

A U·X·L SIAN AMERICAN VOICES 2nd Edition



Deborah Gillan Straub, Editor

A **U·X·L**
SIAN AMERICAN
VOICES 2ND EDITION

Edited by Deborah Gillan Straub

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U•X•L ASIAN AMERICAN VOICES, 2ND EDITION

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Reader's Guide



In the mid-1800s only several hundred Chinese were counted in the U.S. census and the first Japanese had just arrived. Although people of Asian ancestry had lived in the United States for centuries, it was not until the first half of the twentieth century that the number of Chinese, Japanese, Asian Indian, and Korean immigrants rose significantly. Their numbers grew despite widespread anti-Asian sentiments that led to restricted immigration and barred the newcomers from citizenship, public schools, labor unions, social arenas, and even from owning land. For the early pioneers from Asia, the United States often offered a cold—sometimes even a brutal—welcome.

By the dawn of the twenty-first century, the U.S. population had become more diverse. For the first time, the 2000 census invited respondents to report more than one race, and the resulting picture of the Asian American population reveals that almost 15 percent trace their ancestry to at least one other racial category. (Of the total 11.9 million respondents who identified themselves as Asian, 1.7 million identified themselves as

Patsy Takemoto Mink

one or more other race as well.) The 2000 census noted that Asian Americans make up about 4 percent of the total U.S. population. During the 1980s and 1990s, racial and national restrictions were lifted from U.S. immigration policies, and basic civil rights have been recognized. Traditions from the diverse cultures of Asia are being celebrated by many Americans of Asian and non-Asian ancestry. While anti-immigrant hostilities directed at Asian Americans as well as ignorance and discrimination still exist, Asian Americans involved in politics, the arts, and social issues have made their voices heard. If few Asian American speeches went on record before World War II, they have abounded since then.

U•X•L Asian American Voices, 2nd Edition, collects in a single source complete and excerpted speeches delivered by twenty Asian American activists, political and military figures, educators, and other prominent men and women who have helped shape the history and culture of the United States since the late nineteenth century. *Voices* selections include such historical documents as Hawaiian Queen Liliuokalani's statement to the court during her trial for treason against the American-run Republic of Hawaii that had recently overthrown her monarchy. Also included is Syngman Rhee's 1948 speech upon taking over the presidency of a newly independent South Korea after World War II; it is supplemented in this edition by commemoration of the centennial of Korean immigration to the United States celebrated in 2003. The most prominently addressed issue in *Voices* is the internment of more than 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry in the United States during World War II. The speeches of Robert T. Matsui, Spark M. Matsunaga, Norman Y. Mineta, and Clifford I. Uyeda relate the anguish caused by this act and argue passionately for constructive measures to ensure that nothing of the kind will ever happen again. New for this edition is a speech by Michael M. Honda, congressman from California, discussing the importance of celebrating Asian Pacific American Heritage Month in 2003, the sixtieth anniversary of the internment order.

In another speech, Daniel K. Inouye recalls very different World War II experiences in the all-Japanese American 442nd Regimental Combat Team, the most decorated unit in military history. Also among the many topics featured in this volume, playwright David Henry Hwang discusses "authenticity" in

writing about being Asian American, writer Bette Bao Lord calls for U.S. involvement in the international human rights movements, and Helen Zia urges Asian American journalists to help fight the stereotyping of Asian Americans in the media. The test of Daniel K. Akaka's testimony regarding the targeting of Asian Americans in a campaign finance investigation in the late 1990s, new for this edition, reinforces the importance of the fight against stereotypes.

The second edition of *Voices* presents excerpts from the text of a landmark speech by Governor Gary Locke. Locke, the first Asian American governor of a U.S. state, presented the response to President George Bush's 2003 State of the Union Address, becoming the first Asian American to present the Democratic Party's response to a State of the Union address. Also new for this edition is Paul Igasaki's speech to the San Francisco Summit on Immigrant Rights, emphasizing the need for fairness and tolerance in our nation of immigrants as we struggle with issues of national security following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Also new for this second edition is a thought-provoking speech by activist Mari Matsuda, who challenges successful Asian Americans not to join the dominant majority (European Americans) in blaming other minorities when they fail to achieve success.

The Asian American to achieve the highest rank in the U.S. military, General Eric Shinseki, retired in 2003. Among the additions to *Voices* are excerpts of his retirement speech in which he outlines what it means to be an American soldier.

It is not possible to include all of the many prominent Asian American speakers who have contributed to American culture and history. *Voices* does, however, provide a compelling array of perspectives on recent U.S. history, from the annexation of Hawaii to World War II, and from the Vietnam War and student protests to the 2001 terrorist attacks. The speeches were chosen for their accessibility to students and for the first-hand—and often quite dramatic—insight they provide into the issues, events, and movements of Asian American history.

The entries in *U•X•L Asian American Voices*, 2nd Edition, are arranged alphabetically by speaker. Each begins with introductory material, providing a brief biography of the speaker and the historical context of the speech that follows. Informative

sidebars expand on topics mentioned within the entries. A “Sources” section directs the student to further readings on the speechmaker and his or her speeches.

U•X•L Asian American Voices, 2nd Edition, also contains more than one hundred photographs, a cumulative subject index, and a timeline. Words and phrases are defined in glossaries throughout the book.

Related Reference Sources

U•X•L Asian American Almanac, 2nd Edition, explores the culture and history of the diverse groups of Americans who descend from Asian and Pacific Island countries: Asian Indian, Cambodian, Chinese, Filipino, Native Hawaiian, Hmong, Indonesian, Korean, Japanese, Laotian, Pacific Island, Pakistani, Thai, and Vietnamese Americans. The *Almanac* is organized into seventeen subject chapters on topics including family, health, religion, employment, civil rights and activism, education, law, demographics, literature and theater, and sports. More than ninety black-and-white photographs and maps, a glossary, and a cumulative subject index are included in the volume.

U•X•L Asian American Biography, 2nd Edition, profiles 150 Americans who trace their ancestry to Asia and the Pacific Islands. The individuals featured are notable for their achievements in fields ranging from civil rights to sports, politics to academia, entertainment to science, religion to the military. Early leaders in Asian America as well as contemporary figures are among those included. A black-and-white portrait accompanies most entries, and a list of sources for further reading or research is provided at the end of each entry. The volumes are arranged alphabetically and conclude with an index listing all individuals by field of endeavor and a subject index.

U•X•L Asian American Chronology, 2nd Edition, explores significant social, political, economic, cultural, and professional milestones in Asian American history. Arranged chronologically by date, the volume spans from prehistory to modern times and contains more than one hundred illustrations, extensive cross references, a list of sources for further reading or research, and a cumulative subject index.

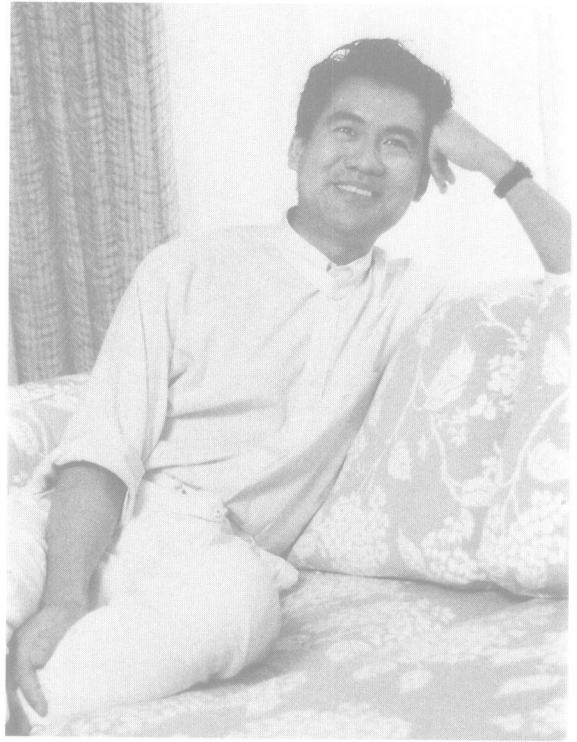
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Your Suggestions Are Welcome

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Introduction



Asian Pacific Americans and Oral Public Discourse

Asian Pacific Americans are a diverse group. They include East Asians (Chinese, Japanese, Koreans), Southeast Asians (Filipinos, Vietnamese, Cambodians, Laotians, Thais, Indonesians, Malaysians), South Asians (Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Sri Lankans), and Pacific Islanders (Hawaiians, Samoans, Guamanians). Besides their diverse origins and cultures, Asian Pacific Americans have a varied past in America. Hawaiians settled their island home possibly as early as the third century B.C. and were forcibly annexed by the United States in 1898. Filipino communities formed in North America as early as the 1760s. Chinese and Asian Indians were on the East Coast by the 1790s, and Chinese settled in Hawaii and California before 1850. However, the majority of Asian Americans have been in the United States only since 1965, when immigration laws that discriminated against them (as well as against Latinos) were lifted. That ethnic diversity gives an in-

David Henry Hwang

dication of how difficult it is to write about an “Asian Pacific American tradition” in oral public discourse.

In the face of those historical and cultural differences, a striking commonality [common feature or characteristic] about Asian Pacific American public discourse is its apparent absence. We find very little evidence of Asian Pacific American speechmaking. I suppose that we in America generally think about public speaking as an arena where leaders—mainly politicians and social and labor reformers—address audiences to move masses of people into action. Most Americans couldn’t name an Asian Pacific American social movement or an Asian Pacific American leader. Part of this difficulty is due to the historical fact that Asians were legally barred from participating fully in American life from the time of their arrival to the 1950s.

What were some of those barriers? For one, most Asians weren’t even permitted to become naturalized citizens until 1952. In addition, they were restricted in their work and housing opportunities, they were prohibited from joining labor unions, and their children were forced to attend segregated schools. Hawaiians lost most of their land and were encouraged to abandon their language and culture. Asian Pacific Americans thus were generally excluded from the life of the mainstream, from politics to labor to the social and cultural arenas.

But Asian Pacific Americans *did* participate in the American pageant, and within their own communities Asian Pacific American leaders galvanized [energized] social movements that involved large numbers of people. For instance, after having been removed from her throne by force of arms in 1898, Liliuokalani, the last Hawaiian queen, argued the cause of Hawaiian independence. “Oh, honest Americans, as Christians hear me for my downtrodden people!” she pleaded. “Their form of government is as dear to them as yours is precious to you. Quite as warmly as you love your country, so they love theirs.”

Beginning in 1901, the Reverend Wu P’an-chao (also known as Ng Poon Chew), a Christian minister and newspaper publisher in San Francisco, California, made several national tours during which he addressed English and Chinese-speaking audi-

ences about the need for immigration reform and the Chinese contribution to American society. Another distinguished speaker of Chinese ancestry was Jinqin Xue, who had studied at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1902 as a sixteen-year-old. She went on to become a leading feminist in China, and when she revisited California, she appeared before hundreds of San Francisco Chinatown residents to discuss ending China's patriarchal [headed by a father or by a male authoritarian figure] system and advancing women's liberation.

Between 1908 and 1910, Taraknath Das, a self-described "itinerant [wandering] preacher," devoted himself to "explaining the economic, educational, and political conditions to the masses of the people." He spoke to audiences in Canada and the United States urging India's independence from British colonialism and calling for an end to discriminatory laws against Asian Indians in North America.

Waka Yamada, a woman of Japanese ancestry who had been tricked into marriage and forced into prostitution around the turn of the century, escaped the brothels [buildings where prostitutes work] of Seattle, Washington, and San Francisco to become a leading writer, social critic, and feminist in Japan. She returned to America in 1937 on a lecture tour of West Coast Japanese American communities, riveting listeners with her insights on politics, peace, and women's liberation.

By and large, however, precious little survives of what these pioneering leaders actually said and what the reactions of their listeners were. Hawaiians in particular comprise a largely silent people because Americans have too easily ignored their articulate and persistent voices. An oral culture before contact with Europeans and Americans, Hawaiians told stories of their past in chants and dances of the hula. Those were deemed "uncivilized" by Christian missionaries who tried to forbid and change the meanings of those traditions, but they survived and have seen a revitalization in the resurgence of Hawaiian culture and language since the 1960s.

Furthermore, we know of few instances in which Asian Americans addressed large numbers of Americans outside of their communities. Only since World War II and the African American civil rights movement of the 1960s have Asian

Americans become a part of American politics in any significant way.

Asian Pacific America has therefore not been devoid of [lacking, without] leaders or social movements—they have simply not been recognized or widely mentioned. Asian Pacific Americans organized and participated in labor unions, initiated civil rights suits that resulted in landmark Supreme Court decisions, engaged in feminist struggles against patriarchy, and formed societies for the liberation of colonized Asia. Ministers preached sermons, labor leaders mobilized masses of workers, and feminists and civil rights leaders testified in courts and lectured to audiences from Hawaii to New York.

Within their own communities, Asian Pacific Americans took part in lively and vigorous public discourse. Among those who did so were people such as American-educated Syngman Rhee, the first president of the Republic of Korea, and D. S. Saund, who gave public lectures on Indian independence while a student at the University of California, Berkeley, during the 1920s and who in 1956 became the first Asian American elected to the U.S. Congress. They in turn paved the way for contemporary civil rights, feminist, and political leaders such as Clifford I. Uyeda, Helen Zia, S. I. Hayakawa, Norman Y. Mineta, and Robert T. Matsui. Meanwhile, Asian Pacific Americans such as Hiram L. Fong, Spark M. Matsunaga, Daniel K. Inouye, Patsy Takemoto Mink, and Daniel K. Akaka have played key roles in transforming the political landscape of Hawaii in the last half of the twentieth century.

Asian Pacific American voices have resonated throughout America's past and present, if we will only listen.

Dr. Gary Y. Okihiro

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Suggested Readings

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