

“On Strike!”

*San Francisco State College Strike, 1968–1969:  
The Role of Asian American Students*

*Karen Umemoto*

The sixth of November, nineteen hundred and sixty-eight. Few thought this would mark the first day of the longest student strike in American history. Student leaders of the San Francisco State College Third World Liberation Front marched with their demands for an education more relevant and accessible to their communities. Their tenacity engaged the university, the police, and politicians in a five-month battle giving birth to the first School of Ethnic Studies in the nation. Batons were swung and blood was shed in the heat of conflict. But this violence was only symptomatic of the challenge made by activists to fundamental tenets of dominant culture as manifested in the university. African American, Asian American, Chicano, Latino, and Native American students called for ethnic studies and open admissions under the slogan of self-determination. They fought for the right to determine their own futures. They believed that they could shape the course of history and define a “new consciousness.” For Asian American students in particular, this also marked a “shedding of silence” and an affirmation of identity.

The strike took place against the backdrop of nationwide Third World movements which had profound impact on the culture and ideology of America. Never before had a convergence of struggles—civil rights, antiwar, women, student and oppressed nationality—so sharply redefined the social norms of our society. Originating from the call for basic rights, protestors moved on to demand power and self-determination. When the State resisted, activists held to their convictions “by any means necessary.” Though these movements did not produce major changes in the economic or political structure, they strongly affected popular ideology and social relations. They also resulted in the formation of mass organizations and produced a cadre of activists who would continue to pursue their ideals.

The San Francisco State strike was a microcosm of this struggle over cultural hegemony. The focus of the strike was a redefinition of education, which in turn was linked to a larger redefinition of American society. Activists believed that education should be “relevant” and serve the needs of their communities, not the corporations. The redefinition of education evolved from the early 1960s when students initiated programs to broaden the college curriculum and challenge admission standards. They

supported the hiring and retention of minority faculty. They demanded power in the institution. When they were met with resistance, activists organized a campus-wide movement with community support for their demands. They built organizations, planned strategies and tactics, and published educational literature. Their activities were rooted in and also shaped more egalitarian relationships based on mutual respect. While this doctrine was not always fully understood nor always put into practice, it was the beginning of a new set of values and beliefs, a "New World Consciousness."

The emergence of this alternative vision is important to study today for several reasons. First, by understanding the beginnings of this vision, today's generation of students can revive certain "counterhegemonic" concepts that have been usurped and redefined by those in power. For example, campus administrators have revamped the concept of "self-determination" to the more benign ones of "diversity" and "cultural pluralism." Thus, the right of a group to decision-making power over institutions affecting their lives has been gutted to the level of "student input" by campus administrators.

Second, studying the strike can deepen our understanding of the process through which ideological currents develop among oppressed groups. Organizers are constantly trying to "raise political consciousness" among the people. But in what ways do the nature of the conflict, methods of organizing, strategy and tactics, propaganda and agitation, and historical factors influence mass consciousness within these movements?

This study will analyze the growth of political consciousness among Asian American students during the San Francisco State strike. I will analyze the development of the strike in four stages from 1964 to 1969, defined according to dominant concepts within the movement. They are: (1) 1964-66—end of the civil rights era marked by the ideals of "racial harmony" and "participatory democracy"; (2) 1966-67—implementation of programs under the banner of "serve the people" and "self-determination"; (3) Fall 1968/Winter 1969—struggle "by any means necessary"; and (4) Spring/Summer 1969—repression of protest and continued "commitment to the community." These concepts signify trends in ideological development and provide a means of understanding the strike as a seed of a revolutionary transformation in America.

#### *1964-1966: "Racial Harmony" and "Participatory Democracy" and the Civil Rights Era*

The civil rights era profoundly impacted the racial ideology of the nation, particularly Third World youth. The dreams of Martin Luther King, Jr., and unsung heroes inspired actions for equality, dignity, and self-respect. The African American movement clearly revealed the deep-rooted, institutionalized nature of racial oppression. Although protests resulted in reforms limited to the legal arena, their impact was felt in all other sectors of society.

Many Asian American students who were later to become active in the strike were moved by the protests. One Pilipino activist, R. Q., volunteered for a federal program on the East Coast:

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When I was in VISTA and worked in a black neighborhood. . . . They had riots in New Haven. . . . I came back to State College in '67, and the black students were at the forefront in wanting programs. . . . I think the black students and the Black Movement of the sixties made a major impact. They laid the groundwork, which made it a lot easier for us.<sup>1</sup>

The civil rights movement reshaped popular thinking about one's role in society. One student, B. I., described the impact on him:

It had a very heavy impact because I found that to have anyone listen to you, you had to be forceful, expressing yourself, not being quiet. If you know you are in the right, you have every right to speak up and organize your people to a just cause. So that brought home to me the necessity of organized action, and to verbalize your feelings about what is going on.<sup>2</sup>

The protests forced President Kennedy to publicly support civil rights. His entrance into the historic March on Washington in 1963 lent federal legitimacy to the idea of racial harmony through integration. The enacting of legislation provided legal sanction for racial equality. Kennedy's slogan of a "New Frontier" also encouraged youth to participate in American democracy and transform society. This idealism contributed to formations of Students for a Democratic Society and Third World student organizations nationwide.<sup>3</sup> Faith in democracy led to initial acceptance of nonviolent protest and to the reform-oriented goals within mass movements.

This idealism manifested itself in experimentation in all aspects of life. What was called "counterculture" was indeed a reshaping of traditional goals, values, and behavior. One activist, I. C., explained this shift:

There was all this emphasis on doing things for other people, such as the Peace Corps. All those ideas were instilled in us . . . "doing something, giving back to society." You couldn't just live for yourself. And I think that influenced my participation in the strike more than anything.<sup>4</sup>

Prior to 1963, student activism at San Francisco State centered around these themes. Students joined a 1960 walk to San Quentin prison against capital punishment, protested at the 1960 House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) hearings, established an outdoor free speech area, joined the 1962 Freedom Rides, and organized lunch counter sit-ins at a local Mel's Drive-in. But 1963-64 also saw the assassination of Medgar Evers, the murder of four black children in an Alabama church bombing, the murder of three Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) workers, and preparation for an escalation in the war in Vietnam. These and other conflicts provided the context for a growing student movement.

Meanwhile, the slogan of racial harmony clashed with the reality of racial conflict. Asian Americans faced discrimination, especially in the areas of education, employment and housing. A. S. described going to school in Stockton, California:

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I went to Franklin because of where I lived. But Edison was . . . [a] minority school, our kissing cousin school—many Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos, Mexicans, and Blacks. Franklin had more poor Whites. . . . You were told where to go. . . . There was a strict code that was enforced.<sup>5</sup>

For J. M., a growing awareness of racism caused conflicts within herself which altered life goals:

I was going with a white man whom I met at Berkeley, whom I eventually married. And so I don't know how to explain this to you, it seems very disorganized and very chaotic, but at the same time I was aspiring to be White, wanting a white child, wanting to marry a white man, I was simultaneously being impacted by all of these events that were challenging me as an Asian woman.<sup>6</sup>

B. I. was like the vast majority of students at San Francisco State who came from the ranks of the working class. He was a farmworker while in high school:

I spent some time in Fairfield, stoop labor, so I knew what they were saying about the low wages, and the twelve to fourteen-hour day. . . . I learned later on that Pilipinos were involved in organizing the first farmworkers' strike. And that made me very proud. . . .<sup>7</sup>

Several strike activists were with the U.S. armed forces in Asia and faced racial hostilities. E. D. C., who became involved with Pilipinos in the strike, described an instance where he was used to "play an agent enemy, in other words, a gook or whatever."<sup>8</sup>

Although it is difficult to determine if those who understood racism were more disposed to strike involvement or if their involvement sensitized them to racial issues or both, it is clear that racial cleavages were at the center of the Asian American experience.

#### Student-Initiated Programs

The period 1964–66 saw the development of student-run programs to address racial issues and other social concerns. These programs functioned within the university as alternative schools or "counterhegemonic sites" through which many students developed ideas running counter to prevailing paradigms.

The initial programs included the Fillmore Tutorial, the Community Involvement Program, the Experimental College, and the Work-Study Program. They were initiated with Associated Student government monies under its president, Tom Ramsey, a socialist, who wanted to use the \$400,000 budget for community work.<sup>9</sup>

The Fillmore Tutorial was an African American–initiated program which tutored youth in the Fillmore District of San Francisco. The Community Involvement Program was an outgrowth of this. Students organized community activities including

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The Experimental College offered alternative courses on topics including "Perspective on Revolution," "Urban Action," and "Competition and Violence." One outgrowth was the Work-Study Program, which was later renamed the Community Services Institute in 1968. A 1966 statement stated that education should be redefined to be relevant to community needs, to equip people to control their lives, and to teach that knowledge came from work in the community.<sup>11</sup>

These programs became increasingly popular. By fall 1966, the college had approximately fifteen courses with 300 students; by spring 1967, there were sixty courses with 800 students<sup>12</sup> and by fall 1968, nine experimental colleges existed in the eighteen-campus university system.<sup>13</sup>

#### A Master Plan for Future Confrontation

The foundation for growing contradictions between students and administrators was the 1960 Master Plan for Higher Education in California. The plan restructured education to meet the changing needs of industry and the growing student population. Projections estimated that by 1975, more than 1 million students would be enrolled in California higher education, nearly triple the full-time enrollment of 1958. Technically skilled and managerial workers were needed for developing high-tech and defense industries. The California Master Plan was preceded by the 1958 National Defense Education Act (NDEA), major federal legislation which provided aid to all levels of public and private education with particular support for the math, science, and foreign language fields. The linking of defense and education coincided with developments in the Cold War, including the 1957 Soviet lift-off of Sputnik, which launched the "space race."

The Master Plan established three tiers: University of California, California State College, and junior college systems, each with target student populations, specialized functions, and centralized governing boards. The UC system for the top 12.5 percent of high school graduates was provided "exclusive jurisdiction over training for professions and the sole authority in public higher education to award the doctor's degree."<sup>14</sup> The state college system was to provide "instruction in the liberal arts and sciences and in professions and applied fields . . . and teacher education." Previously open to 70 percent of high school graduates, it was now reserved for the top 33 percent.<sup>15</sup> The junior colleges were to provide vocational training, general liberal arts background, and preparation for transfer to a four-year institution.

The Master Plan's "solution" to the increasing numbers of students was the "diversion" of students from state colleges and UC campuses to junior colleges.<sup>16</sup> To improve the "quality" of students, the UC system and state colleges were directed to develop new admissions requirements for the fall 1962.<sup>17</sup> Thus, instead of expanding the four-year institutions, the Master Plan restricted admissions. The net result was the decline of minority enrollments. At San Francisco State, African American enrollment dropped from an estimated 11 percent in 1960 to 3.6 percent by 1968.<sup>18</sup>



The Master Plan centralized decision making in the hands of business and political figures. A twenty-one-member Board of Trustees was established to govern the state college system with the system-wide chancellor and board holding absolute control over all academic programs, distribution of allocated funds, and major personnel decisions.

Corporate spokespersons backed the Master Plan. In a 1969 speech entitled "Business and Campus Unrest" to the Education Section Meeting in Sacramento, E. Hornsby Wasson, the board chairman of the Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company, stated:

The best we in business can do is to try and work with you . . . furnishing the most clear-cut guidelines . . . to produce the type of young man and woman we need to keep our state and our national economy moving in the years ahead. The interest stems from what I already have expressed: business depends on education *to produce young men and women capable of meeting the demands of our free enterprise system and thus living full, economically independent life.* [Italics added]<sup>19</sup>

Business concerns received strong political support with Ronald Reagan's rise to the governorship in 1966. Under his leadership, a collision course was set with growing student radicalism on the issues of university access, relevancy, and control.

#### 1966–May 1968: "Serve the People" and "Self-Determination"

As I got involved, I saw what happened [on campus] in terms of a microcosm . . . of what was going on in the city and the larger picture of inequality. You can stay neutral and let it slide by you, or you can walk away from it and deny those problems, or you can become a participant. To me, I was going to become a participant.<sup>20</sup>

—B. L., student government and ICSA member

The process through which action gave rise to new ideas and new ideas shaped action was dialectical. For Asian American students, this process took many forms. Some were involved in the Experimental College, the Tutorial Program, and other Associated Student activities. Some became involved through friendships or contact with other activists. Others literally walked into the strike. Regardless of how they got involved, their actions led to greater questioning and understanding, which in turn shaped later actions.

International events had profound impact on the Third World movements in the United States. Anti-imperialist wars were raging in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Works of revolutionary intellectuals like Frantz Fanon, Amilcar Cabral, Che Guevara, and Mao Zedong were studied by activists in the United States. The concept of "internal colonialism" became popular to depict the oppressed status of minorities in America. For those who used the colonial analogy, liberation movements abroad suggested that freedom also could be won at home. Anti-imperialism challenged fundamental tenets from the civil rights era. Instead of racial integration, anti-imperialist move-

ments argued for national struggle. And instead of

Events abroad were rights programs. The World communities, clearly represented the sage was popularized sources and institutions to identify their primary economic status quo.<sup>21</sup> These conditions during this period of the American movement, their experiences in the United States sought "self-determination" through diverse life experiences and political power.

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As campus conflict eventually steered ICSA in Chinatown at 737 from its founding, the Third World Liberation power brokers, particularly Council monies and c

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Following that incident Students Union (BSU) forces, but A. W. initiated change of mind:

And I said, "Okay fight against it. But I'm "What about all you convince me what you

ments argued for national independence. Instead of nonviolence, they initiated armed struggle. And instead of shared power, they called for "self-determination."

Events abroad were coupled with a growing discontent at the limitations of civil rights programs. The discontent was felt most deeply by working class sectors of Third World communities, those least affected by legislation. An influential figure who clearly represented this sector was Malcolm X, who was killed in 1963 but whose message was popularized for years later. He called for African Americans to control the resources and institutions of their communities "by any means necessary" and to identify their primary enemies as established institutions and those who supported the status quo.<sup>21</sup> These themes are evident in the formation of Asian American organizations during this period. Although these groups were influenced by the African American movement, their development was unique to their cultures and respective experiences in the United States. These groups promoted pride in national heritage; they sought "self-determination" and "power to the people." These slogans captured the diverse life experiences of the activists who were conscious of racism and their lack of political power.

#### Intercollegiate Chinese for Social Action (ICSA)

ICSA was formed in October 1967 by Chinese students who were mainly interested in social, cultural, and community activities. They worked as volunteers for Chinatown social service agencies including the War on Poverty office, taught immigrant teenagers English language skills, and later solicited monies from the Associated Student government to expand the tutorial project and to study the Chinatown power structure.<sup>22</sup>

As campus conflicts intensified with a May 1968 sit-in, a new leadership arose and eventually steered ICSA toward the strike. By July 1968, the group established an office in Chinatown at 737 Clay Street. Though the organization was community-oriented from its founding, the new leadership was more militant. It immediately joined the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF). It also challenged the traditional Chinatown power brokers, particularly the Six Companies, over the use of Economic Opportunity Council monies and over problems of youth and working-class Chinese.

For the new ICSA leader, A. W., "power to the people" meant "a piece of the pie," since his experience showed him that poor people were rarely given anything. A. W. described himself as being a "playboy" and a "hippie." He accidentally walked into the May 1968 sit-in when he attempted to pay his fees in the administration building and "got busted" by the police.<sup>23</sup>

Following that incident, he and M. W. were approached by a member of the Black Students Union (BSU). They were impressed by his militancy and suggested joining forces, but A. W. initially saw it as benefiting only African Americans. He described his change of mind:

And I said, "Okay fine, you Blacks need to go to school, so you guys fight it, and I won't go against it. But I'm not for it because what am I getting out of this?" And he said, "What about all your Chinese who can't get into school?" . . . And I said, "Okay you convince me what you can give me and my people." . . . And he said, "We've got coun-



seling, tutoring service, we have special admission." . . . So I said, "All right, I'm in." That was the first time in my life that somebody, not Asian, was willing to share with me their pot of gold. So I had nothing to lose, and all to gain, and then I got involved.<sup>24</sup>

Other ICSA members got involved through community issues. I. C. worked in Chinatown and was aware of the difficulties of immigrant youth. She helped to coordinate ICSA's tutorial program. In reflecting on the reasons for her involvement, she discussed the strong influence of her family who "taught you that you had to do what was right, do what was fair. And when you would see things that were not right, were not fair, [it] just upsets you."<sup>25</sup>

Others like J. C., who came from a middle-class family and grew up for most of his life in a predominantly white Bay Area suburb, experienced a cultural and political awakening through his participation in ICSA. His involvement in the strike "was the process of constructing an identity."<sup>26</sup> In high school, he felt competition between peers over "who was whiter than who." But the strike was different:

We came together, I think, a little more comfortable with who we were. . . . We found issues we felt [were] lack[ing] in our lives. So we could organize ourselves. We could socialize with one another. We could actually sacrifice part of our egos. So we could join a movement towards some objective that we all thought was correct. I think the one thing you can't do when you are trying to melt into the white world is to complain about it. But if you join with others of your own kind, you have the opportunity to trade stories . . . and articulate your hostility.<sup>27</sup>

This quest to validate the ethnic experience fit squarely with the ICSA demand for Chinese American Studies under the authority of the people themselves.

M. W. and A. W. proceeded to involve the ICSA in the TWLF. M. W. described the conflict within ICSA:

And so we had two factions. One faction that wanted to get more involved in the Third World group, because we figured that's where the power was. . . . There was another group that said, "No, we don't need that; we can go by ourselves" . . . and so we had elections, and all of a sudden I won . . . and we became part of the Third World Liberation Front, and became very active in the strike . . . which was radical for a lot of people at that time. They thought we were crazy.<sup>28</sup>

This was a major turning point for the organization and brought to power those who saw the importance of unity with other nationalities for the benefit of Chinese Americans.

Although joining with other Third World groups, the new ICSA leaders drew from figures in Chinese history, including Sun Tzu:<sup>29</sup>

During the strike we read *The Art of War*. . . . All the Chinese in military history are raised on this . . . [which] says the main goal of war is to win . . . and the true leader doesn't lose lives. . . . The key to win victories is "know thyself."<sup>30</sup>

"Power to the people of Chinatown. This is clear from the Six Companies. From our programs, including the Six Companies. On 17 August, we held a parade in support of the Six Companies and immigration."<sup>31</sup> ICSA members demanded, including the North Beach Equal Opportunity youth center, and a program, and low cost seats on the bus to demand seats on the bus. A. W. sat on a committee about youth "problems" to speak to the needs of

At that time, I think about 50 percent were non-Chinese. We needed to give the students a chance to want to participate. I think it was something to be proud of. I thought it was horse

Just as ICSA participated in the Six Companies, their increased involvement led to solve to fight for ethnic

Chinatown is a Ghetto (GHET) where the vast majority of the population and alleys and the effluvia of Tuberculosis is endemic. It is a premium as to resemble

The position paper on the Chinese American Studies courses in any department with problems of the Chinese American Community. Community efforts worked with Hwa Ching University. Leaders initiated the Free Union to merge the college students and their experiences.<sup>36</sup> The city] don't like us? Well, we work with films, speakers, and



"Power to the people" for ICSA implicitly meant power to the working class of Chinatown. This is clear from their attacks on the landlords and power brokers, including the Six Companies. Frustrations had mounted over the latter's resistance to youth programs, including those of Leways and the Hwa Ching to develop jobs and programs. On 17 August 1968, ICSA members and community leaders including Reverends Larry Jack Wong, Ed Sue, and Harry Chuck led a peaceful march through Chinatown in support of "education, employment, health, housing, youth, senior citizens, and immigration."<sup>31</sup> ICSA members participated in a coalition called Concerned Chinese for Action and Change. The coalition held a press conference to present several demands, including those for a senior center, a full investigation of the Chinatown-North Beach Equal Opportunity Commission office, immediate action for a community youth center, and the future establishment of a multiservice center, educational program, and low cost housing.<sup>32</sup> Students also attended many of the EOC meetings to demand seats on the board and programs to serve youth and low-income residents.

A. W. sat on a community board to the police department. He joined discussions about youth "problems" in the public schools. He pointed to the need for institutions to speak to the needs of immigrant youth:

At that time, I think that Galileo [High School] was about 80 percent Chinese and 50 percent were non-English speaking. I said, "You need bilingual classes, and you need to give the students some pride." Their argument was that [the students] didn't want to participate. I said "How do you expect them to participate? . . . Give them something to be proud of and they will, in turn, turn Galileo into a good school." They thought it was horse shit. . . . Now they have all those things.<sup>33</sup>

Just as ICSA participation in Chinatown helped build opposition to the Six Companies, their increased understanding of Chinatown's problems strengthened their resolve to fight for ethnic studies. In a position paper, the group stated:

Chinatown is a GHETTO. In San Francisco there are approximately 80,000 Chinese of whom the vast majority live in Chinatown. It is an area of old buildings, narrow streets and alleys and the effluvia of a great deal of people packed into a very small space. . . . Tuberculosis is endemic, rents are high and constantly rising . . . and space is at such a premium as to resemble the Malthusian ratio at its most extreme conclusion.<sup>34</sup>

The position paper advocated ethnic studies. It stated, "There are not adequate courses in any department or school at San Francisco State that even begin to deal with problems of the Chinese people in this exclusionary and racist environment."<sup>35</sup>

Community efforts converged with that of students. For example, G. W., who worked with Hwa Ching youth, returned to school after the strike began. He and others initiated the Free University for Chinatown Kids, Unincorporated, "to find ways to merge the college students and street kids together and hopefully share the best of their experiences."<sup>36</sup> The acronym, F.U.C.K.U., was a statement: "You guys [the university] don't like us? Well, we don't like you either."<sup>37</sup> F.U.C.K.U. met for several sessions with films, speakers, and discussion on problems and solutions for Chinatown youth.

An organization which actively supported the strike was Leways. Short for "legitimate ways," it set up a pool hall and soda fountain at 615 Jackson Street called the "Fountain of Youth." Leways member Alex Hing wrote, "Because the strike was aimed precisely at giving oppressed Third World people access to college, Leways became the staunchest supporters of the TWLF in Chinatown."<sup>38</sup> Leways assisted in educational, fund-raising, and picket activity during the strike. Through the strike and community involvement, Leways became increasingly political, and later some members formed the revolutionary Red Guards.

Supporters came from many political persuasions. Despite differences, important alliances were built over strike demands. The Equal Opportunity Council board in Chinatown, dominated by members of the Six Companies, held more conservative views as compared with those of strike organizers. However, they shared concern over educational access. G. W. described an exchange which began as a board member responded to students' appeal for support:

"How dare you people make such a racket! My grandson's trying to apply for the university and couldn't get in!" I said in Chinese to him. "Read our demand carefully. We're doing this for your grandson. It is precisely people like your grandson who feel that they have been kept out . . . and we want to get him in." And he said, "Oh, is that right? I'm for it!" And he turned around and looked at everybody. And since he's for it, the rest of the people said "for," and we got a majority. So we had EOC in Chinatown voting to support the San Francisco State Third World strike."<sup>39</sup>

#### Philippine-American Collegiate Endeavor (PACE)

PACE was established in spring 1968 by P. S. to organize and fight for the rights of Pilipino youth. He had learned about the efforts of Third World students through Professor Juan Martinez. PACE organized counseling programs, tutorial programs, tutor training, study centers, high school recruitment drives, newsletters, fund-raising dances, ethnic studies curricula, community outreach, and liaison with student government.

The backgrounds of PACE members were as diverse as those of other groups. However, most were foreign-born. A number came from military family backgrounds as well as farmworker families. A. S. remarked that "you had multidiverse types of Pilipinos who started PACE, which was really a miracle we even stuck together." But he added, "We had common backgrounds, we had common goals. And we really had a common thought . . . that there really had to be something better in life than what we were used to."<sup>40</sup>

PACE saw the inequality they faced as rooted in racism. It felt that uniting Third World people to create a new consciousness would enable them to control their own destinies. This viewpoint was expressed in the statement of goals and principles, which read:

We seek . . . simply to function as human beings, to control our own lives. Initially, following the myth of the American Dream, we worked to attend predominantly white

colleges, but we have seen that white always come out on top. Third World people struggle, a new horizon in that context collect

One of the ways that ethnic studies. These courses thus lessening racist

Some PACE members through explaining that P. S. explained:

Self-determination stand what we were nation, you had to be convenient to open were doing was going doing would help killate to.<sup>42</sup>

Like ICSA members over one's life. They live 829 Cortland. The Philippine-American students in channels between you problems and their social, housing, recreational, PACE worked with and St. Patrick's. One through the Education students to "make sure helped to recruit students

Yeah, particularly on street. If they were out Army. A lot of people Third World. . . . So the

One issue in Manila students, community organization due to the encroaching over ten years. Pilipino the period of the camp

colleges, but we have learned through direct analysis that it is impossible for our people, so-called minorities, to function as human beings, in a racist society in which white always comes first. . . . So we have decided to fuse ourselves with the masses of Third World people, which are the majority of the world's peoples, to create, through struggle, a new humanity, a new humanism, a New World Consciousness, and within that context collectively control our own destinies.<sup>41</sup>

One of the ways this "New World Consciousness" would develop was through ethnic studies. These courses would educate people to the Pilipino American experience, thus lessening racist attitudes.

Some PACE members organized support for their demands within the community through explaining the concept of "self-determination" with concrete illustrations. P. S. explained:

Self-determination was probably the closest [term] to making other people understand what we were trying to express. Because when you had to explain self-determination, you had to explain the other side, against what? . . . So that buzzword was just convenient to open up . . . discussions. . . . I thought it better to express how what we were doing was going to help. I would say it in different forms . . . how what we were doing would help kids get in school, get jobs . . . very visual things that they could relate to.<sup>42</sup>

Like ICSA members, PACE members saw "self-determination" as taking control over one's life. They initiated community programs through an off-campus office at 829 Cortland. The purpose was fourfold: to encourage and aid low-income Pilipino-American students in the Mission area to enter college; to establish communication channels between youth organizations in the Bay Area; to research socioeconomic problems and their solutions; and to serve as a referral agency for employment, medical, housing, recreation, and counseling services.<sup>43</sup>

PACE worked with youth groups at schools and churches like Mission High School and St. Patrick's. One focus was to recruit Pilipino high school youth to college through the Educational Opportunity Program. Once in college, PACE worked with students to "make sure they stayed on campus" and completed their education. E. I. helped to recruit students and described:

Yeah, particularly on the south of Market . . . they played basketball to keep off the street. If they were out on the street, they would get busted . . . or they wound up in the Army. A lot of people got drafted. You know that the rank and file in the army was Third World. . . . So there was a better alternative: to get them onto campus.<sup>44</sup>

One issue in Manilatown and Chinatown concerned the eviction of elderly residents, community organizations, and small businesses from the International Hotel due to the encroaching financial district. Tenants and supporters resisted evictions for over ten years. Pilipino and other Asian students were active participants throughout the period of the campus strike. E. I. continued:



Sometime in November, mid-December, there were eviction notices posted on the International Hotel door. It said, "You who live here are hereby notified . . . that the Hotel is going to be demolished and you have to leave." . . . And I enlisted the support of (M. W.) and (G. W. of ICSA) and they marched with us. And we had 120 Pilipinos out there, senior citizens, residents of that building. We picketed down Montgomery. . . . These were elderly people, retired veterans. . . . I got appointed to the board of that association. And it was then becoming an issue that totally involved me, and I was a student.<sup>45</sup>

The community programs not only enabled a large number of students to participate in PACE, but they involved students in an implicit challenge to the individualistic pursuits promoted by the university. PACE's activities captured the sentiments of students to uplift their people. The membership roster included almost seventy out of an estimated 125 Pilipino students on campus.<sup>46</sup>

#### Asian American Political Alliance (AAPA)

AAPA was formed in late summer 1968 at San Francisco State College by mainly Japanese American women. It was a vehicle for students to share political concerns in a pan-Asian organization. One founder, P. N., had worked in the Experimental College and had participated in the May sit-in. During that summer, she met a woman whose brother was a member of AAPA at the University of California, Berkeley. She and others attended those meetings and by fall organized an AAPA at San Francisco State:

I felt a lot of need to do something about racism. Also, there was a need to do something about the lack of political involvement of Asians. . . . [There] was also this amorphous sense of wanting to build a sense of Asian American identity and . . . overcome what I saw as nationalistic kinds of trends. I wanted to see Asians from different ethnic backgrounds working together.<sup>47</sup>

The ideological development of San Francisco State AAPA was influenced by the movement at UC Berkeley. P. N. recalled that many of their concepts "were developed as a result of meetings and discussions, trying to get a sense of what AAPA should be and what its goals should be, what kinds of interests it should address."<sup>48</sup> In one of the first issues of the UC Berkeley AAPA newspaper in fall 1968, an article described the group as a "people's alliance to effect social and political changes."

We believe that the American society is historically racist and is one which has systematically employed social discrimination and economic imperialism both domestically and internationally to exploit all people, but especially nonwhites.<sup>49</sup>

AAPA saw the problems facing Asian people as rooted in racism and imperialism; thus, it was important to build alliances based on race as well as common oppression; political organization should not only effect change but build new nonhierarchical so-

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cial relationships; therefore, AAPA was only a transition to generate ideas "to effect fundamental social, economical, political changes." A parallel was drawn to the movements against imperialism in the Third World. "We Asian Americans support all oppressed peoples and their struggles for Liberation and believe that Third World People must have complete control over the political, economic, and educational institutions within their communities."<sup>50</sup>

At San Francisco State, AAPA attempted to organize political study which offered critical perspectives for its activity. One founding member stated that activists studied the "Red Book," which contained writings of Mao Zedong. They also read writings of Frantz Fanon and Black Power leaders, including the Black Panther Party newspaper. She described the impact of these readings:

I think they helped to provide me with a conceptual framework within which I could look at how my involvement fit in with other events: the Vietnam war in particular and the connections between the strike, domestic issues, property, and international issues.<sup>51</sup>

Though AAPA did not have an off-campus office, there were informal gatherings at a house in the Richmond district, several miles west of Japantown. P. Y. explained how this house became a congregating point for AAPA activities, "like an extended family":

Towards the end of the strike, they found us a big house on 4th and California, 4th and Cornwall actually. . . . They got the whole house, it was three stories, two big flats. There were about eight people living there, seven of them were AAPA members. And it became the meeting place. There was a [mimeo] machine in there, and all of our stuff was printed out of there, all the meetings were held there, all the parties were held there. If anybody came in from out of town—a lot of people from L.A. used to come up—and that's where they would come. So that became a real home for AAPA.<sup>52</sup>

Cultural activities strengthened the closeness that P. Y. and many others spoke about during this period. One artist was Francis Oka, who was killed in an accident shortly after the strike. M. O. described his influence:

We were like brother and sister. And he would always be the theoretical one; we kind of balanced each other off. And he was trying, struggling to be a writer and a poet and a songwriter. His idol was Dylan, Dylan Thomas. . . . because of our friendship, he always opened my mind up and made me read things. . . . He was the foremost idealist in my life.<sup>53</sup>

The strike unleashed a creative spirit. AAPA member Janice Mirikitani became a leading figure in the Asian American arts movement. The strike provided a focus for her creative expression. She and others created the Third World Communications Collective, a Third World Women's Collective, and published one of the first Asian American journals, *Aion*.



The appointment in late 1968 of S. I. Hayakawa as San Francisco State College president stirred up controversy in the Japanese American community. Public protest against Hayakawa challenged social codes within the community which discouraged confrontation. However, a minority of Nisei publicly supported the students. The director of the YMCA office in Japantown, Y. W., explained this viewpoint:

It could be that we had more contact with the younger generation in the course of our work. It could also be that we were far more interested in civil liberties, and in the question of freedom of speech, the freedom of assemblage. . . . It could also be that we really didn't feel that restrained to rock the boat, to challenge the status quo. I think it might have been the lessons learned from the evacuation. If there is a wrong, you don't keep quiet about it. . . . I think the evacuation was wrong, and this was one way to say so many years later.<sup>54</sup>

His sentiments may have been shared by some 100 Japanese Americans who expressed support and even pride for striking students at a community meeting at Christ United Presbyterian Church on 6 December 1968. The program consisted of student presentations followed by discussion. A statement by an elderly woman marked a turning point as she expressed her joy that young people were standing up for their rights.

On the evening of 21 February 1969, 125 Japanese Americans picketed a dinner featuring Hayakawa as a speaker. The dinner was sponsored by the Community Interest Committee of Nihonmachi, organized by several individuals affiliated with the Japanese American Citizen's League. AAPA members along with community leaders, including Yori Wada and Rev. Lloyd Wake of Glide Memorial Church, organized the protest and a press conference.

#### Third World Liberation Front (TWLF)

Closer relations among Third World students impacted the ideological development of Asian Americans by emphasizing the commonalities among "people of color" and creating a forum which facilitated a "cross-pollenization of ideas." The demands of the coalition set a foundation for unity and defined the political issues and struggles which occurred through the course of the strike. Due to the development of the African American movement and the participation of relatively experienced members of the BSU and Black Panther Party, African American students played an influential role in the TWLF.

One individual who was influential in the formation of the TWLF was Juan Martinez, a lecturer in the history department and the faculty advisor of the Mexican American Students Confederation (MASC). The TWLF coalition was formed with his encouragement in spring 1968. He had earlier encouraged P. S. to organize Pilipino students and when PACE was formed, it joined the TWLF. ICSA joined in spring. AAPA joined in summer 1968.

The themes of freedom and self-determination are evident in the "Third World Liberation Front Philosophy and Goals," which stated:

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The TWLF . . . has its purpose to aid in further developing politically, economically, and culturally the revolutionary Third World consciousness of racist oppressed peoples both on and off campus. As Third World students, as Third World people, as so-called minorities, we are being exploited to the fullest extent in this racist white America, and we are therefore preparing ourselves and our people for a prolonged struggle for freedom from this yoke of oppression.<sup>55</sup>

The TWLF saw immediate reforms in the context of radical, long-term change. A change in consciousness was seen as necessary to eliminate exploitation and racism.

Racism had been traditionally defined as a set of bigoted assumptions held by individuals. But in this period, racism was redefined as being "institutionalized" into all realms of society. The concept put emphasis on the structure of the economic and political system. Students began to deepen their analysis of society by merging this concept with their own life experiences.

In the immediate work, these ideas manifested themselves in three main demands made to the administration. First, the TWLF advocated the right of all Third World students to an education. They highlighted the existence of "institutionalized racism" as manifested in culturally biased "standardized" tests used as admissions criteria. They demanded open admissions and an expanded special admissions program.

In March and April 1968, TWLF members recruited many high school students to apply for admission to the university. On 30 April, they sponsored an orientation at which several hundred students presented their applications to President Summer-skill's office. They later called for the college to use all special admissions slots for disadvantaged students. In 1966 and 1967, the state colleges had admitted only .27 and .85 percent "disadvantaged" respectively, even though 2 percent were allowed through the "exception rule."<sup>56</sup>

Second, the TWLF challenged the fundamental purpose of education by demanding a School of Ethnic Area Studies. This demand stressed that education should be relevant to their lives and communities. Relevancy in education was clarified by students in their stated purpose of a School of Ethnic Area Studies:

The school clearly intends to be involved in confronting racism, poverty and misrepresentation imposed on minority peoples by the formally recognized institutions and organizations operating in the State of California.<sup>57</sup>

This perspective represented a fundamental challenge to the underpinnings of the Master Plan. While the Master Plan called for restructuring the university based largely upon the priorities of the corporate sector, students advocated a redefinition of education to serve their communities. I. C., who was tutoring in Chinatown, stated that "the community had so many needs, and there were so few people that participated. We always hoped that when these courses came about, more people would be encouraged to go back and help the community."<sup>58</sup> PACE member R. Q. also stated, "I know nothing about my background, nothing historically about the people here in this country, and less about the Philippines."<sup>59</sup> Students wanted an education which

would help them retrieve their historical legacy as well as contribute to social change in their communities.

Third, the TWLF demanded the right to have ethnic studies classes taught and run by Third World peoples. "Self-determination" meant that each nationality had the right to determine its own curriculum and hire its own faculty. Students argued that those who had lived a particular ethnic experience were best able to teach it to others. ICASA's M. W. added that "the winners are the ones who write the history books"<sup>60</sup> and that oppressed people had their own version of history. The TWLF also recognized that the existing criteria to evaluate ethnic studies and Third World faculty would be biased by racism. Thus, the TWLF demanded programmatic autonomy. The BSU had the most developed curricular philosophy. In their newspaper, *Black Fire*, they listed six goals for teaching:

- (1) a cultural identity, because we live in a society that is racist, that degrades and denies cultural heritage of Third World people, specifically black people;
- (2) to educate our people to understand that the only culture we can have is one that is revolutionary (directed toward our freedom and a complete change in our living conditions), and that this will never be endorsed by our enemy;
- (3) to build a revolutionary perspective and to understand the need for using the knowledge and skills we have and get only for our liberation and the destruction of all the oppressive conditions surrounding us;
- (4) to educate ourselves to the necessity of relating to the collective and not the individual;
- (5) to strive to build a socialist society;
- (6) to redistribute the wealth, the knowledge, the technology, the natural resources, the food, land, housing, and all of the material resources necessary for a society and its people to function.<sup>61</sup>

The politics of the TWLF were not as overtly revolutionary as those of the BSU but nonetheless were influenced by them. For example, in the TWLF's demand for a School for Ethnic Area Studies, a similar rationale was put forward:

As assurance against the reoccurrence of education's traditional distortion and misrepresentation of Third World people's cultures and histories, the School of Ethnic Area Studies is to be developed, implemented, and controlled by Third World people. Whether an area study is at a developmental or a departmental level within the school, the people of an area study will have sole responsibility and control for the staffing and curriculum of their ethnic area study.<sup>62</sup>

#### Resistance to the Challenge

DeVere Pentony, who had served as chairman of the Department of International Relations, dean of the School of Behavioral and Social Sciences, and deputy president at San Francisco State, wrote:

The more promising the programs became in exploring and modifying basic assumptions, the more resistance grew. As student programs moved away from strictly academic problems toward direct action, problems of budget, propriety, the role of

the university and view.<sup>63</sup>

As early as June 1968, the trustees authorized a special "task force" to study the situation. And by summer 1968, John Summerskill, then president of the university, had authorized a special "task force" to study the situation. In his co-authored report, "Ethnic Studies to the Fact and Fiction," Summerskill stated that the fact that students did not try to change the curriculum was unreasonable; the situation was a mental contradiction to those who held the curriculum eventually overridden.

Some trustees of the university argued on grounds that they were not the responsibility of Chancellor Dumke. "If the campus entered into a state of anarchy . . . the university did Dumke believe that the responsibility was on the question of the university's programs for the development of the total number of students to justify either expansion or contraction."

The resistance by the students to the university's plan. In May 1968, Third World students staged a sit-in at the President's office to protest the slots for Third World faculty positions for the hiring of Juan María Rivera, who had been expelled from campus. In response, the university responded with their firing of Rivera. A woman charged a woman with the head. Ten were injured. Conflicts heightened the promises he had made.

P. N., who participated in the university's resistance to the university's plan of history. "The hard part [that] there was no one there are subjects we are very difficult thing for the university to do."

The resistance of the students to the university's plan of militant tactics rose as



the university and the place of students in the scheme of things came sharply into view.<sup>63</sup>

As early as June 1967, students had pushed the Council of Academic Deans to authorize a special "task force" to establish Black Studies, but nothing had resulted from it. And by summer 1968, there was still no Black Studies program. When President John Summerskill resigned after the May sit-in, Robert Smith took over the presidency. In his co-authored book, he attributes the delays in the establishment of Black Studies to the fact that "the college did not sense the urgency of the demand; the black students did not trust the world of the honkies."<sup>64</sup> In his view, both sides were being unreasonable; the strike could have been avoided. But he fails to recognize the fundamental contradictions underlying the conflict: student demands ran totally contrary to those who held greatest power in the university and the state. Smith's position was eventually overridden by the trustees; he was forced to resign after the strike began.

Some trustees objected to Experimental College courses and ethnic studies on the grounds that they were not "objective" or had introduced politics into the curriculum. Chancellor Dumke opposed partisan stands of students and faculty on social issues. "If the campus enters politics no force under heaven can keep politics from entering campus . . . the university must remain pure and unsullied and above the battle." Nor did Dumke believe there was a need to expand special admissions. In a letter of transmittal on the question of expanding the 2 percent special admit limit, he stated that "programs for the disadvantaged are a relatively recent development, and that the actual number of students admitted as exceptions . . . is not at present sufficient in itself to justify either expansion or maintenance of present limitations."<sup>65</sup>

The resistance by administrators and trustees led students to use different tactics. In May 1968, Third World students and the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) staged a sit-in at President Summerskill's office. This resulted in the granting of 412 slots for Third World students over the next two semesters, the creation of at least ten faculty positions for Third World professors with student voice in the hirings, and the rehiring of Juan Martinez in the history department.<sup>66</sup> SDS's demand for ROTC to be expelled from campus was the only demand denied. During the May sit-in, police responded with their first major act of violence against student protesters. One policeman charged a woman. Terrence Hallinan, an attorney, intervened. He was clubbed on the head. Ten were injured and taken to the hospital<sup>67</sup> and twenty-six were arrested. Conflicts heightened when Summerskill resigned a few months later without fulfilling the promises he had made in a signed agreement with the students.

P. N., who participated in this sit-in and later founded AAPA, felt that the administration's resistance to students' demands was rooted in a racially biased understanding of history. "The hardest thing for a lot of administrators to comprehend was the notion [that] there was an existing deficit in the way history brings us [knowledge]—there are subjects we weren't taught." Institutional racism, she continued, "was a very, very difficult thing for people to comprehend, and not just white people."<sup>68</sup>

The resistance of the administration, along with police violence, led greater numbers of students to challenge traditional protest channels. The sentiment to use more militant tactics rose as frustration and anger mounted.



## Structure and Organization of the TWLF

During this period, there were many efforts to split the ranks of the student coalition by administrators, media, and others. There were also efforts to learn from these events. In one instance, the TWLF issued a leaflet summing up the major lessons from the 30 April 1968 high school orientation. This was precipitated by mischaracterizations of the event in several news articles. Excerpts from the leaflet read:

Members of TWLF, beware. What resulted after the April 30 event is exactly what emasculates any effort, actions or programs within an organization when the constituents blame one another for what the outside sources of media . . . take to slander and falsify charges against whatever an organization, like TWLF, stands for or does.<sup>69</sup>

Disunity emerged during the May sit-in. According to one account, the BSU was granted some concessions preceding the sit-in. Several members were still on probation from an earlier confrontation between BSU members and the *Gator* campus newspaper staff. BSU decided not to join the sit-in, and their refusal caused mistrust among some in the TWLF. Also, MASC and PACE were reported to have set up the SDS-TWLF joint action without formal approval of the TWLF coordinators. This upset the Latin American Students Association (LASO), which reportedly pulled out of the action a few days before the sit-in.<sup>70</sup>

Conflicts with the white left on campus also shaped the functioning of the TWLF. Self-determination was applied to the movement itself; white students were expected to respect the right of Third World organizations to lead their respective movements. Nationalism, which deemed one nationality's struggle as important above all other causes, influenced some Third World activists. However, this viewpoint was distinct from sentiments for national pride, identity, and self-determination which were held by the majority of activists. Some sectors of the white left failed to distinguish between narrow nationalism and national self-determination. Additionally, members of the Progressive Labor Party considered all nationalism to be reactionary.

Nationalism was a point of conflict within the TWLF. While most activists were committed to improving the conditions of their people, there was a growing suspicion that some were looking out only for themselves. As the movement faced setbacks, the administration encouraged divisions by offering settlements to each group individually.

To counteract divisions and to insure internal accountability, the BSU developed an organizational structure which was to have great impact on the TWLF. BSU Central Committee member Terry Collins described this structure in a *Black Fire* article:

In the spring of 1968 the Black Students Union saw that there was a need for democratic centralism. Before that time the Black Students Union had no formal structure. Dominant personalities of two or three people tyrannically reigned over the other students. Factionalism was rampant, potential revolutionary brothers were disillusioned, sisters were used and abused in the name of "blackness." It was the era of the bourgeois cultural nationalism, a stage of evolution that all black students involved in the move-

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ment move through, but must shake quickly. Bourgeois cultural nationalism is destructive to the individual and the organization because one uses "blackness" as a criterion and uses this rationale as an excuse not to fight the real enemy when the struggle becomes more intense. That is why we presented a new structure to the people in the spring of 1968 and called for the election of a central committee.<sup>71</sup>

In the TWLF structure, each of the six organizations<sup>72</sup> had two representatives to a Central Committee whose decisions were to be implemented by all groups. Chairpersons would be alternated every four months to provide training and to share responsibilities. No one was authorized to speak for the coalition, negotiate with the administration, or make statements to the media without the sanction of the TWLF.<sup>73</sup> Democracy was to be promoted by input through the respective organizations around three principles: fight against racism, fight for self-determination for Third World peoples, and support the TWLF demands.<sup>74</sup>

#### Strategy and Tactics

The BSU's approach towards strategy also influenced the TWLF. BSU members popularized the concept of "heightening contradictions" in order to educate people. Black Studies professor Nathan Hare explained:

For by heightening the contradictions, you prepare people for the confrontation which must come when they are fully sensitized to their condition. Rushing into confrontations without having heightened contradictions contrarily cripples the confrontation.<sup>75</sup>

Hare saw "heightening the contradictions" as a *strategy* to prepare people for confrontational *tactics*. The strategy was to educate the general student population about TWLF problems with the aim of involving them in confrontations to win demands. Violence was seen as a confrontational tactic rather than an organizing principle.

In contrast, P. N. of AAPA recalled a different interpretation:

I guess the main reasons for using violent tactics . . . was . . . [to] heighten the contradictions, increase the level of confrontation. Because . . . the greater the amount of pressure, the more incentive there is to resolve it. So by heightening the contradictions, or by heightening the level of tensions . . . there may be a faster resolution than if things stayed at a lower level of activity.<sup>76</sup>

This interpretation defined "heightening the contradictions" as a tactic. P. N. also observed that "there was a certain amount of macho that was also involved, as distinguished from looking at violence in a more analytical perspective as a tactical movement."<sup>77</sup> The "macho" attitude may have reflected a larger difference; some students may have viewed violence as a *strategy* to win their demands.

The idea of exposing contradictions between students and the administration was based on the assumption that underlying the conflict was a fundamental difference in



values, beliefs, and most of all, interests. Many students came to believe that racism, class, and political interests belied all rhetoric about the university as a neutral and objective entity.

1968–1969: “By Any Means Necessary”

The trustees are worried about a Black Studies department having an all-black faculty. They didn't mention that there are departments with all-white faculties. These people are scared of giving black people control over their own destinies. Does the college plan to do something about institutional racism or is it just going to fire Black Power advocates? I haven't seen anybody fired for being a racist.<sup>78</sup>

—Elmer Cooper, Dean of Student Activities

Students were angered by the refusal of the administration to act on their demands despite prior commitments. This period also saw police violence and political repression against mass movements, including the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert Kennedy. Protesters at the Democratic National Convention were severely beaten. Many believed that substantive change would not be willingly given: it had to be won through force. Thus, they echoed the slogan of Malcolm X—“by any means necessary.”

Many engaged in confrontational tactics after they had exhausted other channels. Some students had been seeking the expansion and institutionalization of ethnic studies and special admissions programs for four years. Promises had been made by Summerskill and others but were never implemented. Now, the administrators were using police to suppress student actions. Due to this repression, students began to understand that their demands represented a more fundamental challenge to the system. Although this understanding varied among students, it was widely shared and provided the basis for mobilizing hundreds in the confrontations with the administration. PACE's B. I. stated that even “the silence on the part of the administration [told me] that our demands were not relevant, told me that our contributions were not anything. So that's what led me to get more involved.”<sup>79</sup>

Firing of George Murray Heightens Confrontation

BSU central committee member George Murray was fired from the English department for his political beliefs and activism in November. He had been hired in May to teach Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) courses. The Board of Trustees opposed his hiring due to his public statements challenging the racism of the university. Murray was also Minister of Education of the Black Panther Party. The alternative campus newspaper, *Open Process*, summarized the reason for his termination:

Institutionalized racism is embedded in the status quo of American society; to challenge it with that in mind is to challenge the very foundations of society. George Murray was suspended not because he is black, but because as a member of the Black Pan-

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ther Party he has challenged the institutions which have always enslaved black people including the educational system.<sup>80</sup>

The controversy over Murray's case reflected a polarization within the administration and faculty. Smith, like other liberals, argued that "if we are to continue as a nation ruled by law, we must give all citizens the benefit of *due process* and the protection of the law."<sup>81</sup> Chancellor Dumke was less concerned with due process than with the problem of "certain tiny groups of students . . . who have lost faith in our system, and are simply interested in overthrowing the establishment." He expressed his determination to suppress any disruption with whatever force necessary.<sup>82</sup>

One month after the publication of Dumke's statements, George Murray gave a speech at a rally at a trustees board meeting in Fresno. In his speech, he spoke about the betrayal of America by politicians.

So you get people deceiving college students, deceiving the general populace in the United States . . . to manipulate you to the extent that you'll die for some nonfreedom in Viet Nam, that you'll die for some nonfreedom throughout Asia, Africa, and Latin America fighting people of color who have never victimized any American persons.<sup>83</sup>

He discussed the demands of African Americans, including the right of self-determination and exemption from the draft. Murray pointed to the examples of revolutionary struggles to win demands.

We understand that the only way that we're going to get them [is] the same way which folks got theirs in 1776, the same way black people in Cuba got theirs in the 1950s . . . that is with guns and force. We maintain that political power comes through the barrel of a gun.<sup>84</sup>

After the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported Murray advocating "guns on campus," trustee opposition to his appointment increased. On 1 November the administration announced his suspension. Murray was later arrested during the first week of Haya-kawa's administration, suspended again, and jailed without parole.

#### War of the Flea

On 28 October, only days before Murray's suspension, the BSU called a rally to announce the strike and their demands.<sup>85</sup> In the following week, meetings were held by the BSU and TWLF, and the strike date was set as 6 November. On the day before the strike, the TWLF held a general meeting attended by nearly 700 Third World students and community supporters. SNCC representative Stokely Carmichael delivered a speech which raised the level of analysis of many students. He warned against trying to solve institutional racism simply by replacing white administrators with Blacks. He said, "Now the way to insure that you get somebody . . . who has the same political ideology that you have is to make sure that you can choose or you have control over that person." He also urged them to take the struggle seriously, stating "do not start off



with something you cannot maintain because in the long run you not only hurt yourself but movements to come." He concluded, "It is easier to die for one's people than it is to work and live for them, to kill for them, and to continue to live and kill for them."<sup>86</sup>

Following Carmichael, Benny Stewart presented the strategy of the "war of the flea." This strategy was adapted from the guerrilla war conditions facing many anti-colonial movements in which the strength was based on mass support, familiarity with the terrain, and the advantage of elusivity. He pointed to the failure of other campus movements after leaders had been arrested and argued for a new strategy for a prolonged struggle:

We call it the war of the flea. . . . What does the flea do? He bites, sucks blood from the dog, the dog bites. What happens when there are enough fleas on a dog? What will he do? He moves. He moves away. . . . We are the people. We are the majority and the pigs cannot be everywhere. . . . And where they are not, we are.<sup>87</sup>

One influential writer during this period was Frantz Fanon with his widely read book, *Wretched of the Earth*. He emphasized the role of revolutionary struggle by the oppressed to achieve liberation. Fanon and other Third World thinkers had great influence on student activists. At the same time, these ideas were integrated with the students' own experiences, both on campus and in American society. This period was marked by a rash of police incidents, including violence against the Panthers, assaults on Chicano youth in the Mission district, and the shooting of a Chinese woman in the eye by a drunk officer. Students also rallied at UC Santa Barbara, San Jose State, College of San Mateo, and throughout the nation. Student activity in Czechoslovakia, France, Italy, Spain, Japan, and China also received publicity. All of these events profoundly affected San Francisco State activists.

On 6 November, mobile teams of Third World students entered buildings, dismissed classes, set trash cans on fire, and otherwise disrupted campus operations. Meanwhile, 400 white students marched to President Smith's office in support of the TWLF demands. In contrast to characterizations of strikers as irrational youth, there was in fact a clear reasoning for actions based on a redefinition of violence.

Soon after the strike began, Smith called in the police and closed the campus. The next day, 600 persons marched on the administration building during a noon rally. By the third day, the *Gator* reported a 50 percent drop in classroom attendance. By that time, students altered tactics and sent "educational teams" into classrooms to explain the strike issues.<sup>88</sup>

On 13 November, the San Francisco police Tactical Squad beat several TWLF members. A rally was called and 1,000 students gathered, ending in more police violence. By the end of the day, seven students had been arrested and eleven taken to the hospital for injuries.<sup>89</sup> Smith announced, "We'll keep classes closed until such time as we can reopen them on a rational basis."<sup>90</sup> The trustees gave Smith until 20 November to reopen the college. The faculty refused to resume classes and held "convocations" to try to resolve the problems. The BSU stated they would refuse to participate unless classes were canceled. When classes were not canceled on 21 November, 2,000 students

rallied, and police again. The police arrested 14. . . . The police adopted in militant tactics. . . . The basic strategy became. . . . The answer at that time so. . . . The trustees chose not to par. . . . I could pick it up, but. . . . It could be in other ways."<sup>92</sup> / . . . The strike was cleaned up by Th. . . . The Indian on campus.

### Winter-Spring 19

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rallied, and police again beat and arrested students. In the first two weeks of the strike, the police arrested 148 participants.<sup>91</sup> Though many Asian student activists participated in militant tactics, some were reluctant. AAPA member M. O. did not oppose the basic strategy because she believed that in order to gain ethnic studies, "the only answer at that time seemed to be: force them [administration]." However, she selectively chose not to participate in violent actions. "When I got to the point of throwing, I could pick it up, but I couldn't throw it. I thought, 'no, my involvement will have to be in other ways.'" <sup>92</sup> Another student opposed those tactics as he saw that the debris was cleaned up by Third World workers, including his father, who worked as a custodian on campus.

### *Winter-Spring 1968: Repression and Continued Community Commitment*

On 26 November, President Smith resigned, explaining his failure "to get from the chancellor and the trustees the resources and kinds of decisions I felt we needed. . . . Further, we could not get them to look past serious provocative acts to basic problems."<sup>93</sup> However, underneath the "problems" were basic differences, which the trustees and California Governor Ronald Reagan clearly understood.

The silencing of liberals matched the rise of conservative national and state political figures. Following the election of Reagan as governor in 1966, Nixon became President in 1968. Republicans won the majority in both houses of the California state legislature. Through appointments, Reagan gained control of the state college Board of Trustees.<sup>94</sup> The naming of faculty member S. I. Hayakawa as president of the college was part of this political realignment. Hayakawa and colleagues in the Faculty Renaissance organization had courted Chancellor Dumke. They proposed to deliver ultimatums, restrict due process, suspend students, and fire disobeying faculty.<sup>95</sup> Hayakawa was a perfect choice, being of Japanese descent. He took a hard line against the student movement and served as a public spectacle for media consumption.

On 2 December, 1,500 gathered after Hayakawa's ban on campus rallies. Hayakawa personally jumped onto the sound truck and ripped off the speaker cords. As the crowd was attempting to leave, several hundred police sealed off a section of campus and beat and arrested students, reporters, medics, and community supporters.<sup>96</sup> Hayakawa stated at a press conference, "This has been the most exciting day of my life since my tenth birthday, when I rode on a roller coaster for the first time!"<sup>97</sup>

On the evening of 2 December, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) held an emergency meeting and voted to request strike sanction from the San Francisco Central Labor Council. Their main concerns were faculty issues, including a nine-unit teaching requirement. On 4 December, 6,000 persons rallied on campus, and on 6 December a large rally was marked by police violence and arrests.<sup>98</sup> On 11 December, the AFT set up an informal picket line in front of the administration building. And on 13 December, Hayakawa announced an early Christmas recess.

TWLF leaders noted the tentativeness of their alliance with the AFT, whose strike began 6 January. "We view it as positive that the AFT has finally gone on strike. It must be clear, however, that the AFT is, by their own admission, striking primarily for



their own demands and only secondarily, under pressure, for the fifteen demands of TWLF.<sup>99</sup>

As students, faculty, and community supporters gained strength, the university prepared to take more repressive measures. On 23 January, over 500 persons demonstrated on campus. Within five minutes, the police encircled the crowd and arrested 453 people.<sup>100</sup> Many spokespersons were incarcerated, leaving a void in the organized leadership. P. Y. of AAPA summarized this period:

We just didn't have the money or the time to deal with 400 arrests at one time. At that point a lot of energy went into preparing for trials. . . . From that point on, the strike went downhill. A lot of EOP students and people who weren't directly involved in the day to day organization just stopped showing up. . . . A large part of the white student population that had supported the strike stopped going to school. . . . And everybody's court dates were starting to come up. . . . Some people were being pulled in for probation violation, for previous arrests. That's what happened to me, all of February. I don't know what happened during the last part of the strike because I was in jail.<sup>101</sup>

For the following months, much time was consumed in legal support efforts. Most trials took between four and six weeks, and by the year's end, 109 persons were convicted, and many served jail sentences.<sup>102</sup> Statewide, over 900 students and faculty were arrested on the state college campuses between November 1968 and March 1969.<sup>103</sup> This repression severely crippled the movement.

State repression impacted Asian students' understanding of the police in several ways. For AAPA member P. Y., this experience reinforced his developing understanding of society:

I think most kids have a real negative attitude [towards police]. What became clearer was that the political context they operated in . . . the role of the police [as] an internal army . . . against the working class and Third World people.<sup>104</sup>

P. Y. was indicted and served a jail sentence. In jail, he saw that the treatment in prison epitomized the status of poor and Third World people in society. From his four-month internment, he learned that "jail is like almost any other segment of society . . . class is such a determining thing on people's lives. For me that put into perspective a lot of the issues of the strike."<sup>105</sup> Meanwhile, Reagan, the trustees, and Hayakawa were able to distort the strike through the media and sway public support for their repressive measures. For example, Hayakawa described students as "a gang of goons, gangsters, con men, neo-Nazis, and common thieves."<sup>106</sup> Also, in a statement to the U.S. Congress on 3 February 1969, he boasted about the use of police repression:

I believe that I have introduced something new to this business of preserving order on campuses. At most institutions the use of police is delayed as long as possible and when assistance is finally requested, the force is usually too small to handle the situation and new troubles develop. I went the other way. . . . The opposition has received my message. I think I have communicated successfully.<sup>107</sup>

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B. L. stated his anger at the mischaracterization of the strike in the popular media:

Their main focus points were probably on Hayakawa and the so-called violence. Like maybe you break a window. But what about the inequity, the psychological damage inflicted on an individual and [the destruction] of their history. What about that kind of violence?<sup>108</sup>

#### Negotiation and Evaluation

The internal weaknesses of the student movement and the external repression of the state forced students into a position of negotiating the "nonnegotiable" demands. Their negotiating power was weakened when the AFT returned to work on 5 March after voting 112-104 to end the strike, despite an unsatisfactory compromise.<sup>109</sup> Meanwhile, to prevent public questioning of their repressive strategy, Hayakawa and Reagan felt pressure to reopen the campus.

After several attempts, Hayakawa recognized a "Select Committee" of faculty which "expected to act with the full authority of the president"<sup>110</sup> and negotiate with the TWLF. However, this committee was more liberal than Hayakawa, and it negotiated a compromise to his objection. On 14 March, the committee met with Hayakawa to formalize the settlement. Since Hayakawa was to leave at 9 A.M. for a meeting with President Nixon, their meeting was set for 7:30 A.M., at which time he was quoted as saying, "I'll give you a month. . . . If all is quiet by April 11, I'll consider your recommendations. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have to catch my plane for Washington. Good morning."<sup>111</sup> Hayakawa never signed the negotiated resolution. TWLF members and faculty proceeded to implement the resolution.

It is important to note the BSU's reasons for entering negotiations with the administration. BSU Central Committee member Leroy Goodwin outlined "major contradictions" in a May 1969 *Black Fire* article. A major reason to enter negotiations was "the determination and support of the people rapidly decreasing due to a low political level, communication gaps, and paranoia or fear of the Central Committee." Also, he pointed to five classifications of opportunism which plagued the movement. They included: those who fronted as spokespersons and collected honorariums for themselves; those who left the struggle after the BSU secured their grades; spokespersons motivated by their personal prestige over the plight of the people; "shit slingers" who mainly criticized; and disruptiveness of the Progressive Labor Party.<sup>112</sup> He concluded, saying sarcastically, "But we came to grips with the reality that the struggle of oppressed people was more important than fourteen individuals walking around with the myth of the revolution going on in their minds. Imagine a flea worried about losing face."<sup>113</sup>

The BSU summation reflects demoralization and an emphasis on internal problems. Although there were internal contradictions, they existed within a context. This context included the alliance of conservative forces, popular sanction of police repression, racism in society including chauvinism in the white left, and the youthfulness of the movement, which, among other things, lacked more experience and theoretical grounding to sustain itself in an organized form.



### Community Commitment

The lives of Asian student activists were changed in many ways. A common theme, however, voiced by all participants focused on a deep-rooted commitment to social change for the benefit of their communities. Some students stated that the strike may not have drastically altered their life. E. I., for example, felt he "would have wound up here anyway,"<sup>114</sup> working as a housing advocate and social worker. Others, like G. C., reflected upon the strike as a pivotal time in their lives:

I think it changed my life in terms of providing some focus to the extent that my career wasn't that important to me. . . . Take a look at the decisions people made back then. It was what the community needed first; and what you could contribute emanated from that.<sup>115</sup>

P. N. stated that her understanding of "what it means to be an Asian in American society"<sup>116</sup> shaped her view of legal work:

I don't think I would have gone to law school if it hadn't been for the strike. . . . The reason why I did go to law school was to get some skills . . . to practice law, and look at law as a vehicle for social change.<sup>117</sup>

Others, including A. S., stated that student activism led them to utilize their skills in channeling resources to their communities "to build low-income housing, parks for the people."<sup>118</sup> A. W. stated that though most of the leadership went into the community, he "chose to stay [to teach] in the university."<sup>119</sup>

Many activists expressed a feeling of personal liberation. Speaking out and taking stands to the point of facing serious consequences instilled a boldness of character. P. N. added that she became "more adventurous, less looking for the safe way to do things," while at the same time "more cautious" in dealing with the complexities of human nature.<sup>120</sup>

M. W. discussed the political ramifications:

What it did is, I think, make me more politically conscious . . . when a person in administration, who is supposed to have authority, a title, . . . [you find that those] people use that [power] to put the pressure on you. Then after getting involved with bureaucrats and politicians, [you realize] that they are people like anyone else. I think that is one of the things I learned: not to be intimidated.<sup>121</sup>

Some activists left the campus with the view of reforming society. B. I. remarked, "I saw myself as a reformist working within the system, to try and get those things that would benefit poor people, regardless of whether you are Black, White or Asian."<sup>122</sup> However, others like P. N. added: "I'd always felt since the strike that what was necessary to eliminate or alleviate racism was a major restructuring of our society, both economically and in eliminating barriers in terms of participation of Third World people in all walks of life."<sup>123</sup>

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### Conclusion: The Altered Terrain

Asian American students played a significant role in student movements of the sixties, as clearly demonstrated in the San Francisco State strike. The struggle was unique in that it was situated in an urban, multiethnic, liberal, working-class city. Perhaps that more closely tied the campus struggle to the respective national movements, while at the same time making bonds between them. In their challenge to the university, Asian students followed in the legacies of Pilipino farm labor organizers, International Hotel tenants, and concentration camp resisters. Their demand for a relevant and accessible education stemmed from the aspirations of peoples who had fought for justice and equality since their arrival in the United States. And, in many ways, it was this legacy which steered the movement and today frames a context to understand the long-lasting significance of the strike.

The most obvious accomplishment was the establishment of the first School of Ethnic Studies in the nation. This school partially met the terms outlined in the TWLF demands, including the commitment of over twenty-two faculty positions, the establishment of a Black Studies department upon which the other ethnic studies departments were based, student participation in the committee to recommend the final plan for the school, and faculty power commensurate with that accorded other college departments. In addition, unused special admission slots were promised to be filled in spring 1969. Campus disciplinary action was recommended to be limited to suspension through fall semester 1969. Demands to retain or fire individual personnel were not met. Though negotiations fell short of meeting the demands in full, the school remains the largest national program in its faculty size and course offerings. The winning of these concessions set a precedent for other universities to follow. In fact, the organization and militancy shown by San Francisco State students led some administrators at other campuses to initiate minor concessions.

A less tangible, but equally significant, outcome of the strike was the emergence of a new generation of fighters who either remained on campus or entered their communities. Many took the concept of self-determination to establish self-help programs to continue political education and promote self-reliance. Many formed or joined organizations to define a collective approach to addressing problems. Some pursued advanced degrees to secure positions of influence within the system, while others concentrated on grassroots organizing to build progressive, community-based movements. Almost without exception, those interviewed affirmed a deep commitment to the basic values and beliefs forged during their days as students active in the strike; many traced their convictions to the period of the strike itself.

The legacy of the strike has also set the terrain for another generation of Asian students. Stemming from the post-1965 immigration, today's students have formed organizations based on the foundations set by an earlier generation. The institutionalization of ethnic studies and affirmative action programs has not only given students important support systems but has also led to greater political influence for Asians in higher education.

These gains, however, have been increasingly contested. Then-governor Reagan launched his political career to become President of the United States, marking the

rise of the New Right. The U.S. economic decline has resulted in government cuts in education and social programs. Universities increasingly rely on private donations, defense-related contracts, and foundation grants, influencing the priorities of the university. Meanwhile, it is estimated that one-half of all ethnic studies programs have already been eliminated. Of those which remain, much of the emphasis has shifted away from the original intent for social change. Most programs have not enjoyed programmatic autonomy or student/community involvement in decision making, and many have lost relevance to community needs. Support for affirmative action has also waned. Since the landmark Bakke decision in 1978, minimum quotas for minority admissions have turned into invisible ceilings for Asians who are perceived as "over-represented." The attention called to these unfair practices is now being used to question affirmative action for Chicanos, African Americans, and Native Americans. And Asians have been effectively eliminated from virtually all such programs. Tenure cases, particularly for minority faculty, have become battlegrounds over the definition of legitimate and relevant research. In short, the essence of the conflict in the San Francisco State strike remains central today.

The strike offers no blueprint for movements today. Its history, however, begins to reveal the nature of clashes between students and administrators. It reminds us that the existence of ethnic studies and special programs for oppressed groups has only been the result of hard-fought struggle. Students of today's movements can study this history as a benchmark to assess their own conditions. And, with that, democratic empowerment movements may set a new terrain for the next generation.

## NOTES

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