

CHAPTER 1

THE FOUNDING OF ASIAN AMERICANS FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT (AACI)

PART I: FROM ACADEMIA TO COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Always an activist in the face of injustice, I naturally became involved in community organizing, advocacy and political engagement. Three major organizations became my lifelong focus and, I believe, impacted the community for decades to come: the Pathway House in San Jose, Asian Americans for Community Involvement (AACI) in Santa Clara County and Asian Pacific American Advocates of California (APAAC) in California.

My first effort was the creation of Pathway House in San Jose, one of only two residential rehabilitation programs for recovering addicts west of the Mississippi. The second was the establishment of Asian Americans for Community Involvement (AACI), which began by providing advocacy services for the Asian communities in Silicon Valley but would expand over the years into the largest and most comprehensive Asian and Pacific Islander multi-service agency in the region. Finally, my AACI activities showed the need for a Pan-Asian alliance in California. The Asian Pacific American Advocates of California (APAAC) was initially confined to California, but expanded into a national organization, the National Asian Pacific American Coalition, United States (APAC-United States). I have made these organizations my life's work.

As a psychiatrist, I entered the world of activism through the issue of community mental health. After finishing my training at the Psychiatry Department of Stanford Medical Center in June 1966, I began a private practice as a partner at the Valley Psychiatric Clinic in San Jose. At the same time, I worked part-time at the San Jose City Health Department as their senior community psychiatrist, serving on a drug abuse team that provided treatment to the Asian American, African American and Latino communities of East San Jose.

In retrospect, the years 1966 to 1970 were a time of intense grassroots training for me. Through my community involvement among the politically powerless members of East San Jose, I learned about community organizing, people empowerment, effective advocacy and the use of political power to effect social change. It was also a time in which my wife, Mary Chan Seid and I were reawakened to the social injustice, economic inequity and racial oppression of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) immigrants. Our experience supporting the Filipino and Mexican farmworkers coalition, the United Farm Workers (UFW) in the struggle to secure basic labor rights, safe housing and humane living conditions in the agricultural fields of Delano, California, profoundly impressed us. We also actively supported the AAPI (Asian American Pacific Islander) students participating in the Third World Student Strike in 1968 at San Francisco State College. The students had suffered police brutality, imprisonment and public humiliation in order to establish a Third World Ethnic Studies Department at the college. These two pivotal events greatly impacted my wife and me and rekindled my intense desire—which had developed during my undergraduate years—to someday be capable of providing medical services to Asian ethnic immigrants.

By the mid-1960s, the drug abuse epidemic had spread to alarming levels throughout the Bay Area. Working on the front line on the streets of East San Jose, I saw that the police were more focused on incarcerating addicts than striking at the root of the problem through preventative measures or rehabilitation. I further learned that local health and social service agencies offered scant support for addicts and that the area's minority population lacked leaders to voice their grievances in the political arena. As a result, politicians were able to ignore the needs and concerns of these communities.

Help emerged in 1966. California Assemblyman John Vasconcellos convened a group titled the Council on Drug Abuse (CODA) with the support of the San Jose City Health Department. I became the Health Department's chief liaison to the citizens group supporting Vasconcellos' efforts, which included

homeowners, church leaders, local businessmen, former drug users, teachers and school nurses. With such a diverse group, mutual trust was essential to the success of our mission. With time, individuals from varied backgrounds overcame their personal misperceptions and gradually in this non-judgmental environment began to appreciate different perspectives. From the CODA experience, I learned that even without initial support of local political leaders, change can be affected by bringing together diverse segments of an apparently powerless citizenry and empowering them with a collective hope and action toward resolving a crisis.

While CODA continued to function smoothly, a few former addicts of CODA became impatient with the slow, deliberative process of planning and action implementation; after six months they wanted to establish a drug recovery house immediately for the many addicts ready to seek recovery. This small group was led by former addicts "Pat" and "George."

Initially Pat and George used their own rented house, where they transported addicts from homeless shelters. Soon after arriving at their home, the addicts would start the withdrawal process supervised by Pat and George and typically would experience excruciating muscular cramps, insomnia and other painful symptoms. Once the peak of the detoxification had passed, each individual was next required to secure help from a Narcotic Anonymous (NA) sponsor and attend NA daily meetings. Having an advocate by the side of a recovering addict sustains his or her motivation for full rehabilitation and greatly maximizes the odds of success.

To ensure a drug-free living environment, the NA sponsor



Assemblyman John Vasconcellos, a leader in fighting drug abuse in Santa Clara County in the 1960s

typically provided temporary housing for two to three months. The next challenge was for the recovering addict to find an appropriate job. This pattern of self-help utilized by NA has proven to be a successful strategy for many recovering addicts and remains a widely practiced methodology today.

The ex-addicts provided precious lessons that advanced my clinical knowledge and skill by demonstrating what strategies and approaches to opiate and illness rehabilitation worked well. Their accounts provided first-hand insight into how addicts feel mentally, emotionally and physically at all stages of addiction and recovery. The personal stories of "Pat" and "George" emphasized that two key components had boosted their rehabilitation: having strong motivation to recover from addiction and having "pillars of support" in the NA groups and their dedicated personal sponsors who had their own past victories and unsuccessful recovery experiences. Working with care-giving ex-addicts at Pathway, I soon recognized that a drug-free environment was absolutely necessary to the total recovery process, yet the cruel reality was that in most communities, such a home was unwelcome.

A group of ten comprised of Pat, George, three care-giving former addicts, three volunteer citizens, Santa Clara County Deputy Mental Health Director Dr. Kenneth Meinhardt and I soon formally established our group as board of directors of the Pathway Society. Attorney Mitch Madson and I drafted the necessary papers and applied successfully for the state certification of a 501c3 non-profit corporation.

I was elected board chairman and Pat as vice chairperson. After a few more months of fundraising, Pathway Society received a grant from the United Way of Santa Clara County, which along with a bank loan enabled the organization to purchase a downtown house on 13th Street near California State University, San Jose. Named Pathway House, this drug abuse prevention and rehabilitation home has greatly expanded since 1968 and continues services today at the same location.

In its infancy Pathway Society was sustained by financial support from the contributions of board members, volunteers

and former addicts speaking to the community. As funding and support grew, the group created a speakers' program with teams comprised of an ex-addict, a physician and a parent who gave presentations at churches, schools, service groups and home owners associations throughout San Jose and its adjacent cities—even as far north as the cities of Palo Alto, Mountain View and Los Altos. These presentations provided credible information on drugs of abuse, practical prevention strategies, identification of helpful community resources and opportunities for family discussions.

By 1970 Pathway Society had recruited the support of approximately 50 new volunteers who either worked on the education teams or in Pathway House. This expansion had tripled the services to addicts and required the organization to expand its leadership.

The board hired former pastor Chuck Woll as executive director. Woll and I were able to secure more funding soon after from the County of Santa Clara, the local United Way and other public and private sources ensuring Pathway Society's economic stability.

In recognition of my work with Pathway Society to combat drug addiction, I was named 1970 Volunteer of the Year by the California Mental Health Association and the California Association of Drug Abuse Administrators. I was also recognized that year by the Volunteer Action Association of Santa Clara County and the Sixth District Congress of Parents and Teachers Association for my drug education training of teachers and parents of Silicon Valley.

In 2018, Pathway Society celebrated 50 years of operation. It



Allan Seid with Chuck Woll

remains vibrant today throughout Santa Clara Valley providing programs in drug-abuse prevention, rehabilitation and community education. The organization has long been recognized as the leading volunteer citizens' agency combatting drug abuse in the region and its community drug-education program has won statewide recognition.

PART 2: POLITICAL INSIGHTS, DECISION MAKING POWER AND ADVOCACY, 1970-1973

In confronting the overwhelming community-wide impacts of drug addiction, I gained added perspectives on the nature of communities and cultural patterns. In the heavily minority areas of East San Jose, I discovered shortcomings in the political, health and criminal justice systems. It became apparent that the lack of political leadership in those sectors contributed greatly to the devastating neglect of the people and their needs and aspirations. Also, in my mind, when surrounded by a pervasively negative environment full of demeaning images and messages, the people's sense of selfhood and identity suffered.

Like the 1960s, the 1970s were a time of social upheaval and revolution. With President Richard Nixon entering the White House in 1968 and re-elected in 1972 and the subsequent scandals that followed, the nation was in a state of disorder and the lives of the people reflected this troubled age. In 1970 my private practice partners decided to expand the clinic's services. To raise sufficient funds to erect a new and larger building, partners were required to increase their practice hours to bring in extra revenue. However, this mandate ran contrary to my partnership contract agreement, which stipulated that I would be permitted to keep my private practice small, at approximately 20 to 25 hours per week and devote other hours to community service. Consequently, I made the pivotal decision to sell my private practice partnership at the Valley Psychiatric Clinic and relocate to Palo Alto to engage in a half-time, solo private practice.

Through my work with Pathway's education teams since 1969, I had become known as an experienced leader in the field of drug abuse prevention and treatment. In 1970, Santa Clara County officials reported that it did not have the resources to meet the drug problem and that the cities themselves would have to undertake a major role to combat the growing problem. A year later, the Palo Alto City Council appointed a 15-member Drug Abuse Task Force to design a program. I was named chairman

and the group was tasked with putting together a comprehensive report on the drug problem and possible solutions within three months. On behalf of the city task force, when I authored its final report, The Palo Alto Tribune noted that "While the Task Force became acknowledged as the hardest-working citizens' group in the city's 80-year history, the report was one of the finest community documents on combating drug abuse."

The report recommended the creation of a community prevention center located in downtown Palo Alto, a residential treatment center and a procedure to evaluate program effectiveness. I then led the lobbying effort directed at the city officials and citizens of Palo Alto to realize these recommendations. The results were a \$250,000 program using tax money to fund a community prevention center for counseling, education, referral and activities to divert people away from drug abuse, as well as a house to operate a residential treatment center. The program also included funds for continuing evaluation of the effectiveness of the programs by independent groups. An unexpected by-product of the report was the stimulation and establishment of a unique partnership between the Palo Alto School District and the City in sharing resources and facilities to address drug abuse on and off school grounds. Many other jurisdictions soon adopted this model of a collaborative partnership between a city and a school district to combat community-wide drug abuse.

Witnessing the power and apparent positive benefits of political collaboration between the city and the schools, I decided in late 1972 to take the reins myself and prepared to enter politics to compete for a seat on the 1973 City Council. It was abundantly clear to me that minorities in Palo Alto and other Peninsula and South Bay cities lacked representation on their top decision-making bodies. Heretofore, no Asian American had ever campaigned for a Palo Alto City Council seat.

Some claimed that the absence of minority participation in the city's elective office process was directly due to the persistence of a low percentage of minorities in Palo Alto. Up to 1968 Palo Alto had had "housing covenants" that excluded non-Whites from

owning homes. Although illegal after the federal Fair Housing Act of 1968 that banned housing discrimination, residential exclusion by race was still widely practiced throughout the Bay Area with many property owners, apartment managers and real estate offices employing a variety of covert



*Campaign photograph of Allan Seid
with his children*

and deceptive means. It was only with the courageous actions of Mid-Peninsula for Fair Housing—a group co-founded by Jing Lyman, wife of then Stanford President Richard Lyman—that those covert practices were reduced. Today, examples of discriminatory housing covenants can still be found in old Palo Alto home sales contracts that explicitly bar the sale of homes to Americans of "African, Japanese and Chinese ancestry." Most local historians attribute the low number of minorities residing in Peninsula and South Bay cities up to the early 1970s to these residential exclusionary practices, racial prejudice and high housing cost.

Prior to my campaign for a 1973 council seat, I had surveyed the number of elected and appointed city and county official positions within Santa Clara County held by people of Asian ancestry and found that of 70 positions, only two were held by Asian Americans. This finding steeled my resolve to somehow remedy this unacceptable reality. I decided to be the first Asian American to compete for a seat on the 1973 Palo Alto City Council and to breach the barriers that had heretofore prevented any Asian American from serving on a Mid-Peninsula elective body. I hoped that my example would encourage other Asian Americans

to seek elective office in the region. Despite a vigorous campaign, I was unable to unseat the incumbent, falling just 33 votes short of about 11,000 votes cast. Nevertheless, the close vote proved that Asian Americans could succeed in elective politics in a community with diminishing racial prejudice and was an encouragement to all minorities to enter the political arena.

In 1973 my wife Mary Chan Seid and I found ourselves following a new and different path, though with similar goals. Our work in East San Jose six years earlier had rekindled our

desire from our college years to assist our fellow Asians and other people of color. Together, we recognized that our upbringing in Chinatown and a decade of residence in Palo Alto had imbued us with unique insights and perspectives to assist newer generations of American-born Chinese who wanted to live in the primarily White suburbs of San Francisco. However, these suburbs lacked support for Asians or other minority new arrivals to feel welcome.



*Allan and Mary Chan Seid
in the 1970s*

At this life's juncture, we debated the most effective means to achieve our goal of empowering Asian American communities in our locale: the strategic path of elective politics or the road of community organizing and advocacy. Loyal campaign supporters from my initial elective venture championed the political route. They argued that a second run for the upcoming council seat, this time with no competing incumbent, would be successful and make me a political role model. The inherent influence of my elected office would encourage other aspiring minority and Asian

Americans to participate in the political arena. A smaller group of friends disagreed, suggesting that being a "community advocate" might be more effective. Whereas an elected official had diverse responsibilities and numerous demands from his constituency, they felt a community advocate could focus more fully on the single issue of Asian American empowerment within specific high-priority areas of need.

Mary and I believed the empowerment of Asian American communities in Santa Clara County would require our total commitment. We foresaw that success in empowering even a single community of Asian Americans would at minimum require a supreme effort over a substantial period of time in partnership with allies of like-mind and passions. Following more thought on the implications for our lives as a married couple and a family with children, we decided to become community advocates. We committed to creating an advocacy group that hopefully would blossom into an enduring, effective organization to address



Allan and Mary Chan Seid with AACI Founders Plaque, 2018

needs within Asian American communities. As a first step, Mary and I began to identify companions and allies.

PART 3: THE FOUNDING, 1973

We realized that only a few Asian Americans would initially share our passion and willingness to devote the necessary time and energy to effect social changes on behalf of their ethnic brothers and sisters. However, we were confident that we could develop a strong and enduring core of allies with the common desire to begin the journey together. The year 1973 became a period of great change that would lay the foundation of an organization known as "Asian Americans for Community Involvement" (AACI).

Mary and I first clarified for ourselves the personal characteristics of potential leaders we believed would be suitable and personally compatible with us as long-term partners. From the onset this idealized list would guide us in recruiting the type of persons who would best serve the need to create and sustain an advocacy organization from the ground up. We used the following checklist of essential desirable characteristics, which became our guide to recruit and select potential candidates:

1. History of high personal integrity, ethical code and altruistic values.
2. Current benevolent activities to help Asian American individuals and/or the community collectively.
3. Specific past experience(s) of commitment to and passion for Asian- American individuals or groups.
4. Knowledge/familiarity with Asian American and/or minority American history of conflicts and struggles for acceptance and inclusion in America.
5. Relevant personal experiences demonstrating resilience, mental fortitude and humility.
6. Suitable temperament, an affinity/compatibility for the "group decision-making process."
7. Openness and comfort with purposeful, bold and creative solutions and actions.
8. Willingness to devote personal time, energy and resources to build an Asian American advocacy group.
9. History of empathy and compassion for the needy, disenfranchised and dispossessed.

10. Good "chemistry," communication and like-mindedness between the candidate and ourselves.
11. Positive reputation and credibility in both the Asian American and the larger community.

Using these guidelines, we first generated a list of Asian Americans residing in Santa Clara County who were reportedly interested in Asian American concerns or engaged in issues of civil and education rights and/or employment, economic and social justice issues. We then sent brief introductory letters to the individuals on the list describing ourselves and our mission. The letter told the potential candidates to expect a follow-up phone call, possibly followed by a personal interview.

Only a small percentage of the letter recipients were interested in a follow-up interview. For those who did, the typical format included an initial explanation of our perception of unaddressed Asian American needs, our vision and purpose for developing a local advocacy group, the activist nature of the proposed group and the potential risks and rewards of such a venture. The interviewees were then asked for their reaction and assessment of the ideas and plan. Next, we encouraged the candidates to share their past and current involvement with the Asian American community or individuals, which often revealed their enthusiasm for and their depth of experience. Following each interview, Mary and I evaluated the interviewee based upon our guidelines and recorded our assessment in writing. All those interviewed were invited to a second visit for further sharing.

From all the personal interviews, the three candidates who had expressed high enthusiasm to join the proposed advocacy group were invited to an initial group gathering at our Palo Alto home in early June, 1973. This group, which included Edward Kawazoe, Bob Kam, Connie Young-Yu and ourselves came to be named the "core group." At that first meeting, these core members each shared his/her personal priorities, goals and visions. They unanimously agreed that the organization's methods must always be ethical and nonviolent. All insisted that action would characterize the nature of the group as it strove for

social change. As the members became more familiar with one another, they began suggesting other possible members. By the end of the lengthy first meeting, the members felt a sense of camaraderie and kinship and collectively agreed to invite additional candidates to the next gathering.

At our invitation, Jeanette Arakawa and Eimi Okano attended the second meeting in June, 1973. They shared with great passion and clarity their efforts with the Palo Alto PTA Council's "Task Force on Textbooks from a Multicultural Perspective." The goal of the task force was to secure racist- and sexist-free textbooks and supplemental instructional materials for public school children. The two detailed their method of assessing and documenting negative items on each-and-every page of the textbooks used by the Palo Alto Unified School District. The core members were highly impressed and the group pledged their support and assistance.

In turn, the core members shared with Jeanette and Eimi their plan to organize an Asian American advocacy group to address the needs of local and county Asian-ancestry residents. Education would be one of the group's five priorities. The core invited them to join and collaborate on common issues, especially those pertaining to Asian American educational needs. With the pledge of Jeannette and Eimi to join, the core increased its size to seven members. This core group voted to meet regularly every second and fourth Thursday at 7:30 p.m. at our home. I was elected group chairman and Ed vice-chairman.

The next meeting in July had a notable increase in potential partners; Leo Lowe, Paul Wong, Victor Wong, Nilo Sarmiento and Paul Sakamoto were new participants. On behalf of the core, I described the purpose and nature of our group and invited comments, questions and reactions. I asked each person what had motivated him or her to attend the meeting. It was clear that some individuals were seeking others who shared their deep emotions of living as an American of Asian descent. Others shared their perspectives on ethnic identity, their sense of being treated as perpetual foreigners in America despite being citizens for two or three generations and their feelings of impotence,

isolation, marginalization and rage as targets of racial and ethnic denigration and humiliation. Some were more focused on immediate employment, health and education problems associated with racist, xenophobic and gender prejudices. The meeting concluded with some new attendees enthusiastically joining the original core of five while others were hesitant.

Following the second July meeting, Ed Kawazoe and I began drafting a mission statement for the group. Leo Lowe completed the application for the group to register as a 501c3 nonprofit corporation. After the group was named, Mary and I filed the necessary documents in Sacramento.

While shaping the group's collective vision and mission, some specific and strongly held personal concerns emerged and became the priority discussion topics for the next two months. Among them five urgent matters arose requiring immediate attention and action:

1. Robert Kam urged immediate supportive action for a discrimination case against the Palo Alto Veterans Administration Hospital.
2. Jeanette Arakawa and Eimi Okano invited urgent assistance for the local effort to eliminate racist and sexist curricular material sold to California public schools.
3. Ed Kawazoe highlighted crisis-level health and educational needs of East San Jose families and called for the group to join the community's effort demanding change.
4. Connie Young-Yu pressed for immediate support of a statewide effort to terminate racist and anti-Asian publications issued by then-Attorney General Evelle Younger characterizing Chinese Americans as likely foreign spies.
5. Mary and I urged action to begin concerted effort to seek appointments of Asian Americans to county and city commissions.

These challenges were the first of many. It became abundantly clear that the AACI would never suffer boredom nor go unnoticed.

AACI's original core of five advocates added seven new members in late July and August. This expanded group, called the "Original Twelve," possessed a broad range of backgrounds, qualifications and skills as follows:

Jeanette Arakawa, co-chair, Education Standing Committee and co-chair Eimi Okano directed the successful textbook battles to establish the landmark California Education Code that requires all public-school instructional material to be free of racist and sexist content and portrayals. Both were active with the AACI teaching teams, providing ethnic study courses at local universities and colleges. Their zeal was key to the recruitment and retention of a large standing committee of parents. The two are still unmatched as champions on bias-free, school-curricula materials.



Jeanette Arakawa

Mary Chan Seid was key in the conception and



Mary Chan Seid

establishment of the AACI. She was there with the initial core of five advocates, the Original Twelve, the founding board of directors and the first 22 years of AACI's life and service expansions. In 1981 the State Department of Refugee Services, per President Reagan's budget reductions, abruptly terminated funds for all state refugee services within 30 days. AACI was forced to close immediately its \$222,000 refugee-assistance program. This loss of funding threw AACI into a serious financial crisis and threatened the imminent demise of its small county-funded mental-health program. To salvage AACI's only remaining

direct-service program, Mary volunteered to serve as the program's full-time administrator/fiscal agent for one dollar a year. She continued for five years (1981-86). Under her leadership program services grew five-fold. Two years later, she founded within AACI the region's first Asian Women Domestic Counseling Clinic, which expanded to include the first Asian Women's Shelter south of San Francisco. Mary is considered "the mother of AACI." As one of the founders observed, "With Mary, AACI became possible; without Mary there would be no 'Seid Partnership,' which was essential for the creation of the organization."

Robert "Bob" Kam, chair of the Affirmative Action/Employment Standing Committee, led the effort to ensure that justice is achieved for Asian Americans wrongfully treated in their employment. His committee evaluated all employment complaints received by AACI and selected those that warranted the organization's support and action. The committee displayed uncommon courage in confronting private corporations and government entities. Examples of successful interactions included the Palo Alto Veterans Administration, the State Department of Education and the University of California Santa Cruz. This committee was so successful that it became the "go to" group for Asian Americans to resolve employment disputes. Bob's unflappable calm, pervasive optimism and quick humor made him a superb chairman for the Affirmative Action/Employment Standing Committee.

Edward Kawazoe and I were the most active and persistent advocates for mental-health treatment services for Asian and minority residents. Gifted with uncommon writing skills, Ed was



Robert "Bob" Kam

singularly responsible for obtaining grants from government and private sources for AACI. He was the cornerstone for AACI's financial stability in the early years of the organization. Many commented that Ed and Allan were like "two peas in a pod" due to their similar life values, perspectives on Asian American historic experiences and strong propensity for action-oriented resolutions of problems. Second only to Mary, Ed provided key emotional and substantive support for me to overcome new and difficult challenges.

Leo Lowe and **Paul Sakamoto**, by their positions as high school principals and respected leaders in their respective communities, provided AACI with the vitally needed positive image and credibility in its early years. During the mid-1970s, many minority grassroots groups advocating for social change were smeared, undermined and destroyed as being subversive communist/socialist organizations. All new groups require time to demonstrate good deeds and actions to earn public trust and credibility. Leo and Paul provided the invaluable and impenetrable shield protecting AACI in its infancy years. Both consistently gave sound and wise advice to the organization.

Eimi Okano's human-relations skills and winsome personality complemented well the intellectual and superb



Edward Kawazoe



Paul Sakamoto

debating talent of her co-chair Jeanette Arakawa of AACI's Education Committee. The two were an irresistible conquering force in battles over social equity in school curricula. Their detailed preparation for overcoming rivals in debates was unmatched. AACI, parents, teachers and families are indebted to these two for the current bias-free school textbooks and instructional materials in California. Standing Committee members were especially blessed to experience Eimi and Jeanette's joint inspirational leadership.

Paul Wong and **Victor Wong** were veteran community organizers from San Francisco's Chinatown. Their experiences in effectively addressing the needs of disenfranchised, immigrant and poverty-level minorities were invaluable in the early years of AACI. They provided insight and knowledgeable consultation to AACI in its advocacy strategies to mobilize community members for massive demonstrations of support or protests in front of decision-making boards. Both were also experts in assisting with recruitment of grassroots citizens for programs. They have remained loyal AACI consultants over several decades.

Connie Young-Yu, author, historian and lecturer, is widely known in the region. She is the author of numerous articles and books, and she participated as the most knowledgeable



Eimi Okano



Paul Wong



Victor Wong

AACI person on public and private media issues during AACI's first decade. She was a fiery and courageous advocate who guided the organization in all its ventures of support or protest on Asian American and minority media issues. Connie was an inspiration to all concerned with civil rights and social justice issues. She raised the consciousness of AACI members on the power of media for both good and evil when reporting on Asian ethnic communities. Connie was also a popular speaker at AACI's numerous education courses and conferences.

I, **Allan Seid**, have the honor to be considered the "father" of AACI. With Mary by my side, I was credited with vision, leadership, courage and inspiration to create AACI and to recruit an abundance of quality advocates and service providers to assist and participate with AACI from its beginning. My broad cross-cultural healing knowledge gained from Western and Eastern professional training was vital for AACI to develop its culturally sensitive, innovative and uniquely effective therapeutic services for Asian and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities.

The decade of AACI's founding was characterized by an environment ambivalent toward minorities and persons of Asian heritage. Many Asian Americans



Connie Young Yu



Allan Seid

of the decades between the mid-1940s to the late 1980s were anxious over being called at best "unpatriotic" or at worst attacked as being Communist agents of China, Korea or Vietnam. Many geopolitical events from the 1940s to the 2020s were particularly troublesome for AAPI communities. World War II against Imperial Japan in the 1940s, the Korean Conflict along with the hate-filled hearings led by Senator Joe McCarthy in the 1950s, the onset of the Vietnam conflict and the Cold War with Russia in the 1960s, hostile trade issues with Japan in the 1980s, the Twin Towers destruction by terrorists in 2001 and the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020-21 all inflamed deep-seated racist and xenophobic perspectives toward Asian ancestry populations in the United States. Many Asian Americans were traumatized for years with anxieties and subconscious unease with White Americans over uncertainties of being accepted or assaulted with macro and micro-aggressions and vilifications. It was not an easy or hospitable time when the "Original Twelve" united to create Asian Americans for Community Involvement.

By late September 1973, the Original Twelve grew into a 19-member "Founding Board of Directors" comprised of the following people: Jeannette Arakawa, Mary Chan Seid, Michael Honda, Robert Kam, Edward Kawazoe, Grace Kubota, Victor Li, Emory Lee, Leo Lowe, Eimi Okano, Russell Pow, Paul Sakamoto, Nilo Sarmiento, Helen Tao, Paul Wong, Victor Wong, Terry Yep, Connie Young-Yu and I.

The Founding Board began to develop a governance structure for the organization in early November of that year. They decided that officers of the Board of Directors would be elected annually. An executive committee comprised of board officers could meet between monthly board meetings and at the call of the board chair to transact business. Five standing committees would be created to address major priority areas: (1) Education, (2) Affirmative Action/Employment, (3) Health and Human Services, (4) Political Representation and (5) Media. The chairpersons of each committee were to be elected annually by its members. These standing committees were established to allow advocates to join the specific committee that would focus

on their priority concerns and facilitate interaction with other members with similar issues and interests.

The organization's regular meetings were held on the fourth Thursday of the month (except for holidays) at our Palo Alto home. The board held its monthly meetings on the second Thursday of the month, also at our home. The group elected the following Board Officers at its first meeting in November, including myself as Chairman, Ed Kawazoe as Vice-Chair, Mary as Secretary and Terry Yep as Treasurer.

In late September-early October 1973, the so-far nameless group of advocates needed a title for their organization, a banner to rally behind. Starting from a list of fifteen potential names, choosing the "perfect one" was a challenge. After significant discussion, they narrowed the list to two: "Asian Americans for Action (AAA)" or "Asian Americans for Community Involvement (AACI)." By the end of their first October meeting, the group decided they would henceforth be known as Asian Americans for Community Involvement (AACI). The choice of a title with the words "for community involvement" instead of "for action" was a nod to the reality of an ambivalent local community leery of minority groups proposing social or perceived change. Under the new "identity brand" and a logo designed by graphic artist Wilford Low, the infant association gradually increased its visibility. It became known widely after two years as a reputable organization within the Asian American and general community.

In mid-October, we hand-delivered the completed application for incorporation to Sacramento officials. The general membership had reached 35 by November, suggesting a positive acceptance by a segment of the Asian American community. It signified a willingness of some in the ethnic group to advocate publicly and boldly for an improved quality of life. With an initial strong and unified board, AACI still awaited official state approval of its application for incorporation in early November. Finally, news arrived that AACI was officially incorporated on November 27, 1973, a reason for a joyous celebration.

The November and December meetings were devoted to work by members of each of the five standing committees. Each

committee met separately and developed its own work plans for 1974. The December meeting was marked by a holiday party with "sweets, sinful goodies and high spirits."

PART 4: FIRST FIVE YEARS: GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT, 1973-1978

The first five years of AACI were a flurry of activities that would set the pace for the growing organization. AACI had two main types of activities: formal and informal.

Informal AACI Activities

Ad hoc activities sprang from a spontaneous idea. Alone or in concert with others, an AACI member would assume responsibility to bring an idea to fruition. This type of activity was usually based on a specific interest, was of short duration and involved only a small number of people.



*AACI volunteers and staff, c.1974: Front, unidentified, Ed Kawazoe;
Rear, Esther Ho, Francis Wong, Julie Hata, Miquel Soria, Janelle
Louie, Bobbie Kawazoe, La Donna Yumori, Mike Kaku*

One example was the creation of "clusters" of mothers (Jeanette Arakawa, Mary Chan Seid, Lucretia Lee, Eimi Okano, Helen Tao, Terry Yep and others) who would gather informally to share issues of child rearing, handling of bullying on school grounds and how children could respond effectively to negative interactions. Such situations could include racist or sexist remarks and classroom discriminatory behaviors from peers or teachers. The clusters also discussed how to teach children coping skills to address academic challenges and matters of disciplining.

Another cluster example involved college-aged AACI members who were keen on encouraging and supporting young aspiring Asian Americans in arts and entertainment. The most active in this group were Cheryl Fong, Paul Fong, Dick Fukushima, Mike Kaku, Richard Katsuda, Joyce Kawahata, Steve Takakura, Candy Takashima, Vicky Taketa and Ladonna Yumori. The group attended live-theater performances, film debuts, art gallery openings and public readings of creative writings and poems. This cluster foreshadowed AACI's current program, Art/Media Promoting Leadership Initiatives for Youth (AMPLIFY), which seeks to stimulate creativity, motivation and leadership in the arts among Asian American youngsters and to support those interested in a future career in the arts.

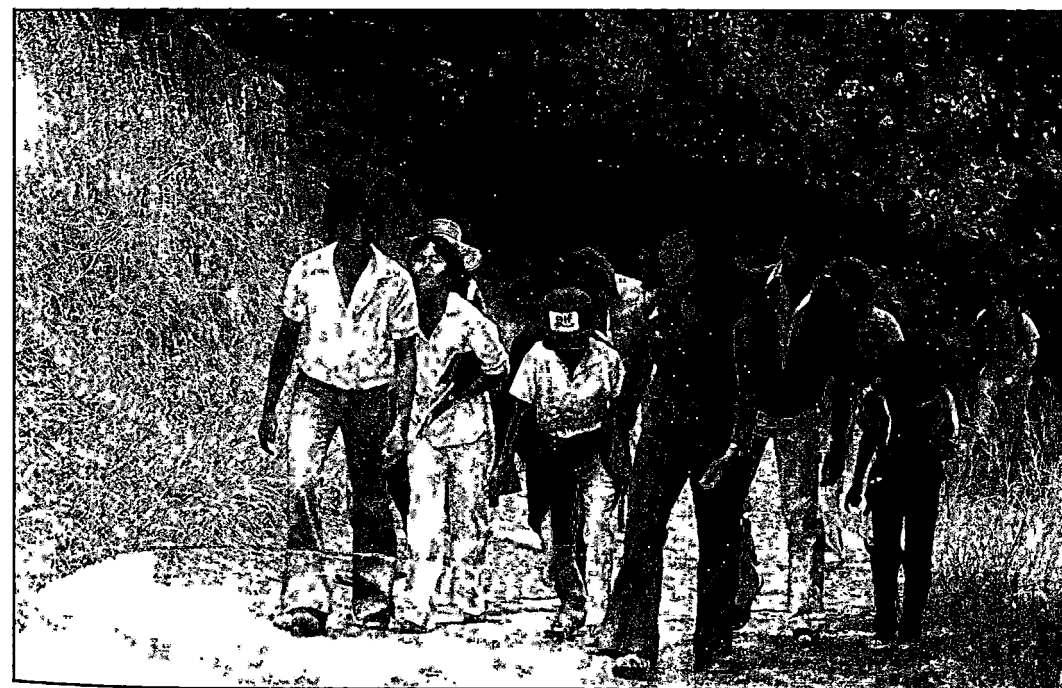
A third example was the establishment of a teen club, Young Asian Americans for Teen Involvement (YAATI), by ninth-grader Arlene Seid, our elder daughter. Marcine, Arlene's younger sister, and Janie Fong were staunch advocates for the group. These three spearheaded the group as a means for the younger generation to be involved in the socio-political arena. YAATI focused on core issues of home, education, family, child rights and



YAATI founder Arlene Seid

youth social justice, as well as other concerns related to Asian American teens. On several advocacy issues, YAATI leaders testified before local school boards, city councils, county commissions, as well as at local, regional and national YWCA conferences and at churches.

The YATTI group enjoyed joining AACI's "Family Education Field Trips," which focused on Asian American history and culture. On such tours, many were exposed for the first time to the early American history of anti-Asian immigration issues. One such trip was to Angel Island, the "first stop in America" for thousands of Asians between 1910 and 1940. On such tours, many were exposed for the first time to the early American history of anti-Asian immigration issues, including the 1882 National Chinese Immigration Exclusion Act. They journeyed to the Chinatowns of San Francisco, Oakland and Sacramento as well as vintage 1800s temples in Weaverville, Marysville, Oroville, San Francisco, Bakersfield and Los Angeles. They also visited the vineyards of Napa and Sonoma Valleys where the Chinese had



Connie Young Yu leads AACI trip to Angel Island Immigration Station, 1976

been engaged in maintenance agriculture and carved out deep caverns for wine storage and aging. They toured historic Chinese pioneer mining sites in the "Gold Country"; early Chinatowns of Locke, Walnut Grove and Coulterville; the extensive Chinese-constructed levees along the California Delta protecting the towns of Courtland, Rio Vista and Isleton from flooding. They traveled to the Almaden Quicksilver (mercury) Mine and the huge silver mines located at Virginia City, Nevada and Nevada City, California.

They went to Chinese fishing centers of the 1800s at China Camp near San Rafael and at Alviso and on the Monterey Peninsula. At the Sacramento Railroad Museum, they learned that between 1863 and 1869, nearly 20,000 Chinese immigrants had performed a Nineteenth-century engineering wonder, successfully chipping through the Sierra Nevada Mountain's solid granite with hand tools and dynamite to unite the western part of the Transcontinental Railroad with the eastern portion.

Aside from giving information and



YAATI field trip to San Francisco Chinatown



YAATI counselors: Top row, left to right: Cheryl Fong, Marsha Fong, Theodore Fong, Middle row, left to right: Mike Kaku, Janelle Louie, Vicki Takeka Right: LaDonna Yumori (Kaku)



pleasure, these created a sense of pride in AACI members—both young and old—in the immense contribution made by Chinese and Asian pioneers in the building of California and the United States. Learning of the achievements of their Asian American pioneer forebears, they could more easily identify themselves as being truly Americans. As part of a pluralistic America, they could join other Americans in feeling proud to assert that families of diverse races and ethnicities collectively helped build

our country. Field trip participants also learned harsh lessons by visiting the wartime Japanese-American Internment/Concentration Camps at Manzanar, Tule Lake and Topaz. These trips impressed upon AACI members the importance of the Constitutional rights of liberty and freedom granted to all American citizens and inspired them to safeguard these rights and never permit similar governmental injustices to be inflicted on any group of Americans again.

YAATI teens were regular active participants in most AACI conferences and public events. AACI college-age members (Cheryl Fong, Paul Fong, Dick Fukushima, Richard Katsuda, Mike Kiku, Janelle Louie, Miguel Soria, Steve Takakura, Victoria Taketa, Ladonna Yumori and others) provided adult supervision, support, leadership training and guidance. On the lighter side, the group organized recreation activities, beach parties, overnight camping, trips to amusement sites and hikes at local, regional, state and federal parks and bay lands for environmental and ecological learning experiences.

YAATI was also the forerunner of AACI's current youth program, entitled "Leadership in Education, Advocacy and Democracy (LEAD)," which provides more formal youth-leadership training, Asian American history and cultural education and opportunities that promote civic engagement and participatory experiences including interning in the offices of elected officials.

Formal AACI Activities

The second major type of AACI activities typically came from one of AACI's five standing committees: Education, Employment/Affirmative Action, Health/Human Services, Political Representation and Public Media. Members paid an annual membership fee of ten dollars that allowed them to cast a vote. In practice, little distinction was made between a member and a volunteer. These committees allowed members and volunteers to select the group that best matched their interests. Within each area, AACI participants brought their own experiences, special knowledge and unique skills to shape the



Marc, Val, Marcine, and Arleen Seid performing at AACI's 5th anniversary celebration, 1978

most compelling intellectual arguments and strategies for advocacy.

Standing committees are the initiators and implementers of AACI actions. Typically, the standing committee identifies an issue and submits it to the board of directors. If a majority of the Board endorses the committee's position, the committee then designs an action plan, recruits supporters and leads the advocacy campaign.

The first collective organization conference, sponsored by all five standing committees, was an all-day training and self-development workshop called "Strategy Models for Asian American Advocacy and Action." Held on July 14, 1974, at De Anza Community College in Cupertino, the workshop aimed to develop strategies for Asian American Advocacy in five areas:



AACI family outing at Asilomar Beach, 1977

- Racism-free/sexism-free education curricula and culturally sensitive and competent faculty, administrators and school board members.
- Affirmative action/fair employment practices in all occupations and professional fields within all levels, from line staff to management, administration and governing board members.
- Adequate and accessible culturally competent and language-appropriate health/human services.
- Just and equal political representation at all governing levels, i.e., school boards, municipal, county, state and federal official bodies and their associated special commissions.
- Effective use of public media.



Meeting at Seid home, where AACI met from 1973 to 1980

More than 80 AACI members collectively developed a 14-page booklet entitled "Working Guidelines for Action," authored by Russell Pow. The strategies became AACI's trademark qualities. These qualities consist of four elements:

1. Utilizing energy and resources of others to effect change
2. Awareness of existing resources in most power structures
3. Timely solicitation for assistance from major and ethnic media, legal, political allies and political structures.
4. Developing a six-point operational style for implementing advocacy activities.

Members and volunteers of the five standing committees and the AACI Board of directors used these materials for many years before they needed to be revised.

CHAPTER 2

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF AACI STANDING COMMITTEES

AACI's five standing committees provided focal points for members and volunteers to select the group best suited to their respective interests. Within each committee, participants could bring their own experiences, special knowledge and passion to argue that a given activity be one of the projects selected by the committee for action and forwarded to the Board of Directors for collective support. These committees still exist.

1. Education Committee
2. Employment/Affirmative Action Committee
3. Health and Human Services Committee
4. Political Representation Committee
5. Media Committee

PART 1. EDUCATION COMMITTEE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

1. ASIAN AMERICAN ETHNIC STUDIES

Academic-level, Asian American studies were virtually unheard of in the San Jose region and Peninsula cities south of San Francisco during the time of AACI's birth in 1973. In 1974-75, Val Chun, Ed Kawazoe, and I used our academic expertise to organize "AACI Teaching Teams" to develop a curriculum for teaching Asian American Studies courses to undergraduate students. The final curriculum focused on the Asian American experience in the United States, touching on acculturation, assimilation, Anglo-conformity, ethnic identity, multi-culturalism, pluralism, structural or "institutional" racism, individual prejudices and historical struggles of Asian Americans to fight exclusion and embrace inclusion in American communities.

Six teaching teams were organized, each comprised of experienced AACI volunteer instructors who assisted Val Chun, Ed Kawazoe, and me in our university and college courses:

- Team A: Mary Chan Seid, Cheryl Fong, Donna Fung, Alice Kawazoe, Leland Nerio, Terry Yep.
- Team B: Jeanette Arakawa, Jo Gampon, Emory Lee, Lucretia Lee, Wendy Lee, Eimi Okano, Jane Potter, Vicki Taketa.
- Team C: Ted Fong, Dick Fukashima Mike Kaku, Shirley Kawazoe, Peter Lee, La Donna Yumori.
- Team D: Jo Gampon, Mike Honda, Lucretia Lee, Ron Lee, Mas Sato, Candy Takahuchi.
- Team E: Gilbert Chang, Bob Kam, Richard Katsuda, Janelle Louie, Miguel Sanchez, Helen Tao.
- Team F: Joyce Kawahata, Leo Lowe, Ben Menor, Russ Pow, Terry Terauchi, Connie Young Yu.

The prime objectives of the AACI ethnic-studies courses for undergraduates were to increase their understanding of Asian Americans and their communities in the United States. In 1975-76 these AACI ethnic courses were successfully taught at four local community colleges: Foothill, De Anza, Evergreen and San Jose. One year later, similar AACI courses began at Stanford University, University of California Extensions at Berkeley and Santa Cruz and San Jose State University. I taught as the "teacher of record" for AACI classes at Stanford University and San Jose State University. Val Chun served as "teacher of record" at the University of California Extensions at Berkeley and Santa Cruz and Edward Kawazoe instructed as "teacher of record" at the four community colleges of Foothill, De Anza, Evergreen and San Jose City. Additionally, a modified series of classes were provided to teachers of four school districts seeking additional credits for salary increases for achieving a master's degree. All three teachers of record donated their instructional stipends to AACI.

2. COMMUNITY PUBLIC EDUCATION CONFERENCES

The objectives of the Community Education Conference project were to address widespread ignorance and misconceptions about the needs and issues of the newly developing suburban Asian Bay Area communities, to increase the general public's awareness and



Some AACI teaching team members:

Top row, left to right:

Bobbie Kawazoe, Joyce Kawahata, Emory Lee

Middle row, left to right:

Leland Nerio, Vicki Taketa, Helen Tao

Right: Terry Yep



knowledge of their Asian American neighbors and to foster mutual respect, positive relations, fruitful interactions and welcoming inclusion of diverse peoples in the area. The teaching teams from the college-level ethnic courses were also utilized in conducting the community conferences.

- **November 1975: "Why America Conference"** at the Chinese Community Center in Palo Alto. The conference used oral histories to explore the experiences of first-generation Chinese, Japanese and Filipino senior citizens and their reasons for coming to America. It examined their conflicts with exclusion and struggles for inclusion into society. The conference highlighted their survival strategies and actions. I opened the conference by asserting that while "we wish to preserve the fire of the past, we honor best our fathers and mothers not by going back to the place where they stopped but by going on toward the things their vision foresaw." The conference was inspired and conducted by Paul Sakamoto and Edward Kawazoe.
- **May 1976: "Experience at Manzanar"** at Mid-Peninsula YWCA, Palo Alto. Mary Chan Seid, YWCA Board chair and AACI board officer, coordinated and conducted this event, which was co-sponsored by the YWCA and AACI. She introduced Author Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston,



Allan Seid opening "Why America?", a first-generational oral history conference, 1974



Speakers at "Why America?" conference: Lily Sung, Pete Silifan, Yoneo Bepp, Yumeno Fujino, with Josephine Gampon, moderator

who discussed her book *Farewell to Manzanar*. In the afternoon session, Houston and four local panelists who were also former internment-camp internees answered questions on details of daily life in the camps and their perspectives on the impact of camp life on the children.

- **March 1977: "Representations of Asians in Educational Material"** at the Stanford Law School. The conference reviewed and evaluated the representation of Asian and Asian Americans in K-12 and college curricula. Examples of demeaning, negative and inaccurate portrayals of Asians in the content and illustration of textbooks and supplementary material were examined. The absence of counter-balancing, positive presentations was noted, as well as serious omissions of information on significant contributions made by Asian Americans to the building of America. A panel of education specialists and

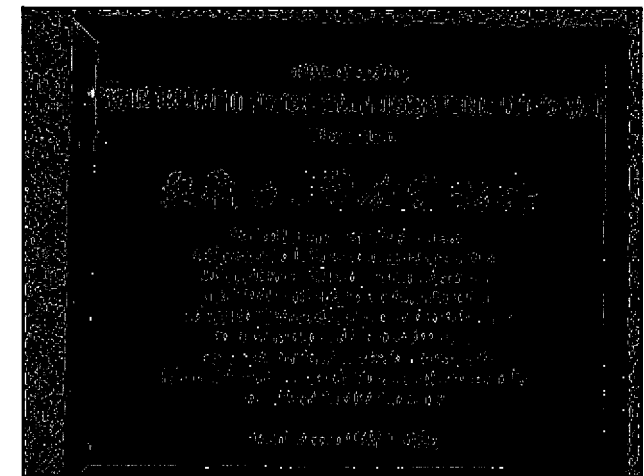
attorneys discussed the implications of the current omission and misrepresentation of Asian Americans. The panel also lauded the newly adopted sections of the California Education Code which mandated bias-free, school materials that include the contributions of diverse groups in the development of the United States.

- **October 1978: "Violence Hurts You and Me"** at Mid-Peninsula YWCA, Palo Alto. Sponsored jointly by AACI and the Mid-Peninsula YWCA, the conference was conducted by YWCA Board President, Mary Chan Seid. Topics focused on crime and violence in diverse settings such as school campuses, homes, neighborhoods, job sites, poor and affluent communities, human-service agencies, jails and prisons. Multiple break-out groups explored the nature, causes, solutions and resources for help for crime and violence in these various settings. The YWCA coordinated follow-up discussion sessions in Palo Alto, East Palo Alto and adjoining cities.
- **June 1979: "Asian American Families in Suburbia"** at the Chinese Community Center, Palo Alto. The conference covered emerging issues such as interracial dating and marriage, concepts of sexuality, acculturation and pressure for Anglo-conformity. Continuing issues included retention of root-culture and primary language ethnic identity, family and individual identities, family conflicts, parenting, academic pressures and fostering a sense of belonging and community acceptance. After formal presentations, break-out groups afforded opportunities for meaningful discussion, sharing potential coping strategies and resource assistance. Invitations to participate in the AACI organization were offered.

3. CENTENNIAL COMMEMORATION OF SAN JOSE CHINATOWN BURNING

AACI and the Association of Concerned Ethnic Chinese (ACEC) jointly sponsored a commemorative plaque and ceremony on the centennial of the fifth and final arson that burned down the Market Street Chinatown of San Jose. Although the fire destroyed their homes, restaurants and businesses and forced the expulsion of over 1400 inhabitants, these Chinese immigrants never gave up and continued to contribute significantly to the prosperity of San Jose and the Santa Clara Valley. Board members Mary Chan Seid and Gilbert Chang represented AACI at the event while Co-Presidents Irene Tai and Jeanette Zane represented ACEC.

The commemoration plaque is mounted at the entrance of the Fairmont Hotel in San Jose for all to see, be informed and remember the courage, resilience and inspiration of the residents of this once-thriving Chinatown, which existed in 1887 on the exact site of the plaque. At the event, San Jose Mayor Tom McHenry and Councilperson Susan Hammer expressed regret for the violence towards the Chinese and vowed to make amends and foster future partnerships of good will between the City of San Jose and its Chinese community.



Plaque placed by AACI and the Association of Concerned Ethnic Chinese commemorating the 100th anniversary of the 1887 burning of San Jose Chinatown

4. RENAMING PALO ALTO MIDDLE SCHOOLS

AACI provided leadership and educational activities strongly supporting the renaming of three Palo Alto public middle schools named for scientists who had advocated for Eugenics, a theory

popular in the 1920s and 1930s. Eugenics was concerned with the improvement of hereditary qualities of a race by control of reproduction. Eugenicist policies subscribed to in California and elsewhere included the sterilization of people considered "unfit," without their knowledge and consent.

Testifying on March 18, 2018, at the Palo Alto Unified School District Office, AACI representatives Jeanette Arakawa, Mary Chan Seid, Eimi Okano, Monica Yeung Arima, Connie Young-Yu and I strongly urged the removal of the school names honoring these Eugenicists. After three hours of testimony, the school trustees voted unanimously to change the school names.



San Jose Mayor Tom McEnery, who officiated at AACI plaque ceremony, 1987



Jeanette Arakawa and Eimi Okano advocating for the successful renaming of Jordan Middle School, Palo Alto, 2019



Monica Yeung Arima

5. PUBLIC CIVIC EDUCATION—POLITICAL CANDIDATES FORUMS

Two of AACI's Standing Committees, the Education Standing Committee and the Political Representation Standing Committee, jointly conducted free, public service, civic education forums with the following five objectives:

1. Provide the general community the opportunity to evaluate rival politicians as they answered questions pre-selected by a panel of three AACI leaders on vital community issues and one or two on high-priority concerns of Asian American residents.
2. Provide visibility and contact between politicians, the public and AACI early in the political cycle.
3. Provide AACI volunteers the opportunity, training and experience needed to become comfortable confronting politicians in public settings.
4. Provide AACI volunteers leadership training in developing and conducting both large and small, public, community forums.
5. Provide AACI visibility as an organization actively engaged in promoting and providing valuable community-benefit activities.

Each forum typically included the two main candidates from



Allan Seid introduces State Assembly candidates at AACI Political Forum, 1974



Audience at AACI Political Forum, Palo Alto, 1974

each of three different contests at three levels: County or City Council, State Assembly and State Senate. Between 1976 and 1980, these forums were held at Cubberley High School in Palo Alto. After 1981 additional forums were held at various high schools in San Jose. The forums were labor intensive but achieved their five objectives, brought community-wide, positive, public-relations benefits and established AACI as a political force in the area.

6. REFORMING STATE'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS' TEXTBOOKS

The First Textbook Battle (1973 – 1975)

In 1973 AACI became deeply involved in a reform effort led by Jeanette Arakawa, Chair of the Palo Alto PTA Council's "Task Force for the Evaluation of Textbooks from a Multicultural Perspective" to ensure that textbooks and supplementary material in California public schools were free of racist and sexist content

and portrayals. This group had been evaluating and analyzing, page-by-page, the curricula of the Palo Alto Unified School District. Each incident of racism and sexism identified was documented. In July 1973 Arakawa and Okano detailed the purpose of the Task Force's project to AACI's core members. The two explained the purpose and the importance of using only bias-free material in public schools. They requested AACI to support the endeavor with the labor-intensive work of analyzing the texts.

AACI quickly endorsed the task force's project and encouraged other citizen groups and governmental agencies to participate in the reform effort. At the time I was chair of both the county's Human Relations Commission (HRC) and the Board of Mental Health of Santa County and secured their endorsements. In turn, members of the two bodies urged active support from their own constituents. As HRC Chair I directed HRC Director James McEntee to communicate the commission's strong endorsement for the endeavor and request support from HRCs of various California counties and cities—including the counties of Los Angeles, San Francisco, Sacramento and San Diego and the cities of San Jose, Palo Alto and San Mateo. Director McEntee was superbly effective in persuading many of his HRC counterparts across California to support the textbook reform effort.

Over the next few years, numerous AACI members volunteered their time and energy to the page-by-page analysis of kindergarten to twelfth-grade textbooks and supplementary material. The AACI Board eventually assigned this ongoing project to its Education Standing Committee for long-term coordination, supervision and recruitment for new volunteers.

By 1975 with support of numerous community-service and church groups, educational associations and women's and governmental entities across California, Ms. Arakawa—with significant assistance from then-Congressman Leo Ryan—gained the support of the California Legislature and State Board of Education (CSBE) to adopt an education code requirement that all curricula proposed for sale to California public schools be free of racist and sexist content and portrayals.

The CSBE next directed the State Department of Education to

issue regulations to assist local school boards and administrations only to use curricula in compliance with the Education Code. The CSBE also directed its California Curriculum Commission (CCC) to implement a legal requirement to review annually all publisher-submitted materials to ensure code compliance prior to granting State approval for sale. The CCC created Legal Compliance Panels in multiple locations across California to perform the yearly reviews and approve or reject curricula submitted for sale. AACI Education Committee members were active in the Legal Compliance Panels of Palo Alto and San Jose for several years.

The victory in amending the California Education Code to include mandating bias-free curricula in California public schools with a compliance-enforcement mechanism is of singular significance; this mandate promotes the development of positive social/emotional identity for countless minority children and other girls and boys during their 12 years of state public education. This achievement in education became known in AACI parlance as "The First Textbook Battle."

The Second Textbook Battle (August 1979 – May 1980)

The "Second Textbook Battle" against the publishing industry in California was won again by the intensive labor and passion of the numerous and diverse groups led by AACI. The triumph was undoubtedly a miracle by many standards: AACI, a small nonprofit, managed to gather support from 82 other organizations throughout the state to fight against the big publisher's conglomerate and win, all within eight months. With coordinated teamwork and stalwart tenacity, this time the small overcame the large. This surprising turn of events would illustrate to future generations that for citizens groups to win against a larger, more powerful industrial firm, they must establish a pre-existing, well-prepared and well-organized statewide organization adjacent to the Capitol in Sacramento. In essence, placing a well-prepared army on a familiar field of battle is a prerequisite for a successful outcome. As Sun Tzu said, "In peace prepare for war; in war prepare for peace." AACI and other

experienced battle veterans knew that this second textbook conflict would not be the last time profit-making industries would rise up to thwart or stifle the voices of less powerful communities.

In early 1979 the publishing industry had been covertly working with the State Department of Education to revise the legal compliance process. This collaboration was proceeding without the general knowledge of the commissioners of the California State Board of Education (CSBE). The publishers asserted without evidence that since 1975, racism and sexism had markedly decreased in the school environment and that it was no longer necessary to continue the intensive review and approval procedures at the same level of thoroughness. They essentially recommend a review for legal compliance of only 25 percent of supplementary materials submitted to the State. Then 75 percent of such materials would automatically be given the state's stamp of approval as being legally compliant. The publishers also cited without evidence that this decreased evaluation process would decrease cost and expedite the work of volunteers.

Fortunately, in the late summer of 1980, because I was a Board of Education commissioner, I uncovered this well-concealed plan by the publishers. I also discovered that the State Department of Education had already scheduled the publishers' proposal for discussion at the November 1980 CSBE meeting and a vote at the May 1981 meeting. Three independent education consultants and I quickly analyzed the publishers' proposed modifications and determined that the publishers' recommendations would significantly weaken the hard-won legal compliance review process. At the May 1981 CSBE meeting, a vote on the publisher's proposal would be held.

Fearing that the publishers' proposal would ultimately lead to the elimination of the well-functioning evaluation review process, I quickly informed the leaders of the AACI Education Standing Committee of this ill-advised plan. AACI immediately alerted and organized its small band of volunteer advocates from the original textbook battle of 1975. AACI again became the de facto leader

and coordinating center, launching forth information alerts to community organizations, education associations and PTAs groups. The message was succinct and clear; powerful publishers could and would use their power again to be unconstrained in selling racist and sexist curricula to California public schools. As the de facto headquarters of the coordination effort, AACI relied on its small but dedicated staff and loyal volunteers, many of whom had fought in the "First Textbook Battle." These veterans were familiar with the difficulties to be addressed in the short time before the November CSBE and the decision-making May 1980 meeting.

Among the numerous challenges were the issues of labor-intensive administrative tasks and an expensive communication and information dissemination campaign. In an age before the introduction of the Internet, AACI depended on the tried-and-true land telephone, the postal mail service and occasional expensive telegram to send out urgent information and coordinate the numerous diverse groups. As a result, a fair amount of time and energy was expended in developing a list of like-minded organizations and community leaders who would not only support but also would be willing and able to travel to testify at the November 1979 and May 1980 CSBE meetings in Sacramento. Secondly, AACI developed a basic information packet explaining the publisher's challenge, the negative implications of the publishers' proposed changes and the rapid, counter-action required, as well as urgent requests for assistance and mutual contact information.

By the May 1981 CSBE meeting, AACI had rallied the supporters and identified individuals willing to testify in Sacramento and developed the most effective approach to present the numerous testimonies. I led the volunteers from AACI. Dr. Ferdinand Galvez directed the volunteers from Philippine American Group Associations of the Sacramento Area (PAGASA), his Sacramento-based Filipino coalition, to arrange the transportation, lodging and resources needed by the speakers and supporters from out-of-town. On their arrival, these speakers were greeted warmly. The hospitable welcome bolstered everyone's courage and spirits.

On the morning of the meeting, the CSBE and publishers were surprised to be confronted by a group of nearly 90 organizations from as far south as San Diego and as far north as Eureka. The assemblage was united in protesting against the proposal to change the legal compliance review process. Seventy persons had signed the witness list, and five of them spoke in the 45 minutes allotted for the agenda item. The first speaker, Edward Kawazoe of AACI, said that although California was recognized as a "national leader in the battle against racism and sexism in published school materials," there was still "a dismal persistence of racist and sexist distortions and omissions in our literature, popular culture and textbooks." Carol Kuiper of The Santa Clara County School Boards Association urged continuation of the policy of screening all proposed instructional materials. Other groups appearing to request a continuance of full screening included the California Commission on the Status of Women, the Chinese Community Center of the Peninsula and the Japanese American Curriculum Project of San Mateo. Because the time allotted to the textbook item expired, I proposed, with Board's approval, that persons and group representatives not yet afforded the opportunity to testify be permitted to submit their testimonies in writing to the board secretary for official recording and board members' study, analysis and consideration. Many of the verbal and written testimony submitted raised the question as to how citizens could be assured that the unscreened remaining 75 percent would be free of racism and sexism. They argued that it simply did not follow that if one piece of material by a particular publisher happens to be free of racism and sexism that everything else from that publisher would be also. Additionally, many group representatives emphasized that information about 25 percent sampling provides absolutely no information about the remaining 75 percent.

At the conclusion of the meeting, several individual commissioners and the CSBE collectively expressed deep appreciation to the many participants in the audience. Following comments from each commissioner and a discussion, the CSBE then voted to table the publishers' proposal, an action essentially indicating a rejection of the proposal. The attendees burst into

applause, expressing joy and relief. This defeat of the publishers' effort to weaken the legal compliance to the review process became known at AACI as the "The Second Textbook Battle."

The Third Textbook Battle (May – July 1981)

When the CSBE continued its meeting the following day, the Board voted to create a Select Committee on the Legal Compliance Process to make a comprehensive update on the functioning of the compliance process and to recommend any needed improvement. Dr. Glen Toney, former Deputy Superintendent of the Palo Alto Unified School District, chaired the committee, comprised of seven education specialists from diverse racial, gender and geographical backgrounds. This select group was authorized to use various methods to analyze material from at least one public hearing in northern California and one in the southern part of the state. The Committee's report was scheduled for discussion and possible action at the July 1980 meeting of the CSBE.

The "Third Textbook Battle" had begun! The Select Committee had only three months, May to July 1981, to make its recommendations, so AACI had to organize quickly to assure knowledgeable people were appointed to the Select Committee and that informed people were registered to testify at the two state-wide public hearings. Once again massive amounts of time and energy were needed from the education associations, community service organizations and women's and PTA groups to mobilize quickly and advocate effectively throughout the period when the Select Committee was evaluating the legal compliance review and instructional material approval process. Similar strategies and tactics that had been employed successfully in the "Second Textbook Battle" had to be repeated and strengthened to retain the existing comprehensive Education Code and robust enforcement system.

Once again AACI agreed to serve as the coordinating center for the "Third Textbook Battle." It sent out to concerned parties the following outline of tasks that needed to be initiated immediately, organized and coordinated by local leaders in at least the cities of San Diego, Los Angeles, Fresno, San Jose, San

Francisco and Sacramento:

- Identify and recommend qualified, sensitive education specialists who are committed to maintaining bias-free textbooks and supplementary material in public schools for appointment to the Select Committee.
- Identify and select immediately a local leader to coordinate and organize local education associations, community service organizations and women's and PTA groups to communicate independently with members of the Select Committee during their three-months of study.
- Register for early speaking slots at the public hearings to be conducted by the Select Committee in their area.
- Plan for mobilization of numerous informed advocacy groups and individuals along with prepared speakers to address the Select Committee at their hearing. The speakers should have a written copy of their testimony for submission.
- Identify individuals and/or group representatives willing and able to travel to testify at the CSBE meeting in Sacramento on July 1980. Group travel by bus together has been found helpful to some advocates in past, similar experiences; however, group transportation by bus requires extensive planning and early coordination.

AACI stressed to everyone that the coming CSBE meeting was vital because the Select Committee would then present its final assessment report and recommendations, after which the CSBE would likely vote on their recommendations at that same July meeting.

This "Third Textbook Battle" finally concluded with the following events:

- AACI successfully accomplished its responsibility as the coordinating center for the "Third Textbook Battle." This third experience was far less stressful and time- and energy-consuming for the AACI volunteers and staff because most of the regional leaders were already knowledgeable about the issues being contested and

already experienced with the type of mass organizing and coordination needed for a successful advocacy effort.

- The preliminary struggles were waged at the Select Committee's public hearings held in the cities of San Jose and Inglewood and at the many other smaller formal and informal contacts between Select Committee members and community and education advocates. The first of two statewide public hearings by the Select Committee was held on May 21, 1981, at the Alum Rock School District Office. Thirty-two organizations presented testimony in support of continuing the legal compliance review system and added specific features to enhance the process. For example, the screening forms should be tightened to identify omissions of smaller ethnic groups such as Native Americans and Asian Americans; similarly, a lack of identifying missing representation of girls in leadership roles was corrected by modifying the screening guidelines and sheets. A similar well-attended hearing was held one month later in the city of Inglewood, California.
- After concluding its independent, in-depth investigation, the Select Committee provided their findings and 13 recommendations to the CSBE in late July 1981. Their summary asserted that there was indeed a need to continue strong support for the Education Code that established the rigorous legal compliance review and approval process. The committee found no basis to decrease the comprehensive and thorough steps within the current review and approval system. They recommended the following revisions: refining the guideline and its associated compliance check-off forms to facilitate improved detection of errors of omission such as inadvertent neglecting to include information of minorities and their contributions to our society. Select Committee member Ms. Eimi Okano, a founder of AACI, clarified that "some reviewers, sincere in their review effort, did not recognize that Asian Americans, a large minority in California, were omitted from the entire

series." She added that "inadequate portrayal of minorities has long been a serious but overlooked problem in our textbooks." Another recommendation called for the use of a "checklist" to determine who is being portrayed in the curricula. Following deliberation, CSBE members adopted the Select Committee's report and recommendations with appreciation. The large audience assembled at the meeting also added their profound gratitude with applause and verbal accolades.



Eimi Okano

Although the "Third Textbook Battle" ended victoriously, it foreshadowed for AACI and other groups concerned with rights and social justice for students, minorities, women, disabled people, seniors, discriminated religious bodies and other vulnerable populations that a more strategically efficient and effective system was needed to address state-wide issues and legislations. All AAPI leaders agreed that it was unrealistic to expect a county community-based organization such as AACI to be forced by default to perform repeated miracles of leading diverse statewide groups to defeat well-financed and politically connected industrial entities. By early 1980, I began discussions on the possibility of creating a statewide Asian Pacific American coalition in California with a headquarter office in Sacramento.

7. RESOLVING RACIAL AND ETHNIC CONFLICTS AT LOCAL SCHOOLS

School faculty, administrators and school board members occasionally become involved with racial, ethnic and/or culturally based incidents. These often arise because of individual insensitivity and biases arising from a lack of knowledge, training or previous experiences with people of diverse backgrounds.

The following example occurred at a Palo Alto middle school seventh-grade classroom. In discussing an historical event, a Chinese-American, seventh-grade pupil asserted that during World War II, Japanese-American citizens were interned in camps. The teacher vigorously denied that such an event ever occurred, publicly silenced the pupil and asserted that her information was inaccurate. The student was traumatized and shamed when she was sent to the principal's office for "classroom misbehavior." When the incident became public and the pupil's parents were invited to visit the principal, the parents appealed to AACI for support. An AACI board member accompanied the parents and together they explained the issue and the accuracy of the pupil's historical knowledge. A satisfactory solution was reached, which included an apology from the teacher and the presentation of an educational forum for the student body on the internment experience of Japanese Americans, with the pupil and two friends participating in the forum.

Another example involved B.F., a tenth-grade student at a high school in the Fremont School District. At the school's annual "Spirit Day," some students impersonated Japanese tourists visiting America, dressing with horn-rim glasses, gaudy shirts and shorts with Japanese cameras hung over the shoulders and speaking in a stereotypical accent. When B.F. protested to student leaders and the principal about this offensive portrayal of Japanese people, he was targeted for being overly sensitive and disrupting the celebratory atmosphere of the event. School administrators did little to resolve the problem. A series of unfortunate racist taunts and humiliating behaviors by B.F.'s peers resulted in his being banned from the Spirit Week activities. His "protest" was reported in the school newspaper the next day and was picked up by the San Jose Mercury News, the leading local newspaper, provoking outrage in the local community, especially among Asian American groups.

Feeling unjustly humiliated, the B.F. family appealed to AACI for assistance. Together with three AACI board members who were also educators, the parents confronted the district superintendent and school administrator. A mutually satisfactory resolution was

hammered out that involved an apology from the student leaders of "Spirit Day" and the school principal. The parents and an AACI consultant agreed to assist the school to plan and implement a series of sensitivity-training seminars for the student body and faculty. Although the school administration did ultimately offer an apology to B.F. and his family, the events highlighted the need for racial and cultural awareness education and ethnic diversity training for the student body, the teaching staff and administrators of this school, as well as many others.

Many negative, hate-based incidents confronted by AACI were not resolved successfully, but AACI made known that it would continue to monitor and confront publicly any racist incidents in both the academic and the general community. The era of the silent ethnic Asian was nearing an end in Santa Clara County.

8. PROMOTING POSITIVE ETHNIC IDENTITY

AACI believes that new refugees and immigrants should be assisted not only to learn English and American living patterns and culture as quickly as possible, but also be assisted in maintaining their primary language, culture and history. Mastering English and American cultural norms without losing one's primary language, culture and proud history are keys to a sound American identity and stable and healthy adult social/emotional life.

AACI assisted in developing and conducting English and citizenship classes, primary ethnic language and cultural schools and ethnic holiday celebrations and festivals. Successful examples include the Laotian Community School, the Cambodian annual New Year's festivals, language and culture classes and daily English and citizenship classes for Vietnamese and Southeast Asian Ethnic Chinese refugees as well as Chinese immigrants from other Asian nations. Working with ethnic community leaders and members, both AACI volunteers and staff have succeeded in creating, developing and maintaining these joint ventures over the years.

9. ADVOCATING FOR POLITICAL REPRESENTATION

With widespread support across the state, AACI and Chinese for Affirmative Action (CAA) of San Francisco successfully spearheaded my appointment to the California State Board of Education (CSBE) by Governor Jerry Brown in 1979. I was the first person of Asian heritage to serve on California's highest education body. As a result of vigorous advocacy by many AAPI organizations and individual leaders, I was reappointed in 1983 for four additional years.



Allan Seid as State Board of Education Commissioner, 1979

PART 2: EMPLOYMENT/AFFIRMATIVE ACTION COMMITTEE

Many members of AACI were involved in the Standing Committee on Employment and Affirmative Action led by Chairman Robert Kam. A notable bout in 1974 placed the organization face-to-face against the Veterans Administration Hospital in Palo Alto. AACI presented evidence which asserted that the local Veterans Hospital discriminated against Asian Americans and other minorities in their promotional practices. Data presented revealed a pervasive, systematic process of directing Asian American employees to train recently hired White workers who were repeatedly advanced to higher supervisory positions, by-passing the highly qualified Asian American who had provided their initial training. After a prolonged struggle, a partial victory was won when, without admitting wrongdoing, the hospital administration agreed to institute a more just procedure for job advancement based on seniority, job experience and objective qualifying test results. As part of the settlement, the Asian American complainant received a promotion and appropriate compensation.

Far less successful was AACI's 1997 effort to assist 62 doctoral-level engineers employed by Ames Research Center-NASA. The "Group of 62" had submitted to management a carefully researched, 13-page report, "A Report on the Status and Views of American Asians at Ames Research Center", documenting a lack of promotions of qualified and experienced Asian American engineers at the work site for over a decade. This report was submitted as an internal document to management in support of their previous complaints of lack of employment advancements and requests for



Robert Kam, Chair, Employment and Affirmative Action Committee

the establishment of a more equitable promotion process.

Receiving no satisfactory response from management, the 62 engineers requested AACI's help. Despite utilizing major and ethnic news media, contacts with officials of Lockheed-Martin and influential politicians, few productive results were achieved. Finally, with the direct assistance of Congressman Norman Mineta, a federal official traveled from Washington, D.C., to California to visit locally with the concerned parties. As the months passed, however, no changes were announced. Instead, it was reported that some individuals of the group had abandoned the collective effort upon receiving covert incentives and that others were intimidated by threats of demotions and/or dismissals.

Gradually, over a period of nearly two years, only a handful of the original group remained fighting for a just promotional policy and practice. Without a sufficient critical number of advocates, the small, exhausted core decided with great regret in 1978 to terminate their endeavor, hoping that a new core of protesters might again take up the cause soon. On analysis, it was clear that AACI's capacity was limited to successful advocacy at the local and regional spheres where its resources, allies and political influence were strongest. Another lesson learned was that a coordinated use of the judicial system—such as law suits—in conjunction with political, social/mass media and grass-root protests are necessary to successfully fight private or public industrial conglomerates at the national level.

In hindsight, securing the early assistance of the United States Labor Department and/or the United States Commission on Civil Rights to help with national-level cases is critical, an essential first advocacy step not utilized in this case. As a result, AACI subsequently tended to limit its employment advocacy focus to more local and regional employment problems and soon began to experience successes again. Examples include victories in securing the employment of a much-needed, full-time, certificated Asian American coordinator at the Bilingual Center of De Anza College (1977) and a counselor for Asian American students at San Jose State University (1977). Similarly, after leading a student

protest, AACI finally convinced the Foothill Community College Board in 1978 to hire a long-needed coordinator to manage ethnic minority activities. AACI also played key roles in the settlement of a dozen individual discrimination cases such as Furukara vs. State Department of Education, Chun vs. University of California, Santa Cruz, Asian Caucus vs. School of Social Welfare, Berkeley, Maron Mann vs. Smith-Kline Instruments and the re-appointment of Dr. Robert Lin at Mills College.

By 1977 the requests for AACI's help on individual employment cases had become too numerous and exhausting. Volunteers began to "burn-out." In response, the Employment Standing Committee decided to change its focus to what it anticipated would be the less labor-intensive activity of addressing and defending affirmative action laws, legislation and programs under attack. AACI quickly joined with other advocacy groups in numerous Affirmative Action cases compelling the United States Air Force (10/75), the Office of Contract Compliance (5/76), Smith Kline Instruments (6/76) and United States Post Office (4/77) to enact Affirmative Action policies for upward transfer/promotion of minorities.

By 1978 and increasingly during the Reagan Administration of the 1980s, Affirmative Action programs implemented for the purpose of securing equal employment opportunities in the job market and fair admission access for minorities and women to colleges were being challenged on grounds of "reverse discrimination." The employment committee found itself defending and intensely involved fighting the titanic tide of "push-back" that sought to eliminate Affirmative Action principles and programs previously embedded in both public and private institutions.

In concert with the Political Representation Committee, the Employment Committee successfully gained the appointment of Robert Kam to the Santa Clara County and the San Jose Community Block Grant Commissions, each for four-year terms of service. These bodies were vital to the distribution of federal and state funds for local projects in employment, housing and neighborhood improvement.

PART 3: HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

When Russell Pow chaired AACI's Health and Human Services Standing Committee (HHSC), he worked as a senior program manager in the Santa Clara County Department of Social Services. He subsequently became one of the most significant leaders to expand and improve health and human services for Asian refugees and immigrants in Santa Clara County.

In 1973 I began lobbying Dr. Dasil Smith, the County Mental Health Bureau Director, and Deputy Director Dr. Kenneth Meinhardt with the goal of providing culturally and linguistically appropriate mental health services to both English-speaking and non-English-speaking Asian American residents of Santa Clara County. These two administrators pointed out that the service-utilization rate over the recent decade revealed that Asian clients used available mental-health services very minimally or not at all. They cited results of prior surveys by both county and non-profit treatment-service providers that also indicated low to zero usage by Asians.

It was evident that the false "model minority stereotype" of Asian people had influenced Dr. Smith's perception that the rate of mental illness in the Asian population was very low. He further mistakenly concluded that since no previous demand for treatment services had ever been received from the Asian communities, any treatment needs were probably adequately addressed by private sources. Since its founding in 1973, AACI had labored intensively to dispel this incorrect stereotype that the Asian population has little or no need for mental health services. It now faced the challenge of disproving the county's utilization statistics that suggested public, mental health



*Russell Pow, Chair,
Health and Human
Services Committee*

treatment services among Asians were not needed.

Despite entrenched resistance, AACI pushed forward aggressively for three years with a systematic re-education effort to correct the mistaken perceptions of Asian Americans and the misconception that Asian communities have low levels of mental illness. As chair of the county Mental Health Advisory Board (MHAB) for four years from 1974-78, while also being a practicing psychiatrist, I personally sought to "re-educate" each board member as opportunities arose. In 1976, I began more intense lobbying of board members to fund an AACI proposal to create a "Pilot Research Project" to validate or refute then-current statistics asserting that Asian communities had a low prevalence of mental illness and therefore little need for mental-health-treatment services.

Wearing a second hat as chair of the influential non-profit, citizen-based Mental Health Council of Santa Clara County (MHC), AACI members and I also lobbied this community group to support the AACI pilot project. After a lengthy deliberation, the MHC voted unanimous support for the approval of the project. Following supportive testimony from representatives of the Vietnamese, Chinese and Cambodian communities, AACI, the MHC and others at the MHAB monthly meeting, the AACI proposal was approved in September 1976.

A month later in November 1976, AACI received funding to conduct a mental health needs assessment among the non-English-speaking Chinese residents of north Santa Clara County. AACI quickly hired a bilingual (Chinese-English) mental health project manager and a project assistant to staff an office from 8 AM to 5 AM five days a week. Soon after, the project staff coordinated volunteers from AACI's HHSC volunteers to interview the Chinese residents of Palo Alto, Mountain View and Los Altos. Up to the mid-1970s, the Chinese were the largest Asian immigrant ethnic group in the county. Most were Cantonese speaking with limited fluency in English. The project team obtained oral testimony and written responses to survey questions on mental health issues, symptoms and needs. The results were compiled, analyzed and documented jointly by

county mental health staff and AACI's project manager. Symptoms of depression, anxiety, psychosomatic aches, transient pains, distress and suicidal thoughts were found at higher levels than for the average, elderly White population. Specifically, the survey indicated a strong need among the north county Chinese residents for language-appropriate mental health treatment services. This project was the first county-funded effort to assess the mental health needs of an Asian ethnic group.

The small survey of Chinese residents of the three north county cities served as the precursor to a much larger and highly sophisticated 1980

research on the mental health needs of ten ethnic Asian populations residing in Santa Clara County. The research was directed by Dr. Kenneth Meinhardt, Deputy Director of the County Mental Health Bureau and jointly implemented by the staff of the County Mental Health Department and



Kenneth Meinhardt

AACI. Financial sponsorship came from the Santa Clara County Health Department. AACI staff translated a detailed survey instrument with 98 questions into the following Asian languages: Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, Korean, Filipino, Hindi, Malay and Burmese. Language-specific, AACI-trained interviewers were matched to the relevant sub-Asian language group to conduct one-on-one oral interviews in their primary language with residents of that group.

In 1976, when the small survey of north county Chinese residents was being conducted, an AACI application for federal Comprehensive Employment Training Act (CETA) funds was granted, enabling the organization to secure more office space at the Chinese Community Center in Midtown Palo Alto. At this juncture, AACI hired a part-time office clerk using its own funds.

In June 1977, Ed Kawazoe, representing AACI, collaborated with the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) on a joint Comprehensive Employment Training Act (CETA) proposal that resulted in the creation of seven positions, two of which were allotted to AACI: a health-services coordinator and a clerical assistant. This progressive addition of staff enabled AACI to expand its advocacy and mental health services.

With the sudden, chaotic withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam and other sectors of Southeast Asia in April 1973 and the final surrender of the South Vietnamese Army in 1975, the bitterly controversial conflict was declared ended. As a result, thousands of refugees fled the country in fear of retribution from the victorious Communist forces. Many of this large group known as the "second wave refugees" died during their dangerous escapes, but others were able to reach refugee camps that had been hastily erected in a dozen Southeast Asian countries.

Unlike these new refugees, the "first wave refugees" who had fled earlier in 1973-74 had the help of their employers, usually the United States government, military and civilian contractors. These "first wave refugees" were generally of the professional, upper-middle or middle classes. They were English fluent, with marketable skills and had relatively minimal post-traumatic symptoms related to the war or horrible escape experiences.

Under an international agreement, the United States and allied countries promised to allow the repatriation of a significant number of "second wave refugee" applicants from the camps. Certain regions in the United States, such as the San Jose Metropolitan Area, were designated by the federal government as "reception regions" to accept the new arrivals.

These Indochinese refugees were far from homogeneous. They included Vietnamese "boat people," the Sino-Vietnamese Hoa, Cambodians fleeing the Khmer Rouge slaughter, Laotians, Lao-Mien, Hmong and other highland peoples of Laos and the Montagnard from the Vietnamese highlands

Early projections of refugee arrivals to the San Jose area were as high as 50,000. Multiple government authorities issued warnings to all public and private health, mental health,

hospitals, medical facilities, social services and law-enforcement agencies to anticipate heightened demand for assistance from the non-English-speaking arrivals. Reports from refugee-camp authorities cited huge medical and psychological needs among these refugees. In late 1978 within this uncertain, stressful environment, the County Mental Health Bureau granted AACI additional funds to employ two, full-time Southeast Asian staff members to prepare to serve the anticipated high number of severely psychologically traumatized clients.

By 1979, AACI had established a mental-health program recognized as providing culturally competent, language-appropriate psychological services to ethnic Asian residents. Securing state and county funding for mental health services tailored for Asians is considered a pivotal moment in AACI's young history and remains one of its proudest achievements. The need to provide health and human services to this large number of "second wave" Southeast Asian refugees scheduled to arrive in San Jose in early 1980 was an urgent priority for Santa Clara County and San Jose City health and social service agencies as well as AACI. The Health and Human Services Committee Chair, Russell Pow, made known to government leaders and department heads at the local, regional and state levels AACI's strong desire to participate in the resettlement of the new arrivals. Health and Human Services Committee members also submitted four applications to government and corporate resources to fund service delivery.

In June 1980, the California State Department of Refugees Affairs awarded AACI Indochinese Refugee Assistance Program (IRAP) funds to provide social adjustment and mental health services to San Jose's Southeast Asian refugees. Program services were required to begin in three months. HHSC members were involved in the process of recruiting a culturally competent and language-appropriate program director, fiscal manager, social service manager, mental health consultant and line staff. A full complement of required staff was employed and ready to provide service on October 1, 1980.

Over the first five years, the HHSC continued to advocate for

qualified Asian American candidates for appointments to county health and social services commissions such as Mental Health, Drug Abuse, Youth Services, Juvenile Justice, Seniors Services, Social Services, Human Relations and the Status of Women. By 1980, there were commissioners of Asian descent on all these county commissions. At the city level, there were Asian heritage members on the Human Relations Commissions of Palo Alto and San Jose.

Advocacy on individual cases in the health field at the state level was limited but needed in one instance. AACI, acting in concert with Chinese for Affirmative Action of San Francisco, successfully advocated for the withdrawal of the Governor's nomination of a doctor to the state Board of Medical Assurance, Dr. Ed Geokas, who had a record of directing discriminatory gestures and offensive remarks toward Chinese Americans.

PART 4: POLITICAL REPRESENTATION COMMITTEE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Although representation on political decision-making bodies is crucial to the empowerment of all communities, it is particularly crucial for ethnic-minority communities. However, the representatives must be competent, insightful, knowledgeable and accountable to members of that community. True empowerment comes to an ethnic community when an indigenous member rises up among his or her own people and is selected by them. Asian immigrants and American-born Asians did not typically grow up in a culture where they could participate in the democratic process. New Asian arrivals to America generally hailed from countries with corrupt governments led by authoritarian dictators.

Most Asians born in America — even fourth-generation Americans — had been deprived of the opportunity to take part in the democratic process due to institutional racism and individual discrimination. For more than a century, these American-born Asians had been confined to enclaves, often called names like Chinatown, Japan Town, Manila Town, Korea Town due to the Chinese Immigration Exclusion Act of 1882, which impacted all Asian-ethnic groups in addition to Chinese.

The “Exclusion Law” denied all Asians the right of citizenship and hence the right to vote. Real powers were vested outside and beyond the boundaries of the immigrant enclaves. Virtually all political, judicial, economic and educational institutions were located in the White communities where democracy was practiced. At its best, Asian children attending their “Oriental neighborhood schools” were taught the theory of democracy and that the nation’s government is based upon the principles and practices of democracy.

Other factors also accounted for the low participation rates of Asian Americans until the late 1980s in the electoral process and as political candidates. These include the low regard or even contempt by average Asians for the corruption among politicians and the lack of any Asian politician in America who might serve

as a role model. There was a general lack of respect and support for a political career as a rewarding life endeavor. In addition, institutional racism, individual discriminatory behavior and prejudicial animosity still present in many American communities discouraged most potential Asian participants or candidates from involvement — except for a few especially courageous ones such as San Jose’s Norman Mineta in the late 1960s. Furthermore, prior to the 1990s, the low concentration of Asians in suburban voting areas served as a disincentive for involvement, as did the election procedures of most cities, where the concentrated political power of smaller ethnic populations was rendered insignificant.

Alarmed by a clear absence of Asians on boards and commissions in Santa Clara County, in 1972 I decided to conduct a survey of the county and city governing bodies to determine the total number of Asian-descent political leaders. The findings stunned me. The survey revealed that of the approximately

seventy-five political positions available on commissions and boards of the cities of Santa Clara County, only one Asian American from Santa Clara County held elective office at the city level and none at the county, state or federal level. To correct this unacceptable situation and to alter the local political landscape, Mary Chan Seid and I began creating the group that would later become AACI. Realizing that such change would require persistence and a core of



Santa Clara County Supervisors: front, Dan McCorcadale, Dominic Cortessi, Geraldine Steinberg; rear, Rod Diridon, Sig Sanchez

like-minded partners, we started at the most accessible level to secure appointments to local commissions of relevance for Asian American concerns.

Initially, I visited members of the County Board of Supervisors who were friends of mine—Victor Calvo, Dominic Cortessi, Rod Diridon, Dan McCorcadale, Sig Sanchez, Geraldine Steinberg and Susanne Wilson—to share information on the newly formed organization and of its priority to increase Asian American political representation, specifically on various county commissions.

These supervisors were extremely helpful and promised to consider seriously the appointment of qualified and experienced, Asian American candidates. They correctly pointed out that the most immediate and significant challenge was to identify qualified Asian candidates and to motivate them to serve on a commission. They recommended an initial strategy of appointing me to available vacancies on commissions; then at the appropriate time, I would recommend a specific Asian person to replace myself on that commission.

Following the approval of the supervisors' suggestion by AACI's Health Services Standing Committee, I accepted appointments in 1973 from Supervisor Victor Calvo to the Human Relations Commission and from Supervisor Dominic Cortese to the Mental Health Advisory Board. A year later Supervisor Dan McCorcadale appointed me to the Drug Abuse Services Commission. This strategy proved successful when after a few years I was replaced by AACI members Wesley Mukoyama on the Mental Health Advisory Board and by Joe Chang on the Drug Abuse Services Commission. AACI board members Roy Takeuchi and Shirley Kawazoe were subsequently appointed to the Mental Health Advisory Board so that Asian Americans would continue to have a place at the decision-making table to voice their concerns and identify needs



*Wesley Mukoyama,
Mental Health
Advisory Board*

in the county's behavioral-care system.

In 1979 AACI believed that a qualified Asian American should serve on the Social Services Commission. Such a commissioner could potentially be helpful with AACI's applications for funding to serve Asian immigrants and Southeast Asian refugees. Russell Pow, chairman of AACI's Health Services Standing Committee, was identified as a competent applicant and, after strong advocacy by AACI, Supervisor Susanne Wilson appointed him. With this foothold, Asian Americans and AACI as an advocacy organization increased their influence on the way Asian-related service programs and projects were perceived and governed, notably in the priority they were given by the county Social Services Agency.

To AACI's delight, Russell Pow was not only keenly aware of the needs of Asian immigrants/refugees but also as a commissioner asserted his influence to expand the in-house services of the Department of Social Services to immigrants and to augment AACI's mental health/social adjustment services. He also pushed for linguistically appropriate social-adjustment services delivered by culturally competent social workers.

The Health and Human Services Committee and the Political Representation Committee jointly assumed the task of training potential candidates for appointive and/or elective offices. AACI members interested in assuming leadership responsibilities were invited to accompany elder members when they made advocacy visits to local politicians. Additionally, they made educational visits to commissions and other decision-making bodies to observe the process of how decisions were developed and made — essentially as training seminars with follow-up analysis and discussion. Some who were successfully placed on a decision-making body had a specific mentor to provide continuing support and consultation. This on-the-job training was one of the most effective methods of rapidly training and grooming a novice decision-maker into becoming an effective advocate for the Asian American community. Individual and collective group involvement in campaigns to place selected persons on commissions or to recruit candidates for political offices were

other means of "political" training and education. AACI continues each summer to provide training and education of youth for leadership in civic engagement through its Leaders for Education, Advocacy and Democracy Program (LEAD). This program places youth in offices of elected and appointed state, county and municipal leaders and provides opportunities for field trips to selected government sites.

In its first five years, AACI successfully placed Asian Americans on the following boards and commissions: the Regional Criminal Justice Board, the Regional Health Systems Agency, the Santa Clara County Mental Health Advisory Board, the Santa Clara County Citizens Council on Mental Health, the County Drug Abuse Commission, the American Leadership Forum-Silicon Valley, East San Jose Fight Back Drug Abuse, the San Jose Anti-Gang Task Force, the San Jose Downtown Children/Family Needs Assessment Task Force, the Santa Clara County Council on Aging, the Anti-Tobacco Coalition, the Community Development Block Grant Committees (CDBG) of the cities of San Jose and Palo Alto, the Santa Clara County and Palo Alto Human Relations Commissions, the Santa Clara County Commission on the Status of Women, the San Jose Arts Commission, the County Transportation Commission, the County Water District Board and the Santa Clara County Political Census Redistricting Committee

Beginning in the late 1980s AACI leaders were appointed to influential non-profit community association boards such as the region's United Way, the Silicon Valley Leadership Forum and Kids in Common. Also starting in the 1980s, Mike Honda was consecutively elected to the San Jose School Board, the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors, the California State Assembly and finally to the United States House of Representatives. Following Honda came the election of another "home boy," Paul Fong—who rose from a 1978 volunteer counselor of AACI's youth club Young Asian Americans for Teen Involvement (YAATI) to become AACI Board Chairman—was elected to the Sunnyvale City Council and then to the California State Assembly.

AACI has continued its close relations with the Santa Clara

County Board of Supervisors including more recent Supervisors such as Jim Beale, Ron Gonzales, Cindy Chavez, Liz Kniss, Joe Simitian and Otto Lee. Supervisor Lee is the first Chinese American to serve on the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors; his wife, Sally Wu, was a former AACI Board Chairman.

Another strategy related to the plan for the political empowerment and the development of leadership and decision-making and advocacy skills of AACI staff and volunteers involved structuring the entire AACI healthcare delivery system to provide opportunities to enhance these competencies. For example, at the staff level services are delivered by four Ethnic Teams (Vietnamese, Cambodian, ethnic-Chinese and Laotians/Lao-Mein), each coordinated by an Ethnic Team Leader who coordinates the team's approach to each client. Each team is responsible for devising its own client-recruitment plan and the most effective service-delivery method. The team is accountable for its own client-service outcomes, which are evaluated by the team itself and by the County Mental Health Bureau's monthly productivity measurements. The premise was that by giving individual staff members the responsibility for devising their own treatment approach, they would learn best and quickly develop self-confidence in serving their ethnic brothers and sisters. Professional mental-health clinicians provided supervision and support to the ethnic team leaders and members.



Ethnic Team leaders: (left to right) Vane Feuy, Helen Lei, and Samrath Nuon (Missing, I-Klong)

PART 5: MEDIA COMMITTEE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The print, electronic and visual media have always had a wide-spread and powerful influence in disseminating information, pointing out problems, highlighting controversies, stimulating thoughtful discussions and at times inciting actions. In Asian American history, however, the media has had a checkered past, sometimes fostering racist stereotypes and violence against Asians and at other times promoting acceptance and inclusiveness of the group into American society.

Spear-headed by Connie Young Yu and Lucretia Lee, the AACI Standing Committee on media took on the following vital tasks:

- To monitor and advocate for fair and accurate portrayals of Asians/Asian Americans and their communities in media.
- To monitor for and protest against racist, negative and stereo-typical portrayals of Asians/Asian Americans and their communities in media.
- To generate, disseminate, support and promote in media positive portrayals of Asians/Asian American artists and their contributions in diverse specialties.
- To support, stimulate, publicize and assist aspiring Asian/Asian American artists and their works, contributions and products among both the ethnic and at-large communities.
- To encourage young Asian/Asian Americans to enroll and study to become media professionals in diverse specialties such as writing, journalism, literature, designing, graphics, painting, photography, theater, cinema, television, newscasting among others.
- To promote Affirmative Action in the employment and promotion opportunities for Asian/Asian Americans in the media industry.
- To publish an AACI newsletter to keep members informed.

The following example illustrates a few of the Media Committee's actions and accomplishments over AACI's first five years, 1973-83:

Asian
Pacific
American
Advocates of
California

**APAAC
ALERT**

1228 N Street, #18
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 443-3215

VOL. 1 NO. 1 JUNE 1983

It is our hope that the monthly APAAC ALERT will not only serve to keep you informed on present trends and developments, but also bring you up-to-date information on the short- and long-range outlook on local, regional, statewide, — as well as — federal regulations and legislations which could have an impact on Asian Pacific Americans.

We will try to keep you informed on events happening at the local, regional, state, or federal level that could have an effect on you, your family and your organization.

The Simpson-Mazzoli bill was reintroduced in Congress in mid-February — it has moved fast through the legislative halls ever since — it was passed out of Senate and House Immigration Sub-Committees early in April for review by the Judiciary Committees. — Senate & House versions vary. The SENATE VERSION of the bill (S 529) WAS PASSED on May 18 — The bill as passed by the Senate dropped the investment portion from its New Version of the preference system. — The investment portion would have permitted persons to enter the U.S. as permanent residents if they invested \$250,000 in this country.

The Senate bill that was passed — (1) has a provision limiting the total number of immigrants to 425,000; (2) a NATIONAL IDENTIFICATION CARD system for workers; (3) Employer sanctions for hiring of undocumented workers; (4) A limited amnesty or legalization program for certain persons; (5) Limited judicial Review of hearings for political asylum and deportation matters; and (6) reduced preference quotas for entry into the U.S.; including a reduction of the traditional Fifth Preference to include only single brothers and sisters of citizens.

Senators Alan Cranston and Pete Wilson voted against the bill.

The House version of the Simpson-Mazzoli bill (HR 1510) is considered by many as more liberal than the Senate version. As it is now proposed, the bill would: (1) Establish a broader amnesty program — although it still would carry a National Identification Card system and employer sanctions; (2) Does Not set upper limits on the total number of immigrants allowed to enter the country; (3) Retains the traditional Fifth Preference system.

It now appears that the Simpson-Mazzoli bill will come up in the House as EARLY as the last week of JUNE or right after its July 4th recess. — TIME is CRITICAL — NOW is the time to Voice Your Opposition to this bill. (A bill which has many unjust provisions.) To have your opinion heard in this matter, write — or better yet, send Mailgrams to your Congressmen. — Call in your Mailgram to Western Union and they will bill the cost to your telephone.

Listed below are some of the Congressmen to contact:

Congressman	Norman Mineta	San Jose, CA.
Congressman	Robert Matsui	Sacramento, CA.
Congresswoman	Barbara Boxer	San Francisco, CA.
Congressman	Ron Dellums	Oakland, CA.
Congressman	Geo. Miller	Fleasant Hill, CA.
Congressman	Ramano Mazzoli	Chairman Immigration sub-committee
Congressman	Dan Lundgren	Member Immigration sub-committee
Congressman	Peter Rodino	Chairman Judiciary Committee
Congressman	Don Edwards	Member Judiciary Committee

ADDRESS ALL CONGRESSMEN AT: WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515

For the addresses of other Congressmen from your area contact:
APAAC, P.O. Box 214998, Sacramento, CA. 95814 (916) 443-3215

AACI newsletter Volume 1, No. 1, June 1983

Committee Protests and Letter-Writing Campaigns

- Protested in 1973 against then State Attorney General Evelle Younger's lurid report, "Triad: Mafia of the Far East," a typical racial-profiling publication of Chinese by law enforcement personnel in the 1970s.
- Ran successful letter-writing campaigns protesting Charlie Chan-type character in "white face" in the TV series Khan, the offensive stereotypes on the Carol Burnett Show, the cancellation of Chinese Youth Voices on KPFA, the racist attacks on Japanese trade displayed publicly on a billboard along Highway 101 and the advertising campaign of Plymouth automobiles, "Deport the Imports." The media committee believed they made a difference, but "there was so much offensive media out there!"

Committee Support and Promotion Activities

- Advocated for Bay Area Asian American community programs such as Open Studio on PBS, free community spots on TV and radio, the Bay Area network of Asian American newscasters, KFRC radio show Dupont Guy and the Asian American Theatre Workshop, which performed Frank Chin's play Chicken Coop Chinatown at the Palo Alto Cultural Center and San Jose State in 1975.
- Supported young Asian American artists such as Laurence Yep who wrote the prize-winning young adult book Dragon Wings. Similarly, gave strong backing to young Chinese American filmmakers such as Arthur Dong as he struggled in his early career to produce his films Public, Living Music for Golden Mountain, Lotus and Sewing Woman. Judy Yung, another author and historian supported by AACI, advanced to become a noted professor at the University of California, Santa Cruz and



Pioneer Ethnic Studies professors:

*Top row, left to right: Phillip Choy, Elaine Kim, Him Mark Lai
Bottom row, left to right: Ron Takaki, Lin Chi Wang, Judy Yung*

- an expert on the history of immigration on Angel Island. AACI staff, members and volunteers regularly attended Asian artist's performances, gallery exhibits and readings to provide encouragement and financial support. During these years, support for young writers such as Frank Chin, Lawson Inada, Lawrence Yep and others was vital for their acceptance and survival. In subsequent years, AACI members extended their energies and efforts to support academic faculty and writers chronicling the long and rich history of Asian American pioneers who contribute to the building of the nation and especially the state of California. Among this group were Him Mark Lai, Phillip Choy, Judy Yung and research students of ethnic studies classes taught by University of California Berkeley professors Ling Chi Wang, Ron Takaki and Elaine Kim.
- Particularly active in creating and developing pioneering diverse and unique Asian artworks in the mid-1970s was AACI board member Florence Oy Wong, whose courageous career became a model for Asian Americans, especially Asian American women in the art world. Her poems, prose and artwork often focused on the themes of liberation, women's empowerment and equity. Now nationally recognized and an inspiration to many, she continues to remain close to her roots as an Asian Pacific American.
- At the same time, Dr. Jerry Hiura, another former AACI board member, led the way in advocating for the acceptance and proper public regard of diverse



Flo Oy Wong



Jerry Hiura

Asian/Asian American art and fine art productions in the city of San Jose. When his initial struggles were at times controversial, he publicly acknowledged that he always counted on AACI's bold advocacy to support him. He was the first Asian American appointed to the San Jose City Art Commission and more than anyone else broke the access barrier for Asian American artists in San Jose.

- An AACI founder and former board member, Connie Young Yu, rose to prominence for her historical/archaeological research and writings preserving the invaluable accounts of early Chinese, Japanese and Filipino pioneers in the City of San Jose. Of unique significance was her uncovering and detailing of the heroic survivals of five downtown San Jose Chinatowns through the

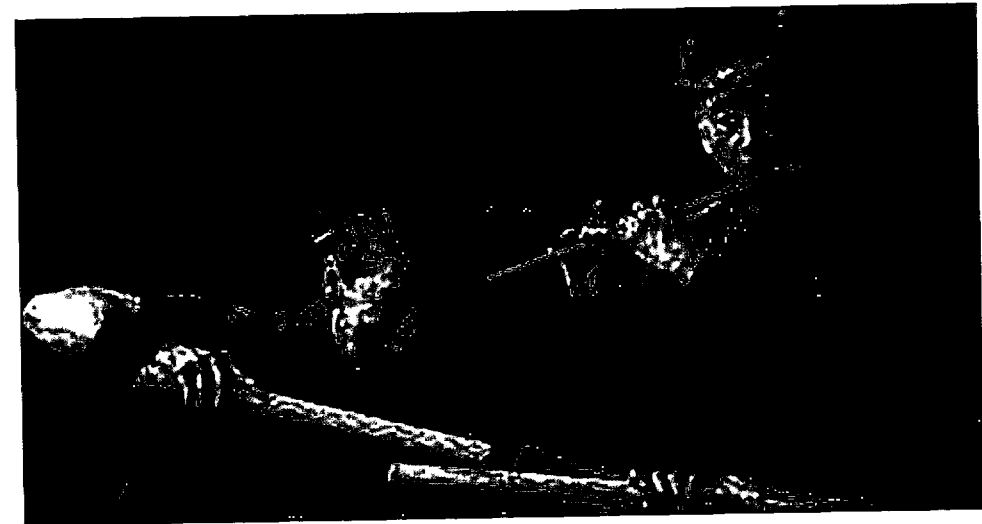


Connie Young Yu

violent years of anti-Chinese hatred and violence of the Nineteenth Century. She is now a well-recognized author, archeologist and historian of Asian American history and an expert on the history of the five Chinatowns which once thrived in San Jose. Connie and AACI supporter Gerrye Wong inspired the San Jose City Council in 2022 to enact an official apology to the city's Chinese residents for past arsons of Chinatowns and decades of atrocities. Three other California cities, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Antioch issued similar official apologies within months of one another.

Committee Promotion of AAPI Organizations

Since its inception, AACI has nurtured individuals to pursue careers and develop significant organizations that benefit AAPI communities as well as the larger society. Several AACI leaders have created independent groups that reflect their individual passions and then moved their organizations aggressively on to



P.J. and Roy Hirabayashi



Richard Konda



Steven Wing

provide unique community services.

- Early supporters of AACI, Roy and P.J. Hirabayashi, created an innovative Taiko Drum Core in the mid-1970s that blossomed into a large and highly successful art force that has provided both cultural pride and positive ethnic esteem among AAPIs but particularly among teens and young adults.
- Similarly, attorneys Steven Wing and Richard Konda, two other early AACI participants, perceived the acute need

for legal representation and advocacy services among diverse Asian immigrant and refugee communities. In 1977 they established the well-respected Asian Law Alliance (ALA) with some assistance from two highly esteemed attorneys, Dale Minami and Donald Tamaki, founders of the Asian Law Caucus of the Bay Area. ALA has flourished for over 40 years and is now a recognized "bridge over troubled waters" for many in Santa Clara County. AACI and ALA continue to collaborate on many projects related to their common client base.

- In 1987, when Gerrye Wong co-founded the organization the Chinese Historical and Cultural Project (CHCP), she made three initial requests of me: use of a meeting space for her new group at the AACI's Moorpark Building, my participation on the new CHCP Board of Directors and AACI's public support of CHCP. I gave Gerrye an emphatic YES to her requests. CHCP has grown to be the premiere organization in San Jose and Silicon Valley promoting Chinese American history and cultural events. One of its proudest achievements is the constructing of a replica of the 1888 Chinese pioneer temple "Ng Shing Gung" and granting the building to the City of San Jose. Located in the San Jose Historical Park, the replica temple is open to the public.
- Brenda Hee Wong, a former CHCP president, created the organization's effective Student Ambassador Project, which



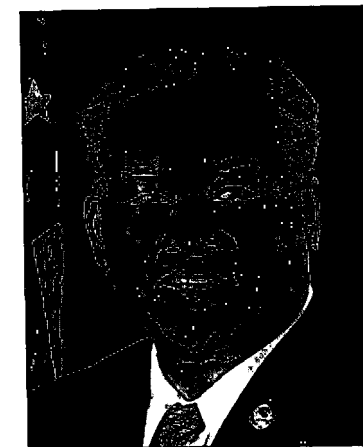
Gerrye Wong



Brenda Hee Wong

provides quality education on Chinese American history and culture to Santa Clara County schools.

- Paul Fong, a former AACI Board Chairman and State Assemblyman, is best remembered for his key role in the California State Legislature to pass an official apology for California's role as the infamous major culprit for the passage of the racist Chinese Immigration Exclusion Act of 1882, which prohibited immigration from China and denied Chinese the right to citizenship by naturalization. He formed the AACI Advisory Board, an auxiliary group to assist the organization in fund development and other needs.



Paul Fong

Committee Participation in Public Media

- Developed opportunities to participate in radio, television and media-covered public gatherings in schools, churches and service clubs to educate the general public about Asian Americans, their past and current status in America and their contributions to our local communities, region and nation. One example was the NBC radio program Intercom, which featured Ed Kawazoe, Mary Chan Seid and me discussing "Concerns of Asian Americans of Santa Clara County." Another was the national television interview with me on CBS Sunday Morning about the rise and prevalence of anti-Asian bigotry and violence.
- Sponsored community events to enhance positive images of the organization and to foster good community relations. The AACI Media Committee typically sponsored and/or participated in the following events: Annual Martin Luther King Breakfast and Activities, Annual Day of Remembrance (Internment of Japanese Americans),

Annual Celebration of the Repeal of the 1882 Chinese immigration Exclusion Act, Annual Celebration of Cinco de Mayo, National Holidays (Independence Day, Memorial Day, Labor Day, etc.), ethnic Asian holidays and cultural events such as New Year celebrations and annual cultural events such as the Cherry Blossom Festival and Mid-Autumn Festival.

CHAPTER 3

AACI DIRECT SERVICE PROGRAMS

AACI offers a wide variety of direct service programs ranging from child abuse counseling, the adolescent day-treatment program, AIDS testing and counseling, and specialty treatment for addictions to drugs, tobacco, alcohol and gambling. The following examples illustrate how AACI programming respond to the acute needs of not only the Asian communities of Santa Clara County but also to a diverse population. Today AACI serves a population that is 46 percent Asian, 37.5 percent Latino, 11.5 percent White, 4.5 percent African American and 0.5 percent Native-American. Its total expected revenue at the end of this fiscal year (June 2022) is projected to be about \$25 million.

PART 1: PRIMARY HEALTH AND PEDIATRIC CARE PROGRAMS

AACI's health clinic deals with more than 9,800 patient visits a year. By 8:30 a.m. every weekday, as many as a dozen people are waiting for AACI's primary medical and pediatric clinics to open. Most of them are young mothers with infants or elderly Southeast Asian refugees, some quite frail with walkers or canes. They are often accompanied by adult children for reassurance. At 8:30 a.m. each morning, more than a dozen physicians, medical assistants, mental health counselors, patient navigators and the clinic's nurse manager gather in a brief huddle to discuss the day's staffing and activities.

AACI first started treating patients 40 years ago. Then as now, the great majority of patients are low income, but today clinic staff will help those without health insurance apply under the Affordable Health Care Act (Obamacare), and no one is ever turned away.

In early 2000, AACI received a substantial grant to hire certified "patient navigators" who could provide language-appropriate assistance to patients. Having worked in a similar