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The Third World Strikes and Asian American Studies as an Institutional and Intellectual Project

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This essay revisits the legacy of the Third World Strikes by shifting attention from their well-known protests to the less visible but equally consequential institutional labors that followed. While the strikes are remembered as revolutionary victories that secured the nation's first College of Ethnic Studies, their enduring impact lay in the sustained efforts of student activists, faculty, and community organizers to reshape university structures from within. Through negotiations over admissions policies, tenure-line hiring, curricula, and program authorization, these actors secured lasting structural changes that established the foundations of Asian American studies. Their work enabled later generations of scholars to develop critical research agendas now central to fields addressing race, migration, empire, labor, gender, and inequality. Tracing the evolution of Asian American studies from its West Coast origins to its expansion across research universities nationwide, the article emphasizes how both mass mobilization and the incremental work of institutionalization were essential to the field's establishment. By highlighting the interplay of radical activism and strategic negotiation, this study underscores the generational continuities that have embedded Asian American studies within broader intellectual and disciplinary formations.

Mention of the Third World Strikes often conjure vivid images of student protesters shutting down campuses with fiery speeches, rowdy crowds, and banners listing demands for revolutionary change draped over buildings, with students confronted and bloodied by police officers summoned by university administrators. The ethnic studies establishment has mythologized what remains the longest student strike in US history as a peak of revolutionary, interracial, coalitional resistance that succeeded in establishing the nation's first, and until recently only, College of Ethnic Studies. Less well known are the longer-term, institutional campaigns strategically implemented by the student activists and their advisors among faculty and community organizer ranks for greater inclusion of students of color[1] and their communities on university campuses in the form of increased admissions, regularly offered curriculum reflecting Third World perspectives, tenure-line faculty, and academic units. Before and after the Third World Strikes, student activists worked within established academic systems to demand such structural changes. The charisma and excitement of radical actions for justice and representation have obscured the more mundane, yet equally consequential, negotiating and jousting with campus administrators and intellectual gatekeepers to secure permanent transformations in areas such as student admissions metrics, hardline budgets, tenure-line hiring, development and authorization of minor and major programs, hiring and retention criteria, teaching materials and curricula, graduate training, and publication in peer-reviewed venues. Our nostalgia for the student idealists and activists of the civil rights era must make room for dogged committee deliberations and joint decision-making, savvy program heads, harried curriculum developers, and first-generation scholars who laid the institutional and intellectual foundations for Asian American studies. Their transformative efforts made it possible for later generations of professional Asian American academics to develop intellectual and pedagogical projects that have become essential pillars in major fields regarding race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, disability, class, labor, military infrastructure, empire, urban studies, migration, refugee and immigration policy, and critical race studies, among others. Asian American studies scholarship and programs have become embedded strands in all critical discourses and intellectual formations regarding race, migration, and inequality thanks to the institutional and intellectual groundwork staked out by these forerunners.[2]

I present this idiosyncratic historical summary as a second-generation Asian American studies scholar who has had opportunities to work closely with many pioneering-generation colleagues through my first job teaching in the Asian American Studies Department in the then-only College of Ethnic Studies at San Francisco State University starting in 1996. Since then, I have migrated eastward to take up positions in

history departments at the R1 institutions of the University of Texas and the University of Maryland, where I now direct the Center for Global Migration Studies.[3] My trajectory maps onto the emergence of Asian American studies programs, which also migrated eastward from West Coast origins. Throughout my career, I have benefitted from the mentoring and strategic savvy of my elders whose boundary breaking set the stage for the attainments of my generation and the hundreds of scholars who have followed in their footsteps.

Foundations of Asian American Studies: Political, Coalitional, Interdisciplinary

From its origins in the civil rights movement, Asian American studies has been a coalitional formation emerging from the meshing of Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino American agendas and advocacy and in alignment with Black, Latina, and Indigenous campaigns while actively engaged with activism along vectors such as gender, labor, anticolonialism, and sexuality. Disproportionately, but not exclusively, civil rights activists were US-born and college-educated and sought to apply their relative privilege to give back to their ethnic communities by pursuing solutions to trenchant problems such as poverty, poor housing and public health conditions, access to education and other public entitlements, labor rights, and political mobilization (Jeung 2009, 3). Many of the student activists "tended to identify as community people who were going to college, and not as college students who were going back to the community" (Collier and Gonzalez 2009, 12). This orientation toward their communities shaped their attitudes that colleges should be accountable to communities of color. Asian Americans drew particular inspiration from causes such as redress for the World War II incarceration of Japanese Americans, opposing the Vietnam War, and bilingual educational access. Perhaps no cause exemplified Asian American civil rights struggles more than the decade-long campaign to save the International Hotel. This low-cost, single-room-occupancy rental property was occupied largely by retired Filipino American workers who had no families in the US due to the Asian exclusion laws and could afford nothing better after being trapped as low-wage, peripatetic workers due to economic discrimination. The International Hotel provided some community despite the hardships and sacrifices they had survived, inspiring an interethnic coalition of advocates when a developer planned to raze the building and construct a parking lot. Although many Asian American community activists learned political tactics and ideologies from African American counterparts, especially the Black Panthers, college campuses provided conducive conditions for recognizing common causes that transcended racial and ethnic backgrounds and for the forging of alliances.

The 1960 California Master Plan for Higher Education codified the sweeping infrastructural conditions for inegalitarian access, experience, and outcomes that unified the student groups that coalesced into the Third World Liberation Front in 1967. The Master Plan was developed to manage the anticipated surge in the college-age population as the children of the "baby boom" generation came of age between 1960 and 1975. The Master Plan sought simultaneously to limit costs and reduce the admission of undergraduate students into more costly four-year programs. The four-year research-tier University of California (UC) and teaching-tier California State University (CSU) systems were to reduce admissions so that only the top 12.5 percent of California high school graduates attended a UC school, the top 33 percent could enroll at a CSU institution, and all others could attend community colleges. The reduced admissions were achieved by requiring standardized tests that limited the number of admitted minority students (Jeung 2009, 14).

The ensuing disparities and underrepresentation of minority students were particularly visible at San Francisco State College (SFSU).[4] Nearly one-third of the city's inhabitants were non-white, with Black people making up 13 percent of the population, Asian Americans about 9.5 percent, and Latinos around 9 percent. Over half of San Francisco's young people were persons of color, yet over three-quarters of SFSU's students were white, while the student population was only 5.3 percent Black, 7.9 percent Asian American, 1 percent Filipino, 2.3 percent Latino, and 0.5 percent Native American. After enactment of the Master Plan, Black enrollment at SFSU halved, reduced from 11 percent in 1960 to 5.3 percent in 1968. Even enrolled students chafed against the Eurocentric curriculum, predominantly white faculty, and marginalization of the perspectives, histories, and values of persons of color (Maeda 2012, 28).

In response to student demands for more diverse course offerings, SFSU established the Experimental College in 1965, which provided stopgap options for students working with sympathetic professors to develop their own courses for credit on topics they believed more relevant. Students could develop their own syllabi and then submit them to the Experimental College office, which would assign a time and classroom and officially list the course. If the course enrolled sufficient numbers of students, it would be offered. This program was popular, and by 1967, over two thousand students had participated. However, students remained dissatisfied with the ad hoc nature of this response and sought greater institutionalization through regularly offered classes, permanent faculty, and programmatic status.

African American students founded the Black Student Union (BSU) in 1966 to press for a Black studies department and the admission of more Black students. One of its organizers, Jimmy Garrett, was an older student and drew upon his experiences in

the civil rights movement in the South. After attending a Negro Students' Association meeting, he built a network that worked together to assemble various Black campus organizations into the BSU, which had the most developed curricular philosophy of any of the student groups. Their newspaper, *Black Fire*, listed six revolutionary goals for the curriculum, including foregrounding a Black cultural identity to combat "a society that is racist, that degrades and denies cultural heritage of Third World people, specifically black people"; "to build a revolutionary perspective . . . for using the knowledge and skills we have and get only for our liberation and the destruction of all the oppressive conditions surrounding us"; and to develop "a socialist society" that will redistribute wealth, knowledge, technology, natural resources, food, land, housing, "and all of the material resources necessary for a society and its people to function"—cultural nationalism and self-determination became core values pursued by all student organizations as they pursued institutionalization of ethnic studies and ethnic-specific departments at SFSU (Umemoto 2016, 41–42).

Despite the radical values expressed in the *Black Fire* position statement, BSU proceeded pragmatically and knowledgeably in dealing with academic institutions. It benefited from the counsel of Garratt and other experienced organizers as well as academics such as Dr. Juan Martinez, a son of migrant workers who had received a PhD in history at UC Berkeley and tenure at Arizona State University before being recruited to SFSU in the fall of 1966. Martinez believed that non-white students would have to forge a multiracial coalition and engage in direct action if they wanted to force the institution to change. Martinez approached the BSU, which was evolving from narrow nationalism toward a vision of Third World unity inspired by writers such as the Algerian revolutionary Frantz Fanon, who directly linked the struggles of people of color in the US with the struggles of colonized peoples such as the Vietnamese, Cubans, and Algerians. BSU bought into Martinez's vision of the necessity of coalition and his encouragement to focus on not only community welfare but also transforming academic institutions (Maeda 2012, 34).

In March 1967, the BSU produced a proposal for an Institute of Black Studies that it used to bargain with administrators for increased admissions of Black students and institutionalization of Black studies curriculum. Then-university president John Summerskill promised admissions of just over 400 slots for Black students one semester, a couple of hundred more admissions the next semester, funding for eleven course offerings in the fall semester, and permission and resources to establish a Black studies program.[5] Upon learning of this successful outcome, Asian American and Latine students realized the effectiveness of pressuring campus administrators and, upon invitation from the BSU, decided to join forces.

The Third World Liberation Front formed in the spring of 1967 as a multiracial coalition comprising six student organizations: the Black Student Union (BSU), the Latin American Student Organization (LASO), the Mexican American Student Confederation (MASC), the Asian American Political Alliance (AAPA), the Intercollegiate Chinese for Social Action (ICSA), and the Pilipino American Collegiate Endeavor (PACE). Of the Asian American groups, only PACE is still in operation. ICSA had formed the earliest, in October 1967, by Chinese students who were mainly concerned with community activities such as volunteering for social service agencies, teaching immigrant teenagers English, and assessing how to improve conditions in Chinatown. ICSA leadership responded receptively to BSU's outreach to join the Third World Liberation Front, recognizing them as fellow radicals seeking changes on campus. PACE, established in spring 1968, sought to develop linkages between students and their communities through counseling programs, tutorial programs, high school recruitment drives, newsletters, fundraising dances, and developing ethnic studies curricula. PACE members shared TWLF's view that racism was a main generator of inequality in concert with imperialism. The last formed group, the AAPA, coalesced in late summer 1968, emulating the organizational approach adopted by a group of mostly Japanese American women students at UC Berkeley who were inspired by the historian Yuji Ichioka, who first coined the term "Asian American" to emphasize pan-ethnic coalitions. SFSU's AAPA aimed to overcome "nationalistic kinds of trends" so that Asian Americans worked together. SFSU's AAPA members met with their Berkeley counterparts in a study group to read political theorists such as Frantz Fanon, Mao Zedong, and leaders in the Black power movement (Maeda 2012, 30–33).

TWLF formed in spring 1968 and by that fall fielded a slate of candidates, known as Community Action, running for campus government with representatives from BSU, PACE, LASO, and ICSA as well as white progressives. The Community Action slate gained support from a majority of SFSU students, gaining control of the Associated Students body and its $400,000 budget. TWLF swiftly made use of the Associated Students funds and office spaces to organize the Institute for the Development of Ethnic Studies, which was tasked with envisioning, developing plans for, and implementing a school of ethnic studies.[6]

Echoing the *Black Fire* values, TWLF's "Third World Liberation Front Philosophy and Goals" emphasized the themes of freedom and self-determination:

> The TWLF . . . has its purpose to aid in further developing politically, economically, and culturally the revolutionary Third World consciousness of racist oppressed peoples both on and off campus. As Third World students, as Third World people, as

> so-called minorities, we are being exploited to the fullest extent in this racist white America, and we are therefore preparing ourselves and our people for a prolonged struggle for freedom from this yoke of oppression. (Quoted in Umemoto 2016, 40)

In pursuit of this vision, TWLF students sought institutional changes that would broaden college curricula, establish ethnic studies programs, and challenge admission standards. To accomplish these ends, they "demanded power in the institution"—notably for hiring and retention of faculty.[7] In the face of administrative resistance, they fomented a campus-wide campaign and cultivated community support for their demands, including the nurturing of organizations, shared strategic planning and decision-making, and the development of educational literature to expand their support base. They emphasized the practice of egalitarian relationships based on mutual respect. To prevent the administration from using divide-and-conquer tactics, the TWLF operated through a general assembly with rotating leadership that ensured each member organization remained solidly in the coalition and committed to the same strategies and goals (Maeda 2012, 36).

In February 1968, former Howard University professor Dr. Nathan Hare was hired to head the Black studies program, and George Murray joined faculty ranks as a lecturer. Fourteen Black studies courses were offered in spring 1968, but intense resistance from the administration and unsympathetic faculty made clear what powers opposed the institutionalization of Black studies.

In fall 1968, the institute presented its plan for a School of Ethnic Studies with three main divisions: an Asian-American Area Study Division, covering Chinese, Filipino, and Japanese ethnicities; a Black Area Study Division, covering peoples from Africa, Brazil, Cuba, and Haiti; and a Native-American Area Study Division, covering American Indians and la Raza. That semester, ten courses were offered, and TWLF planned further recruitment of faculty and more course offerings. The structure of the institute demonstrated the TWLF's understandings of race and coalition building. On the one hand, reflecting its dedication to "self-determination," the plan enabled its racially diverse constituent groups to maintain their autonomy through the separate divisions, each of which was responsible for the development of its own curriculum. On the other hand, it brought together groups that had much in common, even if they were not identical, such as the three Asian ethnic groups, Black people and Caribbean peoples, and American Indians with Chicanos/Chicanas (Maeda 2012, 35).

The TWLF's proposal for the School of Ethnic Area Studies stressed that education should be relevant to the lives of students of color and their communities in ways that existing institutions had marginalized and even suppressed. To secure

self-determination and cultural nationalism, the TWLF demanded that ethnic studies classes be taught and run by Third World peoples. "Self-determination" required that each race had the right to determine its own curriculum and hire its own faculty. The TWLF also recognized that the existing criteria for evaluating ethnic studies and Third World faculty would be biased by racism and thus demanded programmatic autonomy. The School of Ethnic Area Studies proposal provided a blueprint in which Third World peoples would not only gain an institutional footprint on the SFSU campus but also exercise autonomy in criteria and objectives for student admissions, course offerings, faculty hiring and retention, and programmatic outcomes. Such demands met with partial legitimation when the faculty body appointed to consider the future of Black studies recommended faculty positions be allocated to form a Department of Black Studies for the spring 1969 semester

Over the summer and fall of 1968, administrative opposition hardened despite the organizational and institutional savvy of the TWLF, the support of the majority of students on campus who voted for the Community Action slate, President Summerskill's promise of admissions and institutional support, and the faculty committee's recommendations. Besieged on all fronts, Summerskill resigned in May. The administration was backtracking on many of the commitments he had made by shutting down the proposal for Black studies and ethnic studies, citing budgetary restrictions. The administration also failed to admit the promised number of Third World students. The sequence of broken promises, culminating in the firing of Black studies lecturer George Murray, led the TWLF to call for a campus-wide strike.

For five months, from November 6, 1968, to March 21, 1969, protests calling for a broadly based program of ethnic studies and affirmative action immobilized the SFSU campus. The TWLF received support from sympathetic students, faculty, and community members who honored the boycott, resulting in class attendance dropping by fifty percent and sympathetic faculty refusing to convene classes. Campus administrators would summon the police and eventually the riot squad in efforts to quell the upheavals on campus.

The administrator appointed to end the strikes was himself a person of color (Umemoto 2016, 41).[8] The Canadian-born scholar S. I. Hayakawa lobbied to become interim president with promises to take a hard-line approach against the student activists. Hayakawa was the first Asian American faculty hired at SFSU and taught in the English department as a well-known expert on education and language. Hayakawa embraced a "pull yourself up by the bootstraps" ideology and believed that targeted programs to address historic inequalities and repression were unnecessary. Hayakawa was prepared to take strong measures to end the strike, including calling out the riot squad and personally participating in the conflicts. During one televised confrontation

between police and striking students, Hayakawa climbed on top of a striker's truck that had been wired for sound, ripped loose the wires of the megaphone, and used it to lecture to the surprised crowd (Maeda 2012, 40–43).[9] The strike went on for months, wearing down the student strikers who exerted high levels of energy and risk through the constant meeting, planning, and public actions needed to sustain the boycott. They were also drained by the depletion of their ranks as hundreds of their peers were arrested and held in jail.

By early spring of 1969, the TWLF leadership were severely demoralized and more willing to negotiate, again under the leadership of the BSU. They bargained with a faculty committee appointed by Hayakawa while he was out of town. The faculty committee were more politically liberal than Hayakawa and, working together with the TWLF, produced the template of what remains the most radical institutionalization of ethnic studies in national history. Although the student strikers made some concessions, they made greater inroads than any other campus radicals (Maeda 2012, 43).

The most obvious accomplishment was the establishment of the College of Ethnic Studies, the first—and for fifty years, the only—college of its kind in the nation. This school mostly met the terms outlined in the TWLF demands, including the commitment of over twenty-two faculty positions and the establishment of a Black studies department along with three more ethnic studies departments: Asian American, La Raza, and Native American studies. Students sat on the committee that recommended the final plan for the school whose faculty received power commensurate with that accorded other college departments, and unused special slots were allocated to admit Third World students for spring 1969. The settlement also included protections for striking students, including limiting campus disciplinary action to suspension through fall semester 1969. The main demand left unmet was the authority to retain or fire individual personnel.

Inspired by and working with SFSU's TWLF, student organizers on other campuses were able to pressure administrators into authorizing ethnic studies programs. The TWLF at UC Berkeley initiated a strike in January 1969, also demanding a Third World college, with curriculum by and about students of color. The strike ended with the establishing of an ethnic studies department, rather than a college, later that year (Jeung 2009, 17; Maeda 2011, 45).[10] UCLA's then-Chancellor Charles E. Young took the lead in pushing for the "early establishment" of ethnic studies centers under the umbrella of an "American Cultures" project; the initial formulation included only centers for Native American, Chicano/Chicana, and Black studies, leading Asian American students, inspired by the SFSU strikes, to submit a "Proposal for an Asian American Studies Center," which was included in the authorization of Young's proposal by the Committee on Budget and Interdepartmental Relations and the Committee

on Education Policy in July 1969 (Cheng 2021). Despite its status as a center, UCLA's program would come to house a minor, a major, and an MA program, and it would issue major publications such as *Roots: An Asian American Reader* (1971), the first reader for Asian American studies courses, and *Amerasia Journal*, after its initial founding at Yale University. Only in 2004 did Asian American studies at UCLA departmentalize by organizing faculty already on campus. On the East Coast, the City College of New York (now part of the City University of New York) established an Asian American Studies Program within its Asian Studies Program in 1971, following protests that emerged in New York's Chinatown and Flushing district (Wei 1993, 133–134).

Institutionalizing Asian American Studies at SFSU

The Asian American Studies (AAS) Department housed in the College of Ethnic Studies at SFSU was the institution most extensively shaped by TWLF student strikers, who worked with guidance from experienced faculty who counselled them about navigating academic policies and practices. Dr. James Hirabayashi (1926–2012), the second Japanese American hired at SFSU and faculty in the anthropology department, served as the college's first dean. An ideological opponent of Hayakawa, Hirabayashi was a key figure in the founding of ethnic studies and marched with students in the strikes (Hirabayashi 2019).[11] Although the AAS Department had already fielded seventeen different classes in fall 1969, formalization of the status of the college and its departments continued, and in 1973, Hirabayashi and student activists who had become college faculty themselves were still developing operational criteria and standards through committee deliberations and recommendations. The AAS committee, with Hirabayashi's support, successfully made the argument that traditional PhDs were "unreasonable and irrelevant" in ethnic studies, as no academic programs yet offered such a degree or training. Instead, the following were to be applied in hiring and retaining faculty:

1) Professional commitment to Ethnic Studies as an academic discipline;
2) knowledge of and commitment in the ethnic community;
3) Teaching experience in ethnic studies content;
4) contributions to development of Ethnic Studies programs;
5) Research and publications in Ethnic Studies;
6) Formal education in the traditional academic setting. (Quoted in Collier and Gonzalez 2009, 57)

SFSU's administration delayed its response but eventually approved the standards that elevated community engagement and teaching over traditional criteria of professional

credentials and publications. Not coincidentally, the AAS Department's criteria enabled the hiring, retention, and promotion of former striking students to tenure-track positions. The first were George Woo and Danilo Begonia, who became tenure-rank faculty by March 1974, taught at SFSU their entire careers, and retired as full professors. Throughout the 1970s, recruitment priorities were to transition other teaching faculty to tenure-track lines.

From its inception, offering culturally and politically relevant courses was the top priority for the AAS Department. Even after gaining a college and department, teaching such classes in the 1970s was difficult because few persons had developed scholarly expertise in Asian American studies, and there were scant curricular materials to assign to students (Jeung 2009, 18). SFSU's AAS Department emphasized the cultural nationalism and self-determination strands of TWLF ideology and further divided into ethnic-specific sections focused on Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino American experiences explored through the fields of history, psychiatry, and literature and culture. Alan S. Wong, a student striker, was recruited to teach Chinese American history in fall 1969 and recalled that the only published books then available were Rose Hum Lee's *The Chinese in the United States of America* (1960) and Gunter Barth's *Bitter Strength* (1964) and that both conveyed problematic interpretations. Wong developed his own course reader by searching for suitable newspaper articles that he excised with razor blades and mimeographed (Wong 2009, 27). Community historians Him Mark Lai (1925–2009), an engineer at the Bechtel Corporation by trade, and Phillip Choy (1926–2017), an architect, also taught Chinese American history and drew on their own extensive private collections of materials to produce "A History of the Chinese in California, A Syllabus," which they published in 1972.[12] For this first generation of Asian American studies faculty, the publication of *Roots* in 1971 by UCLA's Asian American Studies Center was a major landmark and work of service.[13]

The AAS Department formed a General Planning Group that drew from faculty in each of the ethnic area sections. They adapted quickly and strategically to achieve academic institutional mandates. According to student-strikers-turned-faculty Malcolm Collier[14] and Daniel Gonzales: "We set out to become proficient in the processes and procedures of the college, intent on using that knowledge, those processes, and those procedures for our aims. We would avoid direct confrontations whenever possible and we would use the educational rationales of the college for our own ends. We tried to make all paperwork as airtight and by-the-book as possible to eliminate any possible opening for rejection" (Collier and Gonzales 2009, 53). In order to stabilize and expand the AAS Department, they learned about matters such as staffing formulas, hiring and

retention practices, administrative shortcuts, budgeting procedures for creating new courses, and requirements for establishing new departments and degree programs.

The AAS Department secured general education status for all but one of its course offerings, ensuring robust enrollments that protected departmental survival and even provided grounds for expansion. The AAS Department was satisfied offering courses and regarded developing an AAS major as unnecessary, believing a BA in AAS was unnecessary for students training to work in their communities. Through the 1990s, AAS faculty believed that community-oriented students were sufficiently served by receiving degrees in traditional fields such as social work or business with options to take some AAS classes along the way.

The department's faculty ranks and priorities for academic programs shifted over time. During the 1980s, the department started hiring faculty holding PhDs trained in proximate fields. In the 1990s, one of these professionally credentialled faculty, Dr. Marlon Hom, became department chair and implemented further institutionalization. The AAS Department was recognized in 1994 as an "exemplary" program by the Chancellor Office's Asian Pacific American Education Advisory Committee and launched its BA program in 1997, with its first class ten majors graduating the next year. The AAS master's degree program started in 1999 and began enrolling about ten to twelve students annually.[15] Faculty ranks expanded along with ethnic representation and coverage, reflecting the changing demographics of the Asian American population, and now includes courses focusing on Southeast Asian (Cambodian and Vietnamese), Chinese, mixed heritage and adoptee, Filipino/Filipina, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, and South Asian Americans. Recruitment remains driven by ethnic-specific specialization, though pan-ethnic courses are also taught and required for the major.

AAS at SFSU's emphasis on ethnic-specific curriculum, organization, and scholarship reflects the overall organization of the College of Ethnic Studies and its roots in the civil rights–era racial ideologies centering cultural nationalism and self-determination. The three other departments, Black Studies (now Africana Studies), La Raza Studies (now Latina/Latino Studies), and American Indian Studies remain self-governing units institutionally and intellectually. Not until 2002 did the college attempt to institutionalize relational and intersectional formations of ethnic studies with the hiring of Dr. Amy Sueyoshi as faculty in the College of Ethnic Studies.[16] The addition of this unit met with protracted contestations; ethnic studies did not gain program standing until 2010 and only became a department in 2017 when it rebranded as Race and Resistance Studies.

In contrast, the comparative ethnic studies approach was adopted from the beginning on some other campuses; UC Berkeley's Ethnic Studies Department emphasized comparative approaches and pursued a different version of institutionalization more aligned with traditional criteria in prioritizing professional credentialing and intellectual projects based on research, publications, and intellectual contributions. Most centrally, Berkeley's institution builders asserted their authority to produce knowledge about Asian American subjects. As recounted by Dr. Sucheng Chan (b. 1941),[17] Berkeley's struggle to establish ethnic studies required limiting community organizer influences to focus resources on the building of academic programs and the intellectual standing of Asian American studies research and publications. Chan held a PhD in political science from UC Berkeley (1973) and authored, edited, or co-edited over seventeen books, including the prodigiously researched *This Bittersweet Soil: The Chinese in California Agriculture, 1860–1910* (UC Press, 1987), which won the Saloutos Memorial Award from the Agricultural History Society. Along with her Berkeley colleague Ronald Takaki (1939–2009) and Roger Daniels (1927–2022) of the University of Cincinnati, Chan was among the earliest of Asian American studies scholars to publish monographs through university presses and intellectually legitimate Asian American studies.[18]

At Berkeley, Chan worked with the "Faculty Seven"—including the filmmaker Loni Ding, Elaine Kim, Oscar Sung, Ron Takaki, Ling-chi Wang, and Merilyn Wong—to focus department resources on teaching and research, limiting allocations to community actions claimed in the name of "Marxist" or "Maoist" redistribution. At a series of committee sessions marked by angry accusations that they were "reformers" and not revolutionaries, Chan and her faculty colleagues persisted in their view that academic teaching and scholarship were forms of community work and that "an academic program had its own needs and should not be used to support other groups that had other agendas" (Chan 2005, 9–10).[19] Although more attentive to ethnic and immigrant community causes than traditional departments in the UC system, compared to the SFSU College of Ethnic Studies, Berkeley's Ethnic Studies Department developed to foster and promote intellectual legitimation of Asian American studies projects. Not surprisingly, it was this department that established the first PhD program in comparative ethnic studies in 1984. Since the early 1990s, scores of Berkeley ethnic studies PhDs have dispersed across the US to teach not only in the dozens of AAS departments and programs established since 1969 but also in interdisciplinary area studies departments such as Asian and American studies and traditional disciplines such as history, English, sociology, anthropology, and the full range of humanities and social

sciences. According to its website (UC Berkeley Department of Ethnic Studies, n.d.), the ethnic studies graduate program has one of the highest placement rates (78.6%) among all UC Berkeley doctoral programs (57.2%). The integration and successes of its graduates reflect the growing ranks and acceptance of Asian American studies scholars and projects more generally whose PhDs training and research projects emanate from the full range of departments and disciplines hiring them to tenure line positions. Asian American studies monographs have also received awards from the professional associations in all these fields as well. Mae M. Ngai's *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, 2004) alone has won prizes in American studies, American history, Asian American studies, law, and immigration and ethnic history.

Institutionally, the footprints of Asian American and ethnic studies have proliferated.[20] Fifty years after its first, the nation added a second College of Ethnic Studies at CSULA, housing the Departments of Asian and Asian American Studies, Chicana(o) and Latina(o) Studies, and Pan-African Studies. By 2022, at least thirty universities or colleges had academic AAS departments or programs, although these were housed in a variety of configurations including Asian American/APA; ethnic studies; ethnic studies & Black studies; interdisciplinary area departments; interdisciplinary studies centers with faculty dispersed across traditional departments; and a range of undergraduate curricular programs including majors, minors, and certificates. More campuses offer nonacademic student services addressing Asian American student demands.

Elite institutions have been slower to accept ethnic studies, with Cornell being the first Ivy to enact an academic Asian American studies program in 1987. Others have remained resistant despite concerted student organizing. Nonetheless, the essential issues embodied in Asian American studies contributed to the widely supported establishing of a Department of Race, Diaspora, and Indigeneity in 2022 at the University of Chicago, one of the most conservative of academic institutions, in response to a multiyear faculty-driven initiative. In a faculty vote, a majority of Division of Social Sciences faculty, 150 in favor out of a total of 223, affirmed their support. The campaign was headquartered in the Center for the Study of Race, Politics and Culture (established 1996) and made the argument that race, diaspora, and indigeneity are "among the most important topics studied across the social sciences." By creating an academic unit combining these topics, the University of Chicago would establish "a novel approach that will generate new questions and push the boundaries of existing fields" (DRDI, n.d.). The University of Chicago's embrace of ethnic studies, driven by anticipation that it would foster transformative new knowledge, highlights perhaps the most revolutionary outcomes of the Third World Strikes and the institutionalization of

Asian American studies. Beyond the offering of classes; hiring of tenure-track faculty; authorization of certificates, minors, and majors; and carving out of institutional spaces, as an intellectual project, Asian American studies has been most impactful in establishing Asian American perspectives as essential to how the humanities and social sciences disciplines produce knowledge about the world at large.

Notes

[1] This article will use the terms "people of color" and "Third World peoples" to describe the multiracial and multiethnic coalitional formation of the Third World Liberation Front despite criticisms that these terms mask the more intense and structural forms of discrimination and exploitation experienced particularly by Black and Indigenous peoples. Every term used to capture the ranges of peoples subject to racism are problematic, while "people of color" conveys most meaningfully the kind of coalition and vision for ethnic studies forged by the TWLF activists. In identifying with "Third World" peoples, the student activists understood their positionality in the US as similarly oppressed by racist, capitalist structures denying them self-determination, equal opportunity, and legitimate standing.

[2] This article draws heavily on Maeda (2012), AASD (2009), Chan (2005), and Jeung et al. (2009). A chronology, photos, documents, and curricular materials associated with Jeung et al. (2009) are available at https://www.aasc.ucla.edu/aascpress/mm/. Karen Umemoto's (2016) "'On Strike!' San Francisco State College Strike, 1968–1969: The Role of Asian American Students" remains an authoritative account of the strikes.

[3] I joke that my intellectual trajectory has been imperially expansionary: from Taishan County in *Dreaming of Gold, Dreaming of Home: Transnationalism and Migration Between the United States and South China, 1882–1943* (2000) to all Asian Americans with *Asian American History: A Very Short Introduction* (2016) to all of the US with the co-edited *A Nation of Immigrants Reconsidered: U.S. Society in an Age of Restriction, 1924–1965* (with Marinari and Garcia, 2019) and worldwide with the co-edited *Cambridge History of Global Migrations*, volume II (with Gabaccia and Borges, 2023).

[4] San Francisco State College was renamed as San Francisco State University in 1974. Although it was a college during the strikes, for streamlining purposes it will be referred to by its better-known acronym of SFSU.

[5] These classes were mostly taught by students because faculty had not yet been hired in fall 1967 (Maeda 2012, 33).

[6] The student activists also used the Associated Students' large budget to fund tutoring programs in low-income neighborhoods, programs that eventually grew into the Community Involvement Program (CIP), which offered college credit to students to organize residents of poor, primarily non-white neighborhoods thus fulfilling ideals of campus to community service.

[7] Inspired by Malcolm X.

[8] Summerskill's immediate successor, Robert Smith, lasted only a few months as SFSU president.

[9] Hayakawa's fame from his suppression of the TWLF strikes contributed to his election to the US Senate in 1973.

[10] UC Berkeley's Black Studies separated into its own department (UC Berkeley, n.d.). "Within a year of establishing SFSU's Black Studies program, some estimate that more than 200 similar programs launched at colleges and universities across the country" (Carpenter 2019).

[11] Hirabayashi's (2019) paper "Ethnic Education: Its Purposes and Prospects" was first presented at the Second Annual Conference on Emerging Programs in November 1974. Hirabayashi later became chair of the anthropology department and dean of undergraduate studies. His son, Lane Hirabayashi, also became an academic and taught in the College of Ethnic Studies and UCLA.

[12] Even though he never held a tenure-line position, Him Mark Lai became known as the "dean of Chinese American history" for his wide-ranging and extensive research. The Chinese Historical Society of America, in which Lai and Choy were key contributors, hosts a website featuring Lai's publications and major projects: https://himmarklai.org. I worked with both Him Mark and Phil at the Chinese Historical Society of America, and I edited Him Mark's *Chinese American Transnational Politics* (2010), also writing an introduction for it, and his collected essay volume *Becoming Chinese American: A History of Communities and Institutions* (2004).

[13] The volume's editors, Amy Tachiki, Eddie Wong, Franklin Odo, and Buck Wong, included an interdisciplinary, cross-ethnic sampling of academic essays, poetry, interviews conducted by the editors, journalistic accounts of current issues, and personal essays. Many of the texts were reprinted from other journals such as *Gidra*, *Rodan*, *Amerasia Journal*, *Hawaii Free Press*, and *Kalayaan International*. *Roots* also provided a list of "movement journals."

[14] Although his highest degree was an MA, Malcolm Collier was a second-generation academic whose father, John Collier, was a renowned sociologist and advocate for Native American and Japanese American affairs.

[15] I was assigned responsibility for implementing the MA program, including recruitment, admissions, managing curriculum, and advising students.

[16] Sueyoshi eventually became Dean of the College (2018–2022) and then Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs of SFSU (2022).

[17] Chan later established UCSB's Asian American Studies Department and was the first Asian American woman in the University of California system to hold the title of provost. She taught at three University of California campuses: Berkeley, Santa Cruz, and Santa Barbara. I co-edited with Chan *Chinese Americans and the Politics of Race and Culture* (Chan and Hsu, 2008).

[18] The breadth of Asian American historiography is too extensive to cover here. Chan and Daniels both established Asian American studies book series, Chan working with Janet Francendese at Temple in 1991, and Daniels at University of Illinois Press in 1992. Gordon Chang's series at Stanford University Press published its first monographs in 1993. Both Takaki and Chan published Asian American history textbooks, *Strangers from a Different Shore* (Takaki 1989) and *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History* (Chan 1991). Other pioneering Asian American program builders active elsewhere include Dr. Evelyn Hu-Dehart, who built Asian American or ethnic studies programs at the University of Colorado and Brown University, Dr. Gary Okihiro at Cornell and Columbia Universities, and Dr. Franklin Odo, who developed the APA program at the Smithsonian Museum.

[19] Many ethnic studies academics face difficult choices regarding how to focus their professional labor between teaching, mentoring students, program building and campus service, community work, and research and publications. The last is necessary, and the most highly rewarded, by academic institutions yet often requires distancing from community service projects.

[20] Student groups on the east coast during the 1980s started a new wave of advocacy for programs that forged coalitions across campuses. The East Coast Asian Student Union (ECASU, now ECAASU or the East Coast Asian American Student Union) was founded at Princeton in 1978 by college students from Ivy League and private universities to advocate for greater awareness of Asian American issues and the creation of new programs in Asian American studies. In 1979, AAS faculty founded the Association for Asian American Studies (AAAS) to create a national forum for discussion between academics in the field and promote Asian American studies at universities across the country.

Competing Interests

The history explored in this article is shaped by the author's professional experiences teaching Asian American studies at three institutions, publishing collaborations with senior Asian American studies scholars, and professional service in organizations such as the Association for Asian American Studies and the Immigration and Ethnic History Society.

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