

community actors in a much more meaningful and integral way. Faculty would be more likely to engage in consulting work, whether paid or pro bono, and progressive or otherwise. Finally, journalists will grow accustomed to seeing many more faculty who are expert at engaging with external audiences, and public officials will be much more likely to hear from constituencies that are touched by the work of university faculty.

Incentives and norms, while critical, are only half the picture. We also need to add public engagement to our training, from early in graduate school through the promotion of senior faculty. Thus, for example, scholarly conferences should hold regular training sessions in making faculty more effective users of social media such as Twitter. Universities need to increase the quantity and quality of staff who can train and support faculty in their public engagement, from intensive training on how to engage with journalists to helping faculty to build better web sites, write and place more op-eds, and to produce more specialized work such as legislative committee testimony. While hiring more support staff in public and community outreach may cost the university in the short term, this will almost certainly pay off handsome dividends in the longer term—with alumni, parents, donors, legislators, and the larger public having a much greater awareness and appreciation for the work of the academy. Finally, it goes without saying that the very things that increase our ability to engage with external audiences will also improve our capacity to speak across disciplines to each other. We can still have our venues for more specialized and technical work, but we will also have new, institutionally supported spaces that encourage us to be better understood, to each other and to the larger society that supports our work.

Toward a Third Wave: Why Media Matters in Asian American Studies

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This is a manifesto, a call for advancing a third wave of collaboration among artists, scholars, and community to make media matter once again in Asian American studies. I am not referring to simply screening films in the classroom or researching web content, but rather a deeper engagement in the production of knowledge, the creation of culture, and, ultimately, the advancement of social justice. It is a call to marshal all of our resources, whether intellectual, creative, or the power of social action. Interactive, online technologies unleash new possibilities, such as “footnoting” a film online, heightening the experiential power

of visual knowledge through gaming, and delivering content on digital platforms that expand the reach of Asian American studies.

Back to the future of the origins of Asian American independent media production: In its first wave during the 1970s, filmmaking functioned as a cultural organ of the Asian American movement. Tasked with constructing the narrative of political identity and influenced by eclectic, cultural shape shifters from Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino's theory of third cinema, to Mao's art for the people, Ozu, and American alternative film, the work resisted racist images while building new forms and representations. One of the earliest of the genre is Robert Nakamura's classic documentary *Manzanar* (1972), in which he both reclaimed the buried history of Japanese American concentration camps and imagined a new aesthetics. A few years later, Curtis Choy's tour de force *Dupont Guy: The Schiz of Grant Avenue* (1975) was a rapper's delight meets rage against the culture machine that detonated any notion of flaccid assimilation.

Filmmakers worked alongside scholars, students, and activists in the production of individual work and the establishment of institutions like New York's Asian Cine-Vision, the Boston Asian American Resource Workshop, Seattle's King Street Media, Los Angeles's Visual Communications, and the Center for Asian American Media (formerly the National Asian American Telecommunications Association), based in San Francisco but established as the only national Asian American media arts center. We saw ourselves as interrelated moving parts of a larger Asian American movement, mobilizing collectively against U.S. aggression in Asia and for ethnic studies, labor rights, gender rights, equality in health care housing, and education. I worked in the early 1980s as the director of Asian Cine-Vision in New York's Chinatown. We were a few doors down East Broadway from the Chinatown History Museum that historian Jack Tchen was launching, and nearby were the Basement Workshop art and literature collective, the Chinese Progressive Association, the Chinatown Health Clinic, and any number of community-focused organizations. We mounted film programs at the Chatham Square Library moderated by Asian American academics. Sometimes recent immigrants from China complained about the postscreening discussions. It reminded them of reeducation sessions during the Cultural Revolution. We were very, very young.

The Japanese American movement for redress and reparations during that time epitomizes the collaborative spirit, with former internees, lawyers, academics, community and movement activists, and politicians all playing interconnected roles. Films such as Steven Okazaki's *Unfinished Business* and Loni Ding's *Nisei Soldier* gave the history an essential human dimension. Crews from Asian American media arts centers filmed testimony and interviews with former internees that

could be used to encourage others to come forward and participate in hearings of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC). With no Internet streaming, we “bicycled” tapes through the U.S. postal service. John Esaki at Visual Communications in Los Angeles would mail tapes to New York. We would then haul a television set and a gargantuan early VCR to a church basement or someone’s living room, and show the tapes at emotionally charged and transformational, Internet workshops to prepare for the CWRIC hearings. The findings of the Commission, *Personal Justice Denied*, set the foundation for the Civil Liberties Act of 1988.

The second wave of Asian American independent media, beginning in the 1980s, was distinguished by the sweeping demographic change of new immigration in Asian American communities, and increasing professionalization and specialization of community, the arts, and the academy. Filmmakers competed for broadcast slots, faculty vied for tenure, activists ran for office. The pressures of legitimization encouraged a distance from our subjects and each other, and we became embedded in our own professional cultures and languages. Who ever used the terms *subaltern* or *uprez* outside the academy or the edit room? Who would ever perceive an assistant to be a *best boy* and Fido to be a *companion species*, a *daily* to be a roll of film or a *text* to be anything and everything? As we became increasingly aligned with our fields, and less so the movement, the differences were heightened. A filmmaker’s concern for journalistic integrity, experimentation with aesthetics, or insistence at producing a lengthy festival version of his or her film may conflict with a community group’s interest in advocacy, legibility to many audiences, and brevity for use in organizing contexts. Filmmakers may find dense language and abstractions in scholarly writing to be frustrating. Likewise, scholars may rankle at the lack of rigor in film, where character, storytelling, and drama take precedence over data and theory.

A caveat. That second wave was also a time of substantial, and inevitable progress. A calling could now be a day job. Community health clinics delivered better care, labor organizations worked transnationally, filmmakers moved beyond the obligation of positive portrayals and, alongside Asian American scholars, expanded the scope and complexity of inquiry and representation. Similarly, collaborative social-change-oriented work has never abated. The UCLA Center for EthnoCommunications, established by Robert Nakamura, and the UC Santa Cruz Social Documentation Program were established to train students in the theory and practice of social change media through the merger of art, activism, and the academy. Similar programs and courses have been taught by Loni Ding at UC Berkeley, Ming Ma at Pitzer College, Valerie Soe at San Francisco State

University, and others. Also at Berkeley, Elaine Kim, in conjunction with Asian Women United of San Francisco, has produced interdisciplinary work for over three decades. New affordable and online technologies meant that media production could be further democratized and politicized, and proliferate among emerging immigrant communities. Witness the camcorder diaries produced by Southeast Asian youth who were trained by filmmaker Spencer Nakasako at the Vietnamese Youth Development Center in San Francisco's Tenderloin. Coast to coast, from the New York Taxi Workers Alliance representing large numbers of South Asian drivers to Dreamers in Los Angeles, small-format video posted online has been used as an organizing tool.

Why a third wave now? We are in a transitional moment. Digital and visual forms of knowledge have become ubiquitous, pushing out traditional forms like print journalism and innovating new ones. Asian Americans were early adapters, and there has long been a robust community online, not only limited to the YouTube celebrities like Michelle Pham and Kev Jumba. In the early aughts, when the digital divide seemed almost insurmountable, I encountered Vietnamese meat packers while filming in small rural towns of southwestern Kansas. Whole families of adults worked in plants, often taking on grueling double shifts that left little time for community. There was not even a collective Tet celebration, yet people were plugged in to virtual communities on the Internet. Around the same time, Phil Yu launched his Angry Asian Man blog, an essential online venue that combines the analysis, irreverence, and energy of a *Gidra*, *Bridge*, and *A Magazine*.

Ethnic studies and the humanities and social sciences as a whole have been slow to adapt to this fast-evolving cultural landscape. But there is great opportunity, and in any case, there's no stopping history. A third wave would draw from our activist origins yet acknowledge the distinct identities of each field in a way that deploys varied skill sets. How does that collaboration make films different? In my own work, I have found the theoretical and analytic command of scholars to be invaluable in contextualizing and locating deeper meaning and significance of character and story. It changes *what* I see as a filmmaker.

Lately I have reconsidered what I saw through the lens of my 1997 film, *My America . . . or Honk if You Love Buddha*. On one level, it is a road movie in search of Asian American identity, meant to smash stereotypes and introduce colorful characters, among them the Burtanog sisters of New Orleans's longtime Filipino community, activists Bill and Yuri Kochiyama, and a pair of Seattle rappers called the Seoul Brothers. At the same time, I hoped *My America* would drill deeper. The superstructure of the film follows a historical trajectory, roughly pre-World War II to the 1990s, and tracks questions of representation, marginality, and the

role of Asian Americans in shaping in democratic project. It was a 1990s film, engaged in the conversation of multiculturalism and the decentering of histories and culture. At the time, I imagined the character of Mr. Choi, a fortune cookie maker and fish wholesaler, as a parody of the notion of the model minority on steroids. If I were to make the film in conversation with Asian Americanists today, an analysis of waning empires and rising superdiversity would undoubtedly shift my perspective. I would pay closer attention to Mr. Choi's backstory, as an ethnic Chinese refugee from Vietnam, and at what was happening behind his fish tanks, where undocumented workers from Mexico and Hong Kong bunked down for the night after their shifts.

By the same token, I believe media production can help build the capacity of Asian American studies. Mobile devices armed with GPS, for example, can be deployed to gather data and record testimony, link to distant research sites, connect to constituencies through social media, and provide content for digital storytelling that translates knowledge to nonacademic audiences. New technologies, energized by hacker culture, have produced online tools like html that are equivalent to consumer video of the 1980s. Just as scholars then were able to record oral histories with portable cameras, these new digital forms can make possible the creation of ebooks and interactive websites.

In the UC Santa Cruz SocDoc Program, and now in Asian American studies at UCLA through the Center for EthnoCommunications, my students immerse themselves in scholarly approaches to topic as well as cinematic practice. They work with creative and substantive faculty, and engage with community and activist organizations. Tadashi Nakamura, who graduated from and taught for both EthnoCommunications and SocDoc, produced two documentaries, *Pilgrimage* and *A Song for Ourselves*. These historicize Japanese American activism with a cultural energy and biographical intimacy distinctive to cinematic practice. SocDoc graduate Karin Mak's *Red Dust* is a moving story of resistance on the part of women migrant workers in China, who were poisoned by cadmium dust at the battery factory where they worked. The film is informed by Mak's on-the-ground work with Sweatshop Watch and her research into the consequences of rapid industrialization in China, such as mass migration, labor exploitation, and environmental devastation.

Work by these new filmmakers combines intellect with an experiential and emotive power that changes hearts and minds. Theory and analysis may not be explicit on the screen in the form of expert talking heads or statistics, but theory and analysis are embedded in the DNA of the work. True, there are any number of institutional barriers to teaching, creating, and publishing across disciplines.

But it is the future. Younger scholars are already comfortable with these forms and are willing to circumvent disciplinary boundaries to embrace hybrid careers.⁸ Above all, Asian American studies and Asian American independent filmmaking were borne to an ethos of social justice that obligates all of us to join in common cause to make our work matter.

Disciplinary Divides within Asian American Studies: Lessons from Intergroup Contact Theory and Community-Based Participatory Research

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I begin with a confession. I have been an on-again, off-again member of the Association for Asian American Studies (AAAS) for the past seventeen years with the majority of time as a lapsed member. Yet throughout this time, I have been actively involved as a faculty member in Asian American studies (AAS) programs at the University of Texas at Austin (1997–2000) and the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities (2000–present). Moreover, as a professor of psychology, my research on ethnic identity, perceived discrimination, acculturation, parent-child cultural conflicts, and international adoption has long drawn upon AAS perspectives and scholarship. Nevertheless, I remain ambivalent about AAAS as a professional home, and I believe my own reservations with AAAS reflect a larger disconnect between the behavioral and social sciences and the field of AAS. In this article, I draw upon intergroup contact theory and community-based participatory research methods to suggest ways to bridge the divide between the behavioral and social sciences and AAS/AAAS.⁹

First, it's important to begin with an understanding of what I mean by the behavioral and social sciences. I adopt a rather narrow definition that focuses primarily on empirical approaches to understanding human development, health, and well-being, because this specific subset of the field, which includes my own scholarship, is most absent from AAS/AAAS. The Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research at the National Institutes of Health provides the following description:

Basic research in the behavioral and social sciences is designed to further our understanding of fundamental mechanisms and patterns of behavioral and social functioning relevant to the Nation's health and well-being, and as they interact with each other, with biology and the environment. . . . Applied research in the behavioral and social sciences is designed to predict or influence health outcomes,