors, we have succeeded in creating a model for the near-perfect environment for the growth of an Asian American "think tank." We have built upon the U of I Midwest Asian American Students (MAAS) Conference for the past three years and feel that our combined efforts with the MAASU Executive Coordinating Committee has allowed a greater range of student opinions to be represented.¹⁵³

An estimated 400 students attended, representing over twenty colleges in the Midwest.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁰ Midwest Asian American Students (MAAS) Conference General Info, March 1-3, 1995, Record series 41/2/40, Box 10, Folder: Asian American Association-Midwest Asian American Students Conference 1990-1993, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

¹⁵¹ Mark Allen, "Forum to Raise Awareness of Asian-American Culture," *Daily Illini*, March 1, 1991.

¹⁵² As MAASU grew and MAAS faded out after 1996, UIUC remained active in the network, hosting the annual MAASU conference in February 2002 and March 2007.

¹⁵³ Welcome, 1992 MAASU Spring conference program. Folder: MAASU, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

¹⁵⁴ "MAAS History," MAAS 1993 conference booklet, "Empowerment Through Unity," April 9-11, 1993, Folder: MAAS/ MAASU Early Programs, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

A distinct Asian American identity emerged from growing up in less diverse regions in the Midwest, testifying to the importance of supportive groups such as Asian American Associations and MAASU. Charles Chang recalled,

I think you're impacted by who you grow up around, what you see, and how you think people perceive you. And so as a midwestern Asian American, depending on whether you're totally isolated like I was for the most part, or you're somewhat isolated like most of the other Asians in Midwest, and even in areas with larger concentrations, you're still a minority by far. And so I think that has an impact on your identity and who you see yourself as. As well as, I think sometimes in terms of ... your political consciousness. Because when you grow up as a minority, I think, some people grow up without a sense of feeling totally empowered that they can say whatever they want. If you're the one minority who has totally different opinions from everyone else and that everyone considers you're totally opposite from them, then you might be timid.... So I think that's one of the major effects, which is why I think some Asian Americans who go to college then find a larger group of Asians that makes them feel more comfortable. They all of a sudden start feeling more empowered, able to talk about who they are, their experiences and things like that.¹⁵⁵

Growing up in predominantly white midwestern areas (Fort Wayne, Indiana and then suburban Wheaton, Illinois) was also reflected in Karin Wang's (BS, 1992, Finance) recollections about the role that organizations like AAA played for her:

I got to Illinois and it was a shock to me to be on a campus where there were obviously so many Asian American students. And that was shocking to me just because I suddenly could be friends with people who were very different, but they were all Asian American. Many were Chinese American, but some were Filipino or Korean or Indian. And so I think I became involved because it was a comfort zone, and I think Illinois is so vast and most of the state universities are this way, that everybody finds a smaller community to be part of. AAA became this natural fit because there were people I felt comfortable with, I didn't feel like I had to explain myself. It was a novelty for me to be around Asian Americans who were somewhat similar to me. And that's how I got heavily involved.

So for me, it was transformative because of AAA. Because I grew up in these really white towns and suburbs. I always kind of struggled with the fact that I was different. In Indiana for example, people constantly called me names but oddly, they were people who were my friends. People would say "chink" and things like that to me, but there was no consciousness that that was offensive. And my parents were immigrants and probably not that well integrated themselves, so it wasn't like they knew what to make of some of these things. And I think, like many immigrant parents, they were focused on my doing well in school, ignoring the comments.... When I got involved in AAA, the

¹⁵⁵ Charles Chang interview, 8 October 2008.

political part of that identity became really crucial. Because I finally was able to articulate what I had been feeling for sixteen to eighteen years that I had never had words for.¹⁵⁶

As Chang articulated, MAASU also brought Asian American students together to gain a larger base of support, especially in the midst of feeling isolated from large populations of Asian Americans. Several alumni commented on how MAASU encouraged them to think of larger Asian American issues. For instance, Jeremy Bautista (BA, 1996, History) recalled the impact MAASU had on him; before then he had grown up in a predominantly white suburb in Chicago and had denied his Filipino heritage: "It just really woke me up. And I said Wow! People are wrestling with similar family struggles as me, people are facing the same questions as I am, like with my whole disownment of being Filipino, I really had a big identity crisis on my hands ... I definitely was encouraged to ask those hard identity questions now because here are 399 other people asking the same kind of thing! So, I felt like that was good, that *really* pushed me to getting more involved on campus for Asian American awareness."¹⁵⁷

Patricia Chou Lin (BA, 1991, Sociology) also believed MAAS and MAASU helped shape AAA's future direction. She said, "Many began to recognize there were commonalities Asian Pacific American students shared both across Asian cultures and beyond our university. One such example was the model minority image and related experiences and challenges. Coming together across midwest universities raised the level of awareness, which led towards a mindset of working for a common goal. I believe this created the platform for the cultural center and other areas of continued progress for Asian Pacific Americans at the University of Illinois."¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ Karin Wang interview, 8 September 2008.

¹⁵⁷ Jeremy Bautista (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign alumnus), interview with Sharon S. Lee, 7 July 2007 in Chicago, Illinois.

¹⁵⁸ Patricia Chou Lin interview, 22 July 2008.

In addition, networking with other Asian American students in the Midwest made UIUC students aware of what resources their campus lacked. Karin Wang (BS, 1992, Finance) recalled,

I think especially as we started to network across campuses, there was a lot I learned from the midwest students. And we used to joke about this because at one point I was friends with pretty much the AAA equivalent of presidents and officers at many of the Big Ten schools and also some of the smaller schools, like Oberlin College. And it was really instructive. Because we would see, "Oh Michigan has Asian American Studies professors and classes. Why don't we have that?" And so we started to also push and say doesn't the U of I want to be like these other schools? Aren't we just as good as Michigan?"¹⁵⁹

Thus, the start of networking across the Midwest raised not only personal awareness but a larger vision for what could and should exist at UIUC for Asian American students.

Administrative Responses to Asian American Students

With the rise in the number of Asian American student organizations at UIUC, along with a growing regional awareness of Asian American student needs, administrators began to take notice in the late 1980's and early 1990's. For instance, in January of 1987, the Residential Life staff prepared a report detailing programs and support for minority students. Not surprisingly, much of the programming to that point had focused on African American students in conjunction with the Central Black Student Union (CBSU). These programs included advising, academic support in the residence halls, a Buddy Program that matched students together, and luncheons. The report mentioned increased efforts to reach out to Latina/o students, including working with EOP staff and La Casa Cultural Latina. The report had one sentence regarding Asian American students: "Asian Student Support: This issue has not been specifically

¹⁵⁹ Karin Wang interview, 8 September 2008.

addressed in Residential Life training programs but is a growing concern at a number of schools as Asian students demand more services and attention."¹⁶⁰

The following year, Vice chancellor for Student Affairs Stan Levy sent a copy of an article featuring Asian American issues that ran in the *New York Times* along with a memo to several Student Affairs staff including Dean of Students Bill Riley and Associate Vice chancellor Clarence Shelley. He wrote, "I am enclosing for your information an article which appeared recently in the New York Times. It is relevant to our experience, though it clearly has not been a large item on our agenda. We have focused our minority efforts on Blacks and Latinos, and have paid little-to-no attention to the Asian-American dilemma. I find the enclosed persuasive and sufficiently provocative. It may be time to begin to develop another focus of attention."¹⁶¹ The article from July 10 discussed the pressures of the model minority myth that Asian American students felt at UC Berkeley; Asian American students who did not meet the expectations of the model minority myth were overlooked and underserved. Asian Americans were diverse, and more recent immigrants still needed assistance with financial aid and linguistic adjustment. The pressures to succeed also resulted in psychological stressors.¹⁶²

There were also some key reports being written at the time, informing UIUC administrators of Asian American experiences. In the 1988-1989 academic year, undergraduate student Athena Tapales was a Turner Fellow in the Office of the Vice chancellor for Student Affairs. (Turner Fellows are undergraduate students who take part in Student Affairs internships,

¹⁶⁰ Lenita Epinger to Gary North, re: Minority Programming and Leadership Development in Residential Life, 25 January 1987, p. 3, Record series 41/1/6, Box 112, Folder: Minority Programs, 86-87, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

¹⁶¹ Stanley R. Levy to S. Eugene Barton, Gary B. North, William L. Riley, Clarence Shelley, and Hank R. Walter, Subject: Asian-American Students, 22 August 1988, Folder: Misc. Student Affairs Memos re: Asian Americans, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

¹⁶² Richard Bernstein, "Asian Newcomers Hurt by Precursor's Success," *The New York Times*, July 10, 1988.

voicing student concerns for the campus).¹⁶³ In December of 1989, Tapales submitted an eleven-page report to Vice chancellor for Student Affairs Stan Levy about Asian Pacific Islanders (APIs). The report provided information on historical and contemporary issues facing Chinese, Filipino, Indian, Indochinese (Vietnamese), Japanese, and Korean Americans. In particular, Tapales pointed out specific pressures facing Asian American students at UIUC. Asian American students faced academic pressure from their parents as well as from model minority myth expectations and also hesitated in employing counseling services due to cultural stigma. They also encountered acculturation stress as they negotiated between US society and their immigrant parents' cultures, and they encountered racial discrimination as a racial minority. Tapales recommended development in three areas—academics (providing curricula that included Asian American cultures); hiring of staff who understood the API experience; and support of Asian American campus programs such as an Asian American Awareness Week (which did not yet exist). She highlighted successful programs housed under multi-ethnic and Asian American centers at Michigan State University and Ohio State University, which hired counselors and administrators to assist Asian American students. She powerfully argued, "Asian Americans should also be addressed as a minority on this campus. There seems to be a stigma on this University regarding APIs. Since they do not exhibit academic problems and experience overt discrimination, the University has not placed them under the minority category. However, in order to address the problems Asian American students face, *they need to be acknowledged as a minority that needs support.*"¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ Fred H. Turner Fellow Internship, <http://studentaffairs.illinois.edu/students411/turnerfellows.html> (accessed July 27, 2009).

¹⁶⁴ Athena Tapales to Stanley R. Levy, Subject: Asian Pacific Islanders: Findings, 8 December 1989, pp. 8-9, Folder: Asian American Task Force, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives. Emphasis mine.

Shortly thereafter, on 24 January 1990, Levy created an Asian American Task Force (AATF), comprised of Student Affairs staff to "review the needs of and issues faced by the UIUC Asian American students and to report recommendations/ feedback to the Vice chancellor for Student Affairs."¹⁶⁵ The Task Force met through the spring 1990 semester, gathering information from other Big Ten institutions about their Asian American resources. They also met periodically with groups of Asian American students to assess their concerns and communicated with two interns at the Counseling Center who were working on an Asian American-needs survey instrument, as part of the center's own efforts to reach diverse student populations.

UIUC Counseling Center Programs

UIUC's Counseling Center was an important site for minority student support. With the support of the directors and Bill Riley, the dean of students, the center initiated minority programs in the late 1980's. In fall 1987, counselor Samira (Ritsma) Didos and others met with Latina/o students at La Casa Cultural Latina, and a group voluntarily met to discuss how the center could better serve minority and international students. In December of 1987, a search was conducted for a counselor specializing in minority (especially black and Latina/o) student programming and services.¹⁶⁶ In 1991, the Counseling Center also initiated its annual Midwestern Conference on Ethnic Diversity and the Role of Counseling Centers, with a goal to develop multicultural counseling skills.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ Asian-American Task Force Report, submitted by Susan Yung Maul, 14 May 1990, Folder: Asian American Task Force, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

¹⁶⁶ Counseling Center Minority Student Efforts, in Office of Minority Student Affairs Program Description, 5 October 1987, Record series 41/1/6, Box 112, Folder: Minority Student Affairs, 1987-1988, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

¹⁶⁷ "Dennis H. May Conference on Diversity Issues and the Role of Counseling Centers Timeline," University of Illinois Counseling Center website, http://www.counselingcenter.illinois.edu/?page_id=381 (accessed September 11, 2009).

Asian American students such as Ramesh Subramani (BS, 1991, Chemical Engineering) and Jody Lin (BS, 1991, Bioengineering) had been concerned about Asian American mental health needs. Lin began meeting with Didos about these issues in the early 1990's. Part of Didos' tasks involved outreach to international students, but she quickly expanded her work to other cultural minority groups such as African American, Latina/o, and Asian American students. She began to lead brown bag lunches where Asian American student leaders were invited to discuss issues with Counseling Center staff during the 1989-1990 year; she also conferred with Asian American Task Force members.¹⁶⁸ With student input and direction, a conversation series on Asian American issues called "The Cultural Tightrope" took place in fall 1990.¹⁶⁹

Both Didos and Tom Seals, the Counseling Center director from 1988-2004, recalled the role of Asian American students in educating the center's staff about their issues and needs. Didos recalled, "We took the approach that students would educate us. We planned lunches and meetings where the staff and the students would come together and get acquainted with each other as well as give the staff the opportunity to learn from the students. Our goal was to support the students and provide them with the training they needed to facilitate discussions and give presentations within their community. We invited the students to be our advisors. The whole approach was: we're not telling you who you are, could you please help us learn how to best provide services for your community."¹⁷⁰

In addition to working with Asian American students and serving as the liaison for Asian American events, MAAS conferences, and workshops, Didos worked with Counseling Center professionals who were interested in an assessment of Asian American student use of counseling

¹⁶⁸ Samira Didos interview 4 September 2009.

¹⁶⁹ "The Cultural Tightrope" ad, *The Dynasty*: the Newsletter of the Asian American Association, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, vol. 5, no. 3, October 1990, p. 11, Folder: AAA Newsletters, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

¹⁷⁰ Samira Didos interview 4 September 2009.

services. Scott Solberg and Shiraz Tata, interns at the Counseling Center, initiated a project to gather information on Asian American students with purposes to "assess the psychological and emotional adjustment of Asian American students on campus, and to assess their perception of which help-seeking avenues they are likely to utilize when experiencing difficulty. By understanding these two important issues, the counseling center can adjust outreach and clinical services to provide more effective service delivery to Asian American students."¹⁷¹ An anonymous survey was mailed to Asian American students in February of 1992. Didos recalled that Asian American student leaders assisted in crafting and revising the instrument; questions revolved around identifying Asian American help-seeking strategies in order to develop culturally responsive programs for them. Solberg also came back to campus after the survey was completed to share the results with students. The instrument was used for outreach purposes and fostered relationships with students.¹⁷²

Asian American Task Force Recommendations

Based on their conversations with students, the Asian American Task Force (AATF) reported on Asian American issues at UIUC. With a desire for greater cultural awareness, students desired staff support, Asian American programming, Asian American Studies courses, support groups, and greater representation in mainstream programs on campus, such as through the Illini Union Board. (The Illini Union Board did create an Asian American Programming

¹⁷¹ "Asian American Student Needs Assessment," Folder: Research/ Presentations, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

¹⁷² Samira Didos interview 4 September 2009.

Committee as part of its cultural programming in the 1991-1992 academic year. The committee brought speakers, musicians, and actors on Asian American topics to campus).¹⁷³

The AATF also noted that students desired an Asian American cultural center, which would provide a centralized meeting space for them to come together, learn about each others' cultures, and coordinate programs as La Casa Cultural Latina did for Latina/o students. If a center was not feasible, the AATF suggested two possible existing institutional spaces under which Asian American services could be housed, while also noting the limitations of these options. The first was the Office of Minority Student Affairs (OMSA); however, OMSA's focus on academic support did not meet Asian American students' needs well. The AATF wrote,

OMSA cannot provide much help in cultural programming. The Office could assist, and have assisted Asian Americans in the past, in mentoring, orientation information, financial aid advisement, career advisement, subject tutoring and other academic areas. Due to limited resources, a total commitment to Asian Americans would be difficult, but there is room to expand services in the areas mentioned above. Currently, there are approximately 60 Asian American students who use OMSA's programs. Another factor to keep in mind is that Asian Americans do not generally need academic support as much as they need programmatic support.¹⁷⁴

The second possible structure was the Office of International Student Affairs (OISA), but it had its limitations too. The AATF wrote, "While OMSA can provide support in the academic area, OISA can assist students in cultural programming. Asian American students can be included in OISA's activities with the Cosmopolitan Club, the YMCA, and the Study Abroad Office. However, as in the case of OMSA, OISA, due to limited funds and the fact that the

¹⁷³ "Asian American Students at UIUC in 1997," Report by Yuki Llewellyn, Assistant Dean for Registered Organizations, UIUC, Folder: APARC, 1998-99, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives; Asian American Programming Committee, Illini Union Board, Asianation 1995 Asian Pacific American New Student Orientation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center.

¹⁷⁴ Asian American Task Force to Stan Levy, re: Status of the Task Force, 27 March 1990, p. 3, Folder: APA Faculty & Staff Development, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

office's focus is on international students, OISA cannot provide full support to the Asian American groups."¹⁷⁵

The AATF thus concluded, "As evident from this discussion, neither OMSA and OISA can provide the full service in programming and counseling that Asian American students are requesting. These two offices are possible places for information, but they do not primarily serve Asian Americans. Thus, it is necessary for the University to provide an alternative office whose sole purpose is to address Asian Americans [*sic*] issues, and use OISA and OMSA as supporting agencies."¹⁷⁶

At the end of the spring 1990 semester, the AATF reiterated the top issues and concerns of Asian American students, emphasizing that students wished for institutional support for Asian American programs (such as an awareness week); career workshops on leadership development; Asian American Studies courses; wellness programs for Asian Americans on issues such as family conflicts, academic pressures, and acculturation; support staff; and an Asian American cultural center. It also articulated feelings among Asian American students of not being viewed as a valid minority by administrators and by other students of color. The AATF wrote, "The Asian American students feel rejected by other minorities because of their 'super minority' image. They would like to co-sponsor programs with other minority student organizations because they feel the need to be supportive, but are reluctant because of perceived rejection.... Asian American students feel excluded from Minority Student Affairs. They do not have a 'home' such as the African-American, Latino and International students."¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁵ Asian American Task Force to Stan Levy, re: Status of the Task Force, 27 March 1990.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁷⁷ "Summary of Asian American Issues/ Concerns and Program Recommendations," Asian-American Task Force Report, Submitted by Susan Yung Maul, 14 May 1990, p. 1, Folder: Asian American Task Force, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

During the summer of 1990, the AATF continued to discuss possibilities for Asian American programs and resources as outlined in their May report. By the fall of 1990, the AATF sent out a campus mailing to recruit Asian American staff who were interested in supporting Asian American students and hosted a Student Affairs staff development presentation on Asian American students on 14 November 1990 that featured Asian American students' perspectives and Dr. Pallassana Balgopal, professor of Social Work.¹⁷⁸ The workshop was titled, "Life on a Cultural Tightrope: Asian Americans—The Dilemma of Being the Model Minority." The flyer read: "Who are they? How do they cope with the society and this environment? What is the role of Student Affairs and the rest of the campus community in enhancing and supporting them?"¹⁷⁹

By the spring of 1991, the AATF suggested a new formation—the creation of an Asian-American Advisory Board appointed by the vice chancellor for Student Affairs. The AATF recommended the Advisory Board be made up of Asian American student organization leaders and three faculty/ staff members (preferably Asian American). The purpose would be "to serve as an organization to coordinate information on activities sponsored by the Asian American student organizations; to serve as a focus group for the University to discuss Asian American student issues and concerns; to possibly coordinate, organize and/or initiate new programming ideas."¹⁸⁰ In addition, the AATF recommended that the new board be assigned to OMSA, for the following reasons: "This recommendation is based on the desire to establish a formal relationship with Student Affairs and the University; to change the perception that it is an office designed to meet the needs of African American and Latino students only; and last, to recognize the fact that

¹⁷⁸ Memo from Susan Yung Maul, re: November 14 Student Affairs Presentation, 9 November 1990, Folder: APA Faculty & Staff Development, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

¹⁷⁹ Flyer, "Life on a Cultural Tightrope," 14 November 1990, Folder: Benchmarking Other Institutions, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

¹⁸⁰ Susan Yung Maul to Stanley R. Levy, re: Asian American Task Force Proposal, 13 March 1991, p. 3, Folder: Asian American Task Force, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

Asian Americans are a minority population that have issues, concerns and needs that are different from the majority population."¹⁸¹

If the Board were to be created, the AATF suggested that the need for the Asian Council student organization might no longer be necessary, as the new board would oversee Asian American programs. The AATF continued to meet in the fall of 1991. There is some evidence that an Asian American Advisory Council was created by 1992, but its impact and longevity are unclear.¹⁸²

These developments revealed the rising awareness of and advocacy by Student Affairs administrators for Asian American students, the articulation of needs including an Asian American cultural center and AAS courses, and the limitations of existing units such as OMSA or OISA for Asian American students. These conversations continued in the mid- to late 1990's, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

Are Asian Americans a Minority?

Asian American students in the late 1980's and early 1990's were frustrated with their invisibility in campus life. As UIUC did not recognize them as underrepresented, they were not recognized as a separate minority population in need of services such as programming support, counseling aid, or a curriculum that included them. Asian American students were surprised to learn that they were not minorities when they came to UIUC. Ho Chie Tsai (BS, 1994, Electrical Engineering) wrote in retrospect one of the things he learned as a student at the U of I: "When I

¹⁸¹ Susan Yung Maul to Stanley R. Levy, re: Asian American Task Force Proposal.

¹⁸² Clark Cunningham and Yuki Llewellyn, "University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign," in *East of California: New Perspectives in Asian American Studies*, ed. Gary Okihiro and Lee C. Lee (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Asian American Studies Program, 1992), 85.

was a freshman at the University of Illinois, I once walked into a minority fair and found that I wasn't considered a minority. How embarrassing."¹⁸³

This is not to say that OMSA's academic-focused support services were not critical to serving underrepresented populations. Underrepresentation needed to be addressed for the low enrollment and retention rates of African American and Latina/o students. However, because no other office provided support for Asian Americans and because taking on this task for OMSA would have required not only a *significant* increase in resources but also a shift in its mission, Asian American students had no place to go. While needing more programming support rather than academic assistance, as the AATF pointed out, Asian American students were an invisible minority population, pushed out by discourses that focused on blacks and Latina/os and on underrepresentation.

Jody Lin (BS, 1991, Bioengineering) expressed his frustration with this situation. In a letter to the *Daily Illini*, he critiqued the campus' recent *In Print* Magazine edition that focused on issues of prejudice. However, the edition ignored Asian American experiences. He wrote,

I searched through the entire magazine several times but could not find even a single sentence mentioning Asians. The typical view of Asians is that we are a "model minority"—all smart, successful, overachieving, science-oriented people—and this perception is simply not true.... As minorities on this campus, Asian-Americans have support needs too, but because of the perception that Asian-Americans are so successful, these needs are rarely recognized and addressed. This was painfully apparent when The Daily Illini failed to include Asian-Americans in any of the articles and interviews of the InPrint I speak of. Asian-Americans may be labeled as a "model minority," but a "forgotten minority" may be a more appropriate label.¹⁸⁴

Similarly in November 1991, Stephen Lin, then senior in LAS, wrote to the *Daily Illini* critiquing a recent article about multicultural groups that overlooked Asian Americans as well. He wrote,

¹⁸³ Asian American Alumni Association, Asiantation 1995 Asian Pacific American New Student Orientation, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center.

¹⁸⁴ Jody Lin, "Asian-Americans Left Out," *Daily Illini*, November 8, 1990.

"Minority has become too selective of a term—minority hiring programs, minority scholarships, etc. Which minorities do they benefit? Only African-Americans and Latino Americans? What about Asian-Americans? Aren't they a minority too? Maybe we haven't yelled 'oppression' long enough or loud enough to get some recognition."¹⁸⁵

In the state of Illinois, Asian Americans were also struggling with being overlooked in minority scholarships, such as in the Minority Teachers of Illinois Scholarship Aid Program, founded in 1991. The original program targeted African American and Latina/o students, ignoring Asian American and Native American applicants. The Asian American Bar Association, along with the Native American Educational Services College in Chicago, drafted amendments to the state of Illinois General Assembly to rectify these omissions, and the scholarship was opened up in 1992 to include Asian American and Native American students seeking teaching careers.¹⁸⁶ While these exclusions were unintentional, a developer of the scholarship stated, "The primary focus was on African Americans and Hispanics. There was a general sense that there was more success in the Asian American community."¹⁸⁷

Thus the model minority sense of Asian American success worked against the immediate recognition of Asian Americans as minorities. Asian American students not only challenged their exclusion from minority categories, they also articulated where this exclusion left them—one Asian American student leader articulated it well: Asian Americans were in a racial "no-man's land" at UIUC because it was unclear where they fit. Vivian Chow, then junior in Commerce said, "The problem is Asians are not a part of the majority, yet we are not considered a minority on this campus." In addition, Asian American needs, which did not fit a measure of

¹⁸⁵ Stephen E. Lin, "Asians Are Minorities," *Daily Illini*, November 26, 1991.

¹⁸⁶ Kate Warkentin, "State fixes Flawed Minority Scholarship Bill," *Chicago Reporter*, September 1992, http://www.chicagoreporter.com/index.php/c/Cover_Stories/d/State_Fixes_Flawed_Minority_Scholarship_Bill (accessed October 30, 2009).

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

underrepresentation or a black-white model, got short shrift. Chow said, "People think because we have different needs, we have no needs at all."¹⁸⁸

Vida Gosrisirikul (BS, 1994, Broadcast Journalism; JD 1997) also powerfully questioned the university's problematic rationale that did not recognize Asian Americans as a minority deserving of services, which conflicted with the reality of what Asian American students experienced at UIUC. She described that since APAs were only 2.5 percent of the state population and 11 percent of the university in fall of 1994, they were "overrepresented." Hence, APAs did not qualify for services such as the Minority Student Orientation, scholarship programs, and other services. She argued,

But the reason why APAs deserve a cultural center does not solely have to do with numbers. The University's "over-represented" argument as for why APAs don't receive services as other minorities on campus ignores the fact that numbers have nothing to do with many of the issues that APAs face. Being the largest group of people of color at the U of I does not mean that APA students do not have to deal with racist comments on this campus. It does not mean that APAs automatically do not require any of the services that other minorities on this campus receive. It does not mean that stereotypes such as that APAs are all well-off economically, do not exist here. If sheer numbers mean that these problems are non-existent, APAs would have nothing to worry about since we're clearly "over-represented." But the fact remains that numbers do not guarantee equitable treatment. Equitable treatment can only come through education—education of the campus community as a whole, and education of APAs themselves. A cultural house would serve as a center for that education, through organizing and providing programs, seminars, lectures, films, etc. that would be open to all.¹⁸⁹

Thus, the Asian American minority experience was a racial one, not one of statistical underrepresentation. Put another way, Asian Americans were minorities because they were not white. As Christine Feliciano, then publicity chair of the Philippine Student Association and

¹⁸⁸ Sharon Farlow, "Asian-American Students Seek a Place to Call Home," *Crossroads: The Multicultural Magazine of Daily Illini*, March 23, 1994.

¹⁸⁹ Vida Gosrisirikul, "Why a Cultural Center is Important..." Asiantation 1995 Asian Pacific American New Student Orientation, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center.

senior in LAS, stated in 1996: "I think it is really important that the University identifies us as a minority, especially since physically we're identified as a minority."¹⁹⁰

Conclusion

The late 1980's ushered in a new era of Asian American student activism at UIUC. A new cohort of second generation Asian American students (a post-1965 generation) began to come together. Building a pan-Asian American movement was not easy in these early years, as the community was diverse and divided. Yet, gains were beginning to be made, and new Asian American organizations came to life. As Asian American students began to work together, they began to question university minority policies. UIUC minority programs focused on African American and Latina/os and overlooked Asian American student needs. It was not until the students themselves began to articulate this negligence did change begin to happen and the discourse of minorities begin to shift. Activism for institutional resources such as Asian American awareness programs, counselors, staff, and two key units—an Asian American Studies program and an Asian American cultural center—continued through the 1990's. These efforts, within a context of campus activism for other racial minorities, will be the focus of the next chapter.

¹⁹⁰ Quoted in Larry Powell, "A Rainbow of Many Colors: Asian American Student Leaders Speak Out About the Diversity of the Asian American Community," *Crossroads: The Multicultural Magazine of Daily Illini*, October 3, 1996.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE PUSH FOR AN ASIAN AMERICAN STUDIES PROGRAM AND AN ASIAN AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTER AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN (1992-1997)

Breaking the silence surrounding their experiences, Asian American students at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) pushed for two key resources in the early 1990's—an Asian American Studies program and an Asian American cultural center. UIUC had an African American Studies program and an African American cultural center (both established in 1969), as well as La Casa Cultural Latina, the Latina/o culture center (established in 1974). However, there were no parallel resources for Asian American or Native American students, and an academic Latina/o Studies program did not exist in the early 1990's.

As Asian American students programmed events on their own such as Asian American Awareness Months, speakers, and film showings, they critiqued the lack of institutionalized Asian American services and resources on campus and emphasized the work that needed to be done to counteract the model minority myth. In a December 1991 Asian-Pacific American Coalition to Combat Oppression, Racism, and Discrimination (ACCORD) newsletter, Linus Huang (MS, Computer Science, 1993) articulated that the model minority myth had rendered Asian Americans invisible at UIUC:

At the U of I, Asian Americans can find no institutional acknowledgement of their unique heritage. Virtually no Asian American history or literature or issues in the curriculum. No Asian American cultural center. No Asian American support staff. Not even listed as a "minority" when the Office of Affirmative Action reports how much funding they are providing for non-European ethnic groups, though Asian Americans are figured prominently into the numbers indicating how supposedly diverse the student body is. And

other people of color—African, Latina/o, and Native Americans—just don't think a whole lot of Asian Americans when it comes time to collectivize against racism.¹

In 1992, the campus student newspaper the *Daily Illini* described Felix Horng's, then senior in Liberal Arts and Sciences (LAS), feelings on the subject: "Horng said he thinks Asian-American Month is needed to counteract a lack of support for Asian-American students. 'Asian-Americans are a silent minority,' Horng said. 'We don't have a culture center or Asian-American study courses,' he said."²

As Asian American students pushed for a cultural center and academic program, they did so in a politically charged racial climate. Nationwide, the early 1990's were a time of student activism for multiculturalism by African Americans, Chicana/os, Asian Americans, American Indians, women, and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community.³ These students fought for resources such as Ethnic Studies classes, financial aid, and anti-discrimination protections. In Urbana-Champaign, issues for Native American, Latina/o, African American, and Asian Americans also became more visible. The local newspaper, the *Champaign-Urbana News-Gazette*, attributed the rise of these movements to the demographic increases in minority students on campus. In addition, college students had learned lessons from the civil rights movement of the 1960's.⁴ Perhaps more significant in the 1990's was that activists emphasized that racism was not just an African American issue. Latina/o students challenged UIUC administrators' neglect, arguing, in a similar vein as Asian American students, that they were invisible and problematically lumped in a minority model that focused on African Americans. A movement

¹ Linus Huang, "The Myth of the 'Model Minority,'" Asian-Pacific American Coalition to Combat Oppression, Racism, and Discrimination (ACCORD) newsletter, vol. 1, no. 2, December 1991, Folder: ACCORD (Asian-Pacific American Coalition to Combat Oppression, Racism, and Discrimination), University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

² Mark Allen, "Asian Heritage Celebrated in March Events," *Daily Illini*, March 2, 1992.

³ Robert A. Rhoads, *Freedom's Web: Student Activism in an Age of Cultural Diversity* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

⁴ Julie Wurth, "UI's Changing Complexion: With Campus Numbers on Rise, Minority Students Fight to be Heard," *Champaign-Urbana News-Gazette*, May 10, 1992.

protesting the university's mascot "Chief Illiniwek" also emerged, and a small group of Native American students began to build coalitions to retire the Chief. It is important to begin with a larger political context at UIUC in order to understand how such pressures shaped administrators' and students' responses to Asian American student activism.

Latina/o Students at UIUC in the 1990's: Continued Neglect

As noted in chapter three, since the late 1960's, UIUC Latina/o students struggled to be heard in minority programs that focused on African American students. Through their activism, administrators established positions for a Latina/o recruiter and Educational Opportunities Program (EOP) counselor and created La Casa Cultural Latina. Yet, these resources were not stable; La Casa struggled with a string of directors through the 1980's, with no director staying on longer than three years until the mid-1980's. (From 1975 to 1991, there were eleven people who served in the position, usually serving one year before moving on).

Latina/o students and faculty continued to challenge their invisibility in campus minority programs. In November of 1979, Latina/o students and staff of an ad hoc group, the Latina/o Caucus, walked out of a university minority faculty seminar sponsored by the Graduate College because Latina/o faculty had not been included. The seminar's purpose was to increase the enrollment of minority graduate students, yet caucus members criticized the university for its poor recruitment of Latina/o graduate students and Chicano, Puerto Rican, and Cuban faculty.⁵ Changing its name to the Committee on Latina/o Concerns (CLC), the group (comprised of faculty, staff, and students) submitted a report on issues facing Latina/o students in the 1980's to the Board of Trustees, Chancellor John Cribbet, University of Illinois President Stanley

⁵ Lawrence Shulruff, "Enraged Latina/os Walk Out of Seminar for Minorities," *Daily Illini*, November 6, 1979.

Ikenberry, and other Latina/o city and state officials. The report included recommendations for improved recruitment of Latina/o students; improved Latina/o support services in EOP and in La Casa; a Latina/o Studies program; and greater representation of Mexican American and Puerto Rican faculty.⁶ In response, the university formed a special ad hoc committee to review efforts for Latina/o students. This development was featured in La Casa's newsletter with the statement: "This University must come to the realization that Latina/o students will no longer be a forgotten minority."⁷

UIUC responded by advancing recruitment efforts, opening a recruitment office in Chicago, and starting a new President's Scholarship in 1985 targeted at black and Hispanic students. Yet, Latina/o students argued that these programs only focused on students from middle- and upper middle-income brackets, not those from the inner city.⁸ On 18 April 1988, students held a Latina/o Unity Rally in front of the student union to raise awareness of Latina/o concerns such as financial aid, recruitment, and retention efforts for Latina/o faculty, staff, and students.⁹

Latina/o students continued to push for these needs in the fall of 1989. Osvaldo Morera, a graduate student in Psychology, and Jose Martinez, a senior in Engineering, submitted a letter to Dean of Students Bill Riley, carbon copied to a long list of administrators including deans of colleges; directors of Student Financial Aid and the Office of Minority Student Affairs (OMSA); Vice chancellor for Student Affairs Stan Levy; the Counseling Center; Chancellor Morton Weir;

⁶ Committee on Latina/o Concerns Report, 7 May 1980, Record series 41/1/6, Box 11, Folder: La Casa Cultural Latina, 1980-1984, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

⁷ "Committee on Latina/o Concerns," La Carta Informativa: Newsletter of La Casa Cultural Latina, March 1982, p. 7, Record series 41/64/40, Box 3, Folder: La Carta Information, 1977-1982, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

⁸ Julio Ojeda, "UI Lags Behind With 1% Hispanic Enrollment," *Daily Illini*, May 9, 1986.

⁹ "Latina/o Unity Rally," La Carta: Noticias de la Casa Cultural Latina/o, Universidad de Illinois-Urbana Champaign, March 1988, Record series 41/1/6, Box 111, Folder: La Casa, 1987-88, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

and President Stanley Ikenberry. The letter critiqued the university's lumping of Latina/o students into African American services, reading,

First, we feel that the University believes that every minority group has the same needs and wants. For example, many of us are under the impression that the University considers Black concerns to be the same as Hispanic concerns. Though some of the concerns of Blacks and Hispanics are similar, many are not, and the University needs to acknowledge and address these dissimilarities. Since many of us are first and second generation Hispanics in this country, we have not adapted to North American society due to our strong belief in tradition and culture. Without knowing the above-mentioned dissimilarity and other dissimilarities, a non-Hispanic administrator would not be entirely sympathetic to the Hispanic student. Hispanic students are a unique minority at this campus and should not be perceived to be just a minority group with general minority problems.¹⁰

Morera and Martinez argued for the need for Hispanic faculty and administrators and challenged the university not to assume that hiring only African American administrators would suffice. In addition, La Casa needed improved resources, and the building needed structural renovation. Morera and Martinez called for the creation of a task force to search for Hispanic faculty and administrators. Attached to the letter was a petition signed by 107 students.¹¹

Chancellor Weir and Vice chancellor for Student Affairs Levy met with Morera and Martinez in October 1989. The lack of Latina/o administrators was a key issue for students. In 1989, there were only two full-time Hispanic administrators on campus; two other Hispanic administrators had recently left their positions. Students wanted three additional Latina/o administrators in La Casa, OMSA, and a dean position.¹² Levy described the challenges of small applicant pools and competition from other universities to hire Latina/os. There was no movement on the formation of a task force.

¹⁰ Osvaldo Morera and Jose Martinez to William Riley, received 18 September 1989, Record series 41/1/6, Box 111, Folder: La Casa 1989-1990, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Abert Vargas, "Caught in a Casa 22: Scarcity of Hispanic Administrators Leaves Latina/os in a Bind," *Daily Illini*, July 25, 1990.

Latina/o students were also upset with bureaucratic changes in La Casa. In the fall of 1988, La Casa (along with the Afro-American Cultural Program) was moved under the aegis of OMSA.¹³ In the fall 1990 semester, an associate director of OMSA position was created, filled by Jacqueline Wallace. Wallace's new position was to supervise La Casa and help administer programs. However, students felt that the change meant that La Casa's Director Judith Martinez had to report to Wallace instead of directly to the associate dean of students and OMSA director. La Raza, a new student organization, submitted a petition signed by 160 students protesting this change and La Casa's paltry budget.¹⁴

By the fall 1991 semester, both Martinez and Wallace had moved to different positions.¹⁵ Yet, this was not the end of students' confrontations with OMSA and its structure over La Casa. Students protested when an assistant director position was created for La Casa, which OMSA oversaw with no input from La Casa Director Giraldo Rosales.¹⁶ They met with Vice chancellor for Student Affairs Levy and then Chancellor Weir, pushing for the removal of La Casa's new assistant director, whom they believed was undermining La Casa's recruitment programs. They protested OMSA's control over La Casa's hiring process, wanting self-determination.

Native American Students and the Controversy Over the Chief

Just as Latina/o students were pushing for resources and autonomy at UIUC, a new movement for Native American concerns also emerged. A key issue of contention for students of color was Chief Illiniwek. From 1926 until 2007, Chief Illiniwek represented the University of

¹³ La Carta newsletter, October 1988, Record series 41/64/840, Box 1, Folder: Newsletters, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

¹⁴ Mona Blaber, "Latina/o Group Protests New Supervisor," *Daily Illini*, October 3, 1990.

¹⁵ Osvaldo Morera, "UI Must Give Latin People High Priority," *Daily Illini*, September 9, 1991.

¹⁶ Osvaldo Morera, "La Casa's Problems Stem From Director's Lack of Influence," *Daily Illini*, March 16, 1991.

Illinois as the school symbol. Created in 1926 by UIUC student Lester Leutwiler, the Chief performed at university football events, and as football's popularity rose after World War II, the chief's performances evolved. In 1952, student Bill Hug began to incorporate acrobatics such as split leaps into the chief's dance.¹⁷ By the 1980's, the chief logo (his head with headdress) was printed on university merchandise ranging from t-shirts and caps to toilet paper, urinal screens, and trashcans.¹⁸

For its supporters, the Chief evoked imagery of courage, freedom, and individualism and represented university tradition. However, for its detractors, the Chief represented an inauthentic and offensive racialized mascot that signaled a hostile campus climate not only for Native American students but for all students of color. Native American and Alaskan native student numbers have always been low at UIUC, never reaching over 100 students from 1968 to 2008, ranging from 0.1 to 0.4 percent of the undergraduate student enrollment.¹⁹ In the mid-1970's there was some evidence of support for Native American students and objections to the Chief. In 1974, an ad ran in the *Daily Illini* announcing a meeting for "Native American students interested in the Indian Movement."²⁰ In 1978, three graduate students in Social Work wrote a forum in the *Daily Illini* objecting to the Chief, stating that it unfairly depicted Native Americans as savages and, as a caricature, did not portray Native Americans as human beings.²¹ Another forum by Urbana resident Guy Senese in 1979 stated the same.²² Such editorials fueled angry

¹⁷ Carol Spindel, *Dancing at Halftime: Sports and the Controversy over American Indian Mascots* (New York: New York University, 2000).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 137.

¹⁹ University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Office of Equal Opportunity and Access, "Undergraduate Enrollment by Racial/ Ethnic Category, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Fall 1967 to Fall 2008," <http://oeoa.illinois.edu/Undergraduate%20Enrollment%20by%20Race.pdf> (accessed October 15, 2009).

²⁰ Ad for "Native American Students Interested in the Indian Movement," *Daily Illini*, April 27, 1974.

²¹ Beth Schmakel, Dave Loria, and Warren Lind, "Bury My Heart at Zuppke Field," *Daily Illini*, Editorial forum, September 8, 1978.

²² Guy Senese, "Chief Illiniwek Insults Indian Pride, Heritage," *Daily Illini*, Editorial forum, January 27, 1979.

pro-chief letters to the paper arguing that the chief was respectful, authentic, and honorable—that he was not a mascot but a symbol of tradition.

By the late 1980's, the question of the Chief began to gain momentum. In 1988, UIUC's Art department recruited three Native American master's students from the School of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe.²³ One of these students was Charlene Teters, member of the Spokane nation. Teters created the student organization Native Americans for Progress, protested the Chief, and became involved in a movement to remove him as the university mascot.

In September of 1990, a university civil rights group The Coalition for a New Tradition, composed of students and community members, held a march for Native American awareness and submitted a petition signed by 350 people in support of the elimination of Chief Illiniwek; the inclusion of Native Americans in the curriculum; the creation of a Native American Studies program and Native American cultural center; improved efforts for the recruitment and retention of Native American students, faculty, and staff; and the return of university-owned Native American artifacts to the Native American community.²⁴ However in October of 1990, the Board of Trustees voted to retain the Chief.²⁵

The anti-chief movement continued on. The coalition was multi-racial, demonstrating how the Chief translated across racial groups. As Teters articulated about the Chief, "It's not only a Native American issue. It is an issue of racism. Anyone who is anti-racist must address this."²⁶

²³ Spindel, *Dancing at Halftime*.

²⁴ Sridhar Chigurupati, "Anti-Chief Protestors Send Demands List to Ikenberry," *Daily Illini*, September 17, 1990.

²⁵ Carol Jouzaitis, "U of I Board Votes to Keep Chief Illiniwek," *Chicago Tribune*, Chicagoland section, October 12, 1990.

²⁶ Tara Burghart, "After Two Years, Chief Furor Still Rages," *Daily Illini*, August 28, 1991; "A Chronology of the Chief Illiniwek Issue, University of Illinois, <http://www.uillinois.edu/chief/Chronology.pdf> (accessed September 24, 2009). In March 1994, students filed race discrimination complaints with the United States Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, stating that the Chief created a hostile environment for Native Americans and other underrepresented groups. After an investigation, the Department of Education concluded that the Chief did not violate any civil rights. The anti-Chief movement

As the coalition pushed for Native American resources, they also worked to support an appeal for an Asian American cultural center in 1992.²⁷

Building Coalitions Among Students of Color in the 1990's: Opportunities and Challenges

The early 1990's signaled a time not only when students of color advocated for campus resources but also when they began working together. These conversations challenged a view of racism as just an African American issue, which formed the basis for anti-racist programming at UIUC in the 1960's. For instance in February of 1991, a co-sponsored week-long racism reduction event by Alpha Phi Alpha (a historically black fraternity) and Sigma Phi Epsilon (a historically white fraternity) changed its name from "Ebony and Ivory" to "Ebony *to* Ivory." This slight grammatical change reflected an expansion of programs that now focused on issues concerning Native Americans, Asian Americans, Latina/os, and Jews.²⁸

In spring of 1991, a coalition of students of color (seventeen African Americans and two Latina/os) ran for positions in the Student Government Association (SGA), the official student voice of the university, on a slate called "Vision."²⁹ Members ran for positions on the student assembly, for student trustee, and on the student organization funding board. The Vision slate won a number of positions including student-trustee candidate, ten of the fifteen elected assembly members, and five of eight Student Organization Resource Fee Board positions. One student described Vision's victory this way: "People of color, Vision's constituency, are a very

continued, but it was not until the National Collegiate Athletic Association ruled in 2005 that Native American mascots were hostile and barred several institutions, including UIUC, from hosting post-season athletic events that in February 2007 the Illinois Board of Trustees retired the Chief.

²⁷ Elaine Richardson, "Groups: Chief Fosters Hostile UI Atmosphere," *Daily Illini*, April 15, 1992.

²⁸ Andrew Conneen, "'People Aren't Too Different': Weeklong 'Ebony to Ivory' to Reduce Racism of All Hues," *Daily Illini*, February 15, 1991.

²⁹ Alyssa Tucker, "Candidates Reinforce Current Goals of Diversity," *Daily Illini*, March 4, 1991.

united community and they are much more interested in change than the typical white apathetic voter ... for once, people of color will not be in the minority."³⁰

Oswaldo Morera, graduate student in Psychology, commented on these movements and what they portended in his *Daily Illini* column. He described how on 14 October 1991, more than 250 African American, Latina/o, and Native American students protested the lives lost through the legacy of Columbus (subsequent protests of Columbus day included Asian Americans in 1992).³¹ These students presented a list of demands to the administration that included creating a Latina/o Studies program, a Native American Studies program and cultural center, and enhancing the Afro-American Studies program and cultural center.³² In addition, Morera described the increasing activism of Asian American students and the involvement of Palestinian students in the rally. He noted that previous efforts by the university were aimed at dividing these groups from working together, but this would not happen again. He wrote, "The University has fallen considerably short in terms of numbers of ethnic students, ethnic faculty and ethnic research programs. Instead of addressing the problems, the University masks them and hopes they will disappear. The University has a time bomb ticking, and my word of warning is very simple: Watch out."³³

In addition, a number of programs and events focused on collaboration across racial groups. On 9 April 1992, a panel of students of color discussed how to relieve tensions and build better coalitions between Asian Americans and African Americans.³⁴ Latina/o students' demands were also tied to other students of color. At a rally on May 1, Jason Ferreira, senior in LAS,

³⁰ Greg Keller, "University Voters Choose Mitchell, Begovich as Reps," *Daily Illini*, March 8, 1991.

³¹ Elaine Richardson and Jenni Spinner, "Columbus Day Rally Celebrates Struggle," *Daily Illini*, October 13, 1992.

³² Oswaldo Morera, "UI Policies Stifle Progress of Multicultural Groups," *Daily Illini*, November 4, 1991.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Kim Greuter, "People of Color Discuss Ways to Make Their Groups Closer," *Daily Illini*, April 10, 1992.

described how the barriers to La Casa's growth would be repeated for other groups. He stated, "What's happened to La Casa will happen to the African-American cultural center ... and there will never be an Asian-American or Native American cultural center, and you can bet if we don't get in gear, that racist mascot will never be gone."³⁵

Despite these gains, building coalitions across communities of color was not easy, especially for Asian Americans. The discourse on campus that Asian American students were overrepresented and model minorities was a hard one to ignore. As Asian Americans were not given an institutional space or recognition of their own experiences with racism, how would black and Latina/o students view their struggles for their own resources? How would they fit into a growing coalition? Nationally, Asian American community leaders trying to build these coalitions have expressed the struggle for Asian Americans to be seen as legitimate minorities. For example, Ross Harano, a Chicago businessman (and UIUC alumnus, class of 1965) noted: "When blacks talk about a minority agenda, they don't include us. Most Asians are viewed by blacks as whites."³⁶ An Asian American panelist at a conference said: "Asian Americans feel like orphans. The majority says 'You are not us.' Minorities say 'You are not us.' Our interests are ignored whenever convenient."³⁷ Asian Americans are rendered invisible (or at least secondary) in a black-white paradigm and believed to be model minorities

Some Asian American students, especially those involved in ACCORD, tried to work in coalition with other student of color groups; women of color had made significant strides to work together through the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA).³⁸ Yet, alliances were hard

³⁵ Elaine Richardson, "Latina/os Continue Protests," *Daily Illini*, May 4, 1992.

³⁶ David A. Bell, "The Triumph of Asian-Americans: America's Greatest Success Story," *The New Republic*, July 15, 1985, 31.

³⁷ SB Woo, "America's Second-Class Citizens," *Asian Week*, July 4, 1997, 7.

³⁸ Jonathan Brown, "Students Discuss Issues of Multiculturalism," *Daily Illini*, December 6, 1991; Melita Marie Garza, "YWCA at Forefront of U of I Fight," *Chicago Tribune*, May 14, 1992. The YWCA became a place for women to form support and discussion groups regarding building alliances and combating racism in the early

to build, as Asian Americans were not seen as immediate allies by other students of color, such as in building the slate for Vision. Some ACCORD alumni recalled the challenges to building the coalition. Rhoda Gutierrez (BS, 1993, Psychology) recalled, "The Asian American students were not really welcomed. We actually had to really negotiate our space there."³⁹ In describing the relations between Asian Americans and others in the coalition, Gutierrez also described, "It was like we (Asian Americans) had economic privilege and we had, to a certain extent, been accepted within mainstream social spheres. So it wasn't like we were facing "racism" or discrimination.... At times it was difficult to get in a word edgewise because there was so much hostility against us even trying to be part of this coalition."⁴⁰ These tensions would persist, even as fragile coalitions were built.

Latina/o Students' Sit-ins—The Events of Spring 1992

As all these issues were brewing, Latina/o students continued to push for their needs. Chancellor Weir formed an independent three-person commission to investigate Latina/o students' demands, setting a deadline of April 27 for a response. After several meetings and delays, students felt it was time to take action. On 29 April 1992, they sat-in at the Office of Minority Student Affairs; university police dragged out nine Latina/o students who had refused to leave, and students charged police with brutality and unnecessary force.⁴¹ The sit-in coincidentally fell on the same date as the news of the acquittal of Los Angeles police officers in

1990's, drawing together Asian American, African American, Latina, Native American, and white women for workshops. It also was a space where groups such as Shakti, an Asian women's support group, formed. Additional research needs to be done to uncover the role of women of color and the YWCA in these movements.

³⁹ Rhoda Gutierrez (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign alumnus), interview by Sharon S. Lee, 20 July 2008 in Chicago, IL.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Elaine Richardson, "Latina/os Sit In at UI Building: La Casa Changes Demanded," *Daily Illini*, April 30, 1992; Julie Wurth, "Latina/o Students Not 'Giving Up' After Staging UI Sit-in," *Champaign-Urbana News-Gazette*, April 30, 1992.

the beating of Rodney King, sparking the Los Angeles riots. This coincidence seemed to confirm an institutional response of police force to people of color.⁴² The unjust verdict in the Rodney King case fueled rallies and marches as well as sporadic violence in Urbana-Champaign in May 1992.⁴³

On May 1, Latina/o students held a rally on the campus quad, attracting over 200 people. They sought the removal of La Casa's assistant director and La Casa from OMSA oversight and desired the creation of a Latina/o student council to oversee the cultural center. Four days later, on Cinco de Mayo, 5 May 1992, a multi-racial coalition of 120 students staged an eight-hour sit-in in the Henry Administration building.⁴⁴ Their demands were listed in four categories:

1. Recruitment and Retention: disaggregate the term Hispanic by region, country, and separate it from Latin American international students; achieve Latina/o graduation rates equivalent to the percentage of Latina/os in Illinois; stabilize the university Peer Retention Program and connect it with Latina/o retention efforts; hire a Latina/o counselor in the counseling center; create a Latina/o Student Union in the residence halls; make a concerted effort to recruit Latina/o students from inner city high schools and community colleges; improve recruitment of Latin graduate students.
2. Faculty and Administration: recruit from historically underrepresented groups (Mexican, Puerto Rican); recruit Latina/os in higher administrative positions; ensure that the Latina/o faculty recruited conduct research on the Latina/o experience.
3. Chief Illiniwek: immediately remove Chief Illiniwek as the mascot; create courses and a cultural center for Native Americans.

⁴² Elizabeth Canelo, Jason Ferreira, and Osvaldo Morera, "University of Illinois: El Movimiento and the Politics of Repression," *Z Magazine*, March 1993, 55-59; Kevin A. Schweitzer, "Officials Cite Little Violence in Protests of King Verdict," *Daily Illini*, May 4, 1992. About 1,000 African Americans led a march at the university police department, protesting the acquittal of the LAPD officers in the Rodney King verdict.

⁴³ J. Philip Bloomer, "Anger Over Verdict Draws 1,000 to Late-night UI Protest," *Champaign-Urbana News-Gazette*, May 2, 1992; Mike Monson, "Stay Cool, C-U Mayors and Clergy Urge: Interracial Rows on Friday Night Spark Concern," *Champaign-Urbana News-Gazette*, May 3, 1992.

⁴⁴ Elaine Richardson, "Students Rally in UI Building; Three Arrested. La Casa Protest Leads Sit-in," *Daily Illini*, May 6, 1992; Julie Wurth and Chris Schultz, "UI Students Vow to Keep Up 'Struggle': Three Arrested in Protest; Rash of Fire Calls Made," *Champaign-Urbana News-Gazette*, May 6, 1992.; Melita Marie Garza, "Cops Roust U of I Latina/o Protesters," *Chicago Tribune*, May 6, 1992. There are different estimates of the number of students that sat-in in the administration building. Estimates range from 100 to 150 students.

4. Latina/o Studies Program: differentiate between a Latina/o Studies program and the Latin American and Caribbean Studies program; develop a Latina/o studies program; create a Latina/o and Latin American library; increase resources for La Casa.⁴⁵

In an attempt to break up the sit-in, police from UIUC, Urbana, Champaign, and state police troopers forcibly removed sixty students and arrested three for aggravated battery, resisting arrest, and obstructing justice.⁴⁶ There was also a rash of fires in campus buildings that night, with some officials theorizing a connection to the protests.⁴⁷

Some Asian American students, particularly those in ACCORD, were involved in the May 5 sit-in and publicly supported Latina/o students. Miya Yoshitani, ACCORD member, stated to the *Daily Illini*: "Asian-Americans stand in solidarity with the Latino and Latina community fighting for their cultural center and for self-determination."⁴⁸ Neena Hemmady, another ACCORD member, stated, "For myself and the other Asian groups, I'd like to say we stand in complete solidarity with our Latina/o brothers. We (Asians) are in the midst of struggling for our own cultural center. The university always is trying to impose its view on how the ethnic groups should run their own affairs."⁴⁹

Fall Out From 92

UIUC had not seen such large-scale protest in some time. Paul Doebel, director of Campus Security, described the May 5 protests as the "most significant protest" since the anti-

⁴⁵ "Latina/o Student Demands and Solutions, Spring 1992," La Carta Informativa: A Newsletter of La Casa Cultural Latina, vol. 1, Spring 1992, Record series 41/64/840, Box 1, Folder: Newsletters, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

⁴⁶ Richardson, "Students Rally in UI Building"; Wurth and Schultz, "UI Students Vow to Keep Up 'Struggle'"; "Protest, Fires Hit U of I Campus," *Chicago Defender*, May 7, 1992.

⁴⁷ Mona Blaber and Theo Francis, "Officials Link Rash of Fires to Protest," *Daily Illini*, May 6, 1992; Kim Greuter, "Officials 'Shocked' by Campus Fires," *Daily Illini*, May 7, 1992. The fire department received twenty-nine calls relating to fires, smoke bombs, and pulled fire alarms.

⁴⁸ Elaine Richardson, "Latina/os Continue Protests," *Daily Illini*, May 4, 1992.

⁴⁹ Garza, "Cops Roust U of I Latina/o Protesters."

war demonstrations of the 1970's.⁵⁰ It was paramount for administrators to respond in a meaningful way. The university committee assigned by Chancellor Weir to investigate Latina/o students' demands, chaired by Michael Palencia-Roth, director of Comparative Literature, presented their findings on May 8. The committee found that the university had not provided enough commitment or sensitivity to Latina/o students' needs.⁵¹ It recommended stabilizing La Casa's budget, moving La Casa out of OMSA, and giving a new physical space to La Casa. In May, Weir formed an executive committee to work with students; some changes included stabilizing La Casa's budget, adding \$30,000 in funding, and having La Casa report to a different unit than OMSA.⁵²

University trustees and Illinois state senators were concerned by the protest, the report, and with students' charges of police brutality. State senators Miguel del Valle and Alice Palmer called for UIUC to drop disciplinary actions against protestors and arrested students and met with Chancellor Weir to express their concerns. Del Valle also commended the broad-based racial coalition that made the efforts possible. He stated, "Participating in the demonstration were a coalition of students which included Latina/os, African Americans, Caucasians, and Asians. I truly have not seen such an impressive coalition of diverse ethnic and economic backgrounds since the 1960's."⁵³ Legislators introduced a resolution calling for the university to conduct an investigation of Latina/o concerns.⁵⁴

On 14 October 1992, an Illinois State Senate subcommittee held a six-and-a-half hour hearing in the Illini student union regarding Latina/o students and other students of color, led by

⁵⁰ Melita Marie Garza, "Hispanic Concerns Surface at U of I," *Chicago Tribune*, May 6, 1992.

⁵¹ Elaine Richardson, "University Report Answers Latina/o Demands," *Daily Illini*, June 12, 1992.

⁵² Elaine Richardson, "Court, Committees Consider Latina/o Issues," *Daily Illini*, Welcome Back Edition, August 17-23, 1992; Julie Wurth, "Bitingly Critical, Panel Outlines Path to Progress," *Champaign-Urbana News-Gazette*, May 9, 1992.

⁵³ Miguel del Valle, "U of I Students Protest," *Chicago Defender*, June 2, 1992.

⁵⁴ Julie Wurth, "Lawmakers Seek Amnesty in UI Latina/o Protest," *Champaign-Urbana News-Gazette*, May 23, 1992.

senators del Valle and Palmer. During the hearing, President Stanley Ikenberry and Chancellor Morton Weir testified. Then, Latina/o, Asian American, and Native American students described a hostile campus climate for minorities and the unnecessary police force used in the ejection of student protestors in May.⁵⁵ Students also worked on achieving amnesty for arrested students and pushed for a Latina/o Studies program and improved retention efforts of students and faculty.⁵⁶ Del Valle and Palmer stated they would investigate student disciplinary procedures and police oversight at UIUC.

Asian American students (again, mostly from ACCORD) gathered data to be included in the state subcommittee hearings to shed light on the racism faced by Asian American students. Students testified that Asian Americans were not model minorities and that anti-Asian harassment and violence on campus existed and included racial assaults, threatening phone calls to Asian American students for public statements made protesting racism, and comments hurled at Asian Americans to "Go back to Asia." They stated, "The administration must actively seek to meet the needs and address the issues and interest of Asian/ Pacific American students concerning the culture center, studies program with Asian/Pacific American faculty whose primary research interest is on Asian/ Pacific Americans, counseling facilities, recruitment and retention by ethnicity, and office to handle anti-Asian/ Pacific harassment and violence."⁵⁷

⁵⁵ "U of I Defends Action in Sit-ins: Minority Students Say Police Used Unnecessary Force," *Chicago Tribune*, October 15, 1992; Julie Wurth, "Legislators to Investigate UI Student Disciplinary Procedures," *Champaign-Urbana News-Gazette*, October 15, 1992.

⁵⁶ Rick Wion, "Latina/os Protest Administration: Group Marches to Swanlund Building," *Daily Illini*, April 28, 1993. A Latina/o studies program was established in 1996, and La Casa was moved to a larger space at 1203 W. Nevada Street in Urbana in January 1996.

⁵⁷ "Senate Hearings—Testimony Given by Asian Pacific Americans," *Horizons: Newsletter of the Asian American Association at the University of Illinois at U/C*, November 1992, p. 5, Record Series 41/2/41, Box 10, Folder: Asian American Association Newsletters 1986-1998, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives. The testimony was endorsed by the following UIUC student organizations: AAA, Asian American Artists Collective, Asian/ Pacific American Support Group, BARKADA: Philippine Support Group, Hong Kong Students Association, Indian Student Association, Indonesian Student Association, Philippine Student Association, Shakti (YWCA Asian/ Pacific American Women's Support Group), Singapore Student Association, Taiwanese American Students Club, Vietnamese Student Association, and Wavemakers: Asian American Women United.

Students also pushed for the creation of a full-time staff person for Asian Pacific American (APA) student services.

Neena Hemmady (BS, 1994, Civil Engineering) recalled the significance of working on the data for the hearing: "We were collecting data, putting together a case of what it meant to be an Asian person in the higher education system of Illinois. We felt that there was discrimination and that it was difficult and challenging. There were things like the model minority myth that we had to challenge ourselves on, not to mention Asian Americans who didn't fit the myth and had to face severe economic challenges!... The gist of what we gave to the Illinois Board of Higher Education was: there was anti-Asian discrimination and it was very real. And that to me was also a big deal because it was us being very visible."⁵⁸

But just as some ACCORD members were actively compiling data and testifying in the senate hearings, other Asian Americans avoided involvement. Some leaders in the Asian American Association (AAA), such as Jessica Chen (BS, 1994, Chemical Engineering), expressed frustration at what she termed apathy and criticized Asian American students who feared getting involved in politics. She wrote in the November 1992 AAA newsletter,

What is it that Asian Americans on this campus are the most apathetic among the minority groups? Where were YOU, as an Asian American, when the Senate hearings were going on, or at the Columbus Day protest and teach-in?...

It is thoroughly embarrassing to see the patheticness [*sic*] of the Asian American community. At the Senate hearings, the other three minority groups were well represented and displayed unity within themselves. Yet, just a handful (literally) of Asian Americans were present. Responses for not attending ranged from "I'm tired," "I'm sort of hungry, I'll go eat instead," to the most irrational: "I'm not into politics." Since when is racism solely a political issue? Racism is a lifetime issue, one that will affect us as long as it exists.

There is no excuse for the ignorance displayed by Asian Americans on campus when it comes to the issues we face....

⁵⁸ Neena Hemmady (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign alumnus), interview by Sharon S. Lee, 20 July 2008 in Chicago, IL.

It is not fair that there are perhaps 50 people on this campus actively involved in fighting for Asian American issues trying to get the other 3500 to even listen to them. It's like expecting one person to row the boat for 70 people sitting on their apathetic rears; if the oar doesn't break then the person will. It is pretty safe to say that several of us are getting fed up with the frustratingly indifferent response that has been shown by lack of attendance at rather monumental occasions. What would have happened if the Asian American presenters at the Senate hearings had decided not to stay up all night preparing their excellent presentation before the Senate committee? Or if there was no Awareness or Cultural committees, if AAA was just a "dance club"? You have to realize that there are people on this campus who are putting plenty of effort, time, and pain into voicing Asian American concerns, risking more than just a grade. And if we as Asian Americans do not come together and use our numbers on this campus, their endeavors will not be worth anything.

If we can spend half an hour getting ready for a three-hour dance with 500 people attending, we can spend one hour at an Awareness meeting....

Please don't let the Asian American community be humiliated again.... If as minorities we are expecting to accomplish anything on this campus, it will have to be done in coalition with the other minority groups on campus, where the strength in numbers lie.... Please do something, before the apathy kills everything we're trying to do for Asian American students.⁵⁹

As Chen's letter revealed, while groups such as ACCORD took on a pointed political approach and were involved in larger coalitions among students of color on campus, many others were not involved or shied away. Leaders took on the challenges of eliciting a wider investment by Asian American students cautiously and strategically.

Shaping a Different Kind of Activism for Asian American Students

What qualifies as "activism"? While activism can take on many forms, the idea of protest, rallies, marches, and hunger strikes seem to stand as the most effective and visible ways to press for change, such as used in the May 1992 sit-ins. However, these forms of activism were not

⁵⁹ Jessica Chen, "AA = Asian Apathy," *Asian American Artists Collective Newsletter*, vol. 1, no. 1, November 1992, pp. 2-3, Folder: AAA Historical Resources, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

plausible methods for much of the UIUC Asian American community in the 1990's.⁶⁰ Several leaders were aware that the likelihood of gaining a large Asian American constituency to protest and take over administration buildings for an Asian American cultural center or studies program was unlikely. In particular Asian American students discussed the 1992 sit-ins with some trepidation. Ho Chie Tsai (BS, 1994, Electrical Engineering) recalled:

The comments I would hear were along the lines of "I don't think I could march or protest like that" or "I couldn't do a hunger strike." Many would say they felt strongly about the issues and knew it was important, but the all-too-common response was "I wouldn't do it that way." So, what was I supposed to do? I had to figure out a way that could be palatable. We talked about the 1992 sit-ins a LOT. I think when the incidents actually peaked, it scared a lot of the Asian American students. Because even though they supported it, in their minds, they were probably thinking, we can't do it the same way, there's no way we could fight our fight the way they did.⁶¹

Students described that part of the reasons for this caution was cultural pressure from immigrant parents and a tacit comfort with being primarily involved in social activities. As noted in chapter four, in the late 1980's, many Asian ethnic and Asian American organizations had greater success with social events; it was only the minority of leaders in AAA, the Asian Council, and ACCORD that pushed a larger political agenda. Tsai contemplated on the difficulties in garnering a political movement that was more confrontational.

The Asian groups on campus in the late 1980's and early 1990's were still very much social or cultural, meaning they really were valued as social organizations. Big parties and fashion shows were flagship events. There was no hint of any political statement with these organizations.... To me, it makes sense, because they were the new second generation immigrants coming-of-age, whose parents came post-1965. A lot of them had grown up in the suburbs of Chicago, usually as a minority in their high school at the time, even though it's changed now. And so I think the general attitude was, just try to fit in, just do the regular things that everyone else does. You know, it wasn't cool to be different or identify as Asian American or think about identity. So what was the result? It meant

⁶⁰ This is not to say that *no* Asian American students were willing to protest or sit-in, nor am I arguing that *all* Latina/o or African American students were. Obviously these communities are diverse and broad-based; I am referring here to the dynamics that fueled the 1992 sit-ins, which may have been a product of a specific cohort at UIUC of student leaders, not anything "inherently" Latina/o. Why Latina/o students rallied to sit-in and protest in the way they did is a question for future research.

⁶¹ Ho Chie Tsai (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign alumnus), interview by Sharon S. Lee, 28 July 2008 in Manchester, Indiana.

that they did the things that all the other non-Asian folks did, such as hang out and party. The cool thing was you started to discover that you could relate to all these other Asian Americans, and that was important to these students' sense of identity at that time. But "being political" and "making waves" were not part of most people's natural tendency at that time.⁶²

Jeremy Bautista (BA, 1996, History) also reflected on the improbability of garnering widespread Asian American support for more confrontational tactics, despite a strong commitment in spirit for protestors such as in 1992. He described,

I understand you can only go so far. You know, you're a college student, you can only go so far.... We'd have to convince a LOT of people to possibly get arrested, to possibly get kicked out of school, to possibly get into all this trouble. We'd have to *really* build people up! I don't know if that's a cultural pressure. I don't know if "conservative" is the right word for that ... if Asian culture tends to be on the "conservative" side, more reserved or whatever, if that's what that's being defined as, then yeah, I think cultural pressure would be more of that, like how are you going to explain to your parents that you got kicked out of school? How are you going to explain to your parents, who for a lot of us, are paying for our education ... they were putting us through college.⁶³

Given these dynamics, Asian American leaders walked a fine line; they were conscious of using cautious strategies in pushing for resources but trying not to alienate more conservative Asian American students (potential supporters), all the while making pointed political statements. For instance, in an article in the *Champaign-Urbana News Gazette* dated 10 May 1992 (five days after the Latina/o-led sit-in), Asian American student leaders stated that they would pursue their own cultural center in the next academic year. AAA Co-president Anna Hui discussed plans to approach Asian American faculty and staff for assistance and noted that they would most likely engage in less confrontational tactics. She described, "It is not culturally the way we would handle the situation."⁶⁴ Still, she expressed admiration for the May 5 protests.

⁶² Ho Chie Tsai interview, 28 July 2008.

⁶³ Jeremy Bautista (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign alumnus), interview with Sharon S. Lee, 7 July 2007 in Chicago, Illinois.

⁶⁴ Julie Wurth and Peter Rooney, "Asian Students at UI to Seek Cultural Center of Their Own," *Champaign-Urbana News-Gazette*, May 10, 1992.

Thus, part of these leaders' strategies involved working tirelessly to build an educational element into the social events where Asian American students more readily convened such as those coordinated by AAA. Jody Lin (BS, 1991, Bioengineering), AAA president from 1989-1991, recalled using strategies that were less confrontational and more social.

I think there were some students who were very "in your face" about Asian American activism, and I didn't really feel that was the right approach. I felt like that approach tended to turn people off and shut down dialogue. For instance, if people are constantly being told how racist they are—how often do they want to hear that? I didn't feel like that kind of approach was going to advance awareness of Asian American issues. On the other hand, social events were a way of bringing people of different ethnicities together. I think we always recognized that the social element was (and always would be) the main draw. But if we could inject some education or some awareness into those activities, and if that branched out into other directions, we were very happy about that. Nevertheless, the reality was that overwhelmingly people were there purely for the social aspects of our events.⁶⁵

Ho Chie Tsai (BS, 1994, Electrical Engineering) also recalled the ways that AAA sought to infuse some educational content about Asian American issues into social events.

The cultural center was something that was starting to be discussed, and so we had to be creative in exposing people to the issues. At a large dance party, we might put up a presentation board on the issue as they walk in so that they learn about what's going on and why we're supporting this. Another party would be a fundraising event—we make a lot of money with these parties, but what are we going to do, just keep it in our bank account? It made absolutely no sense if all you were going to do was just to try to host a bigger party the next time. So let's change the focus and now use this as a fundraising opportunity for a greater good. Let's take a percentage of the money and donate it to our library to build a collection of Asian American books. We made it our mission that every dance had to have some other greater purpose attached to it.... To many people, a dance is just a dance. But maybe having walked by, seeing that we were trying to change some things, hopefully making a bigger impact, it may have changed the minds of some people whose original intent was just to come out and have fun only. And I think what we started to see was that a lot of people were starting to come to us more for the organizational aspects and the leadership opportunities.⁶⁶

This caution in moving AAA in a political direction revealed itself in the mid-1990's. For example, this tension was articulated in AAA's newsletter in September of 1995, when

⁶⁵ Jody Lin (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign alumnus), interview with Sharon S. Lee, 20 August 2008 in La Grange, Illinois.

⁶⁶ Ho Chie Tsai interview, 28 July 2008.

newsletter editor Tony Kueh described pressing issues affecting Asian American students at UIUC and the persistence of anti-Asian racism, all the while reassuring students that talking about these issues did not entail political fanaticism. He wrote,

In many cases, *Asian Americans are not considered as minorities in the eyes of the administration*. This is demonstrated by the various "exceptions" that are made in the academic guidelines of the university. These excepts [*sic*] usually regard Asian Americans as a "non-minority" group, therefore, excluding many to benefits such as financial aid. As far as racism, it is present everywhere. It is very easy to deny the presence of racism at such a large university, but look around you. It's there.... All these things might be unfamiliar to many of you, but don't worry. We're not here to create the "Asian Martin Luther King Jr.". The purpose of AAA is to inform and provide resources. We want all our members to be "informed" of the situation, and the facts. If you wish to get involved, and make a difference, we want to be your helping hand in joining our progression towards equality for Asian Americans.

Beyond all this serious politics, there is fun beneath it! Yes! Really! Trust me on this one.⁶⁷

Even while emphasizing a different tactic, Asian American student leaders were intent on building on the momentum of student activism on campus (that took on more visible forms by Latina/o students) and called for unity. In a letter to Asian American student organization officers, Peter Ko, AAA external vice president, wrote,

We, the (AAA) officers, have had many discussions, and we all agree that there is a need for unity amongst the various Asian American student organizations on campus.... Together we are 10.5 percent of the entire undergraduate student body and represent the largest minority group on campus. Apart each of us barely represents 3 percent of the student body. It is clear that only together can our voice be heard and the University recognize us and our need for an Asian (American) Studies curriculum, an Asian American cultural center, and minority support services. Only together can we make the U of I campus more culturally aware. After a year in which we've seen both the African American and the Latina/o Americans really come together for a cause, it is now time for the Asian Americans to show some unity.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Tony Kueh, "From the Desk of the Editor," *Rice Paper*, the Official Newsletter of the Asian American Association at the University of Illinois-Urbana, Champaign, vol. 10, no. 1, September 1995, p. 3, Folder: AAA Newsletters, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives. Emphasis in original.

⁶⁸ Peter Ko to Asian Organization Officers, 20 July 1992, Folder: AAA Meetings, Documents, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

Thus, students employed a variety of strategies as they pushed for university resources.

The Push for an Asian American Cultural Center at UIUC

Much media attention focused on Latina/o students and the 1992 sit-ins. And while Asian American students (such as those in ACCORD) publicly voiced their support for these movements, there was some representation of Latina/os as rabble rousers and Asian Americans as quiet and uncomplaining. A letter to the editor of the *Daily Illini* by Champaign resident and UIUC alumnus Don Kruse in January 1993 read:

The great "hue and cry" was triggered last semester when Latina/o students and "friends" went on a rampage—setting fires, destroying property, blocking accesses to offices with sit-ins, pushing and even hitting a police officer. Their excuse was that they were being treated unfairly and they should have a better meeting facility. They didn't ask; they demanded. How dare approximately 5 percent of the student population demand anything. For their actions, they should have been charged with arson, obstructing justice and unlawful assembly. As far as a different meeting center, what's wrong with the Illini Union building? The Chinese, Koreans, Poles, Irish, etc. don't have a University-provided meeting center. If they're so unhappy here, why not go elsewhere?⁶⁹

Yet, the reality was that Asian American students (whom Kruse may have been referring to with his listing of Chinese and Koreans) *had been* advocating for a cultural center, particularly led by ACCORD and supported by allies in the administration such as the Asian American Task Force. They did so in less visible ways that did not make headlines.

While the campus was still recovering from the May 1992 sit-ins, Asian American students pushed forward. In December 1992, Asian American student leaders presented a petition for an Asian American cultural center to Chancellor Morton Weir, signed by several hundred students, faculty, and staff.⁷⁰ Organizations such as AAA had helped distribute the

⁶⁹ Don Kruse, "Latina/o Protestors are Out of Line," *Daily Illini* Letter to the Editor, January 11, 1993.

⁷⁰ Sharon Farlow, "Asian-American Students Seek a Place to Call Home," *Crossroads: The Multicultural Magazine of the Daily Illini*, March 23, 1994; Matthew Goldfeder, "Asian-Americans Working for Cultural Center,"

petition at their social and cultural events and at Midwest Asian American Students (MAAS) conferences.⁷¹ The cultural center signaled an issue that united the Asian American organizations. Ho Chie Tsai (BS, 1994, Electrical Engineering) recalled, "We started collecting all those signatures, and AAA essentially became, actually the whole entire coalition became active collecting signatures and showing unity.... The petition took off at that point. I think that was the peak of it, we were essentially collecting names everywhere we went."⁷²

Students included a letter with the petition. They explained:

Over the past few years, you have heard some of the concerns of the Asian Pacific American community through persistent individuals affiliated with the various student organizations on campus. One of our deep concerns is the lack of an Asian Pacific American cultural center here at the University of Illinois. During the past year, several of our organizations have collected signatures of faculty and students who support the establishment of a cultural center. We are submitting these petitions to you for your consideration. Early next semester we would like to meet with you in order to begin a dialogue about this issue and other issues within our communities.⁷³

The following Asian American student organizations formally signed their support to the petition: AAA, the Asian American Artists Collective, BARKADA (a Philippine support group); Hong Kong Students Association (HKSA), Indian Student Association (ISA), Illini Union Board Asian American Programming, Korean Undergraduate Students Association (KUSA), Philippine Student Association (PSA), Taiwanese American Students Club (TASC), and the Vietnamese Student Association (VSA).

The petition outlined the main reasons for an Asian American cultural center:

1. To support resources for Asian/ Pacific American students by providing resources on Asian American issues, peer tutoring and counseling services, a centralized meeting space;

Daily Illini, January 26, 1993. Sources conflict over the number of signers of the petition. Student documents and *Daily Illini* articles quote between 400 to 800 names on the petition.

⁷¹ Elaine Richardson, "Conference to Deal with Asian Issues," *Daily Illini*, April 3, 1992.

⁷² Ho Chie Tsai interview, 28 July 2008.

⁷³ Rona Abello, Lena Choe, Jessica Chen, Anna Hui, and Ho Chie Tsai to Chancellor Morton Weir, 3 December 1992, Folder: Asian American Cultural Center Activism, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

2. To fight racism against Asian/ Pacific Americans by correcting stereotypes and disseminating information about the Asian American experience;
3. To support coalition building and unity in the APA community;
4. To serve as a link between APAs and other students of color by providing space for dialogue and support;
5. To educate the university and local community about the history and issues of Asian/ Pacific Americans.⁷⁴

The cultural center would provide a safe space for Asian American students in a racially inhospitable climate, as outlined in chapter four. Ho Chie Tsai, then AAA co-president, described the continued racialization of Asian Americans in this way: "We need a cultural center as a social support system to service Asian-American needs because the campus is not such a comfortable place sometimes with the racist activities going on every day."⁷⁵

In a memo dated 27 January 1993, the outgoing chancellor Weir explained to students that cultural centers at UIUC were established for African American and Latina/o students (underrepresented groups) to assist them in their academic performance and adjustment on campus. He wrote, "The situation with Asian/ Pacific Americans is different. Students such as yourselves are not under-represented on the campus in terms of the population of the State of Illinois and there appears to be no comparable lag between predictors and performance in college. In addition, there are many Asian faculty members to provide role models, which is another concern of African-American and Latina/o students."⁷⁶ At the same time, Weir conceded, "On the other hand, I am sure there are problems that an Asian/ Pacific American faces while matriculating at Urbana-Champaign. There may well be a need for some special

⁷⁴ Petition letter, Folder: Asian American Cultural Center Activism, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

⁷⁵ Michael Dizon, "UI Asian-Americans Request Cultural Center," *Daily Illini*, November 17, 1992.

⁷⁶ Morton Weir to Rona Abello, Lena Choe, Jessica Chen, Anna Hui, and Ho Chie Tsai, 27 January 1993, Folder: Asian American Cultural Center Activism, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

services and some additional curricular development." Weir recommended the creation of a task force to further explore the idea and encouraged students to raise the issue to the new chancellor.

Student leaders met with Vice chancellor for Student Affairs Stan Levy in January of 1993 and began gathering data on resources needed for a cultural center and building a large support base for the idea, including from faculty and staff. In May of 1993, leaders met with the new chancellor Michael Aiken, setting a deadline of June 30 for a decision, but they received no response.⁷⁷

While the petition was sent to Chancellor Weir, students were also proposing the need for an Asian American cultural center to the University Student Life (USL) committee of the UIUC Senate. In November 1993, Peter Ko, a AAA officer and USL committee member, raised the issue. In support, USL Chair David J. Wehner wrote to the General University Policy Committee of the Senate:

The USL committee believes there is a need to study the overall campus climate as it relates to Asian American students. The establishment of an Asian American Cultural Center seems to be the most pressing issue. It is our understanding that there was a proposal to establish a task group to study the issue of such a Center prior to the departure of Chancellor Weir, but the group was not established. We are asking the General University Policy Committee to recommend the establishment of a group composed of students, faculty, and administrators to develop a plan to address the issue of an Asian American Cultural Center and other related issues such as the role of the Minority Student Affairs Office in relation to Asian American students, the need for an Asian American studies curriculum, and the overall experiences of Asian American students in the UIUC community.⁷⁸

The General University Policy committee began to examine the issue, as I will outline later in this chapter.

⁷⁷ Leah Setzen, "Asian Center Still on Hold Despite Plea," *Daily Illini*, August 31, 1994.

⁷⁸ David Wehner, Chair of University Student Life Committee, to Wesley Seitz, chair of General University Policy Committee, 22 November 1993, Folder: Misc. Student Affairs Memos re: Asian Americans, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

Backlash Against Cultural Centers

As noted in chapter four, there was a backlash against multicultural issues and cultural centers in the 1990's, premised on charges of self-segregation. As Asian American students began advocating for a cultural center, the campus' conservative student newspaper the *Orange and Blue Observer* ran a news blurb about their efforts, mocking Asian American claims of racial discrimination:

Recently, a few Asian-American students have demanded that the University provide them with a cultural center, where, presumably, malcontents may ruminate on such topics as "institutional racism" against Asian students. So terrible is this problem, indeed, that the proportion of Asians at the U-I is a mere 600 percent greater than that in the state of Illinois overall; their "retention rate" (sic) is also higher than the overall figure. Though these days any group with a hyphen and "demands" seem to warrant a respectful audience, such students ought to reconsider before leaping onto the pyre of multicultural self-immolation. Such multicultural "awareness" has made it extraordinarily difficult for qualified Asians to gain admission to some universities (such as California-Berkeley). Our advice: be content within the American (no hyphen) culture in which you have succeeded.⁷⁹

In another student editorial, Alex Draptsky echoed scholars such as Allan Bloom and Arthur Schlesinger Jr., rejecting multicultural efforts and criticizing movements on other campuses to change western core curriculum. He wrote,

Nothing would make these wackos happier than to see the Balkanization of America, especially on college campuses. They want a black student union, a Hispanic student union, an Asian student union and perhaps even a student union for left-handed dyslexics.... The way to persevere past some of our unfortunate history is to strive towards a color blind society where one's race or nationality should not matter.... Hopefully, both here on our campus and nationwide, we can learn from other examples and see that every time any form of multiculturalism is adopted, race relations always get worse.⁸⁰

As noted previously, some Asian American students articulated this backlash. As Asian American student leaders pushed for a cultural center, the *Orange and Blue Observer* featured a

⁷⁹ *Orange and Blue Observer at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*, vol. II, no. IV, February 19, 1993.

⁸⁰ Alex Drapatsky, "Multiculturalism Would Be the Wrong Path to Follow," *Daily Illini*, November 11, 1993.

column by Yoon Min Cho, who claimed that the movement was being led by "a fringe group of leftist Asian Americans," and that if created, an Asian American cultural center "will really be a political center monopolized and abused by America-haters ... and if the University administration caves in to their demands, it will be a disgrace to the University and to most Asian students."⁸¹

Another Asian American student, Chet Suri, then junior in Agriculture, wrote a letter to the *Daily Illini*, blasting Asian Americans who were claiming that UIUC was not meeting their needs. He wrote,

If a person can't handle his own needs then he should pack it up, go home, and learn how.... The only way racial barriers are going to be diminished is if Latina/os, African-Americans, Asian-Americans, green Americans, purple Americans and all the other different colored Americans make an intelligent, forceful effort to integrate themselves into society. I am not a Caucasian. I am a first generation Asian-American as well, and I have seen this crap firsthand before. We've already spent way too much time and money on this scam. Hell, they've got themselves (Asian Americans) a committee now. Let's save the State of Illinois taxpayers their money, and if these people aren't getting enough culture here, then tell them to go back to where they're from.⁸²

In November 1993, the University's Board of Trustees met in Chicago and discussed the issue of cultural centers, suggesting that they were separatist. Trustee Donald Grabowski was quoted as saying, "In creating separate programs for separate people, we become exclusionary."⁸³ And while some argued for the public obligation of UIUC to fund minority services, others objected to the funding of separate cultural centers with taxpayer money. Graduate student Scott Mendelson wrote to the *Daily Illini*:

Anyone who believes that the ethnic cultural centers on campus exist to serve, educate and reach out to the University community at large has to be a complete idiot. They exist only as trophies for the groups who pride themselves on having coerced the University of Illinois into meeting their demands. It is a socio-political power trip, pure and simple,

⁸¹ Yoon Min Cho, "Putting the Asian Left in its Place," *The Observer*, April 14, 1993.

⁸² Chet Suri, "Cultural Centers Should Be Abolished," *Daily Illini*, February 15, 1994.

⁸³ Jen Allerson, "Cultural Centers Come Under Fire: BOT Says Centers are Exclusionary; Students Disagree," *Daily Illini*, November 16, 1993.

nothing more. It is not a bad thing for an ethnic group to want to have its own "turf" to hang out at—to have a place to gain, share and strengthen a sense of themselves. It's a good thing. But let them take up a collection among themselves to pay for it. There is not a single reason why the University should pay for it. The University should use the money squandered on cultural centers to pay the salaries of additional professors for additional courses. This would truly serve, educate and reach out to the University community at large.⁸⁴

Thus Asian American students pushed for a cultural center in an environment that saw both strong backlash against "separatist" centers but also heightened administrative concerns for racial issues in the aftermath of May 1992.

Asian American Coalitions Continue to Grow at UIUC

Despite sentiments against an Asian American cultural center, Asian American students continued to work together in coalition, with the goals of uniting the community and articulating that a cultural center would educate the *entire* campus about Asian American experiences. While the Asian Council and ACCORD had faded by 1992, other pan-Asian American organizations were forming.⁸⁵ One such group was the Asian American Artists Collective, founded in the spring of 1992. The Collective was a group of students who published *Monsoon*, a bi-annual journal of Asian American art and literature, and who coordinated art exhibits, poetry readings, and performances. The Collective's objectives revealed a political aim to break the silence surrounding Asian American experiences. Their objectives read: "Asian Americans are the invisible minority and our voices have been historically silenced. The Collective aims to lift that

⁸⁴ Scott D. Mendelson, "Centers Should Not Receive UI Funding," *Daily Illini* letter to the editor, February 14, 1994.

⁸⁵ Peter Ko to Asian Organization Officers, 20 July 1992, Folder: AAA Meetings, Documents, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives. It is unclear how long the Asian Council existed; records cease after the 1990-1991 academic year. In a AAA memo dated July 20, 1992, it was noted that "If enough interest and dedication is shown, the reformation of the Asian Council can also be pursued," signaling that the Council had folded by that date. It is also unclear how long ACCORD existed; records cease after 1992, though according to oral sources, some ACCORD members continued to meet and created new organizations such as the Asian American Artists Collective and Shakti.

veil of silence. We use creative expression to provide a forum for the diversity of voices among Americans of Asian descent. The commonalities of our experiences, our identities and our lives are the issues addressed by the Collective. The Asian American Artists Collective is about people who give a shit."⁸⁶

Asian American alumni also began coming together in support of UIUC students. An Asian American Alumni Association (AAAA) was created in February of 1993 to advocate for Asian American needs. One of its objectives was to "support development of Asian American needs on campus i.e. Asian American studies curriculum, Cultural Center."⁸⁷

By fall 1992, Ho Chie Tsai, then co-president of AAA, was also beginning to think of building a larger Asian American coalition. He recalled:

As I was starting the AAA co-presidency with Anna Hui (fall of 1992), we made it a point on Quad Day to talk to every leader of every Asian American organization represented. By that time, a lot of people had known me because I was already a member of all their organizations. So now having stepped up into a AAA leadership position, I said that I think we can make something great happen. Let's go back to the idea of the Asian Council. We gathered them together to talk about ways we could create a coalition of Asian American organizations. What was helpful was that all the leaders were pretty much on the same page and very receptive to the idea. They also saw this bigger picture starting to evolve, and so that's when we started to sit down and talk seriously. We had meetings, I think, every month at least, to share issues and figure out what we could do together.⁸⁸

As a result, a Coalition of Asian Pacific American Organizations formed. Tsai described the intent was to build bridges among APA student groups through a new form: "There was no (real) educational, political or cultural (APA) organization at the time.... We realized what we needed

⁸⁶ Asian American Artist Collective, Asiantation 1995 Asian Pacific American New Student Orientation, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center.

⁸⁷ Asian American Alumni Association, Asiantation 1995 Asian Pacific American New Student Orientation, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center.

⁸⁸ Ho Chie Tsai interview, 28 July 2008.

was an organization that covered (all) the needs of the Asian American (APA) community."⁸⁹

This group was renamed the Asian Pacific American Coalition (APAC) in spring of 1993, registering as a student organization that fall.

According to APAC's charter, ratified 29 April 1994, the group's functions were outlined as such:

- A. The Coalition shall act to strengthen and maintain unity among the member organizations in the name of Asian-Pacific American unity.
- B. The Coalition shall promote awareness of Asian-Pacific American issues and concerns to the community and shall provide an open forum for discussion.
- C. The Coalition shall serve as the official and collective voice of the member organizations to the University administration and campus community advocating Asian-Pacific American issues and concerns.
- D. The Coalition shall actively seek to establish and normalize relations with non-Coalition groups, and remain welcome to those groups that wish to join.⁹⁰

The major undergraduate APA organizations at the time collectively established the coalition: AAA, Asian American Artists Collective, HKSA, ISA, Illini Union Board Asian American Programming Committee, KUSA, PSA, Shakti (an Asian women's support group), TASC, and VSA.⁹¹ Like the Asian Council, APAC did not recruit individual members; rather, membership consisted of two representatives from each of these organizations, along with elected co-directors. As a new and lasting coalition (APAC is still in existence at UIUC as of 2010), the group became the voice of Asian American advocacy. By the 1994 MAAS conference, the issues of an Asian American cultural center, an Asian American Studies

⁸⁹ Quoted in Anita Banerji, "Getting Involved," Academic paper for Journalism 380, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, April 30, 1997, Folder: Asian American Cultural Center Activism, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

⁹⁰ Charter of the Asian-Pacific American Coalition, 20 April 1994, APAC Binder, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

⁹¹ Ibid.

program, and recognition of Asian Americans as a minority group were listed as top issues for APAC.⁹²

While coalition building was always a challenge, it is important to note that in the early to mid-1990's, Asian American students at UIUC were successful because they had a unifying vision and because they built personal relationships across organizational lines. This was hard work but revealed itself in small ways. For instance, Jeremy Bautista (BA, 1996, History) made an effort to build bridges—at one point he had leadership positions in both AAA and PSA. He recalled, "My situation of being in good relationships with both sides, I think that helped in the development of APAC, because *a lot of us* did that. A lot of us. I think Ho Chie [Tsai] at one time was a member of every organization that he could be. I wasn't the only one who did that, to try to build good cohesiveness ... it didn't matter what group you belonged to ... we didn't fractionalize over style differences. And so building this coalition, it was literally on the backs of people's relationships and friendships, the unifying vision of certain members."⁹³

The effort to unite groups was revealed in the creation of a shared t-shirt for Asian American organizations, which featured the same design on the back and the member organization's individual design on the front. During the 1992-1993 school year, the shirts' design was a drawing of people putting together a puzzle that became a map of Asian countries. Underneath the image read, "Unity Thru Diversity."⁹⁴ Ho Chie Tsai (BS, 1994, Electrical Engineering) described, "The idea was, if we could agree on a common t-shirt design, maybe as a symbol to our members, it would show that we were working very closely together, but still

⁹² "About the Asian American Student Community at the U of I," *Perspectives: A Special Publication of the 1994 MAAS Conference*, p. 39, Folder: MAAS/ MAASU Early Programs, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives. It is important to note that Asian American students wanted both an academic studies program and a cultural center and pushed for both as parallel developments.

⁹³ Jeremy Bautista interview, 7 July 2007.

⁹⁴ "T-shirt Designs," *Asian American Artists Collective Newsletter*, vol. 1, no. 1, November 1992, p. 3, Folder: AAA Historical Resources, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

keeping in mind that every group needed a unique identity. You would have your own lapel and that would be your unique lapel. But on the back, it would all be the same."⁹⁵

Asian American student leaders acknowledged the importance of working together through APAC. In 1993, Philippine Student Association President Maria Gutierrez explained in an interview in the *Daily Illini*, "The purpose of the coalition is to provide on common voice that represents all Asian-Americans, and to give us, as Asian-Americans, more power and influence in University programming. We've seen a severe under-representation among Asian-American issues on this campus considering that we do comprise 11 percent of this University, which is more than any other minority student population. Although we are different, our diversity makes us powerful. We are all, of course, Americans, and our Asian-American experience is the thing that makes us unique and on that point alone we should unite."⁹⁶

The annual Midwest Asian American Students (MAAS) conference at UIUC was also a site of Asian American coalition building. In 1993, the fifth annual MAAS conference titled, "Empowerment Through Unity: Working Together as an Asian American Community," reflected this effort, as it was the first MAAS conference that was co-sponsored by AAA and the Indian Student Association (ISA). This collaboration "was a result of a conscious effort to establish better communication and relations between the two groups and to draw in Southern Asians/Asian Americans into the larger Asian American community."⁹⁷ Conference co-coordinator Sonia Desai described, "South Asians and East Asians never really worked together before.

⁹⁵ Ho Chie Tsai interview, 28 July 2008.

⁹⁶ Wesley Rizal, "Interview: Philippine Student Association Maria Gutierrez Shares PSA's Goals for the Year," *Crossroads: The Multicultural Magazine of the Daily Illini*, October 20, 1993.

⁹⁷ "MAAS 1993," MAAS 1993 conference booklet, "Empowerment Through Unity," April 9-11, 1993, Folder: MAAS/ MAASU Early Programs, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

There's always been a separation."⁹⁸ Workshops examined issues of community building with topics such as "Exploring the Different Ethnicities of Asian Americans," "Southern Asian American-Eastern Asian American Relations," and "Finding the Common Ground," as well as workshops on leadership building, renouncing anti-Asian violence, and campus activism.⁹⁹

The 1994 sixth MAAS conference, with the theme, "Envision a New Horizon," was co-sponsored by AAA, ISA, and the Philippine Student Association (PSA), demonstrating a growing pan-Asian American coalition. Workshops featured topics such as networking, leadership development, coalition building, political activism, Asian American identity, and Asian American arts and culture.¹⁰⁰ The 1994 conference booklet also featured a number of articles and essays on political issues facing Asian Americans as well as cultural topics on Korean, Taiwanese, Indian, and Filipino American experiences.

Previously, animosity between organizations had been rife. Ho Chie Tsai (BS, 1994, Electrical Engineering) remarked on the change as he was graduating in a letter to incoming freshmen. He wrote, "There was a time when AAA (Asian American Association) and all the other Asian American student organizations each stood alone.... Interaction between the organizations was minimal. Competition was the mindset. As a result, it was not uncommon to find personal conflicts between officers of different organizations. A coalition of Asian American student groups was not even a possibility.... Today, the Asian American student organizations are actively working together to achieve common goals and to attain recognition

⁹⁸ Nallsra Luangkesorn, "Finding Common Ground in the Asian Pacific American Community," *Crossroads: The Multicultural Magazine of the Daily Illini*, April 29, 1993.

⁹⁹ Workshop Schedule, MAAS 1993 Spring conference program, 1993, p. 5, Record series 41/2/40, Box 10, Folder: Asian American Association-Midwest Asian American Students Conference 1990-1993, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Archives.

¹⁰⁰ *Perspectives: A Special Publication of the 1994 MAAS Conference*, Folder: MAAS/ MAASU Early Programs, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

for the entire Asian American community."¹⁰¹ The new coalitions that grew in the 1990's enabled Asian American students to more effectively unite around gaining institutional resources and ensured their experiences were seen and heard.

A Proposal for an Asian American Cultural Center

Students continued to meet with administrators regarding a cultural center. Richard Chang (BA, History, 1994) was encouraged in the push for these services and was instrumental in drafting a forty-two-page proposal for an Asian American cultural center, articulating some new arguments inspired by conversations with national Asian American leaders. During the MAAS 1993 conference, Chang met with keynote speaker Dr. Paul Bock, an emeritus professor at the University of Connecticut Storrs (UConn).

Paul Bock, a professor emeritus in the department of Hydrology and Water Resources, was an important advocate for Asian American students at UConn. In response to the racial harassment of UConn Asian American students attending a dance on 3 December 1987 and to the university's poor handling of the event (with administrators interrogating Asian American students and protecting the perpetrators), Asian American students and supporters like Bock began pushing for improved resources including an Asian American cultural center, Asian American Studies courses, and counselors trained in multi-cultural issues.¹⁰² Bock also went on a hunger strike on the campus commons to raise awareness of Asian American issues. Bock founded the UConn Asian Faculty Association and was faculty advisor to UConn's Asian American Students Association.

¹⁰¹ Ho-chie Tsai, "The View From Here," Reprinted in Unseen/ Unheard program booklet, 2006, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center.

¹⁰² David Morse, "Prejudicial Studies: One Astounding Lesson for the University of Connecticut," in *The Asian American Educational Experience: A Source Book for Teachers and Students*, ed. Don T. Nakanishi and Tina Yamano Nishida (New York: Routledge, 1995), 339-357.

In April 1990, Bock filed a complaint with the US Education Department's Office of Civil Rights regarding a Connecticut tax-supported 1986 Minority Advancement Plan (MAP), which provided funds to public colleges to recruit underrepresented students and faculty measured by state population statistics. In UConn's case, the MAP did not include Asian American and Native Americans because they were not underrepresented based on the general state's population.¹⁰³ The complaint charged that the MAP discriminated against Native Americans and Asian Americans; furthermore, no Asian American or Native American had ever been a member of the Connecticut Board of Governors for Higher Education or on any policy-making committee.¹⁰⁴

The complaint also criticized the notion of parity as the single measure for disadvantaged status: "There may be some growing awareness that the definition for 'parity' based *solely* on numbers of a population produces unfairness for certain situations, particularly for small minorities such as Native-Americans and Asian-Americans. A person who is disadvantaged (say a recent Asian immigrant with poor educational background and English proficiency) should have equal access to affirmative action even though Uconn Asian-Americans representing 3 percent of the student population is a number greater than the 0.6 percent parity for Connecticut."¹⁰⁵

In 1993, the Office of Civil Rights ruled that this exclusion violated Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, which bars public institutions receiving federal funds from racial and ethnic

¹⁰³ Scott Jaschik, "US Asked to Study Conn. Programs for Minority Groups," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* State Notes, May 9, 1990.

¹⁰⁴ Discrimination Complaint Form, Complaint No. 01-90-2039, United States Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, Region I, Boston, MA. Available through Freedom of Information Act.

¹⁰⁵ "Racism at UConn, the Asian-American Experience," Testimony to UConn Ad Hoc Sub-Committee on Discriminatory Harassment, 6 February 1989, p. 8, Attachment 8 of Discrimination Complaint Form, Complaint No. 01-90-2039, United States Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, Region I, Boston, MA. Emphasis in original.

discrimination.¹⁰⁶ Citing precedent of the US Supreme Court case *Hazelwood School District v. United States* 433 US 299 (1977), the proper comparison for racial discrimination should be a comparison of actual staff demographics with those in the *relevant* labor market. Thus, "Under the rationale of this and numerous other cases, the Board should have used relevant student and labor market data, rather than general population data, to determine which racial and ethnic groups were underrepresented in the Connecticut higher education system."¹⁰⁷ In addition, the Connecticut plan did not examine underrepresentation in particular institutions. Because it relied on these general measures, the MAP in effect excluded Asian Americans and Native Americans, even though they were underrepresented at a number of specific universities in the state. As a result, the Connecticut Board of Governors for Higher Education submitted a voluntary action plan and agreed not to use statewide population statistics as a benchmark for inclusion in the program, looking to other measures such as high school student data and labor market data. The board also agreed to include Native Americans and Asian Americans in the MAP.¹⁰⁸

As the 1993 MAAS keynote speaker, Bock inspired Chang to investigate the existence of Illinois state laws that defined Asian Americans as a minority group. Doing so would be the "smoking gun" and proof that the university was unfairly denying services to Asian American students.¹⁰⁹ Students Jeremy Bautista and Mark Harang found an Illinois state statute, ILCS 205/9.16 that defined Asian Americans as underrepresented minorities in higher education.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ Scott Jaschik, "Asian-Americans Pleased by US Ruling," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 19, 1993.

¹⁰⁷ Ruling of Office for Civil Rights to Connecticut Board of Governors for Higher Education, Complaint Number 01-90-2039, 7 May 1993, United States Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, Region I, Boston, MA.

¹⁰⁸ Scott Jaschik, "Affirmative Action in Connecticut: US Says Plans Limited to Blacks and Hispanics Violated Federal Civil-Rights Law," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* on-line, October 5, 1994, <http://chronicle.com/che-data/articles.dir/articles-41.dir/issue-06.dir/06a03501.htm> (accessed March 18, 2007).

¹⁰⁹ Richard W. Chang (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign alumnus), interview by Sharon S. Lee, 2 March 2007 in Urbana, IL.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

In May 1994, students submitted a forty-two-page proposal for an Asian Pacific American cultural center to administrators, written with the assistance of Chang (then a graduating senior), APAC, and La Casa Cultural Latina. Building off goals articulated in the 1992 December petition and in discussions among students, the proposal included a mission statement, budget figures, staff job descriptions, programming guidelines, recommendations for the formation of an Asian American Studies program under the center, and timetable. The proposal was endorsed by APAC as well as the African American Cultural Center, La Casa Cultural Latina, several professors, and Assistant Dean of Students Yuki Llewellyn.

The proposal began with a strong criticism of current campus resources for APA students: "It is the consensus of the Asian Pacific American community at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign that the existing curriculum, support services, and general campus policies are insensitive to the needs of Asian Pacific Americans. We feel that this promotes an atmosphere that is hostile or at best indifferent to the problems Asian Pacific Americans face."¹¹¹ Furthermore, by denying APAs minority services, the proposal asserted that the campus was supporting the model minority myth, the presumption that all APA students were thriving. The students called for a correction of this type of "institutionalized racism."

The proposal also put forth legal claims. First, it cited the successful lawsuit filed by Paul Bock at the University of Connecticut, where denying Asian Americans inclusion in minority programs based on overrepresentation arguments was deemed to be selective discrimination in violation of Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Second, the proposal argued that UIUC must reach its commitment to equal opportunity and the Board of Trustees' own resolution "to foster programs within the law which will ameliorate or eliminate, where possible, the effects of

¹¹¹ Richard W. Chang et al., "Proposal For an Asian Pacific American Cultural Center," 3 May 1994, p. 2, Folder: Asian American Cultural Center Proposals, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

historic societal discrimination."¹¹² Finally, the proposal stated that the Board of Education Act Number 205, Section 9.16 defined Asian Pacific Americans as "a minority in all Illinois Institutions of Higher Education."¹¹³ Thus, establishing a cultural center to serve this population would meet the state law's requirement. The authors argued, "The University of Illinois must make a commitment to provide services and funding to *its largest minority population*."¹¹⁴

In conclusion, the proposal read,

We feel it is time for the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to join the multicultural society of the United States by recognizing Asian Pacific Americans as a minority group. It is not only the proper thing to do, but it also the law. We are not just a statistic to be used whenever the University needs to brag about its minority population. Under the Board of Education Act #205 Section 9.16, Asian Pacific Americans are considered a minority in all Illinois Institutions of Higher Education. Thus special programs funding and financial aid must also be given to Asian Pacific Americans at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.¹¹⁵

The Administration's Response

Based on the requests to examine university policies for Asian Americans, the General University Policy Committee of the University Senate Council decided to consider general policies on university cultural centers, submitting their assessments and recommendations. The Committee met with students and staff representing the African American Cultural Program and La Casa Cultural Latina and with Asian American student leaders.

In a draft report dated 3 June 1994, the committee concluded that there were no specific criteria that led to the creation of the African American cultural program or La Casa. Thus, "The committee concluded that it did not have sufficient information to make an informed judgment on the question of whether an Asian-American Cultural Center should be established.... The

¹¹² Richard W. Chang et al., "Proposal For an Asian Pacific American Cultural Center.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 3. Emphasis mine.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 42.

committee recommends the following general criteria be used by campus officials, including Chancellor and Vice-chancellor for Student Affairs, as a framework to consider requests from campus groups and to make a judgment on such requests."¹¹⁶ The committee outlined the following criteria and articulated that, "any group proposing a center must clearly document that there are significant needs that are not, and likely will not, be met without such a center."

Four criteria were outlined:

1. The group being considered should be among the under-represented groups the campus has identified as appropriate for affirmative action efforts in admissions and other programs. Groups eligible to apply would clearly include those identified on University admission materials, specifically African-Americans, Latina/o American (each of which of course already has a center), Asian American and Native American.
2. The proposed center should serve to enrich the campus intellectual environment by providing the campus community with a broader appreciation of the culture of the group being served. In addition to providing a "comfort zone" and developing programs of service to the target population, any center should have as a major purpose the enrichment of the campus intellectual environment through the support of programs and activities targeted for the general campus community....
3. The proposed center should indicate how it would lead to an improved climate among various groups represented in the campus community....
4. The center's programs should be oriented toward addressing the demonstrated problem of retention of the target student population.¹¹⁷

Based on revisions from the Senate council, a final report was issued in September 12. In this final version, criteria number one that had listed Asian Americans as a potential group that might qualify as appropriate for affirmative action efforts was altered, now reading only: "1. The group being considered should be among the under-represented groups the campus has identified

¹¹⁶ University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Senate General University Policy Final Report, "Cultural Centers at UIUC," 3 June 1994, Folder: Misc. Student Affairs Memos re: Asian Americans, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

¹¹⁷ University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Senate General University Policy Final Report, "Cultural Centers at UIUC."

as appropriate for affirmative action efforts in admissions and other programs."¹¹⁸ While it is unverified exactly why the listing of Asian Americans was removed, based on my interviews it is possible to claim that it was preferable to remain vague rather than listing groups in this policy. In addition, Asian Americans were not an underrepresented group, so listing them in the initial report was inconsistent with that criteria.

Despite the fact that the very issue of an Asian American cultural center generated the formation of the committee, the committee's final report did *not* make any specific recommendations regarding it. At a 12 September 1994 meeting of the Urbana-Champaign Senate, Wesley Seitz, chair of the General University Policy Committee, stated that there were no plans to create an Asian American cultural center and that the U-C senate must "establish a need for the institution at the University."¹¹⁹ Seitz also said the report would be forwarded to the chancellor. Pratima Patil, then vice president of the Indian Student Association, critiqued the four criteria outlined in the report as focusing mostly on underrepresented minorities, not Asian Americans. She said, "When people look at us, they don't see us as Americans. They see us as Indians or Koreans. We need a cultural center to promote our identity ... to help society learn who we are."¹²⁰ Seitz clarified that no group requesting a center would have to satisfy all four criteria.

Students argued that an Asian American cultural center would provide an important institutional space on a campus where Asian Americans were overlooked and excluded from

¹¹⁸ University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Senate Committee on General University Policy (Final; Information), "GP.94.07 Cultural Centers at UIUC," 12 September 1994, Folder: APAC 2 of 4, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

¹¹⁹ Rebecca Johnson and Ryan E. Smith, "Cultural Centers Topic of Meeting," *Daily Illini*, September 13, 1994.

¹²⁰ Julie Wurth, "UI Students Seek Cultural Center: Asian-American Group Saying UI Responding Slowly," *Champaign-Urbana News-Gazette*, September 13, 1994.

existing minority services. Benny Wong, then sophomore in LAS, wrote in the *Daily Illini* about these issues:

Contrary to the "Model Minority Myth," Asian Pacific Americans do need help with their academics. However, Asian Pacific Americans are not allowed tutoring services at the Office of Minority Student Affairs (OMSA). For example, an Asian American student, Vida Gosrisirikul, attempted to ask for tutoring services at OMSA and was turned down. Vida complains, "The staff person said that services were for Latina/o, African-Americans and Native Americans only." Asian Pacific Americans are a minority group who is being turned down at the Office of *Minority* Student Affairs. The cultural center could alleviate this problem by providing tutoring services.

Another benefit of an Asian Pacific American cultural center would be for it to find sponsors for Asian Pacific American Students. There is a lack of scholarships for Asian Pacific Americans at the U of I. A case in point is Alex Lai, AAA external vice president. He laments, "I asked OMSA if I could look for scholarships; unfortunately, the Asian Americans are ineligible for the majority of minority scholarships, even though I am clearly a minority student." This is another problem facing Asian Pacific Americans that needs to be resolved.¹²¹

Despite the continued push by students, as of fall 1994, the issue of the cultural center remained unresolved.

Funding for Asian American Programming—The Asian Pacific American Resource Board

Despite the lack of movement on a cultural center, Clarence Shelley, founding director of the Educational Opportunities Program and associate vice chancellor at the time, recalled the importance of the forty-two-page proposal drafted by students, which he called "unassailable." Administrators often referred to the detailed student proposal to clarify the structures of and need for a center over the years. Shelley believed that faculty and administrators who supported the students' proposals often learned more than the students did during the process. He said, "The students' efforts helped a great deal in making the case for the center."¹²²

¹²¹ Benny Wong, "Forum: UI Community Could Benefit from Cultural Center," *Daily Illini*, January 11, 1994. Emphasis in original.

¹²² Clarence Shelley (founding Director of University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Special Educational Opportunities Program), interview by Sharon S. Lee, 22 March 2007 in Urbana, IL.

Despite the lack of movement towards a cultural center in response to the proposal, some programming funds were granted. In September 1994, Chancellor Michael Aiken, Provost Larry Faulkner, Interim Vice chancellor for Student Affairs Patricia Askew, and Dean of Students Bill Riley met with student leaders to inform them of a new \$30,000 fund established for Asian American student programming.¹²³ At the time the source of the funding was unclear, but Bill Riley, dean of students from 1986 to 2008, clarified that the Provost's office, particularly with the help of Associate Provost CL "David" Liu, provided the \$30,000. A professor of Computer Science, Liu was named associate provost in June 1995, with part of his responsibilities to help develop undergraduate students' education.¹²⁴ Riley recalled,

David Liu was the first champion, if you will, in that office, that was sympathetic with what we were trying to do, and he was supportive of moving Asian American Studies forward. And so I credit him with, on the academic side, being the first person that I knew of, that was willing to use part of his time in creating change for the university community, for Asian American faculty and students and the overall environment. So we started to work with him. And we didn't have a lot of resources. But he was supportive within the confines of the areas that an associate provost can influence and his area of responsibility. He agreed to provide programming funds which, subsequently ended up with our first programming dollars, in our Asian American resource board.¹²⁵

The administrators informed the students that "the purpose of these funds was to enable APA students to bring to this campus programs, activities, and events that they felt were appropriate, necessary, and desirable to celebrate and share their diverse ethnic and cultural heritage with the rest of the campus."¹²⁶

¹²³ Yuki Llewellyn to Bill Riley, Re: Status Report on Asian Pacific American Resource Board (APARB), 15 December 1994, Folder: APARB, 1994-95, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

¹²⁴ Karen Hawkins, "Computer Science Prof to Fill New Provost Post," *Daily Illini*, June 29, 1995.

¹²⁵ Bill Riley (former University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Dean of Students), interview with Sharon S. Lee, 15 April 2009 in Urbana, Illinois.

¹²⁶ Yuki Llewellyn to Bill Riley, Re: Preliminary Annual Report of Asian Pacific American Resource Board (APARB) for 1994-95, 19 May 1995, Folder: APARB, 1994-95, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

Despite the gain, students worried that accepting the money would be an agreement to appeasement. But according to Vida Gosrisirikul (BS, Broadcast Journalism 1994; JD, 1997), the student consensus was to take the money and use it to *continue* to push for a studies program and a cultural center, funding activist programs and speakers.¹²⁷ Reshma Saujani, then sophomore in LAS, was quoted in the *Daily Illini* commenting on what the funding signified: "I think Asian-Americans have been put on the back burner for too long and the University is recognizing this by giving us this money. But this money is in no way, shape or form going to stop our plight for a cultural center. It is still one of the major issues."¹²⁸

In addition, a *Daily Illini* editorial on 29 November 1994 forewarned the meaning of this money. The editorial was titled, "Asian Americans Should Be Wary" and presented the funds as an opportunity for Asian American students to continue to demonstrate the need for a cultural center. If well used, the money could make help administrators see that "Asian Americans are the ignored minority on this campus."¹²⁹ In addition, the editorial wondered what the money would mean, if it were a "test" to see how the money would be spent. Concluding words showed that the campaign for a cultural center and studies program was far from over: "Hopefully, the University designated the stipend because they realize that the cultural center situation is far from resolved. Hopefully, this is just a step in process, not the end of increasing awareness of Asian Americans."¹³⁰

The \$30,000 for Asian American student programs was coordinated under the Asian Pacific American Resource Board (APARB) in the fall of 1994, which was renamed the Asian

¹²⁷ Vida Gosrisirikul (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign alumnus), interview by Sharon S. Lee, 2 March 2007 in Urbana, IL.

¹²⁸ Caroline Yu, "Asian-American Group Receives Funding From UI: APAC: \$30,000 Granted for Asian-American Issues; Some Say it Might be a Test for a Future Cultural Center," *Daily Illini*, November 22, 1994.

¹²⁹ "Asian Americans Should Be Wary," *Daily Illini*, November 29, 1994.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

Pacific American Resource Committee (APARC) in the 1997-1998 academic year.¹³¹ The purpose of the board was "to provide direction and allocation of resources for Asian Pacific American programming that is culture specific as well as cross-cultural that attempts to unify the Asian Pacific American as well as the University community. This would further advance Asian Pacific American awareness, encourage diversity, educate the greater community as a whole, and provide a forum for the development, exploration, and improvement of Asian Pacific American-related programs."¹³² An application process was created, by which the board (composed mostly of students) reviewed proposals for APA programs. That first year, APARB approved twenty-nine out of thirty-six applications, funding Asian American awareness programs, leadership development for student leaders, and literary arts publications.¹³³

Despite the limitations of that first year, Yuki Llewelyn, director of Registered Organizations and APARB chair, commented on the significance of the new resources. She wrote to Dean of Students Bill Riley, "With a history of receiving only lip service from the campus administration, and of ineffective cohesiveness on the part of the APA student population, here was, at last, an opportunity to work with the campus administration to bring Asian American issues and concerns to campus through programs, activities, and events made possible by administrative funding."¹³⁴

¹³¹ Email from Susan Maul to Yuki Llewelyn, 29 September 1995, Folder: APARC, 1995-96, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives. This slight name change was because technically the chancellor does not give money to boards but to appointed committees. The term "boards" carried different connotations on campus, such as the Board of Trustees.

¹³² Meeting minutes of Asian Pacific American Resource Board, November 5, 1994, Folder: APARB, 1994-95, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

¹³³ Yuki Llewelyn to Bill Riley, Re: Preliminary Annual Report of Asian Pacific American Resource Board (APARB) for 1994-95, 19 May 1995, Folder: APARB, 1994-95, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

Legal Strategies for Asian American Minority Recognition

The appearance of \$30,000, however, was not the end to the issue. As identified in the cultural center proposal, student leaders continued to investigate the possibilities of a lawsuit against UIUC. The state law ILCS 205/9.16 reads:

Under-representation of certain groups in higher education. To require public institutions of higher education to develop and implement methods and strategies to increase the participation of minorities, women, and handicapped individuals who are traditionally under-represented in education programs and activities. For the purposes of this Section, minorities shall mean persons who are citizens of the United States or lawful permanent resident aliens of the United States and who are: (a) black (a person having origins in any of the black racial groups in Africa); (b) Hispanic (a person of Spanish or Portuguese culture with origins in Mexico, South or Central America, or the Caribbean, regardless of race); (c) *Asian American (a person having origins in any of the original people of the Far East, Southeast Asia, the Indian Subcontinent or the Pacific Islands)*; or (d) American Indian or Alaskan Native (a person having origins in any of the original people of North America).¹³⁵

The statute also outlined the role of the Board of Higher Education in requiring public institutions of higher education to determine compliance with the section, assess programs targeted to increase participation of these groups, and mandate information to determine compliance.

Students were contesting Asian American "non-minority" status as defined by UIUC and the construction of Asian Americans as problem-free model minorities. The theme of Asian American overrepresentation as a rationale for denying Asian American students services and an academic studies program pervaded memos and press coverage. However, these students argued that even though they were overrepresented by a state measure, they were not a problem-free group on a predominantly white campus.

One heated point of contention was the university's inconsistent claiming of Asian Americans as minorities. Students believed that UIUC was counting Asian Americans as

¹³⁵ Chapter 110: 1/1 to 805/2 in *West's Smith-Hurd Illinois Compiled Statutes Annotated*. Higher education. (St. Paul, MN: Thomson West, 2006), 115-116. Emphasis mine.

minority students in federal reports but was not considering them minorities in need and providing them services. Students also believed that UIUC's counting them as minorities in reports such as to the Illinois Board of Higher Education garnered funding for minority programs—funds that did not trickle back down to Asian American students. For instance, in 1992 Anna Hui, senior in LAS and co-president of AAA argued, "The University uses minority student statistics on campus to get state and federal funding for minority programs, but that money never comes down to us."¹³⁶ Hui also articulated that Asian American students wanted to use the federal and state funding that the Office of Minority Student Affairs received, in part for including Asian American numbers in their reports. She said, "I think the University needs to re-evaluate the double standard on paper (of Asian Americans) as not being a minority."¹³⁷

The money issue is unclear. In 1993, Chancellor Weir said the university did not receive state or federal funding for students of color.¹³⁸ In interviews, administrators reiterated that while the university was obligated to report minority student numbers, these numerical counts were not likely tied to funding. Obviously, this issue still needs to be clarified. Regardless, the paradox of being included in counting minority numbers, which yielded the positive effect of making the university appear diverse, but not providing services for Asian American students troubled faculty and students. And being acknowledged as a minority was critically associated with acquiring university resources.

Students considered a lawsuit against the university. In response to the legal statutes mentioned in the 1994 proposal, UIUC administrators drafted several responses. In July 1994, Linda Bair of the Office of Affirmative Action explained the inclusion of Asian/ Pacific Islanders (APIs) in Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) reports on underrepresented

¹³⁶ Michael Dizon, "UI Asian-Americans Request Cultural Center," *Daily Illini*, November 17, 1992.

¹³⁷ Trey Gehrt, "Asian-American Cultural-Center Talks Begin," *Daily Illini*, January 27, 1993.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

students and staff—namely, APIs were included in IBHE reports, but such reports focused on groups such as blacks and Hispanics who were the most severely underrepresented at the graduate and undergraduate levels compared to their state figures (blacks were 14.8 percent of the state and 7 percent of undergraduate enrollment; Hispanics 7.9 percent of the state and 5.3 percent of undergraduates). In contrast, Asian American were 11.9 percent of the fall 1993 undergraduate enrollment, higher than the state population of Asian Americans eighteen- to twenty-four-year-olds (3.0 percent) and the state in general (2.5 percent).¹³⁹

In August of 1994, UIUC legal counsel also informed the administration that while state law ILCS 205/9.16 defined Asian Americans as minorities, Asian Americans had equivalent retention rates as non-minority (white) students. Furthermore, "the University has full discretion as to what specific actions the University takes." Legally, students' claims seemed thin. Counsel wrote, "State law is silent with respect to any language that provides an enforcement mechanism. State law defines the under-represented groups and provides specific reporting requirements. However, the mandates of State law end with those reporting requirements. That means that State law is silent in terms of any penalties or remedies for noncompliance. There is no private right of action created by this law which would give Asian American students a basis to sue if they are dissatisfied with the University's recruitment and retention efforts, including the lack of a cultural center."¹⁴⁰ The legal claim that state law mandated the university to establish minority programs such as an Asian American cultural center did not hold weight. Counsel concluded that UIUC would not be legally at risk for not establishing an APA cultural center.

¹³⁹ Linda Blair, Office of Affirmative Action to Paul Riegel Office of the Chancellor, Re: Asian/ Pacific Islanders and the IBHE Report on Under-represented Students and Staff, 7 July 1994, Folder: APAC Lawsuit, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

¹⁴⁰ Renotta Young-Kelley, Office of University Counsel to Steve Veazie, re: Cultural Centers at UIUC, 17 August 1994, Folder: APAC Lawsuit, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives, p. 2.

It is unclear at this point if these responses were addressed to students.¹⁴¹ What is clear is that students continued to explore the options of a lawsuit in the 1994-1995 academic year, aided by the Asian American Pacific Islander Law Students Association (AAPILSA) at UIUC. AAPILSA discussed helping provide legal help if the case went to trial, in conjunction with undergraduate APAC students.¹⁴² In particular, Melissa Choo, a third year law student, drafted a memo analyzing possible legal arguments.

Choo's memo stated that UIUC had denied numerous support resources to Asian American students available to other minorities. She cited Vice chancellor for Student Affairs Stan Levy's reasoning for this university policy based on Asian American overrepresentation at UIUC (9.3 percent) compared to those in the state of Illinois (3 percent).¹⁴³ Choo outlined several legal arguments available to students: violation of Illinois statute 205/9.16 (a statute that clearly included Asian Americans); violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (that the university knowingly decided to deprive Asian American students of minority funding and support services, creating a disparate impact); violation of Title VI regulations issued by the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (by denying services to Asian American students given to other minority students); and a constitutional claim under the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth amendment (the university denied APA students a cultural center while funding other groups' centers). In relation to this last claim, Choo wrote, "This refusal is a decision based on the University philosophy that Asian Americans are not a 'minority' on campus. However, since Asian Americans are minorities under both federal and state law, they are entitled to the

¹⁴¹ Vida Gosrisirikul interview, 2 March 2007. In my interview with Gosrisirikul, the university did not address the lawsuit directly with student leaders.

¹⁴² Ohn Park to Asian American Pacific Islander Law Students Association members Sangmoon Chang, Vida Gosrisirikul, Henry Lin, Chung Poon, and Christine Yang, 15 February 1995, Folder: APAC Lawsuit, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

¹⁴³ Melissa Choo, legal paper, ca. 1995, p. 2, Folder: APAC Lawsuit, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

same protections as other minorities. Therefore, the actions that stem from the University philosophy above constitute violations of the equal protection clause."¹⁴⁴

Choo contested the university's claims of Asian American overrepresentation, citing the 1993 Office of Civil Rights ruling (complaint filed by Paul Bock) that underrepresentation be determined not on census figures but on other measures such as the student applicant pool. She also challenged UIUC's rationale of Asian American overrepresentation as a problem for maintaining diversity on campus. As in the Asian admissions controversy of the 1980's (outlined in chapter two), high Asian American enrollments had been used to justify university policy decisions that denied Asian American students equitable treatment. Choo questioned this rationale of overrepresentation in denying Asian Americans services. She wrote,

The over-representation argument often leads to a second argument that the University is merely trying to maintain diversity in the student population. The University will not give funding or support to Asian American students as long as they represent 10 percent of the student population; is the administration saying that it would give money if fewer Asian students enrolled in the University? Is this a disincentive to Asian students to attend the University?... Since *Bakke*, Universities have relied on diversity to validate many programs. However, as the number of Asian American students rise in colleges across the country, they have become vulnerable to the attack that their high numbers actually decreases diversity among the student population. This is not the type of diversity that Justice Powell advocated.... Using diversity as a means to limit Asians, however, implies that the only contribution Asian students makes [*sic*] to diversity is based on their race.¹⁴⁵

There is some evidence that Asian American students began preparing paperwork for a lawsuit in the Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois. A draft suit listed Vida Gosrisirikul, Todd Zoltan, and APAC as plaintiffs against the Illinois State Board of Higher Education, Illinois Board of Trustees, Chancellor Michael Aiken, and University President James Stukel.¹⁴⁶ Though the lawsuit was not ultimately pursued, Asian American students were employing a critical new

¹⁴⁴ Choo, legal paper, ca. 1995, 24.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 27-28.

¹⁴⁶ Complaint draft, Vida Gosrisirikul et al. v. Illinois State Board of Higher Education et al., undated, Folder: APAC Lawsuit, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

legal strategy and discourse that challenged UIUC policies that did not consider them a minority in need.

The Push for an Asian American Studies Program at UIUC

Students desired both Asian American academic and student support services; as mentioned earlier in this chapter, the forty-two page student proposal included a recommendation that an Asian American Studies program be housed in the cultural center. In the early 1990's, UIUC faculty and staff began to join with students to advocate for an Asian American Studies program. This movement took place in a national context of growth in the field of Asian American Studies (AAS) at this time.

According to Mitchell Chang, AAS proliferated in the 1990's across the country. Several key factors influenced the trend of new programs: the nationwide rise of Asian American enrollments in higher education; that these students were beneficiaries of the civil rights movement and expected to be able to take Ethnic Studies courses; the growth of the field of AAS; the presence of other Ethnic Studies programs and services for African American and Latina/o students; and a rising awareness of diversity in the academy.¹⁴⁷

The field also began to grow outside of California, evidenced by Peter Kiang's announcement at the 1987 annual Association for Asian American Studies Conference of a "new wave" of AAS on the east coast.¹⁴⁸ On 13-15 September 1991, Cornell's AAS program hosted a symposium titled "East of California: New Perspectives in Asian American Studies" that brought together representatives from several colleges and universities to discuss the prospects and needs

¹⁴⁷ Mitchell Chang, "Expansion and its Discontents: The Formation of Asian American Studies Programs in the 1990's," *Journal of Asian American Studies* 2 (1999): 181-206.

¹⁴⁸ Peter Kiang, "The New Wave: Developing Asian American Studies on the East Coast," in *Reflections on Shattered Windows: Promises and Prospects for Asian American Studies*, ed. Gary Okihiro, John M. Liu, Arthur A. Hansen, and Shirley Hune (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1988), 43-50.

for Asian American Studies.¹⁴⁹ Those seeking to build AAS "east of California" faced different intellectual challenges; Gary Okihiro cited Steve Sumida and Gail Nomura from the University of Michigan who observed "that Asian Americanists east of California do not have the luxury of assuming the necessity for Asian American Studies, and instead must summon intellectual and pedagogical justifications other than the demographic reasons cited in California."¹⁵⁰

Clark Cunningham, professor of Anthropology, and Yuki Llewellyn, assistant dean of students and director of Registered Organizations, gathered requested data for the symposium, and Cunningham represented UIUC at the meeting. Nine identified issues were included in the UIUC report. Among them were that Asian American students reported not feeling that they had enough understanding or knowledge about their cultures and desired course offerings and programming, such as through an Asian American Studies curriculum and a cultural center.

In particular, Cunningham and Llewellyn noted that Asian American students were not considered to be "minorities" on campus and hence were not eligible for "special services, educational opportunities, funding in scholarships, grants, or job opportunities." They continued: "Students are concerned that Asians and Asian Americans are perceived to be the 'model minority' in terms of their success in academics, ability to assimilate into white society, and the advantages of an upper middle class family incomes when in actuality, there are Asian American students who desperately need the kind of assistance given by the university to African American

¹⁴⁹ Twenty-three campuses were represented at the meeting: Boston College, Brown, Bryn Mawr, the State University of New York Buffalo, Colgate, Colorado, Connecticut, Cornell, Hampshire, Hunter, Illinois, Northern Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan, Michigan State, Ohio State, Pennsylvania, Queens College, Swarthmore, Tufts, Williams, Wisconsin, and Yale.

¹⁵⁰ *East of California: New Perspectives in Asian American Studies*, ed. Gary Okihiro and Lee C. Lee (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Asian American Studies Program, 1992), 3.

and Latina/o students. Since Asian/ Pacific Islander students are demographically listed as minorities, the assistance and services given to minorities should be extended to them."¹⁵¹

Back on campus, Cunningham appealed to administrators for the need for an AAS program, just as he had in the 1970's. However, unlike the 1970's, there were other faculty on campus willing to help the effort. Cunningham wrote a memo to Peter Schran, director of the Center for East Asian and Pacific Studies, updating him on the Cornell conference, suggesting the important role that UIUC could play in the field of AAS and pointing to a growing movement on campus of students and faculty in support of it. He wrote,

Given the fact that Illinois is fifth ranked in the nation in its Asian American population, and that it leads all other Midwestern states in that regard (and in fact all non-coastal states in the nation) we believe that Asian American studies—in which some creative scholarly work is being done—should be developed now. Asian American students here have been organizing quietly to encourage it, and some faculty members have shown initiative. If we do so, we will be well ahead of other Illinois institutions in that regard, even our campus in Chicago which ought by rights to have Asian American studies, does not.¹⁵²

Cunningham also began to connect with other UIUC faculty and staff interested in offering courses on Asian American issues, with a vision for something bigger. Cunningham's role was pivotal, as a tenured professor. Yuki Llewellyn recalled, "There was a tenured professor who was willing to put himself on the line. And he knew that if a course were offered and students took it, that would speak volumes to the administration.... We started doing stuff and people started to come.... Institutions, even stubborn ones, have to react to things that are *academic* in nature."¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Clark Cunningham and Yuki Llewellyn, "University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign," in *East of California: New Perspectives in Asian American Studies*, ed. Gary Okihito and Lee C. Lee (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Asian American Studies Program, 1992), 87.

¹⁵² Clark Cunningham to Peter Schran, 12 May 1992, Folder: Research/ Presentations, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

¹⁵³ Yuki Llewellyn (former University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Assistant Dean of Students), interview by Sharon S. Lee, 26 April 2007 in Urbana, Illinois.

Thus, the role of multiple faculty was one advantage that had not existed before. In the 1970's, there were few faculty who lent support to the Asian American Alliance, thus stunting progress for an academic curriculum. Even in the late 1980's, Jody Lin (BS, 1991, Bioengineering) did not recall assistance or leadership from faculty on Asian American issues, describing, "There were very few Asian American faculty around let alone Asian American faculty that supported Asian American student activism. There were certainly Asian professors—but none that took an interest in Asian American issues."¹⁵⁴ But in the 1990's, Cunningham and Llewellyn began working to gather information on faculty who had research, teaching, or service interests to build Asian American Studies and commitment to work with Asian American students.

The role that tenured professors played in building an academic unit such as an AAS program was invaluable. While Student Affairs administrators could provide support, they did not have the same leverage or voice. Bill Riley, dean of students from 1986 to 2008, articulated, "Student Affairs is, as you know, not an academic program. We can stand outside the gate all day and be yelling about what the needs are to make this a better place. But we at times don't get very far unless we can demonstrate that we've got faculty support that are saying that too, and we've got student support too."¹⁵⁵

Making a case for an academic unit also seemed to be an easier sell to the university compared to a cultural center under Student Affairs. A world-class research unit would bring UIUC prestige, whereas a cultural center to support a population (one for which it was difficult to see even needed support along academic measures) was a more challenging argument.

¹⁵⁴ Jody Lin interview, 20 August 2008.

¹⁵⁵ Bill Riley interview, 15 April 2009.

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In 1992, Cunningham offered the first AAS course since the 1970's under Sociology/Anthropology 296C called "Asian American Experiences." Structured around readings and guest speakers, students spoke of the course as pivotal and as something that they strongly desired. Vida Gosrisirikul (BS, Broadcast Journalism 1994; JD, 1997) remembered, "Students were voraciously hungry for Asian American Studies courses."¹⁵⁷

During this time, some students pointed to the legacies of the Asian American Alliance's efforts to push for an AAS program in 1973. Just as the founders of AAA pointed to the Alliance's history in 1986, others also embraced this past. Though not connected to the Alliance organizationally or through personal networks, some students researched Asian American student life at UIUC and educated others about this rich history. In expressing praise for Cunningham's course in 1992, Linus Huang (MS, Computer Science, 1993) put this gain in perspective in the Asian American Artists Collective newsletter, writing: "While we can rejoice that Anthropology 296C exists at all, it would do well to remember that the Alliance's 1973 effort did not last very long; we are certainly not groundbreakers where Asian American Studies at the U of I is concerned, and it is testimony to the severity of the situation that few are even

¹⁵⁶ This citation is left intentionally blank due to redaction of quotation in dissertation.

¹⁵⁷ Vida Gosrisirikul interview, 2 March 2007.

aware of this fact. Asian American students must assume responsibility for sustaining and developing Asian American Studies at the U of I."¹⁵⁸ That issue of the Collective's newsletter also contained the text of the 1973 Alliance Proposal for an Asian American Studies program, reminding students of the long struggle for AAS at UIUC that preceded them.¹⁵⁹

Other UIUC faculty teaching AAS courses included Nancy Abelmann (East Asian Languages and Cultures and Anthropology) who taught a course on the Korean diaspora; Pallassana Balgopal (Social Work) who taught a class on Asian families in America; and Rajeshwari Pandharipande (Religious Studies) who taught on Hinduism in America. Slowly, course offerings began to increase. Cunningham and Llewellyn also requested curricular materials and guidance from AAS scholars across the nation. Peter Kiang, director of AAS at the University of Massachusetts Boston, visited UIUC in February of 1991 to give a talk, and in sending materials to Cunningham, he commented on how impressed he was "with the interest and commitment to Asian American Studies expressed by students and staff."¹⁶⁰

Students were also taking it upon themselves to teach each other. Richard Chang (BA, 1994, History), who had been instrumental in crafting the 1994 proposal for the cultural center, had taken Cunningham's course and passed on the information he had learned. Chang offered a course on Asian American issues in fall 1993 through the University Young Men Christian Association (YMCA)'s "communiversity" program.¹⁶¹ The "communiversity" program offered noncredit classes in special interests and social issues since 1976.¹⁶² Chang encouraged other

¹⁵⁸ Asian American Artists Collective Newsletter, vol. 1, no. 1, November 1992, p. 10, Folder: AAA Historical Resources, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 16.

¹⁶⁰ Peter Kiang to Clark Cunningham, 27 February 1991, Folder: AASC History, Memos, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Studies Program Files.

¹⁶¹ University of Illinois YMCA, Communiversity Course Catalogue, Fall 1993, Folder: Activism for Asian American Studies, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

¹⁶² "Communiversity: Providing Continuing Education for the University and Community," *Daily Illini*, December 6, 1977.

students to learn Asian American history, pointing out the huge lapses in UIUC curriculum that overlooked Asian contributions to US history. This gap fueled Asian stereotypes such as foreignness and the model minority. Chang wrote, "Just make sure you understand what kind of education you are getting. Be aware of what you are and are not learning." He advertised the commiversity course, Cunningham's course, and AAA as resources for information. Of AAA, he wrote, "We are not just a social organization. We also try to provide you with the education that the University does not provide: your history and your heritage."¹⁶³ Similarly, then APAC co-presidents Reshma Saujani and Mark Harang described this need in the *Daily Illini* in 1991, pointing out the lack of Asian American Studies curriculum (distinguishing it from Asian Studies) and a centralized location for Asian American resources in the library (there was an Asian library but no centralized Asian American library). Saujani said, "We feel like if the University will not get the information out, it is our duty to educate the students and ourselves about issues concerning Asian American students."¹⁶⁴

Efforts to Build Asian American Library Resources

Despite having a renowned world-class library, UIUC's collections on Asian American resources left much to be desired. Some students applied to APARB for money to purchase some resources in 1994 but were denied. In fact, one item not funded by APARB in its first year was a request for the purchase of journals, volumes, and other items to establish an Asian American library in a residence hall. One student member, Neal Sikka, commented on this situation in a written evaluation of his APARB experience in 1995: "The funding guidelines seemed to work

¹⁶³ Richard Chang, "Learn Your History, Asian-Americans," *Crossroads: The Multicultural Magazine of the Daily Illini*, November 17, 1993.

¹⁶⁴ Jonathan Berlin, "Building Bridges: One on Two with Reshma Soujani [*sic*] and Mark Harang, Co-Presidents of the Asian/ Pacific American Coalition," *Daily Illini*, February 1, 1995.

well; however, I do not believe that we should limit the scope of APARB funding to just programs that are transient, but also support long term goals like an Asian American Film Collection and an Asian American Library. These are investments in the University's interest in Asian American students and will not only help to bring Asian Americans to this campus but also inspire and compliment the programs that they create."¹⁶⁵

Asian American students had been wanting better, more centralized Asian American resources in the library. AAA began raising money for Asian American materials. From fundraiser monies, they purchased a small collection of books and gathered articles and resources (such as Asian American Studies course syllabi from UCLA) and housed them in the AAA office in the student union. These materials were open for anyone to borrow. Eventually these books were donated to the UIUC library, with a sticker placed on the inside of books reading: "Gift of the Association of Asian Pacific Organizations," the precursor organization to APAC. Ho Chie Tsai (BS, 1994, Electrical Engineering) described the significance of these efforts for a library system that lacked Asian American materials: "There were plenty of Asian Studies texts, and scattered educational texts or works by Asian American authors in the main library, but no collection impressive enough to note. In some respects, we wanted to make a subtle statement that the university wasn't doing enough for the APA community, and here we were, poor students, trying to raise money to buy resources that we felt were important in teaching our own history to ourselves."¹⁶⁶ Thus, Asian American students took on great efforts to teach each other and build collections in the absence of institutionalized resources.

¹⁶⁵ Annual Report on APARB by Student Board Member Neal K. Sikka, ca. 1995, Folder: APARC, 1995-96, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

¹⁶⁶ Ho Chie Tsai interview, 28 July 2008.

Northwestern University's Hunger Strike for Asian American Studies

Students elsewhere in Illinois were also pushing for Asian American resources in the early 1990's. At Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, Asian American students comprised 20 percent of student enrollment, and they believed the university was discriminating against them by denying them an Asian American Studies program.¹⁶⁷ In 1991, a pan-Asian American student organization formed at Northwestern, the Asian American Advisory Board, which identified the lack of resources on campus. They submitted a proposal to the administration for a permanent staff position in Student Affairs specializing in Asian American issues but were rejected in fall 1992.¹⁶⁸

Asian American Studies courses also were desired, and, just like at UIUC, students began teaching themselves AAS through student-organized seminars starting in spring of 1992. After numerous meetings with administrators, the Advisory Board presented a 200-page proposal for an Asian American Studies program in February 1995; the proposal included syllabi and program descriptions as well as a projected timeline. They also submitted a petition of 1,200 signatures from faculty and students supporting the proposal.

Feeling frustrated after four years of advocacy, the Advisory Board took action. On 12 April 1995, more than 150 students and supporters marched on Northwestern's campus in support of Asian American Studies. Seventeen students began a hunger strike, vowing to hold out until administrators provided a commitment to establish a program.¹⁶⁹ Within a week, ten remained on the hunger strike. The demands included a short-term plan to hire visiting lecturers,

¹⁶⁷ Melita Marie Garza, "NU Students Demand Ethnic Studies, Chanting 'No Program, No Peace,'" *Chicago Tribune*, April 13, 1995.

¹⁶⁸ Ragini Shah, "A Piece of the Pie: The Unknown Story Behind the Asian American Adviser Proposal," *Asian American Quarterly*, Asian American Advisory Board, Northwestern University, Evanston Illinois, vol. 1, issue 1, Spring 2003, Folder: Asian American Resources, National, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

¹⁶⁹ Boaz Herzog, "'We Will Not Be Ignored': About 150 Students Battle Cold to Demand Asian-American Studies Program From Cautious Administration," *Daily Northwestern*, April 13, 1995.

tenure-track faculty, and a permanent director for the program in the next four years. The Northwestern strike encouraged similar protests at Stanford, Princeton, and Columbia. Students at Stanford began a hunger fast in support of Northwestern students; students staged a sit-in in the president's office at Princeton calling for an Ethnic Studies center; and students created an ad hoc committee for Asian American Studies at Columbia. A Princeton student described, "It's been on our minds, and hearing what (NU strikers) have done helped add fuel to the fire."¹⁷⁰

The hunger strike lasted nineteen days, ending without a university commitment for a program. Yet, the administration agreed to offer a minimum of four AAS courses for the 1995-1996 year and committed to having the Curricular Policies committee address the issue.¹⁷¹ In May 1996, Northwestern's faculty of Arts and Sciences approved a plan for an Asian American Studies program.

Asian American students at UIUC were aware of what was going on up state, with leaders expressing similar frustration with the limited AAS course offerings at UIUC and making plans to draft a resolution in support of Northwestern's hunger strike.¹⁷² And as news spread, *Daily Illini* columnist Stacey Jackson drew parallels between Northwestern's and UIUC's struggles for Asian American resources. She wrote, "It's too bad that officials at a certain university three hours south of Northwestern don't recognize the needs of Asian Americans, either. Asian American groups here on campus have been calling for a cultural center for a long

¹⁷⁰ Rebecca Winters, "Strike Gains National Support," *Daily Northwestern*, April 21, 1995.

¹⁷¹ Robert Yap, "Making History by Fighting for our History: The Real Story of NU's Protest for Asian American Studies," *Rice: The Staple for Asian American News and Entertainment* (formerly Asian American Quarterly), Spring 1996, Folder: Asian American Resources, National, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

¹⁷² Brian Wasag, "NU Advisory Board Starts Student Fast: Asian American Demands: Group Asks for Representation in Faculty and Programming," *Daily Illini*, April 18, 1995.

time. The University has responded by gift-wrapping an ambiguous answer in red tape. Beware, administration: A cultural center is needed."¹⁷³

When UIUC students led a teach-in to discuss AAS on campus on 20 January 1996, they invited Northwestern students to participate. Titled "Look at our Roots: Asian American Studies 101," the day-long event featured speakers on the academic discipline of AAS and on student movements for AAS across campuses. the *Daily Illini* described Mary Despe's, then senior in Communications and organizer of the event, reasons for the teach-in: "Despe said she wanted the University to reflect the push for Asian American Studies programs at schools such as Northwestern and Princeton universities, where students conducted hunger strikes and sit-ins to demonstrate their commitment to Asian American Studies."¹⁷⁴ UIUC students' struggles were taking place in a larger context.

Asian American Student Activist Programs at UIUC—Asiantation

As the teach-in, programs, and library collection development exemplified, Asian American students continued to do enormous amounts of work on their own to educate UIUC administrators and students about Asian American issues. Asian American students created programs that continue to this day, including an annual new Asian American student orientation called "Asiantation" and an activist conference called "Unseen Unheard."

Asian American student leaders were concerned about the lack of orientation programs for Asian American students. The Office of Minority Student Affairs (OMSA) offered a supplemental orientation primarily for African American and Latina/o new students. In April of 1994, Vida Gosrisirikul (BS, Broadcast Journalism 1994; JD, 1997) wrote a memo to Dean of

¹⁷³ Stacey Jackson, "Asian American Cultural Center is Long Overdue," *Daily Illini*, April 26, 1995.

¹⁷⁴ Kendra L. Williams, "'Teach In': An All-Day Program Examines the Past and Future of Asian Americans," *Crossroads: The Multicultural Magazine of the Daily Illini*, January 18, 1996.

Students Bill Riley proposing such an event for incoming Asian American freshmen for fall

1994. She described the conversations that APAC members were having on orientation needs:

One concern APAC has expressed, is the lack of an Asian Pacific American Freshman Orientation. These students are excluded from the University's Minority Student Orientation which is offered to African American and Latina/o students. Many APA freshmen have also gone to the Office of Minority Student Affairs and have been denied help. They have been told that the services are only for students admitted under special programs. Therefore, APA students are confused about which services are available to them. The confusion stems from the University's definition of a minority as a group that is under-represented and has retention problems. This definition is obviously different from how APAs consider the term minority. If APAs are not a minority, and if APAs are not part of the white majority, what is their status? This confusion only makes the transition to college life more difficult. We would like to be given the same opportunity to reach out to incoming APA students as the Latina/o and African American organizations have. One way to help new APA students is through an APA Freshman Orientation, which would provide them with the resources and information to adjust and succeed at the campus environment.¹⁷⁵

Gosrisirikul proposed a welcome event and an informational resource booklet that would be sent to APA freshmen their first week on campus. She also reiterated the necessity of the welcome event to support Asian American students who continued to face an inhospitable racial climate, writing, "As an institution of education the University has the resources to implement this booklet and program, and the University should try to foster a healthy environment. APA students have reported more than fifty incidents involving racial slurs on this campus. The US government also reports that violence against Asians is rising. These circumstances make the implementation of an APA Freshman Orientation an even bigger priority."¹⁷⁶

The Office of the Dean of Students supported the event and booklet in fall of 1994. More than 100 students attended the program, and 1,500 booklets were distributed.¹⁷⁷ In the booklet,

¹⁷⁵ Vida Gosrisirikul to Bill Riley, Subject: "Proposal for an Asian Pacific Amer. Freshman Orientation," 19 April 1994, Folder: APAC 4 of 4 Asiantation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Vida Gosrisirikul to Members of the Asian Pacific American Resource Board (APARB), subject: "Proposal for Funding the Second Annual Asian Pacific American New Student Orientation—'What's in it for

Yuki Llewellyn, director of Registered Student Organizations and assistant dean of students, included a welcoming letter, describing the movements on campus for Asian American student needs and for building cross-organizational unity. She wrote,

There is a student movement on campus at the present time calling upon the campus administration to establish an Asian American cultural center. Such a center can be a resource for students, the campus, and the community where information, understanding, and knowledge about the various Asian ethnic groups can be obtained, where academic advising and counseling can be available, and where all students can come together as part of a community. You are invited to be part of this movement to let the campus know that Asian American students have unmet needs and that there is unity among Asian Americans. Working together you can make an important contribution toward improving the overall climate of this campus.¹⁷⁸

In the fall of 1995, the orientation was funded by APARB and given a new name of "Asiantation." An anonymous poem opened the informational booklet, a poem that has opened almost every succeeding year's booklet.¹⁷⁹ Gosrisirikul wrote, "Asiantation is not orientation: You may be asking yourself, 'What the hell does that mean? Why is it called Asiantation instead of Orientation? Did they do that just to be cute?' Unlike many things in life, there is an explanation. This poem says it best." The poem, "Asian is not Oriental" read:

ASIAN
is not
Oriental.
Head bowed, submissive, industrious
model minority
hard working, studious
quiet
ASIAN
is not being
Oriental,
Lotus blossom, exotic passion flower
inscrutable

You?" 10 February 1995, Folder: APAC 4 of 4 Asiantation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

¹⁷⁸ Yuki Llewellyn, "Welcome Incoming Asian American Students," Fall 1994, Asiantation booklet, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center.

¹⁷⁹ Fall 2003 Asiantation booklet, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center. The one exception was in 2003, when a different poem was featured.

ASIAN

is not talking

Oriental.

ahh so, ching chong chinaman

no tickee, no washee

ORIENTAL

is a white man's word.

Oriental is jap, flip, chink, gook

it's "how 'bout a backrub mama-san"

it's "you people could teach them niggers

and Mexicans a thing or two

you're good people

none of that hollerin' and protesting"

ORIENTAL is slanty eyes, glasses, and buck
teeth

Charlie Chan, Tokyo Rose, Madam

Butterfly

it's "a half hour after eating Chinese food

you're hungry again"

it's houseboys, gardeners, and laundrymen

ORIENTAL is a fad: ying-yang, kung fu

"say one of them funny words for me"

Oriental is downcast eyes, china doll

"they all look alike".

Oriental is sneaky

Oriental is a white man's word.

WE

are not Oriental.

we have heard the word all our lives

we have learned to be Oriental

we have learned to live it, speak it,

play the role,

and to survive in a white world

become the role

The time has come to look at who gave the name.¹⁸⁰

Gosrisirikul, Asiantation chairperson, described the importance of Asiantation and of
bringing the Asian Pacific American community together. She wrote: "I have increasingly come

¹⁸⁰ "Asian is Not Oriental," Asiantation 1995 Asian Pacific American New Student Orientation, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center.

to understand how important words are. That's why we chose Asiantation as the theme of this year's orientation. We thought it would be eye-catching; that it would spark some curiosity; and most of all we thought it would emphasize that 'Asian is NOT Oriental.' The term 'Asian American' or 'Asian Pacific American' however, is a term of empowerment, of Asian people assuming control of the way they are viewed. Both terms are also more inclusive to encompass Asian Indians and Pacific Islanders, groups not traditionally thought of as 'oriental.'" She continued, expressing the importance of a large APA community coming together:

If we never unite, we will never have any power or any voice in the way we are governed, because no one will care enough to listen to a small group of "orientals" complain about their problems, especially when everyone thinks we are all automatically math and science geniuses and we all make lots of money. Unity will be important in dispelling these stereotypes, and giving ourselves a voice in mainstream America.... I want to highlight the UNITY formed among the numerous APA organizations at the U of I in order to bring you Asiantation ... read on with an open mind and remember "Asian American" or "Asian Pacific American" are not merely words, nor are they just convenient categories. These words mean UNITY and EMPOWERMENT. And you thought ASIANTATION was just a cute title.¹⁸¹

Asiantation has continued at UIUC every year since 1994—with student leaders claiming it to be the "first orientation of its kind in the US that is directed specifically towards Asian Pacific American students," and that APA students on different campuses have been inspired to create their own Asiantation programs.¹⁸² In creating Asiantation, Asian American student leaders continued to push the minority discourse at UIUC, challenging the notion that just because they weren't underrepresented, they were not struggling with racial or cultural issues. Information about Asiantation in the *Daily Illini* read: "Asian Americans are not considered a minority on campus because they are proportionately more of them enrolled here than there are

¹⁸¹ Asiantation 1995 Asian Pacific American New Student Orientation, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center. Emphasis in original.

¹⁸² Vida Gosrisirikul, "Asiantation is Not Orientation," Asiantation 1996 Asian Pacific American New Student Orientation, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center.

Asian Americans in the state of Illinois. These numbers, however, do not mean that Asian American students do not have their own unique issues to deal with. It also does not mean that Asian American students do not need or want their own chance to help new students to adjust to campus life. This need for Asian Pacific American students is the drive behind Asiantation."¹⁸³

Asiantation also met its mission to reach out to incoming Asian American students. Clark Cunningham, professor emeritus of Anthropology, recalled, "Vida was one of the organizers of Asiantation. And that was something that I think really had an impact on kids coming down from the suburbs. Some of the students in my (AAS) class talked about that too. They had always been kind of aware of their Asian-ness but were not aware that other people were feeling similarly about it."¹⁸⁴

Asian American Student Activist Programs at UIUC—Unseen Unheard

Just like with Asiantation, students continued to create programs with APARC funds including the annual student activism conference "Unseen Unheard," established in 1996, referring to how Asian Americans were unseen and unheard on campus. The annual conference highlighted the overlooked experiences of Asian Americans. In the second conference's booklet, Co-directors John Fiorelli and Snehal Patel wrote, "The title of this event implies, the Asian Pacific American Community has often been looked upon as the silent, 'model' minority; the group that won't rock the boat or cause commotion. Often thought of as a group that will 'turn the other cheek,' we have chosen not to support this ridiculous stereotype through our increasing involvement in community and political issues that affect our incredibly diverse community.

¹⁸³ Karen Hawkins, "Asiantation Information: Orientation Program Lets Students Know What to Expect," *Daily Illini*, August 31, 1995.

¹⁸⁴ Clark Cunningham (emeritus University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign professor of Anthropology), interview with Sharon S. Lee, 21 March 2007 in Urbana, Illinois.

However, the Asian Pacific American community must not only deal with being 'Unseen, Unheard,' but also 'Misseen, Misheard.'"¹⁸⁵

The mission of the conference was three fold: "to dispel misunderstanding, ignorance, and apathy through education; to break through silence by facilitating discussion; and to develop and promote leadership, cooperation, and activism in the APA community."¹⁸⁶ The annual conference includes workshops on topics such as discrimination, anti-Asian stereotypes, Ethnic Studies, Asian American feminism, identity, Asian American history, the model minority myth, and politics.

As Asian American students pushed for university resources, they sought to make their experiences *seen* and *heard*, as powerfully described in the Unseen Unheard conference booklet, showing the growing strength of Asian American voices in the late 1990's:

This conference provides a place where APA students can empower themselves and others to rip off the blindfolds that have traditionally made APAs invisible to others, that we can see ourselves and others not through the lens of a Western education, but through the lens of a multi-faceted, multi-dimensional model of society. This conference provides a place where we as APA students can rip the cotton from our ears and others' ears, so our screams, our protests, our voices of reason and passion, the voices of our community, our mothers, our fathers and children, can be heard.... By making our issues and concerns *SEEN and HEARD*, we begin to change the powers that be into empowerment within our own communities.¹⁸⁷

Programs such as Asiantation, Unseen Unheard, and the Midwestern Asian American Students conferences were completely undertaken by students. And they not only educated Asian American students but non-Asian American students and administrators as well. The programs were impressive and thought provoking. Patricia Askew, vice chancellor for Student Affairs from 1995-2005, recalled, "I used to just be amazed that they could pull off that

¹⁸⁵ Welcome, Unseen Unheard Conference of Asian America booklet, October 1997, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center.

¹⁸⁶ Unseen Unheard conference program, 4 December 1999, p. 5, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 3. Emphasis in original.

(MAAS/MAASU) conference where they had students come from *all over* the Midwest! I mean the amount of work that went into that! And Asiantation got better every year and it just blew me away. The booklet and ... their timing was right, they got those students in there at the right time to introduce them, while they were freshmen, they made it fun and interesting."¹⁸⁸ Thus, Asian American programming was a critical form of activism and part of a larger movement of petitions, protests, proposals, and legal strategies to educate the university.

A Staff Position for Asian American Student Services

By 1996, there were a few tangible gains made—programming dollars through APARB, a growing AAS curriculum, and Asian American student-led programs. But without a cultural center and AAS program, or similar such institutional support, there were still gaps. For instance, in an annual closing report on 1996 Asian American Awareness Month Committee programs, Tami Hiroyasu, awareness month chair and resident director for Pennsylvania Residence Halls, wrote an assessment of these resources and plans to create a resource manual for Asian American programming:

The committee identified that there were no resources available to student leaders about Asian American programming, and since the Asian American students do not have a cultural center such as La Casa and the Black House, student and professional staff programmers often may not know where to go if they wanted to do a program on Asian American issues.... Upon investigation around the Student Affairs offices, the committee discovered that there really are *few resources at all* (programming or not) specifically for the Asian American students. Most offices do not offer support or resources specific to the Asian American community ... I hope that this committee will strive to be advocates for the Asian American students and encourage Student Affairs to take notice of the unique needs of our Asian American population.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁸ Patricia Askew (former University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Vice-chancellor for Student Affairs), interview by Sharon S. Lee, 9 July 2007 in Urbana, Illinois.

¹⁸⁹ Tami Hiroyasu, "Annual Closing Report for Asian American Awareness Month," March 1996, p. 3, Folder: Asian American Awareness Month 1996, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives. Emphasis in original.

The lack of resources fueled the push to establish a designated staff position to work with Asian American students in the Dean of Students office. Susan Maul, director of the Illini Union, an original member of the Asian American Task Force, and member of APARC, wrote to Vice chancellor for Student Affairs Patricia Askew on 2 May 1995 explaining the need: "Even when a decision was made to provide \$30,000 funding to the Asian American students, I believed that a staff person was what they needed and wanted the most.... Although there are all kinds of staff members within Student Affairs available to help them with programming, designating one staff member to work with them would certainly indicate that the University is supportive of the Asian American population on campus and recognizes that they have special needs."¹⁹⁰

That December, Asian American student leaders expressed their desires as well and met with Askew. On December 8, Reshma Saujani and Jeremy Bautista, then APAC co-directors, wrote to Chancellor Michael Aiken. They described the numerous Asian American programs that students had coordinated since 1992:

Although most of these programs were extremely successful, they regrettably came at a cost of having student leaders compromise their academics and psychological well-being as there were too often little or no resources in which to assist them in their ventures. Students often debate between spending time on homework and developing needed educational programs intended to raise cultural and intellectual awareness. "Burn-out" often occurs from the continual administration of necessary campus programming putting APA leaders at a disadvantage in the academic and work world. Energetic and talented students then become apathetic and cynical to new projects. These stresses could be alleviated by institutional assistance.¹⁹¹

They articulated the necessity of an Asian American advisor or director.

Vice chancellor Askew reiterated this need to Chancellor Aiken on December 22. In a memo, she requested the establishment of an assistant dean position to help Asian American

¹⁹⁰ Susan Yung Maul to Patricia Askew, 2 May 1995, Folder: APARB, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

¹⁹¹ Reshma Saujani and Jeremy Bautista to Michael Aiken, 8 December 1995, Folder: Asian American Staff Position, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

students with programming and support. She described her conversation with Bautista: "Students like Jeremy Bautista express a sincere need to have a dean or advisor to turn to when they are coping with stressful situations—someone who understands the Asian-Pacific American culture, the parental expectations, the model minority stereotype, and so forth. After listening to Jeremy relate some of the problems he faced, and describe the void he felt in not finding a professional staff member who understood him culturally, I am convinced of the need to establish this new Assistant Dean position."¹⁹²

A new position of assistant dean of students for APA affairs was announced in February of 1996. The staff person would advise students to develop programs as well as serve as a liaison to other university administrators.¹⁹³ The search for the position was launched quickly, with job descriptions sent out with a starting date of 1 July 1996 and a closing date for applications 19 April 1996. There is some evidence that Asian American student leaders were unhappy with the search process, which they felt was undertaken without adequate student input in the job description, timeline, and composition of the search committee. Student leaders suggested a position be filled by spring of 1997.¹⁹⁴ While it is unclear how these disagreements were resolved, Jonathan Ying was appointed in the new position and was on campus in the fall of 1996.

¹⁹² Patricia Askew to Michael Aiken, 22 December 1995, Folder: Asian American Staff Position, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

¹⁹³ Katherine Klimas, "Position Created to Address Asian American Affairs," *Daily Illini*, February 28, 1996.

¹⁹⁴ "Issues and Suggestions Concerning the Current Selection Process for the Asian American Assistant Dean Position," Folder: Asian American Staff Position, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

The Establishment of an Asian American Studies Program at UIUC

While an important and significant gain, the staff position still was not the end of the struggle. Just as with the gains of APARB, Asian American student leaders continued to view these gains as only partial steps within a larger movement. Though they now had funding money and a staff person, they *still* did not have an Asian American Studies program or a cultural center. Thus, even with gains, students reminded each other of the larger struggle. For instance, in the September 1996 APAC newsletter, members described the situation to new students:

The Asian American population comprises about 10 percent of the total student body at the University of Illinois. This makes us the largest minority population on campus. However, we do not get "minority status" at this lovely institution because Asians make up about 3 percent in the state of Illinois. This is how administration likes to explain why Asian Americans at the U of I are "over-represented." Doesn't make sense, does it? The current struggle to give Asian Americans recognition on this campus goes back to 1992. For the past four years, AA students have been requesting an Asian American studies program and an Asian American Cultural Center. The African American Students have a Black House (formally, the African American Cultural Center), and the Latina/o/a students have La Casa Cultural Latina. Both groups have minority status AND studies programs at the U of I, with the Latina/o/a students' studies program implemented as of last year. Members of the Asian American student body have tried to meet with administration to discuss the issues, but to no avail ... until the spring of 1996.

This past spring, the administration finally gave a listen. Associate Provost David Liu and William Riley, Dean of Students, set up meetings with Asian American students and supporting faculty. We had meetings. And meetings. And more meetings. Finally, something happened. Out of the patience of students and the support of faculty we got an Asian American Assistant Dean.... But we still don't have a studies program or a cultural center. Things can change, but only if you want it to. Get your ass in gear. APA student activism can't exist without you. Everything that's happened so far is because of us. Students. Get involved.¹⁹⁵

The mid-1990's were a time of growth for Asian American Studies. While the cultural center advances stalled, the academic side began to flourish. Given some progress made for AAS, students shifted their focus on curriculum. the *Daily Illini* quoted Jeremy Bautista of

¹⁹⁵ "The Nightmare Has Begun..." Newsletter of the Asian Pacific American Coalition, vol. 1, no.1, September 1996, p. 3, Folder: APAC 1 of 4, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

APAC, "We've decided to focus on the studies program because, the more you know, either as an Asian American or not, the more information you'll have to make an accurate decision on problems facing the Asian American community."¹⁹⁶

But even with the shifting focus on the academic side, students continued to maintain the push for *both* academic and student resources. For example, APAC created a Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) sheet in 1996 on the Asian American cultural center and AAS program. The sheets posed similar questions such as why UIUC needed these resources, who would benefit, refuting that a cultural center and studies program would be separatist, and pointing out that Asian Americans did not benefit from existing university services or programs (OMSA or Asian Studies). Both FAQ sheets ended with a statement that the university was doing nothing on each issue.¹⁹⁷

Asian American students were actively drafting proposals for an AAS program. In the spring of 1996, they submitted a list of demands to administrators, which included an AAS program director, physical office space, clerical and graduate assistant staff, a cross-listing system of all AAS books in the library system, and additional AAS books and journal subscriptions. They also demanded that at least five classes a semester be taught with at least 50 percent AAS content in a variety of disciplines including English, History, Political Science, Anthropology, Sociology, Education, Community Health, Religious Studies, Music, and Fine and Applied Arts.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶ Joan Mocek, "Asian Americans Drive for Studies Program," *Daily Illini*, September 4, 1996.

¹⁹⁷ Asian Pacific American Coalition, FAQ Sheet on Asian American Cultural Center at UIUC and FAQ sheet on Asian American Studies at UIUC, 1996, Folder: Early APAC Documents, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

¹⁹⁸ "What's New?" Asian American Activist, the Newsletter of APAC—the Asian Pacific American Coalition, vol. 1, no.2, November 1996, Folder: APAC 1 of 4, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

Asian American student leaders and faculty met with UIUC administrators, in particular Associate Provost Liu, to discuss the establishment of an Asian American Studies program. Liu turned out to be an important ally in the administration in investigating the options of developing such a program. During a meeting in June 1996, Liu suggested forming an ad hoc committee and requested a listing of faculty who might be interested in being involved. At the meeting he also committed to working with students and faculty on the issue.¹⁹⁹ By fall of 1996 the ad hoc committee was created consisting of approximately fifteen faculty members and three students.²⁰⁰ The committee investigated ways to establish a program, how to institutionalize AAS courses and an academic minor, and met with the campus' directors of African American Studies and Latina/o Studies.²⁰¹ The committee also invited national AAS scholars to campus. These scholars included Amy Ling (Director of the Asian American Studies Program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison), David Eng (AAS scholar at Columbia University), and Don Nakanishi (Director of the Asian American Studies Center at the University of California Los Angeles).²⁰²

By October of 1996, it was announced that the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences would set aside two faculty positions in AAS. One hire was made in the field of Asian American Political Science. Despite such progress, committee members were frustrated over their limited input in hiring decisions. When a second position hire decision was made for a candidate in Asian American Speech Communications, the ad hoc committee protested, arguing that expertise in AAS and Speech Communication might not be similar. In an article in the *Daily Illini* (misabeled "Asian Studies"—not Asian American Studies, a common error in the 1990's), Vida

¹⁹⁹ Meeting minutes with Assistant Provost David Liu and professors willing to help on establishment of Asian American Studies, 6 May 1996, Folder: Early APAC documents, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

²⁰⁰ Grace Uy, "Asian Program to Hire Professors," *Daily Illini*, October 7, 1996.

²⁰¹ "On the Academic Side...", Asian American Activist, the Newsletter of APAC—the Asian Pacific American Coalition, vol. 1, no.1, September 1996, Folder: Activism for Asian American Studies, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

²⁰² Jonathan Ying interview, 15 August 2009.

Gosrisirikul (BS, Broadcast Journalism 1994; JD, 1997) was quoted as saying, "What it comes down to is, are you hiring people who are experts in Asian American Studies, or are you hiring people who are merely Asian American?"²⁰³ As a result, the search in Speech Communication was halted.

By April 1997, ad hoc committee member Gosrisirikul expressed her impatience on the slow progress for AAS in an email to students, writing,

Nearly a year ago, students submitted a proposal to the university faculty committee outlining what students would like to see happen with APA Studies. What has the University done with this list? NOTHING!!!!!! There is NO APA Studies Program at the U of I. There have been a few classes here and there such as Prof. Balgopal's Asian American Families and another course Asian American Experiences, but NO formal APA Studies Program. Many other University campuses have APA studies, namely UCLA (and many other UC schools), U of Wisconsin, Cornell, etc. but U of I has NOT done enough towards establishing a program here.²⁰⁴

She also urged students to attend a meeting with invited speaker Don Nakanishi from UCLA.

She wrote, "We need to show the University that we will NOT be ignored. This proposal is only the most recent in a long struggle for APA Studies. Unless, we show them that we care about this issue the University will continue to do..... NOTHING!!!!!! PLEASE DO SOMETHING!!!!!"²⁰⁵

Despite a slow start and some confusion over the new hires, the committee was reorganized in fall 1997, headed by George Yu, who was the director of the Center for East Asian and Pacific Studies. The committee was renamed the Asian American Studies Committee and was comprised of four faculty members (Yu, Cunningham, Nancy Abelmann, and Pallassana Balgopal), two ex-officio members (Liu and Jonathan Ying), and three student representatives.

²⁰³ Asako Tanabe and Matthew Priestley, "Asian Studies Advance on Campus: Multiple Cultures on Campus—Asian Pacific American Committee Attempts to Promote Asian Services on Campus," *Daily Illini*, April 28, 1997.

²⁰⁴ Email from Vida Gosrisirikul, 2 April 1997, Folder: Early APAC Documents, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives. Emphasis in original.

²⁰⁵ Ibid. Emphasis in original.

The committee was also given six faculty lines with the charge to build an Asian American Studies program in three years, upon which the committee would become a program under the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. According to Yu, the committee was given \$1 million to build the program, money that funded faculty and staff salaries, facilities, programming, and operations.²⁰⁶ Administrators also gave the committee a building, located at 1003 West Nevada Street in Urbana. UIUC's creation of six faculty lines received national news within the field of Asian American Studies.²⁰⁷ Finally, after almost twenty-five years since the Asian American Alliance's proposal and after decades of activism, an Asian American Studies program was a reality at UIUC.

Conclusion

Going as far back as the 1970's, Asian American students had pushed UIUC to institutionalize resources such as an Asian American Studies program and an Asian American cultural center. Within a revitalized campus context of political activism for students of color in the 1990's and a confrontational sit-in led by Latina/o students in 1992, Asian American students began to see some gains made in the mid-1990's. Some Asian American leaders worked in coalition with other students of color, while others struggled to build their own brand of activism for a more conservative and cautious community. Their activism was less visible than the 1992 sit-in or the 1995 Northwestern hunger strike, but Asian American students employed critical methods such as signing petitions, crafting proposals, creating activist programs, and

²⁰⁶ George T. Yu (founding Director of University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Studies Program), interview with Sharon S. Lee, 1 March 2007 in Urbana, IL.

²⁰⁷ Peter Monaghan, "A New Momentum in Asian American Studies," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 2, 1999; Karen Lam and Jim Cho, "A Higher Education: How Do Top Schools Fare on the A.-Domometer?" *A. Magazine*, August/ September 1997, pp. 49-52, 54, 56, 58, 87. UIUC was also mentioned in a 1997 issue of *A. Magazine* profiling the best colleges and universities for Asian Americans.

investigating legal strategies that coalesced with growing support from faculty, alumni, and long-standing allies in the administration.

After decades of pushing for Asian American resources, gains were steadily made through the 1990's, with the culmination of the establishment in 1997 of what would become the largest Asian American Studies program in the Midwest. At the same time, the struggle for the cultural center waged on. What made these gains possible? What were the challenges of continuing the movement after 1997? How does this history help inform higher education policy for Asian American students? These questions will be examined in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

GAINING ASIAN AMERICAN RESOURCES BEYOND PARITY MEASURES

After decades of activism, students, faculty, and administrators had laid a strong foundation for an Asian American Studies (AAS) program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) by 1997.* Between 1997-2000, the Asian American Studies Committee filled six faculty lines. In 2000, the Committee became the Asian American Studies Program under the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. George Yu served as program director from 1997-2002, and Kent Ono, from the University of California Davis, was hired as the program's first permanent director in 2002. With on-campus faculty support and additional partner hires, the AASP had fourteen core faculty and eight affiliate faculty and offered an undergraduate disciplinary minor by 2009.¹

An Asian American Cultural Center

Even with the gain of the Asian American Studies program, the push for the Asian American cultural center continued. Making an argument for support services for such a high-achieving population (in the aggregate) was still a challenge, but students persisted in their efforts. Gains in Asian American Student Affairs resources had been made through the early 1990's, as noted in chapter five—\$30,000 in funding for Asian American programs and an Asian

* Portions of this chapter have been published previously. Sharon S. Lee, "The De-minoritization of Asian Americans: A Historical Examination of the Representations of Asian American in Affirmative Action Admissions Policies at the University of California," *Asian American Law Journal* 15 (2008): 129-152. Copyright owned by author.

¹ Asian American Studies Program website, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2007, http://www.aasp.uiuc.edu/p_faculty.html (accessed November 23, 2009).

American staff position in the Office of the Dean of Students. In 1998, a full-time counselor was hired by the Counseling Center with specialty working with Asian American students. Despite these new resources, an Asian American cultural center remained an elusive gain. In April 1997, Asian American students sponsored a "cultural center day" consisting of workshops and activities. Joline Robertson, then external vice president of AAA, believed that "persistence will eventually overcome," and that a cultural center would one day be a reality at UIUC.²

A new cohort of student leaders took on the cultural center battle in the late 1990's and also worked to ensure the success of the new AAS program. In doing so, they continued to argue that Asian Americans had a minority experience despite being statistically overrepresented. For instance, in 2000, Asian Pacific American Coalition (APAC) Co-director Paula Kim (BA, 2001, History and Political Science) said, "Many of us (Asian Americans) do face issues of discrimination and racism. But the University does little to acknowledge this. They say because we have high numbers and a higher retention rate than other groups, we must not have many problems. By not having resources available to us, *the University is saying that we aren't really a minority*. That implies that we have been successfully integrated into the majority, which at this school happens to be Caucasians. *But we're not the same as Caucasians.*"³ Yuri Kim, then Illinois State Government vice president, agreed: "It's not right for the school to say we are not a minority. We don't have the benefits of affirmative action or a cultural house. It's like the University is saying that we're all right and we don't have any problems, which just isn't true."⁴

Persistence was key to the eventual creation of an Asian American cultural center, along with the continued help of allies in the administration. In 2001, Nancy Cantor was appointed

² Grace Uy, "APA Students Fight for Center," *Daily Illini*, March 10, 1997.

³ Tom Kim, "Asian Americans Wrestle with Minority Status: Resources Available to Other Minorities Overlooked for Asian Americans," *Daily Illini*, August 2, 2000. Emphasis mine.

⁴ Ibid.

UIUC chancellor. Cantor was provost and executive vice president for Academic Affairs at the University of Michigan when students filed court cases against the university's usage of affirmative action in undergraduate (*Gratz v. Bollinger*) and law school (*Grutter v. Bollinger*) admissions, heard by the US Supreme Court in 2003. During those cases, Cantor was a champion of diversity and defended affirmative action.⁵

In October 2002, Chancellor Cantor and Vice chancellor for Student Affairs Patricia Askew appointed an Ad Hoc Committee on Asian Pacific American (APA) Campus Life. They charged the committee to assess the personal, social, and academic needs of Asian American students. The committee conducted a large-scale online survey to assess Asian American students' needs and perceptions of the quality of academic and extracurricular life at UIUC. Students reported rates of racial discrimination on campus and dissatisfaction with the university's performance for Asian American students. In a final report, the committee submitted nine recommendations, the top one being the creation of an APA cultural center. Other recommendations included disaggregating APA student data; hiring more APA staff; expanding Asian American Studies and library resources; improving interracial relations; and developing an Asian American alumni network.⁶

Advances continued, and in August 2003, then provost Richard Herman announced the approval of an Asian American cultural center. Through the 2003-2004 academic year a campus committee worked with architects and administrators to draft a proposal for the facility. However, in the process, the committee learned that the center had been allotted a budget that

⁵ Nancy Cantor, "Affirmative Action and Higher Education: Before and After the Supreme Court Rulings on the Michigan Cases," *Chicago Tribune*, January 28, 2003; Patricia Gurin, Jeffrey S. Lehman, and Earl Lewis, *Defending Diversity: Affirmative Action at the University of Michigan* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007).

⁶ Ad-hoc Committee on Asian Pacific American Campus Life, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Final Report, 30 April 2003, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center, Director's files.

would only accommodate a structure of 1,400 square feet, in a one-story structure. Students were dismayed and, through further negotiations with the administration, were able to acquire an over \$1 million budget and a two-story center with a basement that totaled 6,800 square feet.⁷ Hence, even in the planning stages, students and staff had to continue to lobby for adequate resources for the center.

The Asian American cultural center held its grand opening on 9 September 2005, at 1210 W. Nevada Street in Urbana, a center that was physically connected to the Asian American Studies program building at 1208 W. Nevada. At the celebration, Betty Jang, then president of the Asian American Alumni Network, reflected on the long journey to that day, remarking, "I ask the University with a smile, 'What took you so long?'"⁸

UIUC as a Case Study: How Were Gains Made?

As Asian American students combated their invisibility at UIUC, they began to be seen and heard. In fact, as a testament to these gains, the thirteenth annual Unseen Unheard conference was renamed "Seen and Heard" in March 2009. Asian American students now had a voice on campus within institutional spaces, such as a renowned studies program and a cultural center.

Looking back on this history, a difficult question often posed to a historian is how were these gains made? How do we replicate such factors to make similar progress for Asian American students on other campuses?⁹ What lessons can we learn from UIUC in understanding

⁷ Frank Krolicki, "Budget Problems Stall Center Opening: Organizations Frustrated by Hold Up," *Daily Illini*, April 22, 2004.

⁸ Vasanth Sridharan, "Asian American Cultural Center Opens to Warm Greetings," *Daily Illini*, September 12, 2005.

⁹ J. Linn Allen, "Asian Rally Seeks More Attention From UIC," *Chicago Tribune*, March 9, 2000; "The Asian American Movement at UIC," UIC Asiantation Resource booklet, 2002, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center, Director's files. A similar movement for Asian American Studies and

what is required to push for Asian American resources at a university that does not define them as minorities because of their overrepresentation? Such questions are difficult to answer, as there are many complex forces that generate any social movement in a historical context.¹⁰ It is my hope that the readers of this study come away with an understanding of the *multiple* factors that came together at the right time and place, that the movement was an uneven process of stops and starts (as seen in tenuous coalition building processes within and outside of the Asian American community), and that gains for Asian American students evolved within a *larger* campus context of student activism in the 1990's for racialized populations who pushed beyond a black-white racial framework. Asian American students were part of a larger movement by students (Latina/o and Native American) that expanded the administration's understanding of "minority" students beyond African Americans.

The Confluence of Supporters and Coalition Building

One thing that several of my interviewees related regarding the resources gained for Asian American students was the confluence of numerous supporters. Not only were students key players but so were alumni, faculty, and administrators in Student Affairs (Dean of Students, Counseling Center) and Academic Affairs (Provost's office). There were also key people who lent their support for large gains, such as Associate Provost David Liu and Chancellor Nancy Cantor. These allies worked together over many years to advocate for programs, staff positions, curriculum, funding, and the like. Clark Cunningham, professor emeritus of Anthropology,

resources at UIUC's sister campus, the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), developed through the 1990's; an Asian American Resource and Cultural Center opened at UIC in 2005, and an academic AAS program was announced for Fall 2010.

¹⁰ Maris Vinovskis, *History and Educational Policymaking* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999). Maris Vinovskis discusses the ways that historians may offer guidance in public policies yet also with limitations in identifying direct and prescriptive lessons from the past.

related the confluence of this support on all levels for Asian American resources: "Looking around at other places, where sometimes all or none of those things existed, or one or two existed but they couldn't move because others didn't exist ... we had it all. And I think the speed and the size of our (AAS) program is simple proof of that fact that all of those things came together and they came together at the right time."¹¹

In addition, despite moments of backlash against an Asian American cultural center, manifested through a campus discourse of self-segregation and balkanization, there was no single resistant administrator or group that made such gains impossible. As several alumni discussed, working with administrators entailed educating them about what they did *not* know, rather than confronting them over a refusal to consider their experiences. As Ramesh Subramani (BS, 1991, Chemical Engineering) noted in chapter three, the lack of resources for Asian American students was more of an "error of omission" than commission. Of course this is not to say that the educational process was easy, but rather that without a singular opponent, years of persistence were able to pay off.

Ultimately as the years went on, resources were gained—first the \$30,000 in program funds, then the assistant dean of students for APA Affairs, a counselor in the Counseling Center, and a AAS program with faculty lines. David Chih, director of the Asian American cultural center, reflected on the incremental gains over the years: "After more than ten years of incremental growth, there wasn't much more that the campus could do in building Asian American programs without creating a center. We had done most things that we could think of.

¹¹ Clark Cunningham (emeritus University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign professor of Anthropology), interview with Sharon S. Lee, 21 March 2007 in Urbana, Illinois.

So that was the normal, natural next step."¹² A cultural center's time had come, and with the support of key people like Chancellor Cantor, it moved forward.

Coalitions across numerous groups also converged at a certain time among students, faculty, staff, alumni, and within the Asian American community itself. Working together across Asian ethnic lines was a new development and was not always easy but had its impact. Building a united voice for Asian American students through organizations such as the Asian Council and APAC also had a specific "flavor" in the early 1990's that did not exist in later years. The early 1990's were a time when there were key groups around which to build coalitions; thus, building bridges across eight or so organizations was easier than across the dozens that would emerge in the late 1990's. Jeremy Bautista (BA, 1996, History) reflected, "You know, I hate to say it was a simpler time but it really kind of was! You didn't have to be friends with people in twenty different groups. You had to be friends with people in eight groups. And that was enough for us."¹³ Thus, coalition building among Asian American groups was easier to manage in the early 1990's, led by a specific student cohort who prioritized building a larger community.

Asian American Students Work With Administrators

Collaboration with administrators also made the response to Asian American students different than for other groups. On campus, the fears of another explosive protest such as taken by Latina/o students and their allies in 1992 pervaded. There is some evidence that students were discussing the 1992 sit-ins as a model for future activism. For example, in a memo shortly after

¹² David W. Chih (Asian American Cultural Center Director, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign), interview with Sharon S. Lee, 26 July 2007 in Urbana, Illinois.

¹³ Jeremy Bautista (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign alumnus), interview with Sharon S. Lee, 7 July 2007 in Chicago, Illinois.

the May 1992 sit-ins, Yuki Llewellyn, director of Registered Organizations, apprised Susan Maul, director of the Illini Union, of some of these thoughts. She wrote,

Although the largest group of students of color with 10.5 percent of the undergraduate population at UIUC, Asian American students currently are provided with no services or opportunities from the University accorded other "minority" students. Asian American students viewed the recent Latino protests with great interest. Although not traditionally culturally appropriate for them to "make waves" or confront administrators, there is growing interest among Asian American student leaders to do whatever needs to be done to have the administration pay attention to their needs. If the administration will not acknowledge their needs and if they will not work with the students in helping to meet those needs, then these students will feel that they have no other recourse than to actively, visibly, publicly, noisily make their needs known. History shows that this course of action works.¹⁴

The 1992 sit-ins and protests inspired students at UIUC. For instance, Steve Fellner called to students of color and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students to look to Latina/os as a model for change and activism in the fall of 1992. He wrote in the campus student newspaper the *Daily Illini*, "As Latinos showed us, people of color, women, and queers who feel that we are oppressed by our University need to reveal our rage through visible demonstration.... There are no excuses for inaction. There are no excuses for failing to fight discrimination. Latinos have constructively used their anger through successful protests. They must continue. And we need to follow their example."¹⁵ Administrators were aware of these sentiments and worked hard to avoid another 92. For instance, in 1995 when Vice chancellor for Student Affairs Patricia Askew informed Chancellor Michael Aiken about the need for a full-time staff person for Asian American students, she expressed the importance of such resources in the light of growing Asian American demographics on campus and the need to work *with* the Asian American student community. She described, "From my perspective, this campus is at a critical

¹⁴ Yuki Llewellyn to Susan Maul, re: "Asian American Students and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign," 19 May 1992, Folder: Research/ Presentations, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

¹⁵ Steve Fellner, "Latino Protests Sets Example for Disempowered," *Daily Illini*, September 14, 1992.

juncture in building a sound and progressive relationship with students in the Asian Pacific American community ... it is in our enlightened self-interest, as a campus, to be proactive at this time and to establish this professional position as described above. If we hesitate to take this action now, we will soon be faced with such a demand and will be responding from a defensive posture."¹⁶

Bill Riley, dean of students from 1986 to 2008, also discussed how the necessity of avoiding another 92 was clear in his mind at the time. He stated,

You don't want this to happen again.... And if you don't want this to happen again, the institution needs to be responsive in addressing needs the *next* time. And I would have to say over the next decade, that was not very far from some of my messages from time to time and that is, work *with* faculty and students who are willing to work with you to make change. Don't provide either an excuse or a reason to feel like they need to do this, in order to make change.... I think the Latino situation allowed those that were interested in change for Asian American students in the environment as well as African American students, to say, we need to do this. This is one example of things that need to change relative to minority students and let's try to get in front of the curve for once.... There was an understanding that 1992 was not well handled and a clear understanding that we shouldn't let that happen again.¹⁷

Thus, through the process, there was collaboration between Asian American students and administrators. Patricia Askew, vice chancellor for Student Affairs from 1995-2005, reflected,

We were able to work together. There was a lot of continuity among the students too. Because they were so engaged in doing programming and so forth, and had seen support from different areas of Student Affairs in getting these things accomplished, I think it laid the groundwork for more trust and negotiation maybe. And then I think as we were able to deliver on things, like when we got the funding money for the programming and we established a process where the students were really having a lot of input—that built trust. It also allowed them to wisely use those funds so it was things that students would engage in.¹⁸

¹⁶ Patricia Askew to Michael Aiken, 22 December 1995, Folder: Asian American Staff Position, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Asian American Cultural Center Archives.

¹⁷ Bill Riley (former University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Dean of Students), interview with Sharon S. Lee, 15 April 2009 in Urbana, Illinois.

¹⁸ Patricia Askew (former University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Vice-chancellor for Student Affairs), interview by Sharon S. Lee, 9 July 2007 in Urbana, Illinois.

Riley agreed in assessing why gains for Asian American students came, while slowly, more securely and with less provocation.

There were a number of people that were willing to work within that structure to try to make change and to create an argument that Asian American students had needs too, and the argument that is still going on is, "We are a minority and have needs comparable to other minorities on the campus, to which you have some responsibility independent of individual student needs."

I think there was enough appreciation for an agreement or a consensus on direction among the advocates and not enough threat for anybody to try to stifle it, to incrementally move forward with it. And there's enough, I guess, investment on faculty to the institution, continuity to see history, and commitment to move forward. And independence to be unbridled that Student Affairs people don't always feel, combined with the commitment from Student Affairs in assignment and task and the energies of students to provide a critical mass of visibility and resources that when you put the puzzle together and each one plays a part that the other one can't play, and I think it ended up with an ability to get more resources on a quicker timeline, or permanent stable way.¹⁹

Thus, a sense of collaboration from multiple players helped the movement inch along on a steady foundation, avoiding explosive confrontations.

Asian American Student Activism

As noted in chapter five, there were many barriers keeping student leaders from garnering widespread support from other Asian American students to engage in confrontational political tactics—even raising awareness was difficult at times. Because Asian American students took a different course of conveying Asian American needs to the administration through meetings, legal paperwork, petitions, programs, and memos (versus sit-ins or hunger strikes), they were better able to navigate the system. That system had also *changed* after 1992—administrators were more attuned to diversity issues and wanted to avoid confrontation again. Thus after 1992, as administrators sought to prevent such conflict, Asian American students' strategies of working

¹⁹ Bill Riley interview, 15 April 2009.

within the system were effective. Ho Chie Tsai (BS, 1994, Electrical Engineering) described it this way:

I think that one of the things we were aware of was that we were always a few steps behind African American and Latino students in terms of civil rights issues and activism, so a lot of times we take the lead from those who have come before us. They broke the ground for us, and now that the doors open, we can have those conversations. I think we tried to use those routes more often, and it's also something that most Asian Americans were more comfortable with ... to be non-confrontational, to be more give-and-take, to negotiate, and just to be more humble about it. And I think an administrator can spin that any way they want, but that just tends to be the nature of our community. It's not that we feel less strongly about an issue, but perhaps it's the cultural way that we learned to get ahead.²⁰

Jeremy Bautista (BA, 1996, History), also recalled some members of Asian Pacific American Coalition (APAC) articulating a specific strategy: "You have a system here, let's work *within* it. Because there's no reason why we couldn't because there are no rules against that. So, you almost defeat them from the inside (laugh). And we looked at APAC as sort of building critical mass. That was the term I used a lot. You know, we wanted to build critical mass. We knew that we couldn't do it without a consensus. And that was built on people's shoulders."²¹

Patricia Askew, vice chancellor of Student Affairs from 1995 to 2005, recalled the collaborative ways that she worked with Asian American students, even in tough budget times that kept some resources from being gained. She stated, "And that's where I really credit the students that we worked with. Because even though they were strong advocates and they pushed hard, they also understood more the reality of the situation. And we were able to say well, these are our goals, now let's start on them. And I think because we delivered it in good faith, they were willing to keep working on it."²²

²⁰ Ho Chie Tsai (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign alumnus), interview by Sharon S. Lee, 28 July 2008 in Manchester, Indiana.

²¹ Jeremy Bautista interview, 7 July 2007.

²² Patricia Askew interview, 9 July 2007.

At the same time, while Asian American leaders focused on strategies that were collaborative and behind-the-scenes, they also balanced this cooperation with the *potential* to use more vocal protest. Asian American student leaders admitted that culturally it would have been an uphill battle to garner a mass protest by Asian American students to the degree that had occurred before on campus. However, they were also aware that such tactics were effective. In a *Daily Illini* article, Vida Gosrisirikul's (BS, Broadcast Journalism 1994; JD, 1997) position was described the following way: "Gosrisirikul said that at other universities, APA students had protested for recognition. This was how both the African American Cultural Center and La Casa Cultural Latina were established on this campus.... 'We are willing to fight for what we think is right, but we are also prepared to discuss and compromise with the University,' Gosrisirikul said."²³

A Cautionary Note About "Activism"

This is all not to say that the confrontational tactics used by Latina/o students were the "wrong" way to go about challenging institutional neglect and that Asian American students' strategies were the "right" or even "preferred" way. Activism takes *many* forms in the way it challenges an institution. Yet, this was one theme that emerged in oral history interviews and in the media representations of protest—Latina/o students took on a more confrontational strategy than Asian American students.

For instance, after the first sit-in held by Latina/o students in April 1992, then vice chancellor for Student Affairs Stan Levy was quoted in the *Champaign-Urbana News-Gazette*. He described the confrontational efforts as putting administrators in an "impossible dilemma" by not waiting for a university committee to come forth with their recommendations slated for May

²³ Kay Burgess, "Students Seek Place for Asian Awareness," *Daily Illini*, October 16, 1996.

8. He stated, "It is the way the university does its business, and you need to learn how to work within that."²⁴ However, Latina/o students felt action was necessary given the impending end of the academic year and felt frustrated that university had assigned committees in the past as a way to stall progress.

Asian American students were unintentional beneficiaries of Latina/o students (and their allies) who had protested and sat-in in the administration building, because in doing so, Latina/o students created a campus context where administrators were determined to avoid "another 1992." In this new climate, it had become less necessary to engage in direct confrontation in order to gain visibility.²⁵

The Persistent Question: Are Asian Americans Minorities?

The question posed at the beginning of this study was "Are Asian American college students minorities?" UIUC thought so only in situational contexts. Asian Americans were counted in federal and state reports that categorized them as a minority group, but they were not considered "underrepresented" or in need of services. Or, put another way, David Chih, director of the Asian American cultural center, described that Asian Americans are a "minority of convenience." He described,

The university has to report racial data by law and include Asian Americans and take pride in what a large group it is, supporting the sense of multiculturalism and diversity on our campus. At the same time, Asian Americans do relatively well in admissions, all the way through graduation as a group, do rather well comparatively with white Americans. Therefore administrators have not seen the need to invest financial resources

²⁴ Julie Wurth, "Latino Students Not 'Giving Up' After Staging UI Sit-In," *Champaign-Urbana News-Gazette*, April 30, 1992.

²⁵ Was working within the system a conscious strategy? Was it one that fueled representations of Asian Americans as "model minorities" who played by the rules and of Latina/os and African Americans as unruly protestors? I do not doubt that these issues played out; however, these questions are beyond the scope of this historical project and aside from anecdotal evidence, no such claims can be made here. However, these are critical issues to examine for future study in how representations were used to fuel racialized stereotypes and even how these groups strategically used stereotypes to their advantage.

for academic support services for Asian Americans in the same way they have for other minority groups. Asian American students do experience issues related to minority status and intercultural conflicts that can and should be addressed by the university but for so many years were not. And so they're a convenient minority group to count in the diversity data and don't demand as many resources as others.²⁶

This shifting definition of Asian American minority status has been seen over time, such as in California, where Asian Americans were "de-minoritized" from minority programs in the 1980's.²⁷ In UIUC's case, Asian Americans were never given minority status related to minority programs, beginning with the Special Educational Opportunities Program (SEOP) in 1968. Such programs did not target them as a specific disadvantaged population; hence in effect, they were "un-minoritized." Even today, the concept of minority is qualified by the adjective "underrepresented" at UIUC, as at other colleges and universities. James Anderson, Head of Educational Policy Studies and UIUC professor since 1974, discussed the evolution of terms used at UIUC and the ways that the term "minority" was conflated with blacks and then teased out to differentiate Asian Americans from other groups: "I think at some point the university decided that the Asian American students, while classified, while being a minority population, were not an underrepresented population. So initially, we never used the word underrepresented, it was just minority or black students. And then from black students to minority students. But I think at some point you got the evolution of the concept *underrepresented* minority. And I think underrepresented minority is a concept that was introduced in order to distinguish black, Latino, and Native American students from Asian American students."²⁸ Thus, this shift from "minority" to "underrepresented minority" has become code to exclude Asian Americans.

²⁶ David W. Chih interview, 26 July 2007.

²⁷ Sharon S. Lee, "The De-minoritization of Asian Americans: A Historical Examination of the Representations of Asian American in Affirmative Action Admissions Policies at the University of California," *Asian American Law Journal* 15 (2008): 129-152.

²⁸ James D. Anderson (Head of Educational Policy Studies, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign), interview with Sharon S. Lee, 21 June 2007 in Champaign, Illinois.

A focus on underrepresentation and academic needs has been and continue to be the focus for minority programs at UIUC. In the cases of the African American and Latina/cultural centers, university rationale emphasized the centers' positive effects on the retention, positive orientation, and academic success of these students. However, that rationale did not seem to apply with regard to Asian American students. Clarence Shelley, founding director of the SEOP and long-time campus administrator, recalled, "We did not take a very careful look at the fact that these (Asian American) students were not using our counseling services as much. We did not examine their levels of comfortability in the residence halls, or their participation in student activities and services." Shelley concluded, "I'm thoroughly convinced that because these students did so well academically that they did not really need a cultural center. It is so ironic in retrospect that their academic performances and lower levels of activism were used by many to justify not developing and encouraging the development and use of services."²⁹

Within this discourse of underrepresentation, Asian American students had to push the minority discourse and craft different arguments—stating that overrepresentation did not mean that equity or full integration had been achieved and arguing that the whole campus would benefit from learning about Asian American experiences and histories. Their counter-narratives testified to anti-Asian hostility at UIUC, not captured by statistical measures of academic achievement (enrollment and retention) that served as the standard for gauging minority need. They showed the limitations of the university's understanding of these non-academic issues, and they challenged the arguments for under and overrepresentation. Vida Gosrisirkul (BS, Broadcast Journalism 1994; JD, 1997) noted,

The University would tell us that the reason that African American and Latino students had services and a cultural house is because traditionally those minority groups had

²⁹ Clarence Shelley (founding Director of University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Special Educational Opportunities Program), interview with Sharon S. Lee, 22 March 2007 in Urbana, Illinois.

retention issues and were underrepresented on the U of I campus. The administrators said that we had numbers and were well represented so we didn't demonstrate the same need for services. But our counterpoint was, because we had so many students on campus, shouldn't we get services? I mean, where was a lot of tuition money coming from then?

That was always a weird argument, which we called the overrepresented argument. Seemingly, then the University was saying that the only reason for having services was if you belonged to an underrepresented group so, the University needed to keep you here and retain you. So, is that the only need then, that the black and Latino students have, is that they need to be retained? I mean, what, they don't have any other issues? I mean, what's the underlying reason for needing services, is it racism? Is it lack of support? Is it not having role models? Those same things apply to other minorities too. We just wanted to have the same opportunity to benefit from similar services.³⁰

Underrepresentation has become a key measure for "minority" needs, and in many of these measures Asian Americans in the aggregate fare well and thus are not seen as minorities in the same way. Ross Harano (BS, Finance, 1965) described that Asian Americans don't have a "minority agenda" stating, "A minority agenda is that ... I'm under-privileged, I'm under-served, so therefore we need programs to compensate for the disadvantages we had in the past. I don't think we can say that, at least not about this generation. Maybe among the older generation. But this generation we can't say that. Now, there are exceptions of course, those who came as refugees rather than as students, professionals and college-educated immigrants. But still, our agenda isn't a minority agenda. So it has to be an agenda that recognizes that we are a visible minority."³¹ As a racially visible non-white minority, Asian Americans are targeted for backlash and racist policies such as in the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II.

Harano continued that one important argument for Asian American programs and services is the need to consider the diversity of US society and history, and often times these histories and cultures are not even known by Asian Americans themselves. He stated,

³⁰ Vida Gosrisirikul (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign alumnus), interview with Sharon S. Lee, 11 April 2007 in Chicago, Illinois.

³¹ Ross Harano (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign alumnus), interview by Sharon S. Lee, 4 November 2008 in Urbana, Illinois.

As a visible minority, it is important for us to pass on whatever cultural values we have to provide an Asian American identity for our American-born generations. One of the problems is that Asian Americans have not been included in our history books as part of the American story. Our existence in this country has never been legitimized. As a result, we are still viewed as foreigners. We are still asked, "Where are you from?" And how do we tell our story so that it is not an *Asian* story but an *Asian American* story? How do we have our story included into mainstream history books as part of the American story? How do we get Asian American Studies, not only in colleges but also in high schools and grammar schools? And that's where we're teaching Japanese and Chinese, it has to go more into that. So those are some of the responsibilities that we have.³²

Karin Wang (BS, 1992, Finance) also noted the need to have this knowledge of Asian American history given the diversity of UIUC and of society. She reflected,

There was just a lack of education and understanding about the community. I think we used the numbers the other way—saying we're actually a significant part of the campus and you don't understand us, you don't understand the history of Asian Americans, there are no classes for us. So I think at the time, the programming and what we were trying to do was probably not based on making the underrepresentation argument per se. I remember more trying to argue for the need to be more inclusive of the diversity of the community, of the Chicago community, the Illinois community, the campus community. And recognizing that a large population of students who are here really felt left out, and there are elements of racism and discrimination present in how people treat us. And we want that dealt with. We don't want it swept under the rug and ignored. I think for us, there was probably a big sense that we need to build awareness, to educate. And that was both non-Asians and Asians alike. Because I think we found that a lot of Asian Americans who had grown up in these suburban schools would come to Illinois and know no more about Asian Americans than their white counterparts! So there was a desire to both self educate and educate a larger set of people.³³

Thus, the rationale that Asian Americans were highly visible numerically at UIUC (and hence did not need services) could also be used to argue their presence required a better awareness of Asian American experiences in the curriculum and in campus programs.³⁴ The Asian American presence could not be ignored.

³² Ross Harano interview, 4 November 2008.

³³ Karin Wang (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign alumnus), phone interview by Sharon S. Lee, 8 September 2008.

³⁴ Robert A. Rhoads, *Freedom's Web: Student Activism in an Age of Cultural Diversity* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998). Robert Rhoads describes how Asian American students at the University of Maryland who desired AAS in 1995 made similar arguments. Students argued that they were about 15 percent of the student body, but they were not represented in the curriculum.

A Focus on Race Over Class

Not having a "minority" agenda for Asian Americans belies the fact that Asian American subgroups such as Southeast Asians and Pacific Islanders still struggle with educational access, retention, and poverty. It is critical not to forget that once Asian American data is disaggregated, there are many ways in which Asian American groups still qualify for minority services along measures of underrepresentation. Asian Americans are a highly diverse group, and disaggregated data shows wide ranges of academic achievement along ethnic and disciplinary lines.³⁵ Thus, despite charges of overrepresentation, underrepresentation still exists for Asian American subgroups and in some disciplines. Additional studies also need to examine the role of socioeconomic status on educational access and adjustment; advocates pushing for disaggregation of Asian American data along ethnic or socioeconomic lines argue that doing so will also help to identify and address socioeconomic barriers.³⁶ And there are movements at UIUC to disaggregate racial data in order to get a better idea of which groups need improved services.³⁷

While one of the limitations of this study is its focus on middle-class Asian American student leaders, these students' arguments centered race over class—arguments that are critical in challenging traditional minority discourse. A movement solely pushing to disaggregate Asian American data to reveal underrepresentation continues to reify a "minority = underrepresented"

³⁵ Gabriel Chin, Sumi Cho, Jerry Kang, and Frank Wu, *Beyond Self-Interest: Asian Pacific Americans Toward a Community of Justice: A Policy Analysis of Affirmative Action* (University of California Los Angeles Website, 1997), <http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/aasc/policy/beyond.pdf> (accessed October 9, 2004); Eugenia Escueta and Eileen O'Brien, "Asian Americans and Higher Education: Trends and Issues," *Research Briefs* 2 (1991): 1 (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED381103); Shirley Hune and Kenyon Chan, "Special Focus: Asian Pacific American Demographic and Educational Trends," in *Minorities in Higher Education: Fifteenth Annual Status Report: 1996-1997*, ed. Deborah Carter and Reginald Wilson (Washington DC: American Council on Education, 1997).

³⁶ Jamie Lew, *Asian Americans in Class: Charting the Achievement Gap Among Korean American Youth* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2006). Jamie Lew's study of Korean American high school students in New York city reveals different experiences of educational achievement based on socioeconomic resources, providing an important direction in this research on the intersections of race and class.

³⁷ David Chih interview, 26 July 2007.

argument. The fact that Asian American students at UIUC pushed that very discourse by highlighting the salience of race *despite* socioeconomic privilege and academic achievement is what is significant in this study. As beneficiaries of the 1965 Immigration Act, many of the 1980's and 1990's Asian American college generation at UIUC enjoyed a level of socioeconomic privilege (more so compared to the 1970's Asian American Alliance cohort). The stories of Asian American leaders at this time are ones of a middle-class population, a group of students who did not struggle socioeconomically. Yet these students highlighted and centered race in their analysis, as well as cultural conflict with immigrant parents, that led to pressures and need for support. Karin Wang (BS 1992, Finance) described it this way:

We were not conscious at the time of how the model minority myth also plays down the disparities in the community, economically. I had no consciousness at the time of Vietnamese and Cambodian refugees for example, since most Chinese, Korean, or Filipino Americans on campus had parents who came in the early 1970's, parents who might come with a higher level of education or some resources, they were not fleeing a war for the most part. So the Asian Americans I knew on campus, I think were predominantly East Asian and some were Indian, and most came from more privileged suburban families. We all went to pretty good schools, more of us came from the suburbs than from Chinatown. So that was something I just wasn't aware of yet. At the time, when we talked about model minority myth being detrimental it was more about a fairly privileged group of Asian Americans not having access to the kind of university support for programming.³⁸

Thus, despite certain socioeconomic privileges and high academic achievement that seemed to put Asian Americans at a position of comfort and adjustment, Asian American students still pushed the discourse, critically redefining alternative measures of minority experiences along racial (non-white) lines.

³⁸ Karin Wang interview, 8 September 2008.

Parity as a Problematic Goal for the Equity of Racial Minority Groups

This is not to say that underrepresentation should not be a measure in identifying needs for minority groups at all, as this is a crucial problem for certain populations; rather that its opposite—that parity means equity—is not an accurate measure. As we chase for parity as a goal, we need to critically examine the concept itself. How do we measure parity? No one can deny that Asian Americans are statistically visible in higher education admissions and retention, especially at the undergraduate level. Yet, they are less visible in prominent leadership positions both in higher education and beyond. William Tierney quotes Tom Mullen that affirmative action policies are "attempts to make progress toward substantive, rather than merely formal, equality of opportunity for those groups ... which are currently underrepresented in significant positions in society."³⁹ What are these "significant positions" in society? Is it representation in positions of political and economic power? If this was the case, Asian Americans are severely underrepresented in Congress and on corporate boards of directors.⁴⁰ Scholars have also shown that Asian American and Pacific Islander faculty face barriers to tenure and promotion.⁴¹ Asian Americans are also severely underrepresented as higher education administrators—they are the smallest number (under 1 percent) of top administrative positions at two- and four-year academic

³⁹ William Tierney, "The Parameters of Affirmative Action: Equity and Excellence in the Academy," *Review of Educational Research* 67 (1997): 167.

⁴⁰ The Committee of 100, *2007 Corporate Board Report Card: A Report on Directors of Asian Ethnicity on Fortune 500 Boards*, 2007, http://www.committee100.org/initiatives/corporate_board/2007%20May%20C-100%20Report%20Card.PDF (accessed November 23, 2007). In 2007, Asians and Asian Americans only held 1.5 percent of corporate board seats among Fortune 500 companies.

⁴¹ Shirley Hune, *Asian Pacific American Women in Higher Education: Claiming Visibility and Voice* (Washington DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities, 1998); Guofang Li and Gulbahar Beckett, *"Strangers" of the Academy: Asian Women Scholars in Higher Education* (Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, 2006); Dale Minami, "Guerilla War at UCLA: Political and Legal Dimensions of the Tenure Battle," *Amerasia Journal* 16 (1990): 81-107; Haunani-Kay Trask, "Racism Against Native Hawaiians at the University of Hawai'i, A Personal and Political View," *Amerasia Journal* 18 (1992): 33-50; Eric Yamamoto, "Foreword: We Have Arrived, We Have Not Arrived," *Asian Law Journal* 3 (1996): 1-6.

institutions combined.⁴² Don Nakanishi notes that the higher one goes up the academic pipeline, the fewer Asian Americans there are.⁴³

The flip side to arguing that Asian Americans are still underrepresented at various levels is to question what parity means. Is parity tantamount to equity? Parity is a salient concept in measuring discrimination, and Sumi Cho makes this point within the law. She writes, "This parity, as it's popularly known, reflects a close approximation or a balance between the baseline representation or applicant pool and the actual percentage or the applicant flow. If a protected group is significantly under-parity, liability may ensue."⁴⁴ In the *Bakke* decision, Cho notes that Justice Powell's decision, which focused on the forward-looking rationale of diversity, "set the stage for the exultation of 'diversity' and the measurement of such, through proportionalism or the search for parity."⁴⁵

But does parity denote lack of discrimination? As sociologists argue, smaller numbers do not alone define minority status.⁴⁶ Thus, parity may not mean complete integration and may not signal a group's shift from minority to majority status. Cho critiques this correlation, arguing the limitations of proportionality. While she does not question the relationship of under-parity with possible discrimination, she challenges its converse. She uses the historical example of Chinese laundries: in 1886, Chinese were only 10 percent of San Francisco's population but operated 75 percent of the city's laundries, hence being "overrepresented" in the industry based on their

⁴² Brief for National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium, Asian Law Caucus, Asian Pacific American Legal Center, et. al., as Amicus Curiae Supporting Respondents, *Grutter v. Bollinger* 539 US 306, (2001) (No. 02-241) and *Gratz v. Bollinger*, 539 US 244, (2001) (No. 02-516), 20.

⁴³ Don T. Nakanishi, "Asian Pacific Americans in Higher Education: Faculty and Administrative Representation and Tenure," in *Racial and Ethnic Diversity in Higher Education*, ed. Caroline Turner, Mildred Garcia, Amaury Nora, and Laura Rendon (Needham Heights, MA: Simon & Schuster Custom Publishing, 1993), 370-375.

⁴⁴ Quoted in Asian Pacific American Law Students Association Symposium, "Rethinking Racial Divides: Asian Pacific Americans and the Law," *Michigan Journal of Race and the Law* 4 (1998): 221.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 221.

⁴⁶ A classic sociological work defining minority group status is Charles Wagley and Marvin Harris, *Minorities in the New World: Six Case Studies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958).

numbers.⁴⁷ However, Cho points out that 200 of the 201 laundry licenses that were denied at the time were denied to *Chinese*. She concludes: "I maintain that over-parity is inappropriately conflated with the concept of non-discrimination in APA history, as well as in contemporary experiences."⁴⁸

It is important to understand that changing the law does not ensure equity. This reality can be seen in the desegregation literature. Desegregation was legally "achieved" in the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* case. However, due to persisting stereotypes and racial animus, integration did not result and instead, scholars have pointed out that "second generation" desegregation effects have taken place in the forms of placing black children in special education programs and vocational-tracked curriculum, punishing black children more harshly for school violations, and demoting black principals and teachers in desegregated schools.⁴⁹ In a similar way, the parity of Asian Americans in higher education does not connote full integration, as evidenced by instances of racial conflict and foreigner stereotypes of Asian American students.

Conclusion

As a non-white racial group, Asian American college students continue to struggle with race in their educational experiences. Unfortunately, university minority programs have been defined along underrepresentation and have originated from and continue to focus on a black-white racial lens. Joy Ann Williamson notes affirmative action programs became racialized as

⁴⁷ Asian Pacific American Law Students Association Symposium, "Rethinking Racial Divides," 222.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 223.

⁴⁹ Charles S. Bullock and Joseph Stewart, Jr., "Second Generation Discrimination in American Schools." *Policy Studies Journal* 7 (1978): 219-224; Robert E. England and Kenneth J. Meier, "From Desegregation to Integration: Second Generation School Discrimination as an Institutional Impediment," *American Politics Quarterly* 13 (1985): 227-247.

black with the interchanging use of terms minority, disadvantaged, and African American.⁵⁰

These minority programs and discourses have been limited by a black-white paradigm. Asian Americans, in not fitting in the "minority model" well, have been uncritically removed or excluded from minority programs and services, which overlooks their experiences on campus.

Asian American students at UIUC challenged statistical measures of adjustment and success and pushed the discourse further, showing that racial and cultural differences continued to affect their experiences on campus, despite high rates of academic achievement and socioeconomic status. In this way they revealed different arenas of racialization and marginalization, arenas that have historical roots and persist today. It is through understanding Asian American students' continued struggle for minority student status that one can push beyond parity alone and see how race operates in their daily lives. And by doing so, improved services and programs can begin to address their educational needs and ensure that Asian American students are *seen* and *heard*.

⁵⁰ Joy Ann Williamson, *Black Power on Campus: The University of Illinois, 1965-1975* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 56.

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APPENDIX A

PHOTOGRAPHS AND IMAGES

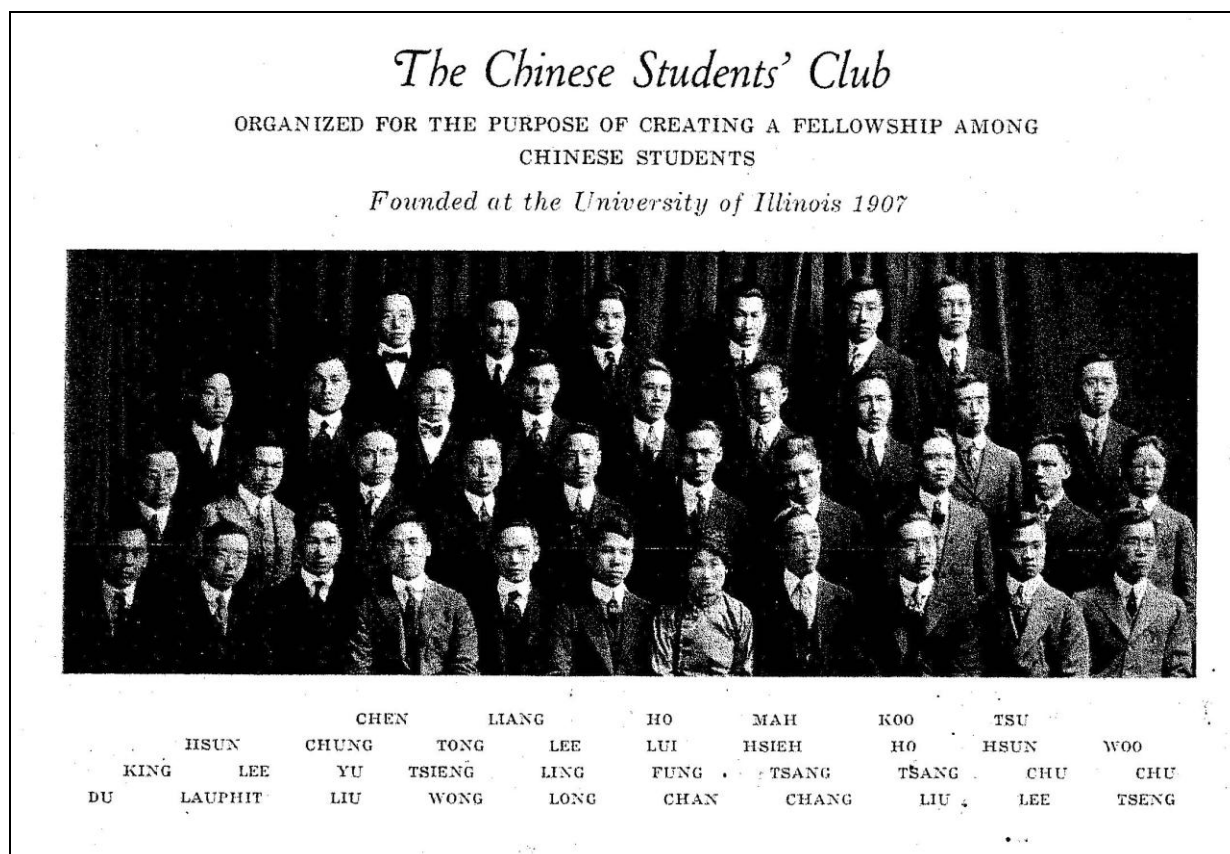


Photo of the UIUC Chinese Student's Club, an early Asian international ethnic student organization from the 1919 Illio.

Asian international students attended UIUC in significant numbers in the early 1900's.

Photo courtesy of Illini Media.



Photo of a Korean student performing at the UIUC International Fair, from the 1963 Illio. Images of Asian student life on campus focused on international students; Asian American student life did not become visible until the 1980's and 1990's. Photo courtesy of Illini Media.



Photo of Filipino students performing at the UIUC International Fair, from the 1966 Illio. Photo courtesy of Illini Media.



The Asian American Alliance leads a local anti-Vietnam War protest, 5 May 1971.

The Asian American Alliance was the first pan-Asian American student organization at UIUC, established in 1971.

Source: The Daily Illini, Photographer Ron Logsdon. Photo courtesy of the Daily Illini.



Photo of Latina/o students, wearing La Casa Cultural Latina t-shirts, ca. late 1970's- early 1980's. Latina/o students advocated for support in UIUC minority programs.

Photo courtesy of La Casa Cultural Latina, UIUC.

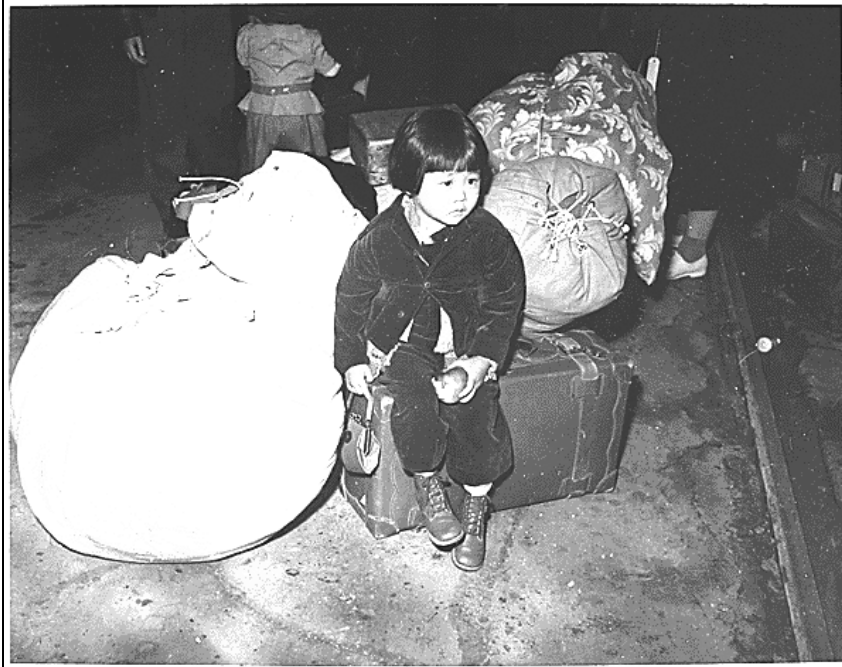


Photo of Yuki Llewellyn as young child awaiting evacuation, 1942.
 Photos of Llewellyn were displayed during the 1980's Japanese American redress movement.
 Photo courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration




Photo of Yuki Llewellyn, holding picture of herself as child awaiting evacuation, ca. late 1990's.
 Llewellyn was director of Registered Organizations and first sponsor of the Asian American Association in 1986. Llewellyn was a long time supporter of Asian American students at UIUC.
 Charles Mercer Photography. Photo courtesy of Yuki Llewellyn.




Photo of Clark Cunningham and Yuki Llewellyn, presenting information on the Japanese American internment for the Asian American cultural center, 14 March 2006. Cunningham and Llewellyn were early supporters of Asian American Studies at UIUC. Photo courtesy of the UIUC Asian American Cultural Center.


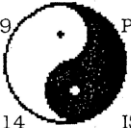




Photo of members of the Asian American Association at a fall picnic, from the 1993 Illio. The Asian American Association was the second pan-Asian American student organization established at UIUC, in 1986. While always maintaining a social focus, AAA leaders began to voice their concerns for Asian American student needs at UIUC in the late 1980's. Photo courtesy of Illini Media.




ASIAN AWARENESS MONTH 1991



3/1-3	AAA	Midwest Asian American Students Conference @ Illini Union For more info, contact Karin Wang @ 367-8618	
3/2	AAA	Dance 9pm-12:30am @ Illini Union Ballroom	
3/2	ISA	Open Gym 1pm-4pm @ Huff Gym	
3/6	HKSA	Potluck Dinner For more info, contact Alice Djung @ 384-5159	
3/7	ISA	"The Gulf War's Effect on India & India's Middle East Policy": Speaker Steve Cohen 7pm @ 261 Illini Union	
3/7-9	IUB	International Fair	
3/7		Exhibits 4pm-8pm	Film Festival 6:30pm
3/8		Exhibits 12pm-8pm	Performances 8pm
3/9		Exhibits 12pm-4pm	Activities 12pm-4pm
3/9	PSA	Formal: "It Had to Be You" 7pm @ Chancellor Hotel Interested? Call Marianne Bantog @ 367-0110	
3/14	ISA	News Track Of India Today (video) 7pm @ 263 Illini Union	
3/15	IUB	Asian Variety Show: "Far East Fanfare" 8pm @ Illini Union Ballroom	
3/15-16	AAA	"The Last Emperor" 8pm @ Lincoln Hall Theater Cospponsored with IUB Films Committee	
3/16	HKSA	Asian Olympics 1pm-5pm @ IMPE Ice Cream Social to follow afterwards	
3/16	ISA	Catered Indian Dinner 2pm-5pm @ YMCA For more info, contact Sweta Katwala @ 359-6621	
3/16	KUSA	Annual Talent Show 7pm-10pm @ 112 Gregory	
3/17	AC	Taste of Asia & Games of Asia 2pm-5pm @ YMCA	



This calendar sponsored by Asian Council: Asian American Association, Hong Kong Student Association, Indian Student Association, Korean Undergraduate Student Association, & Philippine Student Association.



Flyer for the first Asian American Awareness Month at UIUC, March 1991.

The awareness month was coordinated by the Asian Council; since 1991, the campus has celebrated Asian American Awareness month annually.

Photo courtesy of the UIUC Asian American Cultural Center.



Photo of Chief Illiniwek performing at a UIUC football game in the 1991 Illio. A controversial figure, the Chief's performances were critiqued as inauthentic and offensive. Photo courtesy of Illini Media.



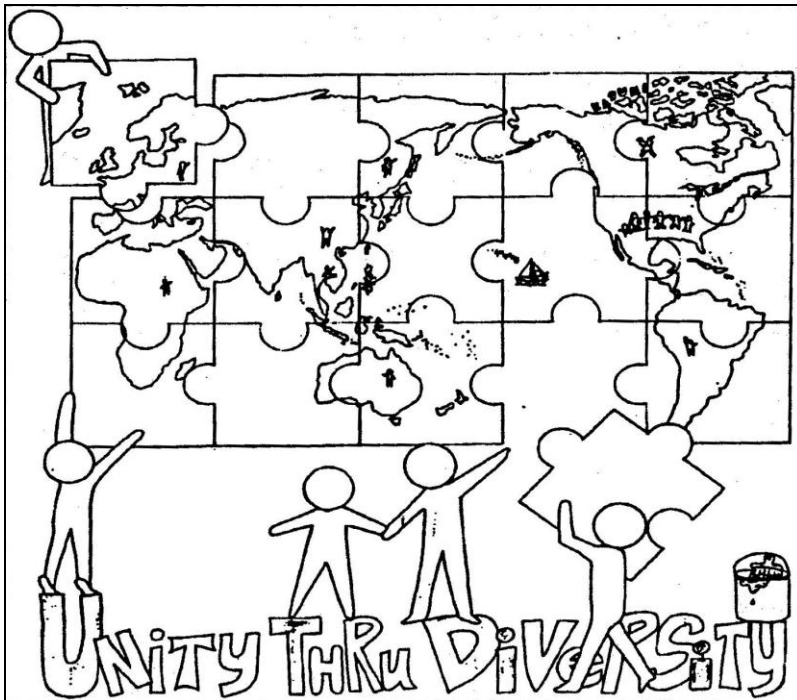
The Asian-Pacific American Coalition to Combat Oppression, Racism, and Discrimination (ACCORD)-led protest of ATO fraternity, 26 March 1992. ACCORD members waged a sharp critique of anti-Asian racism and the lack of Asian American services at UIUC in the early 1990's. Source: The Daily Illini, Photographer Dale Hensel. Photo courtesy of the Daily Illini.



Police remove protestors from Henry Administration Building, 5 May 1992.

A multi-racial coalition, led by Latina/o students, sat-in in the administration building; the sit-ins made headlines and raised concerns by administrators to avoid such conflicts in the future.

Source: The Daily Illini, Photographer Mark Cowan. Photo courtesy of the Daily Illini.



Shared t-shirt design used by Asian American student organizations, Spring 1993.

The shirts signaled an early move towards building unity among the diverse Asian American ethnic organizations on campus.

Photo courtesy of the UIUC Asian American Cultural Center.



Cover of the Midwest Asian American Students (MAAS) Conference program, held at UIUC, 1993.

The MAAS conferences were an extensive effort to build Asian American student community in the Midwest across campuses; MAAS also helped to solidify a pan-Asian American student movement at UIUC.

Photo courtesy of the UIUC Asian American Cultural Center.



Pallassana Balgopal teaches an early Asian American Studies class at UIUC, mid-1990's. Asian American Studies classes began to be taught by faculty at UIUC in the late 1990's, as students pushed for a formal program and curriculum. Photo courtesy of the UIUC Asian American Studies Program.



Students advertise the new Asian American Studies Committee (AASC) during Quad day, 1999. The AASC was established in 1997, with a three-year charge to hire six faculty in Asian American Studies by 2000. Photo courtesy of the UIUC Asian American Studies Program.



Groundbreaking for Asian American cultural center, 13 October 2004.
 Administrators and students enjoy a symbolic ground-breaking at the site of the UIUC Asian American Cultural Center.
 Photo courtesy of the UIUC Asian American Cultural Center.



Ribbon cutting for opening of Asian American Cultural Center at UIUC, 9 September 2005.
 The cultural center was the result of decades of student activism. It is now the largest facility of its kind in the Midwest.
 Photo courtesy of the UIUC Asian American Cultural Center.



UIUC alumnus Ang Lee receives Outstanding Asian American Alumni Award from the Asian American Cultural Center, 26 April 2008.

The Asian American cultural center recognizes Asian American achievement and service, including from its alumni each year.

Photo courtesy of the UIUC Asian American Cultural Center.



Buildings of the Asian American Studies Program (front) and Asian American Cultural Center (back) at UIUC, 2010.

The Asian American cultural center was built physically connected to the Asian American Studies program building. The two units share a conference room.

Photo courtesy of the UIUC Asian American Cultural Center.