

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN



Major Problems in American History

# Major Problems in Asian American History



DOCUMENTS AND ESSAYS EDITED BY  
LON KURASHIGE AND ALICE YANG MURRAY

*Major Problems in  
Asian American History*



DOCUMENTS AND ESSAYS

EDITED BY

LON KURASHIGE

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

ALICE YANG MURRAY

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA CRUZ

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY

Boston      New York

Editor in Chief: Jean L. Woy  
Senior Associate Editor: Frances Gay  
Associate Project Editor: Reba Libby  
Editorial Assistant: Kendra Johnson  
Associate Production/Design Coordinator: Christine Gervais  
Manufacturing Manager: Florence Cadran  
Senior Marketing Manager: Sandra McGuire

Cover image: "Chinatown, San Francisco" by artist Jade Fon Woo (1911–1983) from the Michael D. Brown Collection.

Copyright © 2003 by Houghton Mifflin Company. All rights reserved.

No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system without the prior written permission of the copyright owner unless such copying is expressly permitted by federal copyright law. With the exception of nonprofit transcription in Braille, Houghton Mifflin is not authorized to grant permission for further uses of copyrighted selections reprinted in this text without the permission of their owners. Permission must be obtained from the individual copyright owners as identified herein. Address requests for permission to make copies of Houghton Mifflin material to College Permissions, Houghton Mifflin Company, 222 Berkeley Street, Boston, MA 02116-3764.

Printed in the U.S.A.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2001131519

ISBN: 0-618-07734-0

123456789-CRS-06 05 04 03 02

## Preface

The 2000 United States Census identified Asian Americans as the fastest growing racial population within the United States. The classification "Asian American," however, did not exist before the 1960s. During the social movements of the late 1960s and 1970s, students, activists, and scholars began using the term to promote solidarity among people of Asian ancestry. Programs in Asian American Studies, the first of which was founded in 1968, as well as early scholarship, often emphasized a common history of struggle by primarily Chinese and Japanese immigrants and their descendants. Beginning in the 1980s, research began to uncover the histories of Korean Americans, Filipino Americans, Southeast Asians, South Asians, Hawaiians, and mixed race individuals. More recent studies have analyzed the diversity within ethnic groups and sources of conflict and cooperation among Asian American groups and between them and other racialized peoples. Now Asian American history is a burgeoning field that includes studies on ethnicity, migration, politics, economy, work, class, legal issues, community, families, education, religion, gender, sexuality, and culture.

*Major Problems in Asian American History* invites readers to explore this dramatic growth in excellent scholarship through primary and secondary sources on the rich and diverse history of Asian Americans. Our main goal in this volume is to join the recent wave of new perspectives and scholarship about Asians in American history with the enduring insights of earlier studies. We are not simply showcasing new interpretations or preserving classic ones. Rather, we seek to bring old and new points of view into dialogue with each other to encourage a more comprehensive understanding of the past. And so it is that the reader will find essays written by Ronald Takaki, Sucheng Chan, Roger Daniels, and other prominent historians in the same volume as those of younger scholars such as Mae Ngai, Lili Kim, Rhacel Salazar Parrenas, and Sandhya Shukla. Likewise, essential documents, including the original Chinese Exclusion Act (1882) and General John L. DeWitt's rationale for Japanese American internment (1942), are put alongside less conventional primary sources, such as ethnic press articles and unpublished oral histories that offer intimate views of Asian American agency. And perhaps most important, we have stretched this diversity of documents and essays across the entire chronology of U.S. history, from the eighteenth to the twenty-first centuries.

In addition to expanding the boundaries of what is considered Asian American history, we took great pains to encourage the comparative analysis of ethnic groups and individual experiences, paying particular attention to the significance of gender, geographical region, and economic, political, and cultural conditions. In each chapter we have made it a point to include documents and essays that focus on a wide variety of Asian American experiences, while at the same time making sure that the

leading groups and issues in the designated period remain central. We performed this same balancing act to ensure that the voices and experiences of women and Asian Americans outside the West Coast were validated and included in the understanding and analysis of the Asian American past. The book is also organized so that comparisons can be made across different time periods. For example, the post-1965 migrations highlighted in chapter 11 can be compared with the nineteenth century labor migrations addressed in chapter 2, while the examination of Asian American culture in chapter 14 can be read fruitfully against the earlier formations of “Orientalism” that are the subject of chapter 6. In a similar way, the recent Asian American political activism presented in chapter 13 can be compared with the early twentieth century political struggles for and against immigration exclusion at home and imperialism abroad, which are taken up by chapters 4 and 5, respectively.

The first half of the book (chapters 1–8), prepared by Lon Kurashige, covers the period from the late 1700s to America’s entry into World War II in 1942. Early chapters explore the impact of U.S.–China trade relations and Japan’s world status on perceptions of Asian immigrants. Students can compare the independence campaigns of Hawaiian, Filipino, Indian, and Korean nationalists. We examine the experiences of nineteenth century plantation workers, agricultural laborers, miners, prostitutes, and debates about the causes and consequences of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. A chapter on early twentieth century popular culture includes a discussion of “yellow peril” imagery, representations of sexuality, and the tremendous influence of popular author Pearl S. Buck. Another chapter analyzes the cooperation manifested in interethnic and interracial marriages and the confrontations between Japanese immigrant farmers and Filipino immigrant laborers in the California Delta. We end the first half of the book with a chapter on the different memories of childhood and views of Americanization for second generation Asian Americans who came to age before the 1940s.

The second half of the book (chapters 9–15), prepared by Alice Yang Murray, examines the period during and after America’s participation in World War II. Selections address debates about Japanese American cooperation or resistance with World War II internment policies and the impact of the “red scare” on Asian American labor movements and ethnic communities. We look at how Asian American communities have been transformed by the influx of new immigrants following the Immigration Act of 1965, the arrival of refugees from Southeast Asia and China, and changing relations with other racial groups, including conflict between African Americans and Korean immigrants during the Los Angeles riot of 1992. A chapter on pan-ethnic coalitions includes a celebration of 1960s “yellow power,” a satire of sexism in the Asian American movement, a report on anti-Asian violence in the 1980s, criticism of Asian “settler privilege” by Hawaiian sovereignty activists, and the mobilization to defend Los Alamos scientist and “accused spy” Wen Ho Lee. A chapter on contemporary culture explores charges that Asian American authors have misrepresented Asian American culture and communities, the rise of Asian American hip-hop artists, and the influence of Hong Kong Cinema. We end the book with a discussion of globalization, the changing demography of Asian America, assaults on South Asian Americans after the attack on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, and the relationship between the growing multi-racial population and traditional ethnic and racial communities.



This book follows the same general format as other volumes in the *Major Problems in American History* series. Each chapter includes a short introduction that provides general historical context, a selection of primary documents, and two to three essays. Headnotes to the document and essay sections explain the historical themes and interpretive issues in the selections. We provide a "Further Reading" list at the end of each chapter for students interested in additional research.

Many people have helped in the preparation of this volume. We are grateful to the colleagues who gave us thematic and bibliographic suggestions: Lili M. Kim, Hampshire College; Sandhya Shukla, Columbia University; Judy Yung, University of California at Santa Cruz; Xiaojian Zhao, University of California at Santa Barbara; Lori Pierce, Wabash University; Yong Chen, University of California at Irvine; Karen Leong, Arizona State University; Paul Spickard, University of California at Santa Barbara; K. Scott Wong, Williams College; Moon-Ho Jung, University of Washington; and Emily Lawsin, University of Michigan at Ann Arbor.

Alice Yang Murray thanks the Committee on Research at the University of California at Santa Cruz for funding research assistance by Hiroyuki Matsubara and Joel Wilson. The talented staff at Houghton Mifflin deserves special mention. We could never have completed this book without the editorial support of Jean Woy, Frances Gay, Martha Rogers, Reba Libby, Kendra Johnson, and Marcy Lunetta. We also received helpful advice from Thomas G. Paterson, editor of the *Major Problems* series. Finally, we express our deep gratitude to our families for their encouragement and understanding as we completed this book. Lon Kurashige thanks Anne Cherian Kurashige for her unfailing support and Cole and Reid Kurashige, who along with their mother, have made all the hard work put into this book worthwhile. Alice Yang Murray thanks Steve Murray and David Yang-Murray for inspiring and sustaining her throughout this project.

We welcome comments, suggestions, and criticisms from students and instructors so that we can continue to improve this book.

L.K.  
A.Y.M.

# Contents

Preface      xv

## CHAPTER 1 *Framing Asian American History* Page 1

### ESSAYS

- Roger Daniels • Neglect and Distortion of Asian Americans by American Historians      3
- Ronald Takaki • The Centrality of Racism in Asian American History      9
- Sylvia Yanagisako • Rethinking the Centrality of Racism in Asian American History      15
- Paul Ong, Edna Bonacich, and Lucie Cheng • Capitalist Restructuring and the New Asian Immigration      23
- Bill Ong Hing • What Does It Mean to Be Asian American?      29

### FURTHER READING      33

## CHAPTER 2 *Colonization, Pacific Markets, and Asian Labor Migration to the United States Before the Civil War* Page 34

### DOCUMENTS

1. Chinese Emperor Decries Market Expansion in South China, 1727      36
2. An American Trader Recommends a Route from California to China, 1850      37
3. Writer Ralph Waldo Emerson Excoriates Chinese Civilization, 1824      38
4. Hawaiians Petition the Privy Council to Halt Foreign Influence in the Islands, and the Council Replies, 1845      39
5. A Foreigner Speculates on Hawaiian Land Acquisition, 1849      42
6. American Commodore M. C. Perry Opens Up the Japanese Market, 1856      43
7. *New York Times* Heralds New Trade with China and Japan, 1858      45
8. Researcher Traces Early Nineteenth-Century Origins of Filipino American Family, 1988      46

E S S A Y S

- Yong Chen* • Origins of Chinese Emigration to California 47  
*Ronald Takaki* • Native and Asian Labor in the Colonization of Hawai'i 54  
F U R T H E R R E A D I N G 61

C H A P T E R 3

*The Work of National Expansion in the  
 American West, 1848–1908*

Page 62

D O C U M E N T S

1. Writer J. D. Borthwick Observes Chinese Miners in California, 1857 63
2. Chinese Laborers Report on a Race Riot at Rock Springs, Wyoming Territory, 1885 66
3. Journalist Helen Grey Exposes the Activities of a Chinese Brothel Owner, 1899 70
4. Chinese Merchant Lee Wong Hing's Store in Holyoke, Massachusetts, 1904 75
5. Leading Japanese Intellectual Encourages Westernization, 1875 76
6. Japanese Newspaper *Jiji Shimpō* Views Emigration as a Sign of Japan's Military Power, 1896 78
7. Japanese Government Criteria for Emigrants to Hawai'i, 1885 79
8. Japanese Official Condemns Brutal Working Conditions on Hawaiian Plantations, 1885 79

E S S A Y S

- Sucheng Chan* • Shifting Chinese Immigrant Employment 80  
*Akira Iriye* • Japanese Expansion in California 87

F U R T H E R R E A D I N G 95

C H A P T E R 4

*Confronting Immigration Exclusion, 1860s–1920s*

Page 96

D O C U M E N T S

1. Editor Henry George Supports Chinese Exclusion on Economic and Racial Grounds, 1869 97
2. "The Tables Turned: You Sabe Him? Kealney [Kearney] Must Go!" 1877/1878 100
3. Senator George Hoar Declares Chinese Exclusion Un-American, 1882 101
4. Chinese Exclusion Act Suspends Immigration to the United States for Ten Years, 1882 102



5. New York Chinese Merchants Oppose Renewal of Chinese Exclusion Act, 1892      106
6. Wong Kim Ark, 1904      108
7. Asiatic Exclusion League Argues for Excluding Japanese and Korean Immigration, 1908      109
8. Spokane Labor Union Derides Anti-Japanese Prejudice, 1909      115
9. Tokyo Government Protests Exclusion of Japanese Immigrants, 1924      116
10. Ray E. Chase and S. G. Pandit Critique Supreme Court Ruling Excluding East Indians from Citizenship, 1926      118

#### E S S A Y S

- Andrew Gyory* • The Significance of Chinese Exclusion      123
- K. Scott Wong* • Chinese Responses to Exclusion      127
- Mae M. Ngai* • The Immigration Act of 1924      132

#### F U R T H E R R E A D I N G      137

### C H A P T E R 5 *Imperialism and Anti-Imperialism in the Early Twentieth Century*

*Page 138*

#### D O C U M E N T S

1. Senator Albert Beveridge Champions Philippine Colonization, 1900      139
2. Theodore Roosevelt Justifies Philippine Colonization on the Basis of America's History of Westward Expansion, 1900      142
3. Filipino Soldiers Pray Before Surrendering to Americans, 1900      147
4. American Troops Fight in the Philippines, 1910      148
5. Filipinos Demand Independence, 1908      149
6. Indian Nationalists and American Journalist Disagree Over the Route to India's Independence, 1923      150
7. Indian Immigrant Mohan Singh Recounts His Education in the United States, circa 1924      151
8. Korean Congress Declares Independence from Japanese Rule, 1919      155
9. Korean Immigrant Margaret Pai Joins the Korean Independence Movement, 1919      159

#### E S S A Y S

- Stefi San Buenaventura* • The Colors of Manifest Destiny in the Philippines      163
- Joan M. Jensen* • Exporting Independence to Colonial India      167
- Lili Kim* • Korean Independence Movement in Hawai'i and the Continental United States      172

#### F U R T H E R R E A D I N G      178

## CHAPTER 6

*Orientalism and Popular Culture, 1904–1930s*

Page 180

DOCUMENTS

1. Writer Jack London Decries the New Yellow Peril, 1904 181
2. Dance of the Igorrotes, Louisiana Purchase Exposition, St. Louis, 1904 185
3. Filipino Immigrant Condemns Representation of Group, circa 1924 185
4. Anti-Japanese Monologue in Wallace Irwin's *Seed of the Son*, 1926 187
5. Writer Sui Seen [Sin] Far Reveals Private Lives of Chinese Merchant Wives, 1897 188
6. Sociology Graduate Student Rose Hum Lee Lists American Beliefs About the Chinese, 1927 192
7. MGM Studios Strategizes Advertisement for *The Painted Veil*, 1934 193
8. Harold R. Isaacs Addresses the Historical Significance of Pearl Buck's Portrayal of the Chinese, 1958 196

ESSAYS

- Robert Rydell • The Filipino Village at the 1904 World's Fair 199
- Karen Janis Leong • The Racialized Image of Anna May Wong 206

FURTHER READING 214

## CHAPTER 7

*Interethnic Tensions and Alliances in the 1920s and 1930s*

Page 215

DOCUMENTS

1. A Chinese American Woman Identifies with Japanese American Marriage Practices, circa 1924 216
2. A White American Woman Compares Marriage to Chinese and Japanese Husbands, circa 1924 218
3. Indian Immigrant Inder Singh Discusses His Marriage with a Mexican Woman, 1924 223
4. A Filipino Immigrant Is Shocked by Sexual Freedom in the United States, circa 1924 224
5. Sociologist Emory Bogardus Analyzes an Anti-Filipino Riot, 1930 225
6. *Time* Magazine Reveals Sexual Basis for Filipino Repatriation, 1936 228
7. White Landowner Dr. E. E. Chandler Describes an East Indian Agricultural Community, 1924 230
8. Writer Carlos Bulosan Conveys the Dangers of Filipino Labor Organizing (1930s), 1943 232
9. Labor Leader Karl Yoneda Recalls Japanese Interethnic Organizing (1930s), 1978 234

ESSAYS

*Eiichiro Azuma* • Labor Conflict Between Japanese and Filipinos in the California Delta 236

*Rhacel Salazar Parrenas* • Alliances Between White Working-Class Women and Filipino Immigrant Men 241

FURTHER READING 247

## CHAPTER 8

*Americanization and the Second Generation, 1920–1942*

Page 249

DOCUMENTS

1. Flora Belle Jan Longs for Unconventionality and Freedom, 1924 251
2. Connie Tirona Recalls Growing Up Filipino American (1930s and 1940s), 1995 252
3. Dora Yum Kim Recalls Growing Up Korean American in Chinatown (1920s, 1930s, and 1940s), 1999 255
4. Taishi Matsumoto Bemoans Limited Employment Opportunities for Nisei, 1937 259
5. Tokutaro Slocum Debates Nisei Stand on Sino-Japanese War, 1938 260
6. Japanese American Newspaper *Kashu Mainichi* Heralds Biculturalism of Beauty Queen, 1940 261
7. American Intelligence Officer Promotes Nisei Americanization, 1942 262
8. San Francisco Japantown, 1942 268
9. Middle-Class Japanese American Family Before Evacuation, 1942 269

ESSAYS

*Judy Yung* • Second-Generation Chinese American Women 270

*Lon Kurashige* • The Problem of Nisei Biculturalism 277

FURTHER READING 283

## CHAPTER 9

*War, Race, and the Meaning of Citizenship, 1941–1988*

Page 285

DOCUMENTS

1. Sociology Graduate Student Rose Hum Lee Describes How World War II Changed the Lives of Chinese Americans, 1942 287
2. Filipino Regiment Member Manuel Buaken Fights for Freedom, 1943 290
3. Lieutenant General John L. DeWitt Recommends the Removal of Japanese Americans from the West Coast, 1942 293
4. Japanese American Mike Masaoka Vows to Cooperate with Government Removal Plans, 1942 295

5. Journalist James M. Omura Condemns the Mass Exclusion of Japanese Americans, 1942 297
6. The Fair Play Committee Calls on Nisei, Second-Generation Japanese Americans, to Resist the Draft Within the Heart Mountain Internment Camp, 1944 298
7. Justice Frank Murphy Criticizes the Supreme Court's "Legalization of Racism," 1944 299
8. A Government Commission Proclaims Internment a "Grave Injustice," 1982 302
9. A District Court Acknowledges Government Misconduct Before the Supreme Court During World War II, 1984 303

### ESSAYS

*Theo Gonzales* • Filipino Veterans of World War II on Citizenship and Political Obligation 304

*Alice Yang Murray* • The Internment of Japanese Americans 310

### FURTHER READING 318

## CHAPTER 10

### *Asian Americans and the Cold War, 1945–1965*

Page 319

### DOCUMENTS

1. Novelist James Michener Portrays Romance Between Japanese Women and White Soldiers in *Sayonara*, 1953 321
2. A Hollywood Poster Sells Interracial Love and the Exoticism of Japan in the Film *Sayonara*, 1957 325
3. Social Worker Bok-Lim C. Kim Describes the Social Isolation and Alienation of War Brides (1947), 1979 326
4. President Harry S Truman Vetoes an Immigration and Naturalization Bill, 1952 327
5. Congress Expands Immigration and Naturalization Rights for Asian Immigrants, 1952 330
6. Former Communist Party Member Ichiro Izuka Denounces Communists in Hawai'i, 1947 332
7. *Honolulu Record* Editor and Labor Leader Koji Ariyoshi Describes the Arrest of Seven Suspected Communists in Hawai'i (1951), 2000 334
8. Franklin Woo Remembers Attacks on Chinese Immigrant Leftists Who Supported Communist China (1950s), 1973 336
9. Pei Chi Liu Recalls Why He Campaigned Against Communism as a Leader of the San Francisco Chinatown Branch of the Kuomintang Party (1950s), 1973 339

### ESSAYS

*Paul R. Spickard* • Marriages Between American Men and Japanese Women After World War II 341

*Arleen de Vera* • The United States Government Tries to Deport Filipino Labor Leaders 345

*Xiaoqian Zhao* • The Immigration and Naturalization Service's Campaign Against Chinese Americans During the Cold War 350

FURTHER READING 356

## CHAPTER 11

### *Post-1965 Immigration and Asian America*

Page 357

#### DOCUMENTS

1. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 Repeals Discriminatory Policies Toward Asian Immigrants, 1965 359
2. Statistics on Immigration Trends
  - Immigration Trends by Race and Decade, 1820–1980 361
  - Immigration by Country of Origin, 1850–1990 362
3. Perla Rabor Rigor Compares Life as a Nurse in the Philippines and America, 1987 362
4. The Supreme Court Endorses Bilingual Education, 1974 364
5. Asian Americans Debate the Pros and Cons of Bilingual Education, 1998 365
6. Asian Immigrants Transplant Religious Institutions, 1994 367
7. Korean American Professor Elaine Kim Discusses Problems in Building Coalitions Between Asian Immigrants and Other Communities of Color, 1998 370
8. Indian Immigrant Sarita Sarvate Criticizes the “Brain Drain” from the Third World, 2000 373

#### ESSAYS

*Catherine Ceniza Choy* • A Transnational History of Filipino Nurse Migration 375

*Edward J. W. Park* • The Los Angeles Civil Unrest Transforms Korean American Politics 381

FURTHER READING 386

## CHAPTER 12

### *Refugees and Their Struggles in Asia and America, 1975–2000*

Page 388

#### DOCUMENTS

1. Lang Ngan, a First-Wave Refugee, Compares Life in Vietnam and the United States (1975), 1991 390
2. Cambodian Refugee Bun Thab Remembers the Atrocities of the Khmer Rouge, 1993 392

3. Le Tan Si Writes a College Essay About His Terrifying Escape by Boat from Vietnam (1979), 1989      394
4. An Account of Cultural and Religious Conflict Between American Doctors and Hmong Refugees in a Thai Refugee Camp, 1982      397
5. Xang Mao Xiong Tells His Daughter of the Problems Hmong Parents Face in America, 1994      400
6. *Golden Venture* Refugees Wage a Hunger Strike to Protest Their Detention, 1995      401
7. Business Consultant George P. Koo Criticizes Harry Wu's Campaign Against the Chinese Government, 1996      403
8. Chinese Refugee and Human Rights Activist Harry Wu Criticizes U.S. Trade Policies Toward China, 2000      405

### E S S A Y S

*Gail Paradise Kelly* • Education and Sex Role Socialization of Vietnamese Immigrant Women      407

*James M. Freeman and Usha Welaratna* • Vietnamese and Cambodian Views of "Successful" Adjustment in America      412

### F U R T H E R   R E A D I N G      418

## C H A P T E R   1 3

### *Panethnicity, Asian American Activism, and Identity, 1965–2000*

Page 419

### D O C U M E N T S

1. Activist Amy Uyematsu Proclaims the Emergence of "Yellow Power," 1969      421
2. Asian Americans Protest Against the Vietnam War in Los Angeles, late 1960s      425
3. A Skit on Sexism Within the Asian American Movement, 1971      425
4. A Song of Struggle and Solidarity by A Grain of Sand, 1973      426
5. A Government Report on the Murders of Vincent Chin and Jim Loo, 1992      427
6. Professor Dana Takagi Notes How Sexuality Complicates Definitions of "Asian America," 1999      430
7. Hawaiian Sovereignty Leader Haunani-Kay Trask Criticizes Asian "Settler" Privilege and Collaboration with Colonialism, 2000      434
8. Captain Ted W. Lieu Is Asked If He Is in the Chinese Air Force, 1999      437
9. Lawyer Angela E. Oh Describes the Significance of the Government Prosecution of Los Alamos Scientist Wen Ho Lee, 2000      438
10. Accused Spy Wen Ho Lee Describes His First Month of Imprisonment, 2000      439
11. Judge James A. Parker Apologizes to Wen Ho Lee for the Way He Was Treated by the Executive Branch, 2000      440



ESSAYS

*Yen Le Espiritu* • Panethnicity and Asian American Activism 442

*L. Ling-chi Wang* • Asian Americans and Debates About Affirmative Action 450

FURTHER READING 456

## CHAPTER 14

*New Formations of Asian American Culture,  
1990–2001*

Page 457

DOCUMENTS

1. A Journalist Recounts the Battle Between Writers Frank Chin and Maxine Hong Kingston over the Soul of Asian American Literature, 1990 459
2. Vietnamese Americans Condemn Depictions of South Vietnam by Le Ly Hayslip and Oliver Stone, 1994 463
3. Asian American Hip-Hop and Rap Artists Gain Recognition (1990s), 1998 465
4. The Association of Asian American Studies Rescinds a Fiction Award to Lois-Ann Yamanaka Because of Her Portrayals of Filipino Americans in Hawai'i, 1998 467
5. Silent Protest Against a Fiction Award Presented to Lois-Ann Yamanaka by the Association for Asian American Studies, 1998 469
6. A New York City Parade Celebrates India's Independence, 2000 469
7. The Media Action Network for Asian Americans Condemns Hollywood Stereotypes, 2000 470
8. Hollywood Recruits Asian Stars from the Hong Kong Cinema Industry, 2001 472

ESSAYS

*Candace Fujikane* • Racism, Censorship, and Lois-Ann Yamanaka's *Blu's Hanging* 474

*Sandhya Shukla* • Transnational Community, Culture, and Little India 480

*Peter Feng* • Defining Asian American Cinema 485

FURTHER READING 490

## CHAPTER 15

*Erasing Borders and Boundaries:  
Asian Americans in the Twenty-First Century*

Page 492

DOCUMENTS

1. Activist Mallika Dutt Organizes Migrant Women in Seven Countries (1995), 1997 495
2. Residents of New Elmhurst, New York, Develop Multiracial and Multiethnic Coalitions to Improve Their Neighborhood (1992), 1998 498

3. Psychologist Maria P. P. Root Proclaims a Bill of Rights for Racially Mixed People, 1996      501
4. South Asians Unite Against Bigotry Following the 9-11 Attack on the World Trade Center, 2001      502

E S S A Y S

*K. Connie Kang* • At a Crossroads: California's Diverse and Changing Asian American Population      504

*Cynthia L. Nakashima* • Approaches to Multiraciality      512

F U R T H E R   R E A D I N G      521

# Framing Asian American History



*Studying Asians in American history is both an old and a new endeavor. It is old in that early in the twentieth century, social scientists began to document the experiences of Asian immigrants in seeking to explain their tumultuous impact on American society. Sociologists, who by profession were concerned with the negative effects of the nation's rapid urbanization, were especially interested in figuring out how such small numbers of these newcomers could provoke intense and widespread racial fears fueling anti-Asian massacres, immigration exclusions, prohibitions against Asians becoming American citizens, and other legal and extralegal actions designed to discourage Asian American settlement. Sociological works challenged the popular racism that viewed Asian immigrants as genetically unable to assimilate into a white culture and society. Instead of looking at the immigrants' racial characteristics, the sociologists examined the more malleable social and cultural conditions that had encouraged Asians to isolate themselves from the broader society. In this framework, anti-Asian racism was seen as resulting from the immigrants' refusal, for whatever reason, to become American.*

*A later generation of scholars dismissed the early sociological works, arguing that these were themselves racist because they placed the blame for anti-Asian racism on the victims rather than on the victimizers. This was an understandable critique from those who experienced the revolutionary changes in racial attitudes in the two decades after World War II. During this period, the "Oriental problem" in American history became reenvisioned as a problem of white supremacy. The shift in perspective influenced, and was influenced by, a handful of historians who became the first cohort in their profession to see Asian American issues as a significant part of the nation's past. But it was not until the civil rights movement transformed into black nationalist struggles in the late 1960s that the field of "Asian American history" became possible. Inspired by black radicals and intellectuals, Asian American activists, mostly college students from the second and third generations, created a new historical awareness that they believed was crucial for the liberation of Asian Americans as subjugated racial minorities. This new historical awareness underscored the centrality of anti-Asian racism and highlighted the struggles of Asian immigrants, and their descendants, to overcome their racial predicament. To Asian*