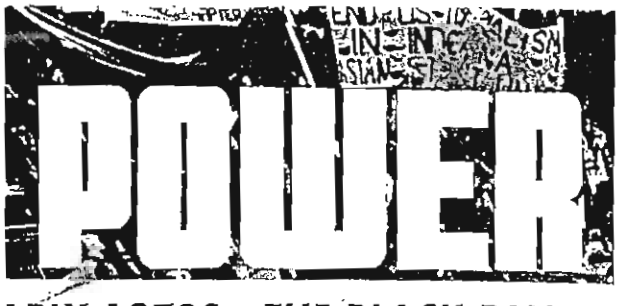
YELLOW POWER



DURING THE LATE 1960S AND EARLY 1970S, THE BLACK PANTHERS ROSE TO THE BATTLEFRONT FOR THE OPPRESSED PEOPLE IN AMERICA. MANY ASIAN AMERICANS WERE RIGHT THERE, TOO.

The Panthers set the stage in the late 1960s and were the unofficial leadership for the American revolt against The Man. A lot of people probably have no idea that this movement included Asian Americans that supported, joined, and participated with Black Panther-inspired groups. Yes, Asian Americans were badass and fought oppression in the forms of drugs, racism, and injustice.

In our quest to make sense of this period, we interviewed a bunch of people who participated in various organizations from LA to Seattle to New York who were part of the worldwide movement during this turbulent and exciting period of protest in America. Most of the people we talked to said that the Yellow Power Movement ended when the Black Panthers were split in the early 1970s. The end of the Vietnam War was also cited as an end to the massive protest, but most of the individuals we met are still active and waiting for the next big revolt so they can kick The Establishment's ass.

Inevitably, some of you will say "But you forgot this..." or "This isn't true," but we don't care, so don't waste your time telling us what we missed. We wrote about what we thought was accessible and interesting. We did the best we could with the people who responded to our inquiries. And then there are those Yellow Chickenshit Charlies who held back or wouldn't respond at all. You know who you are, and we're sure your ex-movement group will thank you for being a pussy.

To our knowledge, this is the biggest, fattest, and most informative collection of articles written in a non-academic magazine about this topic. But take it for what it is–a series of interviews that describe a bigger story of movement and revolution around the world. The individuals aren't as important as the entire picture. If you're an Asian American, a history buff, or a person who gives a shit about society, then these pages are for you.

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Left to Right: Yuri holds a sign in a protest. Yuri making a speech with a big afro'd man. Malcolm chilling at Yuri's pad talking to people. Below: Donald Byrd hanging with Yuri. (Photo: EN)

ANGEL OF HARLEM

Looking through an old copy of *Life* magazine, you might come across the photographs from Malcolm X's death.

In the smoke-filled Audobon Ballroom, he was slain from 16 shots to the chest, face, and hands. If you look closer at the black and white photograph, you'll see Malcolm's lifeless head resting on the lap of an Asian woman who's wearing cat-eye glasses.

Living by herself in her Harlem projects apartment, Yuri Kochiyama is still active in numerous causes from the Mumia Abu-Jamal defense to protecting Affirmative Action. Rea Tajiri (who made *Passion for Justice*, the Yuri Kochiyama documentary) and I became two more visitors to add to the Kochiyama's long list of friends who range from Malcolm to legendary jazz man Donald Byrd–who happened to be there when we dropped in. As we came through the door, Yuri soon whisked the jazz man out to make space and time for us in her teddy-bear-filled apartment.

NISEI SOLDIERS LETTERS

Perhaps the first level of her involvement to make life better was to start a letter-writing campaign to WWII Nisei (Japanese American) soldiers. This began during her assembly center days in Santa Anita and followed her into her concentration camp days at Jerome, Arkansas.

WE ARE KEEPING TABS ON HOW MANY TIMES THESE FOLKS ARE MENTIONED

Mao	X	Ché	MLK
2	17	0	4

YURI KOCHIYAMA

BY ERIC NAKAMURA

video images from Rea Tajiri

GR: Tell me about your letter-writing campaign.
YK: I had a Sunday School class. The class grew to about 60 in the Santa Anita Relocation Center and then we were sent to different camps. Then five of the camps started their own groups. In 18 months we were writing to 13,000 soldiers. People would ask, "How did you do it since you didn't have much money?" But you have to remember, we were doing it with penny postcards, so with $2 that's 200 people you could write to.

big family with her husband, Bill, whom she met when he visited the camp as a soldier. They later relocated to NYC, and that's where the activism ball started rolling.

We had a group called the Nisei-Sino Service Organization during the Korean War, from 1950 to 1960. We worked with girls between 16-25, and we said, "Here are all of these Asian American soldiers, they have nowhere to go and they don't feel welcome in the regular dance places." Chinatown came right in and helped and we had these young girls organize dances in Chinatown, Midtown, YWCA, and churches. In that way we helped many Asian American soldiers.

Also, we had demonstrations to get traffic lights on every block. You know if it's down in the white town, it's there on every corner, but not up here.

There were two major leaders. There was Martin Luther King who was for integration, and Malcolm X who was for separation, or self-determination. I'm glad we were involved in both, because you have to get a taste of both to get an idea of what was needed in the black community. Malcolm X thought we must separate from the power structure, and develop our own group. Martin Luther King was propped up there as a national leader, whereas Malcolm X was demonized as being excessive and anti-American. But I think when you see what was happening in the world–the African countries were fighting to free themselves from colonialism, from the Western powers–you could see why Malcolm chose the direction he did. There was no way black people could really be free by becoming part of the power structure. We felt Malcolm was doing the right thing. Not that Martin Luther King wasn't; Martin Luther King was carrying the mass movement. But there needed to be another kind of movement that would challenge those in power, and the only way you could do it was by being your own leader and by determining your own programs.

"He (Malcolm X) asked, 'What am I doing for my people?' and I had to think of a quick answer and said, 'You're showing direction.' And all of a sudden he just looked up and he smiled and he came out of the circle onto the other side and shook my hand."

Prior to Yuri's entry into concentration camps, she didn't care about politics. Living in San Pedro, she lived the life of an average high school student, eating hot dogs, going to the Friday night game, and having fun. The concentration camp experience changed her outlook.

I came to know Japanese people and I felt very proud of how they took the evacuation and how they worked in camp without letting it overwhelm them. I think as soon as you finish school and you go into the working world, you face racism trying to get a job. I think my first and only job before I went to camp was at Woolworth's. Woolworth's never hired an Asian before. But I saw a Mexican working there so I asked her if they would take me. She was the first Mexican, so she said, "Why don't you try?"

After being released from the concentration camp, Kochiyama worked for the USO in Mississippi, went to Minnesota, then returned to the camp. After the war, she went back to California and began to raise a

LIVING IN HARLEM

Harlem was such a motivating place to be. Everything was happening. It was 1960, the Civil Rights Movement was coming up North and there was a Black Liberation Movement already going on. I didn't realize there was a big difference between the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Liberation Movement, but here in Harlem you could see both and the different tendencies.

I worked with CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) for the Civil Rights group, but at the same time I joined Malcolm's group, Organization of African-American Unity. The first group my husband and I joined was the Harlem Parents' Committee and the major issue there was quality of education. In 1953 all of New York City had massive, massive picket lines in front of every school, to improve education.

GR: How did you go from an Asian-American community group to working with an African-American community group?

YK: It was gradual. In the mid-'50s, there was Little Rock, Arkansas, where they were desegregating the schools. We were watching that,

MALCOLM X ASSASSINATION

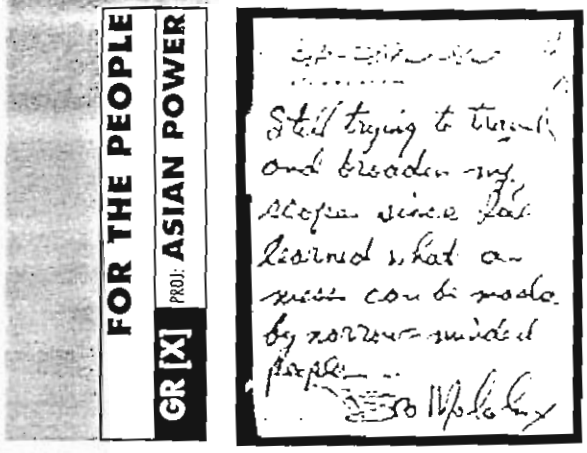
GR: How did you get so close?

YK: It happened right across from where we were. Two guys jumped up and one said, "Get your hands out of my pocket." Every eye looked at them. Then two or three guys in front went right up to Malcolm and he was a clear target.

I ran up on stage as soon as he got shot, when all the shooting started and the smoke bombs and all that were going off. People were screaming and yelling. This guy came right past where I was and I thought, "Gee, this guy knows how to get to the stage," so I followed him right up there and I put Malcolm's head on my lap. When I went to see him he had about 13 shots. I was hoping he was going to make it, but he didn't make a sound. I don't think he could have survived it. It was all over.

The hospital sent a rep who said that Malcolm had passed away. You could just feel how it hit the people. When I got on the subway, they announced over the loudspeaker that Harlem leader Malcolm X was just shot down in the Audubon Ballroom. I'd gone with my 16-year-old son Billy. It hit him hard.

Since that assassination, so many things are still unanswered. The people put on the stand weren't even at the Audubon. They did 27 years except one who's still in. The one caught there is quietly in one of the these small prisons in Harlem. They only got him because one of Malcolm's bodyguards got him. He asked his bodyguards not to have weapons so as to not frighten children and their mothers. I think he thought something was going to happen. Everyone thought something was going to happen.



and were encouraging Asian Americans to keep an eye on what was happening in the South. So it was a transition, but as we saw the Civil Rights Movement getting major play by the media, we felt that was one of the most important things happening in the country.

HAVING GUESTS

We had speakers. Every time someone interesting would come in, like people who had been down South, we would invite them. And then we would invite them to our homes. It wasn't difficult to locate people like that because the newspaper would give their phone number and address.

GR: Did you do that in the '60s and the '70s?
YK: Oh, from the time we first got married, I guess. We've had literally thousands of people stay with us. But this is a good way to meet people. In my condition, now that I've had the stroke, I can't go out that much, and so I have a good excuse: "I'm sorry, I can't walk well enough to meet you outside. Could you come here?"

ON MEETING MALCOLM

GR: When did you meet Malcolm?
YK:During the Summer of '63, one of the biggest things in Civil Rights was getting construction jobs for blacks and Puerto Ricans. We used to go to Brooklyn where they were building hospitals, and I used to take the four little ones, they were 4, 6, 8, and 11, and we would hold hands and go on the subway to the demonstration. Eventually, by the end of that summer, more than 600 people were arrested, including my 16-year-old son. Then the hearings began. In October of '63, Malcolm came to the court, and that's where I met him.

I remember when he walked into the foyer of the court, all the young blacks ran down and they circled him and they were shaking his hand, but since I wasn't black, I didn't feel like I should go down there. There was that article a few months before in *Life* magazine where a white gal came into Harlem and saw Malcolm at the Shabazz restaurant and said, "What can I do for you Malcolm?" and he just said, "Nothing," and she went away crying. I thought "Wow, that could be me making the same mistake." But as I saw all those blacks around him, I kept thinking, "Gee, doggone it," I wanted to meet him so much and I asked one of the court leaders, "Do you think there's any chance of meeting him?" and he said, "Why don't you try and see? All he can do is tell you to go away." So I went slowly down there until I was 15 feet away, watching them, and then all of a sudden, just in one instant, he looked up almost looking like he was wondering, "What is this old Asian woman doing?" But I thought it was now or never, so I went right over there and said, "Malcolm, can I shake your hand?" "Of course," he said. "For what?" and I said, "Oh, I want to congratulate you." And he said, "What for?" I said, "Well, for what you're doing for your people." He asked, "What am I doing for my people?" and I had to think of a quick answer and said, "You're showing direction." And all of a sudden he just looked up and he smiled and he came out of the circle onto the other side and shook my hand.

But I said something stupid–I didn't know anything about civil rights or the black liberation movement–I said, "I admire the things you say, but I disagree with you about some things." To show what an open guy he is, he said, "What do you disagree with me about?" I said, "Your harsh stand on integration." And he said, "Well, I can't give you a two-minute stand on the pros and cons of integration. Come to my office and we'll discuss it." I couldn't believe it. I said, "You mean I can go to your office and talk with you?" He said, "Yes, but you probably won't know where I am." I said, "Oh yes, I live in Harlem on 126th Street and your office is on 125th." And so he said, "Get an appointment with my secretary." Of course, it never happened because the next month he made that statement about the "chickens coming home to roost," when Kennedy was killed on Nov. 22, and then he was taken out of the Mosque, so I thought I'd never never see him again.

HIBAKUSHA IN HARLEM

When the Hiroshima-Nagasaki Peace Study Mission started to come in, they wanted to meet Malcolm. When they found out that we were Japanese living in Harlem, they asked us if we could get in touch with him. So I started writing letter after letter, not knowing if he was even receiving them or if he would even come if he did. And then–I couldn't believe it–on the day we had the reception he came. He came here June 6, 1964, and half-a-year later he was killed.

GR: What did he talk about that day?
YK: There were three major things. One, he thanked the Japanese Hiroshima Nagasaki Hibakusha for coming to Harlem, because Harlem was holding its "World's Worst Fair." Harlem activists got one of the worst streets in Harlem and they just opened it up for people to come and look at. There, you could see clogged bathtubs and toilets that wouldn't flush.

GR: They put them out on the street?
YK: No, no, no! You go right into those buildings, and you see all those broken windows that the landlords didn't fix, all the garbage on the streets, and the Hiroshima-Nagasaki group had only been to the nicest lunches, church events and schools, but had never gone to Black communities. Especially not these poor communities, and so I thought it was great that for the first time they saw something different.

GR: They spoke English?
YK: No, they had translators. They knew very little English. He (Malcolm) thanked them, he said you have scars on your body, but you have seen scars in our community, you know these broken-down places and all. And he said, we were hit by a bomb too, and that bomb was racism. Then he mentioned how much he admired Mao, because Mao tackled three problems: feudalism, corruption in the government, and foreign incursions. Then on the Vietnam War (which hadn't started yet –this was 1964), America was sending advisors to Vietnam. Here, all the people were Civil Rights activists, he said if America decides to go to Vietnam, you progressives should be protesting it, and it's too bad he didn't live long enough to see how big that protest became. He also made remarks like, "The reason that Japan has never been attacked is because Japan never had anything to offer other countries, they didn't have resources." Vietnam had resources, all of the other countries that Europe went into had resources, but Japan did not. It just showed how much he knew about the world. He said, "What I gained out of prison was reading everything I could get hold of." And he knew so much about Asian history. Everyone was so impressed by him.

GR: Did he come alone?
YK: No, but it was done in such a way that we didn't even notice who his bodyguards were. He had three, but then the place was jam packed. We couldn't get everyone in here. Everybody was filled in the kitchen hallway, jammed. When he spoke, you could almost hear a pin drop because everybody kept so quiet when he spoke. The Japanese said we don't want any translation since we don't want to stop him at every sentence. They said they could catch on to him plus they thought they could get him through his vibe. He was so gracious. The white people were surprised. He was as warm to

them as to the blacks. There were no radicals, no Muslims, nationalists...

GR: Was that after he broke off?
YK: It was only three months after, and there were so many rumors that he was going to be killed, that's why everybody told us Malcolm won't come to your place, he doesn't know you, why would he come here? it was so dangerous, but he came.

GR: What did you think of the movie?
YK: Spike followed the book and spent a lot of time when Malcolm was young and jitterbugging. He didn't put in the parts with the African leaders that he met. You know why? The book has chapters missing. One is the chapter on Africa, one is on sister Ella. It's sad that before sister Ella died no one saw her. She has both of her legs amputated. She was a half sister and more like a mother or sister to him. His real mother was in an asylum. Before he was killed he was happy that he got her out of there. I think they got along so well that she and Betty never got along.

GR: When did you get involved with the later Asian American Movement?
YK: I joined Asian Americans for Action shortly after I Wor Kuen (IWK) started. The Nisei were really ahead because they have been active from way before. They were active since the '30s . . . not only against the Vietnam war, but against the U.S.-Japan SEC Treaty. Every year they renewed it, so we would speak out against it. When the Hiroshima or Nagasaki dates came, we would do a program about it. It was mostly anti-war and peace movement. We took a stance for the workers.

After spending a couple of hours at Yuri's place, and being her last visitors of the day, we took off having learned a lot. She showed us the postcards that Malcolm X had sent to her husband while he traveled the world to find his roots and to study. One of the postcards read: "Still trying to travel and broaden my scope since I've learned what a mess can be made by narrow-minded people." And he signed most everything "Brother Malcolm X."

But aside from her relationship with the late political leader, Kochiyama has gone on to work with almost every group which she feels she can make a difference. Her husband passed away and she has endured a stroke, but today she is as active as ever in current events and she still travels to conferences to fight the power.

ON THE PUERTO RICAN STATUE OF LIBERTY TAKEOVER

GR: You helped the Puerto Ricans take over the Statue of Liberty?
YK: In 1977 the brothers ran up there and put up the Puerto Rican flag. The whale thing was to get Andres Cardero out of prison. He got out in six months, and the others got out in a yeor. Five Puerto Rican nationals did 25 yeors. We had to do something that would get the media to put enough pressure to get the five out of prison. The Puerto Ricans thought af it; I think they were called Puerto Rican National Rights Group.

GR: How did you become involved?
YK: They asked 29 of us and there were a couple of whites and blacks. I was the anly Asian. They told us to get to the ferry at o certain time early, and said no one should recognize each other or talk to each other. We had to get out of the boat quickly. And we had to be sure nobody could beat us to the Statue. In front of us was a bunch of Catholic School children and a bunch of Japanese tourists. They had to shove everyone out of the way. The kids didn't know why. We started to run and then everyone started to run. The Japanese didn't know what was going on. We all ran into the Statue and closed the door on everybody else. The guys told the people working that we aren't going to hurt you but you better do what we tell you. Then the guys ran up the stairs to put the flag up. The rest of us took all of the furniture in the statue and piled them in front of the doors and windows so no one could get through. We held it for nine hours. Then we heard the boats coming. The police come and we could hear the helicopters. They broke the door down and the furniture came toppling down. It was exciting.

IWK BLACK PANTHER GR [X] PRO: ASIAN POWER

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Right: Lee Lew-Lee is for the proletariat, but he looks like a million bucks. (Photo: MW) Video images were liberated from his video, *All Power to the People! The Black Panther Part and Beyond* Below: Lew-Lee chills in Oregon (Photo courtesy of Lee Lew-Lee)

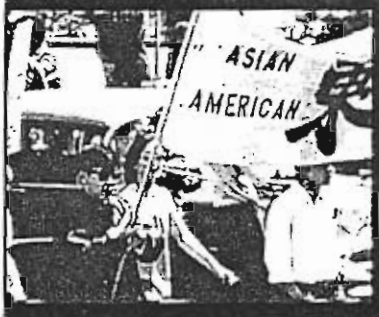
YELLOW PANTHER

Mao	X	Ché	MLK
5	2	0	3

BY ANY MEANS

LEE LEW-LEE

by Martin Wong



LEE LEW-LEE is a Chinese-Jamaican who would rather talk about how his grandparents were scholars in China than say what it was like to interview Geronimo Pratt, Leonard Peltier, and Mumia Abu-Jamal in prison.

Likewise, he would rather recount how the I Wor Kuen and Young Lords teamed up to resuscitate New York's Gueveneur Hospital than describe meetings with Jackie Robinson, Haile Selassie, and the Dalai Lama. After several lengthy discussions with Eric and me, the LA-based filmmaker took me to his secret book source and provided more contacts than I'll ever be able to dial. Lee's humble, generous, and playful personality belies the fact that he belonged to radical Asian Power groups as well as the Black Panther Party, and is a fierce revolutionary to this day.

KING COMMIE

I had a scholarship to go to the Cathedral of St. John the Divine choir school. When I was in the eighth grade, Dr. King came and gave his first anti-war speech. I was one of three students chosen to meet him and he was very kind. Then he sat opposite me in the cathedral. He was staring at me. At first I thought I was imagining it. Then I looked around and noticed that I was the only person of color up in the choir on that side of the cathedral. When he gave the sermon, he began talking about the Vietnam War.

Basically he asked, "How can we ask for civil rights in this country when we deny other people their human rights?" That was a profound statement in 1967. The whole cathedral was silent, and then in about 30 seconds there were 5,000 people crying. I've never seen 5,000 people cry again, even to this day.

I thought to myself, "This is a dangerous thing to say; they're going to kill him." And of course, a year and two months later, he was killed. I think it was a month after the sermon that he offered himself as a peace candidate to stop the Vietnam War. In fact, the day after the sermon, all the New York newspapers labelled him, "King Commie," and you could see the campaign to demonize him.

When Dr. King died, I was in school in upstate New York. I saw the reaction of the white kids there and the reaction of the people in the community. There was a riot. I dropped out of school and joined the movement. I'd already been going to movement things for a year and a half before that, but after Dr. King was killed, I joined the Ahmed Evans Defense Committee. Ahmed Evans was a political prisoner in Milwaukee, a brother in the ghetto who dared shoot back at the Klan. So we got together a defense committee.

ASIAN-AMERICAN ACTION

When I was 16, I joined the Asian Americans for Action (AAA) in the end of 1968 and the I Wor Kuen (IWK) in 1969. When I was going back and forth from school I would go to meetings. It was not uncommon to belong to more than one organization.

Taking a cue from Yuri Kochiyama and being a multi-racial person, I tried to help people organize, to bring all these different groups together. I would tell the IWK what the Panthers were doing in Harlem and what the Young Lords were doing in East Harlem. I spent a lot of time with the Young Lords.

The IWK was like the Black Panther Party, the Young Lords, and the Red Guards. It was a Maoist organization run by two engineers from Mainland China, Yu Han and Yu Man. They were the best ideologists because they were here in the United States doing graduate work. They decided that these poor kids in Chinatown didn't know how to organize, so we studied the Red Book a lot.

On the East Coast, we knew about Alex Hing and the Red Guards. The IWK was patterned after the Red Guards. It was one-upsmanship. They were the Red Guards. But what was the IWK? The Boxer Rebellion. You can't get better than that. The movements were very connected. The real problem was that we didn't have fax machines. We sent letters, but many times the letters were intercepted, so people got in airplanes.

THE PANTHER DAILY GRIND

I started becoming involved with the Panther Party in June 1969, when I dropped out of school. I got closer and closer to the Panther Party and joined in December 1969. When I joined the Panther Party, I talked to Athena Shakur and Bashir Saunders. I told Bashir I had been in these other organizations and could I be a contact between the Harlem Branch of the Panther Party and the IWK and AAA. For a little while, I tried to do that, but I got totally subsumed by all the things I had to do with the Panther Party.

I knew the Red Book better than anybody. I spent two years reading it. I also read Marx, Stalin, and Hegel. In the Panther Party there was really very little time to read. The Panthers were basically a daily grind.

There were no part-time Panthers. You couldn't just join. You had six months on probation, gradually getting initiated deeper and deeper into the party. The things I remember the most clearly were the different programs we had, especially the breakfast program and anti-drug program.

The IWK or the Red Guard would defend the Asian community if the racists wanted to take people of Asian descent to concentration camps.

We had a health complex in the South Bronx on Boston Road. We had free clothing, a free food program, all these things. Most importantly, we went door-to-door, organizing strikes, things like that from 5 o'clock in the morning.

The Panthers stopped wearing the black beret and leather jacket in the end of 1968. People think that went on and on, and it didn't. We stopped that because it made it easy for people to infiltrate. That all stopped before the Panther 21, I think. I came in after the Panther 21.

The good thing about the Panther Party was that it brought the idea of socialism. Let's look at this (Mao's) revolutionary ideology from China and bring it into the African context. And then take it into the American context, understanding that we are colonized as people of color in the ghettos of America. Chinatown is a ghetto. IWK said the same thing.

So we began to look at neocolonialism, Marxism, Ho Chi Minh, and these different ideologies and how to bring them together in the context of the United States. For example, if Mao had his barefoot doctors, we would have our barefoot doctors and our health centers. We didn't believe in Western anything, so if you were going to be a barefoot doctor, you were

FISTS OF RIGHTEOUS HARMONY by Martin Wong

With the Western powers jamming their collective tongues down China's throat and the Manchu Ch'ing dynasty shacking up in the Forbidden City in 1895, a secret society of patriots formed and called themselves *I Wor Kuen*—the *Fists of Righteous Harmony*. This group of red-turban-wearing martial artists became known to foreigners as the Boxers.

The IWK's initial goal was to run the Ch'ings and the Westerners out of China, but the Empress Dowager convinced them to focus on the gweilo influence. Christian missionaries, Chinese converts, and foreigners in general were sought out and beaten down by the Boxers, who cast magic spells to protect themselves from bullets and gain support from spirit soldiers.

Foreign diplomats and businesspeople fended off attacks for two months after the Boxers took over Peking. When the Empress Dowager's promise to dispel the rebellion proved empty, the Imperialist forces of Europe and America proceeded to crush both the Boxers and the Ch'ing rulers. Then they pillaged the capital city and created an economic and political gang-bang that would last until the Communists seized control of China after World War II.

The Boxers' skin wasn't bulletproof and their actions weren't exactly harmonious. They tended to be xenophobic and reactionary. But the IWK's cause was righteous and the activists in New York's Chinatown named themselves after them.


Panther on the talkie borrowed from *The Vanguard*

going to learn acupuncture. If Mao had his People's Revolutionary Army, we would have our People's Revolutionary Army in the sense that the Panther Party would defend the black community against the racists. The IWK or the Red Guard would defend the Asian community if the racists wanted to take people of Asian descent to concentration camps. That was a real threat back then.

There was a lot of training. We learned how to break down rifles and guns. We learned military strategy. For example, what did Mao mean when he said that "force had to be 2-to-1?" You cannot win a shoot-out if you have less than a 2-to-1 advantage. You have to understand what a fire zone is, how to apply what Mao said in *Selected Military Writings* to the actual reality if you have to fight in the ghetto, and how to make Molotov cocktails.

HARLEM VS. CHINATOWN

One of the differences between the African community and the Asian community was that the IWK couldn't just come out and walk down the street. If you came out all the time and did a lot of propaganda, you would get into some very serious fights. A lot of people were very skilled in martial arts and at the time, the KMT was very strong in New York's Chinatown. They controlled all the family associations and they would send goons to beat you up, like the Flying Dragons, White Shadows, and people like that.

To be in the Panther Party in Harlem was much easier because they had much greater community support. You didn't have to worry about going down the street and being beaten up so much as having cops trying to kill you. Mao said, "To be effective you have to be like a fish among the people." The Panther Party was much more effective in grass-roots organizing than the IWK.

The truth is that the historic conditions did not exist at the time in Chinatowns in the United States. The United States was at war with Vietnam and here we were walking around supporting the Viet Cong. They didn't allow any Asian Americans to become citizens in 1965, and a lot of people wanted to become American citizens. A lot of people considered us to be communists and traitors. Of course, the more somebody calls you a communist, the more you want to become one.

INTERNATIONALISTS

The Black Panther Party had a political and a military wing, as did any socialist revolutionary organization of the time period. The Panther Party followed the same command structure of the liberation movements overseas. The Panther Party, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the I Wor Kuen, the Red Guard, the Young Lords, the Brown Berets, the White Panther Party, the Young Patriots–all these organizations saw themselves as part of a worldwide youth revolution. The Panther Party in particular sent people to the Middle East and to socialist countries like Cuba for training in military affairs, guerrilla warfare, and other things. This occurred around 1970. You began to see quite a few people going overseas to be trained in East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Palestine, and Ireland. At that point, people were preparing for guerrilla war. Our idea was always to have a mass struggle and to organize as many people as possible to guard what we now call human rights.

Every city in the country had what they called a "Red Squad." Chicago, New York, Los Angeles–their intelligence units used to spy on anybody who was against the war in Vietnam, anyone who was talking about civil rights, affirmative action, union organizing, or student unions. It is estimated that the CIA actually had spied upon 24,000 Americans and opened 30 million pieces of mail during that time period. There was good reason to be paranoid. Sometimes people were actually assassinated.

GOING UNDERGROUND

We had a song: "Hold your heads high/Panthers marching by/We won't take no jive/Not from a regular 45/Free Huey, free Bobby/Goddamn, we gotta free Eldridge." All they had to do was arrest our leaders and the whole thing fell apart. Cult of personality was the worst thing, and it destroyed the movement. We mustn't have hero worship again.

I quit the Black Panther Party in 1970 when all the slaughter started to happen in Harlem. I went underground. Hearing the stories of how my grandmother, my grandfather, my mother, and my aunt survived the Japanese Occupation taught me a lot about how to survive. It's a sad reality when you're in your own country and you haven't broken any laws. I didn't kill anybody. I didn't

THREE TAPES THE HARD WAY by Eric Nakomura

Here are a few tapes to get you into the mindset of revolution to fight back against your oppressors. Sure, there are tons of tapes out there that might represent fighting back, but this is a great little collection that ranges from the fake and funky to the hard and real.

BLACK GESTAPO Approx. 90 min. Director Lee Frost. No name recognition on this tape like Dolemite or Shaft, but you do get a Blaxploited view at how power gets corrupted. A black man, Rod Perry as General Ahmed, wants to start a Watts black army and he gets it going, but then it splinters off in a bad angle. The People's Army Group square off with cheesy white racketeers who have the gambling, prostitution, and drug market cornered. The army takes over with violence and gets too fat, they get a training compound with swarms of big-breasted white women and are living like Idi Amin. General Ahmed gets word of this and it's up to him to set everything straight. Meanwhile the whiteys get driven out of town. With gun battles, freebie breast shots, pimp slaps, and militant uniforms, shit goes off in this film. There aren't exactly any Black Panthers in this film, but it's a satire on how local armies get started.

THE FBI WAR ON BLACK AMERICA 60 min. This documentary by Denis Mueller and Deb Ellis has great select footage from Malcolm X, MLK, and some Black Panthers. It traces the COINTELPRO, the FBI, police, and the KKK who were out to destroy the black revolutionary movement by killing the young and outspoken Fred Hampton, X, and MLK, among many others. With interviews with Kathleen Cleaver, FBI testimony, Huey P. Newton, Geronimo Pratt, H. Rap Brown, and Adam Clayton Powell, this film is heavy on the Panthers. Although it clocks in a bit too short, it gives you an idea of what really happened.

BROTHERHOOD OF DEATH 85 min. Director Bill Berry. No city folks here. *Brotherhood of Death* starts off with black Vietnam War soldiers who come back and end up in the South. A local black woman gets raped, her boyfriend gets beat

even commit any felonies. But I had to go underground. I continued living: I went to college and everything. It was a futile reality, though. You realize that you're not going to change the system from within it.

ALL POWER TO THE PEOPLE

I had been a photographer before I was in the Black Panther Party. I set it aside for the party, because they didn't want a photographer coming off the streets. It was kind of suspicious. I picked it up again because of Gordon Parks' book, *Choice of Weapon*. Later, I became friends with Gordon. I credit him with saving my life, actually. He gave me direction. When you're in the mode of revolution and you're thinking that you're going to kill the enemy, and then you find that there's a way to change society without having to kill people, that's quite liberating.

The film, *All Power to the People*, is an organizing tool to help people in the black community say, "Look, Asians are not your enemy." Originally, in the film we wanted to have one part about the Asian movement, one part about the Latino movement, one part about the African movement . . . but the mandate we got from German TV was to do the Panther Party, so we had to focus on that. But we still tried in the context of the film to make people see the much bigger picture. I'm not advocating that we overthrow our government, but I think in the future this system will collapse on its own. People ought to be aware and ready to replace it in the future.

ORIGINAL GUERRILLAS

People turn on the TV today and see Bobby Seale selling barbecued spare ribs. They don't realize that 30 years ago he wasn't selling barbecued spare ribs. They look at Geronimo Pratt and think, "Oh, he's OG." He's beyond OG. OG ain't shit. He's an old guerrilla, that's what he is. The youth has nobody from our generation in the mainstream that's telling the truth. Jesse Jackson has sold out. All these other so-called leaders you see on TV–Sharpton, Young, even Farrakhan–they're all bought out. They're not going to give you an hour on TV to talk about them. It costs $400,000 an hour. It's misinformation. Propaganda, communication, and public opinion–that's how they run the media. They make people think the '60s were a time of free love, free this, free that, *Steal This Book*, and Abbie Hoffman. Abbie Hoffman and Yippies were clowns. The real revolutionaries were hardcore revolutionaries who got killed on a daily basis.

When Timothy Leary said, "Tune in, turn on, drop out," most of us didn't agree with him, either. Leary worked for the government at Harvard, doing LSD experiments on people. The more serious revolutionaries didn't do heroin, cocaine, or any drugs at all. Anybody who did drugs, we expelled. The Panther Party was anti-drugs. The Panther Party, the Young Lords, and maybe the IWK on the East Coast used to go out, grab the drug dealers, and beat the crap out of them. If one came back, you'd go get a gun, put it to the guy's head, and say, "If you come back here, you're fucked." And the cops had a program going in New York, San Francisco, and Los Angeles because drugs were coming in through the military. They found out in the Vietnam War that a lot of brothers came back and said that drugs were being sent in body bags to the ghettos. We realized drugs were a way they were destroying the revolution.

THE WAY TO SURVIVE

I am insignificant. And I don't pretend to speak for the entire movement, but I can speak honestly about those that I knew. We were willing to sacrifice our own lives if need be for our fellow human beings and our people in the ghetto who might even hate us. Everybody was 17, 18, 20–nobody thought they'd live to be 30. Everybody thought they would be dead. I think for the 21st century, Maoism isn't going to make it. Marxism and Leninism aren't going to make it. People are going to have to make a new kind of ethic. Malcolm said, "Think for yourself." You don't need anybody to tell you what to do. Malcolm never saw a fax machine or the Internet. This stuff is new. Think in a new way. Organize in a new way. That's the way to survive.

Lee Lew-Lee's two-hour documentary, *All Power to the People! The Black Panther Party and Beyond* can be purchased for $30.00 from Electronic News Group, PO Box 86209, LA, CA, 90086. Lee is currently working on *Downwinders*, a new documentary about nuclear pollution.

...and the three white perpetrators walk around strutting. The ex-soldiers decide that going to the church and talking about it is no longer good enough. Alongside the funky music score, they fight back and beat the shit out of one of the men. But after the nice local sheriff gets murdered by the Klan while investigating the murder of a black man, the locals get organized to fight back and beat the shit out of the Klan, and they do it with force and brains. I'm not sure if Black Panthers were powerful in the South, but this brotherhood was solid enough to take care of The Man.

PAT SUMI MET THE NORTH VIETNAMESE GENERAL

Pat Sumi was one of the individuals we wanted to interview for this article. But as we were getting our editorial minds up-to-date, Pat passed away, stricken with cancer. According to Lee Lew-Lee, she wanted a copy of the photograph of the delegation to Asia before she passed away. Eldridge Cleaver, who had the neg, never made a copy for her. This image you see above was liberated from Cleaver's book, *Soul on Ice*.

Pat grew up in East LA, admittedly a model Asian getting good grades and, to quote Moo, "a frog at the bottom of a well." She traveled throughout the US to get a glimpse of how life really worked outside of her home. She went to Africa in 1965 and learned that the people there have elements in common with Asians. After college, she traveled to the South, where she saw poverty and racism firsthand. This is where she realized that her life was going to change. After attending grad school, Sumi moved back West and joined a hippie commune in 1967.

Later, she helped set up a coffeehouse near Camp Pendleton in San Diego to talk to GIs about what the heck they were doing and what was going on. "When you start messing with the troops, you're messing with the power that The Man has to control most of the so-called 'free world,'" said Sumi in a 1971 *Gidra* interview. Her group helped organize the Movement for Democratic Military, which sounds like an oxymoron. Although she admits that they did some good, they also messed some soldiers' minds up. In recognition of her work, Sumi was invited to join the Anti-Imperialist People's Delegation on their trip to North Korea, North Vietnam, and China. (Alex Hing, who joined the delegation as a member of the Red Guard Party, talks about the trip on page 79.)

-EN

Clockwise from left: Richard Aoki decked out in full Panther gear (Photo by Nikki Arai). I-Hotel eviction notice burning with Steve Louie taking a photo in the right bottom corner (Photo courtesy of José). I-Hotel protesters including bespectacled Harvey Dong on far left (Photo courtesy of Steve Louie).

BERKELEY AND BEYOND

Mao	X	Ché	MLK
2	0	0	0

A GANG OF FOUR

by Martin Wong

Photo: MW

A ton of e-mails and phone calls led me to the Asian-owned, movement-rooted Eastwind Books shop on Shattuck Street in Berkeley. That's where I met with Richard Aoki (charter member and Field Marshal of the Black Panthers and spokesperson of UC Berkeley's Asian American Political Alliance), Harvey Dong (worker and tenant organizer), Steve Louie (member of Wei Chi Min and worker organizer), and Vicci Wong (a founding member of UC Berkeley's AAPA, involved with SNCC, and worker organizer). Eastwind was too small for all of us, so we procured a corner booth at a nearby Burger King. It was weird to talk to a bunch of political radicals in a corporate death-burger joint, but sometimes the most dangerous place is the safest place.

PART I: STEVE LOUIE

"The Asian Movement was tremendously liberating," says Steve Louie, sifting through his collection of slides, prints, and radical newspapers from the early 1970s.

The third-generation ABC first became involved with Asian activism in 1969 when he was studying sociology at Occidental College in Los Angeles. When he received a scholarship for independent study, he used it to travel the Bay Area, Boston, New York, and across the country where "groups were coming up like weeds."

He settled in San Francisco, where he made contacts during his travels. At this time, the International Hotel was a center of Asian American activism, with elderly Filipinos and Chinese living in the upper stories and community groups renting out the basement.

Louie joined the Wei Min She, an anti-imperialist and pro-worker group whose name can be translated into "Organization for the People." Louie explains, "We were trying to organize people to take things into their own hands and become politically conscious."

Unionizing the Lee Mah electronics and Jung Sai garment workers was one of the group's big struggles. Both battles ended bitterly when the electronics owners struck a deal with the union and fired the workers and the garment workers walked out and Jung Sai went out of business.

When the Vietnam War ended, so did WMS. "As the war started to wind down in 1972, the more politically aware groups began to embrace more revolutionary ideals. Struggling against the war and understanding the nature of the enemy caused a lot of us to gravitate toward Marxism and find inspiration from Mao. That's the direction I went in."

PART 2: RICHARD AOKI

By the time Richard Aoki involved himself with Asian American activism, he had been active in three political movements:

1. "Picking strawberries is the worst thing I've ever done in my life. While I was getting my toes wet being a proletariat, I ran across militants in the unions. All these militants were communists! These communists seemed to have some good ideas."

2. "You could look at the Civil Rights Era as the beginning of the Black Liberation struggle, but the Nationalist Movement with Stokely Carmichael, SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee), and other younger organizations that sprung up all over the country attracted me."

3. "When the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense sprung up in Oakland, it seemed like a good thing. I was at the first organizational meeting and they said, 'Who wants to step forward to join?' I stepped forward and was made branch captain and then elevated to field marshal, of which there were only six of in the history of the BPP."

Upon promotion to field marshal, Aoki (who grew up with BPP co-founders Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale in West Oakland after returning from the Topaz Concentration Camp) transferred from Merritt College to Berkeley and "went underground to look into the Asian Movement to see if we could develop an Asian version of the BPP." There, he joined the Asian American Political Alliance (AAPA) and became the spokesperson.

"We protested against the security pact signed by the US in Japan. We participated in anti-war and BPP demonstrations, especially to free Huey Newton, the co-founder who was in jail at the time. Technically I was a representative of AAPA. Privately, I was still making reports to the Panther organization. I'd say, 'This is what's happening, etc.' They'd ask, 'How can we help?'"

"AAPA was the first Asian group at Berkeley that had such a diverse ethnic background. We had Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos, and Koreans. Pan-Asianism really was something that we never thought of at the time. We were so glad to see another Asian."

And not all members were students: "Bob Rita was a founder of the Farm Worker's Union. He was at Berkeley organizing and I was able to talk to him and see if he was interested in AAPA. It was a natural thing for him–he was Filipino and he had been an agricultural worker all his life. He was a labor organizer, yet he joined AAPA because of our stance on the exploitation of workers."

In Fall 1968, the SFSU branch of AAPA joined the Third World Strike. The Berkeley chapter followed in the spring.

PART 3: GANG OF FOUR

THE THIRD WORLD STRIKE

GR: Why did the Asian Americans for Political Action and other groups in the Third World Liberation Front strike at Berkeley and SFSU?
VW: What we were striking for was not ethnic studies but an autonomous Third World campus, which never happened. We got tremendous community support, despite what people have said about our movement being an isolated group of militant students.

GR: What was a typical strike day like?
HD: A common day involved helicopters flying above, shooting pepper gas at the students. The police would sweep the campus with these machines spraying gas. All that repression forced neutral elements to take sides.
RA: I saw how changes occurred in consciousness when 147 of us were arrested. We had a mass arraignment and I was sitting in the classroom. I saw a blond-haired, blue-eyed sorority-type girl walk before the judge with a big-time attorney. So I said, "What are you doing here?" She was coming out of one of the buildings and her boyfriend, a hippie, got his head beaten in. All she could do was recite one of our slogans: "Pigs off campus! Pigs off campus!" They arrested her. You don't think she had an attitude change?
VW: It was the bloodiest and costliest strike in history. We had to come up with these actions and tactics because people in power were violently against the Third World College, against the Third World people uniting.
RA: After three months, the violence got out of control. Reagan called the Alameda County's Sheriff's Department, which brought an atmosphere of terror to our campus. Things happen in a reign of terror. The largest auditorium on the university caught fire.

GR: What made the Third World Strike different from previous demonstrations?
VW: People like Richard who had direct military experience. Also, we took inspiration from worldwide struggles, most notably the Zengakuren in Japan. They had very unusual tactics, very mobile and fast actions. We would start really early, break up into small groups. By the time campus officials got there, we were gone. Before they'd just seen big, massive demonstrations.
SL: The Free Speech Movement used very massive, immobile, easy-to-find groups.
HD: The strike was a combination of direct action with education. In the evenings we went to dormitories, fraternities, churches, community groups, and stuff like that.
VW: It wasn't just a local thing or just for our own little group in college. We identified with the struggles of the oppressed peoples of the world, of all of the struggles that were going on then. We fought harder because we didn't see it as just our own fight.
HD: After the Third World Strike, we felt that we had to carry out our rhetoric, so we started setting up field offices in the community.

CHINATOWN CO-OP

GR: How did the Chinatown Co-op start?
HD: It began as a research project. There was a lot of research on the problems of garment workers and we didn't want to be "poverty pimps" who did research, filed reports, and that was it. They were trying to get into the union. I was involved in two union drives. The problem was that there wasn't much democracy within the union, so we looked more toward the idea of developing a cooperative. The Co-op lasted about four years.
GR: Was it hard to get workers involved?
VW: We were fortunate enough to recruit one of the top workers, Mrs. Lum, who was making a lot of money for a garment worker back then. She tested us for a while, but after the third meeting she decided to join. She helped recruit other workers.

GR: Did they freak out when you asked them to sew Chinese worker-style jackets?
VW: No. That was a big moneymaker. It became a famous thing among international labor movements. We would get people visiting us from Iceland and Canada.
HD: And they all brought home Mao jackets. It was kind of unique. This whole concept of alternative institutions was part of the whole movement going on at the time. Eventually, it shut down, but we were able to make new links with immigrant workers and provide things like English classes. Later, when there were other labor disputes and strikes, some workers from the Co-op came to the Asian Community Center for help in their struggles.
VW: Every day, people would come down and say, "Can you help us?" Electronics workers, garment workers–they had no place else to go. Some of them felt intimidated. Busboys would say, "I shouldn't be here." We said, "You have every right to be here. This is supposed to be a public university."

THE I-HOTEL

GR: What was the International Hotel?
HD: The hotel was owned by Walter Shorenstein, one of the real estate barons in San Francisco. The tenants (elderly Filipino and Chinese men) organized a union that opposed eviction. They got a lease extension, then a fire was set in the building and several tenants died in it. Shorenstein said, "See? I was right."
Just around the time the Third World Strike was winding down, tenants of the I-Hotel contacted AAPA for support.
SL: When I first saw it I thought, "Holy shit! What a tuberculosis breeding pit!"
HD: That's when all the former SF State strikers, AAPA from Berkeley, and the Filipino community converged. The Co-op was a part of that. The Asian Community Party was part of that. The Asian Legal Services set up shop there. The Red Guards opened there.
VW: You had the Financial District that was Moneybags City. Then here was one block, totally the opposite in they way they dressed with paintings, murals, and all these banners saying, "Get the rich off our backs." The community started to see this was their center. All these different groups operated out of there. On paper it looks good: young and old, unite! It was a real lesson in democracy. We argued, but we kept the place going when they were going to tear it down.

GR: What was eviction night like?
SL: It went beyond the Asian community. Five to six thousand supporters came from all over the city. They went there because we were fighting for something that we thought was important. There was a landlord-tenant aspect of the struggle, but when they wiped out the block, they wiped out a center of activism in the Asian community.
VW: Not just the Asian-American Movement. It became a center for The Movement.
HD: Although you can't prove it, we see the eviction as being political. It's not a landlord-tenant dispute; it's an attempt to destroy the Asian-American impact that was going on.

Clockwise from top left: Nobuko in motion (Liberated from *Gidra*'s 20th anniversary issue). Nobuko on *Newsweek*. Nobuko and friend (from Bindu Web site). artwork from *A Grain of Sand* LP. Nobuko on the *Best of Both Worlds* LP. Nobuko today (From *All Power to the People*).

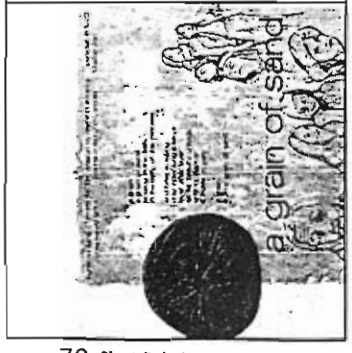
GRAIN OF SAND

Mao	X	Ché	MLK
0	5	0	0

NOBUKO MIYAMOTO

by Eric Nakamura

Bindu Records Web site is:
www.bindurecords.com



Nobuko Miyamoto gave up the glamour of being top-billed in Broadway stage shows such as *Les Girls, Kismet,* and *The Flower Drum Song,* and in Hollywood blockbuster movies like *The King and I* and *West Side Story* only to get her home ransacked, searched, and pillaged by The Man.

One day while scouring a used record bin, I stumbled across a 1973 LP called *A Grain of Sand* that featured three Asian names: Charlie Chin, Chris Iijima, and Nobuko Miyamoto. It was subtitled "Music for the Struggle by Asians in America" and song titles included "Wandering Chinaman," "Yellow Pearl," and "Somos Asiaticos (We Are Asians)." For $1.99, it was a steal. The clerks working at this collector's shop had no clue, much less gave a shit that this was the first album of Asian-American songs.

Last year, the trio reunited for a show that was filled with old friends and college students who were there as a class. Nobuko sits across from me in her LA home with a stack of photocopied essays that the students had to write up about the reunion gig. Many were taking notes during the show, but after a few songs, the notebooks went back into the packs. Nobuko then handed me some proof sheets of college students looking like they were having some supreme flashbacks.

She started dancing at 4 and then got scholarships to some of the best schools before landing her first pro job at 15 in *The King and I*. From there, she went on to do much more on Broadway and on the silver screen . . . and then she gave it all up.

"I was actually sort of disgusted with the limitations within that business. I would go to audition with these TV variety shows, and they would come up to me and say, 'You're great, but we can't use you since you stick out.' The dancing was one thing, but the acting was another. I knew they would want me to have a fake accent. And I would ask, 'Why would this person have an accent?' I would confront this, and that's why I went to singing."

While Nobuko was singing in a Seattle nightclub in 1968, she checked out the political scene and was later approached by an Italian filmmaker who was making a documentary on a young man who becomes a Black Panther member.

"It was like a docudrama so we were with this guy who was actually in the Black Panther Party. We moved around with the BPP, went to demonstrations, and met a lot of people." During a film shoot at the Young Lord's (the Puerto Rican radicals) Church, she met Yuri Kochiyama and gravitated into the Asian American movement.

At the time, Miyamoto was in another band called "Sequoia," a jazz-rock fusion thing that was close to signing with A&M records. But the climate was expanding her mind and the band became a memory. Finding that she would rather pass out flyers and leaflets, go to demos, and volunteer her time, she moved on to a new part of her life. And after going to a meeting in Chicago between West and East Coast Asians in 1969 and performing in a new group with Chris Iijima and Charlie Chin for the first time in front of an entirely yellow-faced crowd, she felt something different.

"It was a mind-blowing experience, just to put your two feet on the ground. Then I knew I couldn't go back any more."

The band played shows up and down the coasts, crashing on couches. Trying to figure out what the scene was like, I asked if these events were cool. Nobuko came back with, "It was the best party in town. It was political, but it was the party. It was the in thing to do. It was rebellious, there were a bunch who came for the party. There were a lot of posters, flyers, and there were dances with light shows. We used to fill the UCLA Grand Ballroom."

The trio played everywhere, including prisons. At one prison gig in Chino, they played to a multicultural crowd only to come out to find their cars had flat tires. Perhaps it was the KKK not digging the fact that Asians were playing shows to unite the ethnic prisoners. Nonetheless, Miyamoto laughingly remembers, they passed out Red Books in prisons! The trio's biggest show was at the Madison Square Garden show for Puerto Rican Liberation Day . . . where they sang in Spanish!

The highlight was the trio's performance on the Mike Douglas Show on the week that John Lennon and Yoko Ono hosted a week of programming.

"We met them at their loft in the Village. We went with them to Philadelphia in a limo and on the way to the show we thought it was surreal. We got there and rehearsed and the director comes forward after he hears, 'Watching war movies with the next-door neighbors and secretly rooting for the other side,' and asks us what other songs we have. They said there were a few lines there that housewives in the Midwest would think were subversive. Then Lennon comes in and says, 'Well it's just a couple of lines, can't you fudge the words a bit?' I don't know what happened to me. All of a sudden I lost it and I pointed at this guy (the producer) and said, 'You were put in concentration camps and now you're saying that we can't play this song?" I don't know who did this, but it was me. I started walking away, and they said that we could do the song. It went on national TV."

On Getting Ransacked, Busted, Ambushed

"Later, a couple of my friends got busted for having guns in their house. And when they were going to trial, police broke into my house. I didn't know what it was about until much later when I learned that the trial was beginning and Hirohito was coming through town. They were trying to say that it was a conspiracy to kill Hirohito. Ten years later, my brother was reading a script written by an ex-member of the FBI Asian Tactical Squad. In this script, the ex-cop (who wanted to be a Hollywood writer) wrote a scene about a Japanese singer who was plotting to kill Hirohito. He described breaking into my house and at the end of the scene he looked around and he said, 'It looked like a nigger's pad.' That's chilling. I don't know why I returned the script. This was evidence.

"And sometimes, the Panthers would stay at my house and make a call to Algeria, and the next day the police would come. That's why the FBI knew who I was. And I just narrowly escaped being arrested many times through association.

"I was married to someone before, a Jewish man. But I was never married to Attila, the father of my son. He was close to Malcolm X when Malcolm was with Elijah. When Malcolm left Elijah, Attila left with Malcolm. And when Malcolm got killed, Attila went in many different directions. He went downhill and went into drugs. Finally one day, he woke up and thought, 'Would Malcolm want me like this?' So when he got out he started a detox program at the Lincoln Hospital in the Bronx, which was the center of the BLA. And so when the Imam (spiritual leader) came back to America, he called the followers to come back. In the process of meeting, they were ambushed by other Muslims, so he died defending his Imam. Four died, two on each side, and no one was convicted."

A lot has happened since the turbulence of the '70s. Nobuko now lives in a cool pad in Los Angeles. She went on to record more albums, is still performing a one-person play, and is working with musicians. She's part of the Bindu record company where she records, produces, and releases music. Check Bindu's Web site, and if you're lucky, you may someday find a copy of *A Grain of Sand* . . . but don't count on it.

FARM WORKING TO ORGANIZING

Traveling to where the crop needs to be picked is the life of a migrant farm worker, and so is living in a farm camp that doesn't have toilets or running water. Philip Vera Cruz did this for years, living through injustice, racism, and poor living conditions. Being a migrant farm worker and Filipino was tough, since many Japanese and Chinese had already come through and been the subjects of hatred from land owners, public figures, and the general citizenship. The Filipinos were the next-hated farm group.

Photo of Philip Vera Cruz liberated from *East Wind* journal, 1982.

"I remember him talking about the need for working people to fight racism and the need to fight for the rights of immigrants. He said that some day, the capitalists were going to fight scapegoat immigrants for political power," explains Fernando Gasposin, a nephew of the late Vera Cruz, who now teaches at UCLA's Center for Labor Research Education. "Philip was a progressive guy."

Also raised on a farm until the first grade, Gasposin recalls, "I learned what 'take out' meant at many restaurants: Mexicans and Filipinos eat outside. We couldn't stay at most hotels. There were signs that read 'No Mexicans, Filipinos, or Dogs.'"

On September 8, 1965, 1,300 Filipinos stopped work in Delano, starting the Great Grape Boycott. The group that organized this event was the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee, of which Vera Cruz was an active member. Following the lead of the 1,300 strikers, 11 days later, Cesar Chavez and his National Farm Worker Association joined in and together they formed the United Farm Workers. The original UFW board had three Filipinos on it, including Vera Cruz.

"It was Gandhian," explains Gasposin. "What Cesar was doing was portraying the UFW as victims. It worked and gained nationwide sympathy . . . especially because of the picture of the cops and Teamsters whipping the farm workers' asses." The strike was non-violent, but they would picket daily on farms. Many had to get jobs to support their own strike, like washing dishes. "The strike benefits were something like $5 a week. They used winos from Skid Row, and bussed them out. It had a demoralizing role. They would take them in and out on a bus."

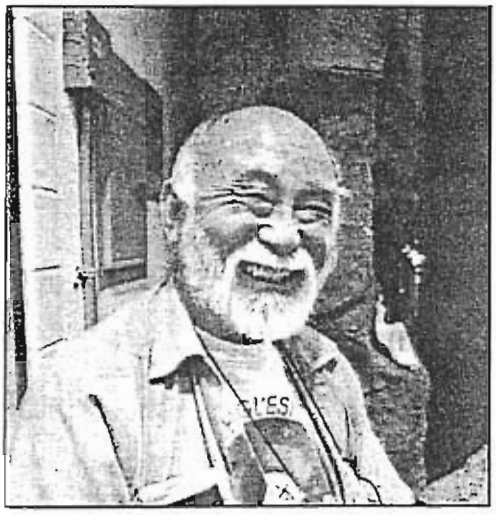
Philip Vera Cruz worked for years as a second vice-president of the UFW. He left in 1977 when he felt the focus began to shift away from undocumented workers and Filipinos. Today, Vera Cruz is no longer with us and the work of the Filipino farm workers is largely unrecognized, but the Grape Boycott continues and the Filipino workers' struggle lives on. -EN

A GRAIN OF SAND—A hot album that you will most likely not find. But it will be on CD on Nobuko's label BINDU RECORDS 11901 Santa Monica Blvd Ste. 533 LA, CA 90025. Write to her here!

YOKOHAMA, CALIFORNIA—Courtesy of Ron Kane. If you have this, then you're a real collector. This came out later in 1977, but it's a Yellow Power album for sure. Some songs are hilarious.

10

Clockwise from top left: Heavy-duty meeting in LA. Mo Nishida gets serious (Photos by Nikki Arai). Mo Nishida now (by EN)



HARDCORE asian american

Mao	X	Ché	MLK
3	1	1	0

MO NISHIDA HARDCORE

by Eric Nakamura

You might not notice the person walking around wearing a shade of fatigue green who cleans up after your empty soda cans, condom wrappers, or nail clips. But one of them at a popular mall is waiting for the Revolution of the APEs. Mo Nishida is an ex-member of the Asian American Hard Core, a small group that formed after the Black Panthers during the revolutionary late '60s. The friendly man who maintains the grounds you might be walking on is waiting for the wave of change. The greatest thing about this man isn't his past, it's his truthfulness and openness to the entire subject.

GR: On the Asian American Hardcore?
MN: I think the idea was percolating around because of the notoriety of the Panthers. Looking at places where our people were concentrated, you could see what the hell was going on with the young people. Quite a few were going in and out of prison and stuff like that. And when the Panthers came forward, the idea of trying to get some of our people back from the other side of capitalism came up, so some of us talked about needing to form a group like that. We developed a crash pad over on 23rd and Vermont. A doctor owned the apartment and let us stay there. We used to get people who were just out of prison or referred to us from parole officers and from there, with the Panthers as a model, we could serve the people. Christmas programs, working with seniors, helping with projects, and different kind of things. We did that for a few years. The core was three or four to half a dozen. The rest were helping out.

GR: The crash pad?
MN: The crash pad was for people to detox and have a place to stay. We did some political education and took people out into the community. People were trying to get straight and they wouldn't take any bullshit. We didn't tie people up (some folks did do that). There were always enough people around to babysit. If they acted up, we held them down. We were dealing with more mature people, so we didn't want to mess with them too much or else they would try to kill your ass.

GR: What kind of drugs were they doing?
MN: Reds or Seconal, downers. People were gangsters. They were going to jail for all kinds of stuff, mostly drugs. Most of the hardcore were doing hard drugs like heroin. They were in prison for drug-related incidents and raising rent.

GR: Were you a gang member?
MN: You had to be part of a gang in the '50s and '60s. I was in one called the Constituents. We were from the Westside on Crenshaw. There were gangs from before the war. The JAs were no different than other people.

GR: What did your gang do?
MN: See who was the baddest, go to the dances and act funny, and get drunk.

GR: Did you fight against yourself?
MN: It's usually like that. You fight against your own group, then everybody got together and participated in the race riots and went after the white man.

GR: Did you work with others, like Chinese Americans?
MN: Those other communities have to develop their own thing. People are talking about this Asian American stuff–it's a political term, not real. The real Asians are hurting. These so-called Asian programs are helping non-Asians. We got some real oppressed communities now. Some of those people don't have a pot to piss in. So they have to go the other route, the backside of capitalism. Shit, nobody ain't doing nothing about them. It's the straight up betrayal of the Asian Movement.

GR: Did you wear paramilitary outfits?
MN: Some wore fatigues and a red beret. We wore it sometimes at certain demonstrations.

ON THE END

MN: Some of us took on a more political process. This was after the Panthers got wasted by COINTELPRO, so there was disillusionment about the political line of the Panthers. The proletariat was supposed to become the leadership of the people. But they couldn't protect themselves from the fuckin' cops. And what a lot of us were waiting for was for the word to come down from Huey, Bobby, and them. The Panther Party was the basic acknowledged leadership in the Revolutionary Nationalist Movement. They set the whole stage. When they couldn't respond to the killings by the police, it fucked everybody's mind up.

GR: Did you dissolve?
MN: There was the AA Hardcore and New People's Hardcore. There was a deviation from Mao to the classics like Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stelin. So we went into studies, the NPHC stayed with the old way. They kept it going in the old direction. We studied–and tried to apply–Mao. We stayed at the level of the Red Book and didn't get into his philosophical stuff.

ON THE MOVEMENT

There was a conference called "Are you Yellow?" in the later '60s to bring together the younger people who were trying to figure out what was going on. They knew about Asians getting jacked up, so they wanted to know what was up. People were saying, "Fuck the Man." We were sick and tired of them telling us what we were supposed to be, we were going to develop our own identity. We wanted to build a real democratic system that had no racism.

GR: Did you meet the Black Panthers?
MN: I met Eldridge and Bobby. We were small potatoes compared to those guys. We are talking about a real small operation, but we never felt that way. We weren't petty bourgeoisie nationalists who thought we were the center of the world. We thought we were part of the revolutionary stream that was going on at that time around the world. Ché said we were like the fingers of a hand. We all do our bit; one finger can't develop a grip. If you get them all working, you can fuck The Man up.

GR: You still get active?
MN: I went through being a drug addict in the '80s. Part of my recovery was to go back to The Movement again. I hope young people get into looking at themselves, looking at what kind of things we stood for, and see where you hook up. It's coming. This thing is getting ready to rock and roll. The '60s and '70s ain't shit compared to what's gonna go down now. The reactionary motherfuckers are tightening the screws on everything. There's the stratum of third world people who moved up since the civil rights movement to become the power elite . . . quite a few Asians in there. They think that they represent all of Asian America. Those motherfuckers are going to get knocked out. They are upholding a system that is unjust. Everything is based on greed and what's best for them.

GR: Did they sell themselves out?
MN: That's what it looks like. They're all nice people if you talk to them; they have liberal sentiments. But what do they stand for and what do they do? How can 5% of the population consume 40% of the resources and make 20-30% of the greenhouse gases and pollution? The only way the human race is going to survive is if we take them out by any means necessary. The first person you work on is yourself. We didn't do that in the '60s and '70s. All we thought we needed was an identity. But looking like a Buddhahead isn't enough. We have to learn who we are and then we can accept other people and share ourselves with them.

GR: What's going to happen?
MN: The revolutionary storms in the Third World are kicking up. People are clear to what the US government is doing in South Africa and Indonesia, they don't give a fuck; there's no getting along with this son of a bitch. Western Imperialism doesn't benefit most people. All over the world, you can use the Internet. That's the only thing that's not controlled. Fuck TV, fuck newspapers. You can't pick up shit on the bourgeoisie media. Chairman Mao teaches "wherever there's oppression there's resistance," and there's oppression all over the world. If you have spiritual strength then suffering is part of the game. If you can turn suffering into challenges, to turn you into a loving human being, then shit, when you die its like the Indians say, "It's the best time to die," so you won't have regrets.

GR: Were you into the armed struggle?
MN: Malcolm teaches that you get ready by any means necessary. When we say by any means necessary, and Mao teaches that you fight with two hands–not one behind your back–that should be sufficient. The whole thing is about the human race now. Another 100 years and forget it. Look at the dumbshits in Indonesia setting forest fires. For what? The most important thing to realize is that the struggles of the '30s, '60s, '70s, and '90s and the coming millennia show a lesson. As if they think we started on a level playing field, now they want to knock out affirmative action. And then look at the top, it's "Charlie."

What we have to do as APEs, Asian Pacific Ethnics, is the key question. All classes of people in the ethnic communities need to recognize the working class. Shit, I don't want to buy a big house and I don't need anything. Little Tokyo is a big parking lot. We got thrown out, they destroyed the housing. If you want political power you need people concentrated. I'm waiting for the young people to come back and say, "I'm tired of this shit; let's build something." I want to live in a Buddhahead community. Right now I can't trust anybody, including other Buddhaheads. I grew up in camp; being in a village with 10,000 others is a pretty cool experience.

WHERE DO THESE WORDS COME FROM?

The funniest use of the word, "Charlie," sneaked out of Mo Nishida's lips. But after thinking about it, what does "Charlie" really mean? I've heard it in many of the incredibly popular 1980s Vietnam War films, and after looking in an Oxford English Dictionary, which weighs in at about 20 pounds with three-point-font text that you literally use a magnifying glass to see, the answer was revealed:

CHARLIE

Charley, Charlie–there are many definitions, the origin is unknown.

6 A fool, simpleton, esp. a proper, right Charley. *slang*

7 A white man. U.S. Negro slang. 1967 11 Jan Guradian Stokely Carmichael was there promising "Mr. Charlie's" Doomsday.

8 U.S. Services Slang. The North Vietnamese and Vietcong, esp. a North Vietnamese Soldier or Vietcong soldier. e.g. M. McCarthy Vietnam, 'If he called them Charlie'... he was either an infatuated civilian, a low-grade primitive in uniform, or a fatuous military mouthpiece.

9 Used as adj.: afraid, cowardly, esp. in phr. to turn Chorlie. slang. 1954 'N. Bloke' whispered in "Gloom You," 'turn Chorley and we'll do yo.' Here's another word. This word seems like it originated from the Vietnam era, but there are traces of it from much earlier.

GOOK

Origin unknown. Used as a term of contempt: a foreigner; spec. a coloured inhabitant of Southeast Asia or elsewhere.

To summarize, the word has been around since the '30s to signify an Asian who speaks Spanish, particularly a Filipino, but it is also used to slag the Koreans, Japanese, and Vietnamese. -EN

PANTHER BROTHERHOOD

Left to right: Panther photos liberated from *Vanguard* book. Pompadour photo by Flea, borrowed from *Gidra*. New photo of Art Ishii and Guy Kurose by MW.

Photo by Flea

YELLOW BROTHERHOOD member Ronnie Nakashima speaking before Westside Optimists at Youth Appreciation Week dinner.

Mao X Ché MLK

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ART ISHII
GUY KUROSE
by Martin Wong

Art Ishii was a gangbanger who became one of the Yellow Brotherhood, which was the first group of Asian activists in Los Angeles. Guy Kurose was a Black Panther who became an Asian activist in Seattle.

Today, both run their own dojos, teaching karate to at-risk kids in their respective cities. When Guy was in L.A. for a speaking engagement (he's a spokesperson on race and gangs), I met both of them in a Silverlake coffeehouse to talk about their experiences in the Asian-American Movement.

GR: How did a Japanese-American kid from Seattle become a Black Panther?
GK: I was raised in the black community and listened to these songs: "Say it loud, I'm black and I'm proud." I wanted to be there, too. Also, the Black Panther Party had a strong anti-war line. My perspective of the anti-war movement was "I'm not going to fight no Asians."

GR: What was it like being in the party?
GK: We did what we wanted. I was a renegade Panther. We were what Bobby Seale called "jackanapes," kids that had good intentions but were relating strongly to hoodlumism. He said we were good guys, but we always wanted to do something crazy.

GR: How did you find out about the Asian Movement?
GK: When Mo Nishida, Victor Shibata, and Warren Furutani came from the JACL to speak in Seattle, I was introduced to them. I was 16 and I was a member of the Black Panther Party. I had basically said, "I don't need to talk to no Japanese motherfucker who thinks he's white, man. So fuck you!" I was a kid. I was telling him what was going on with the Party up there. My perception of other Asian Americans was that they weren't very hard.

GR: Why did you think Asian Americans were soft?
GK: A lot of that was due to the camps and the way the community had become very insular about it. There was a fear. I tell people I'm a product of the concentration camps my parents went to. I was born a few years after they got out. I felt all this injustice.

GR: Did you read the Red Book?
GK: The Panthers took the Red Book and broke it down into how it affected the community in a real direct sense. I was a Panther, I got a Red Book, I said, "This motherfucker's Asian." I got an identity thing out of that.

GR: How long were you a Panther for?
GK: I stayed in for three years until I was 18. Then I entered college and became involved in the Asian Student Coalition. We had demonstrations on campus. I was into rioting. We'd cause wild stuff. We'd all end up in jail because we'd fight the police and fuck up all the buildings.

GR: What sort of support did you get in the Asian community compared to the black community?
GK: As Panthers, we were heroes in a lot of communities. In the Japanese-American community, everything our parents knew culturally and through their camp experiences for the most part was to be quiet. I'm proud of the activists' search for identity that resulted in the Redress Movement. Some people back then would have called it bourgeoisie–counter-revolutionary. I don't agree with that. It's wonderful it happened for, if nothing else, psychological reasons. I see so many Niseis out there and you know they're traumatized. They're hypersensitive or hyperapologetic. We picked up some of that.
Al: That's why the Yellow Brotherhood was so controversial. We weren't hyperapologetic. We weren't like, "Let's keep it hush-hush."
GK: We were told to outwhite the white, and groups like the YB and me said, "Fuck the whites. Fuck that shit."

GR: How did you meet the Yellow Brotherhood?
FC: I came to LA to meet the Movement people. Some of them were from the middle class, espousing philosophical and ideological kinds of things. Then I heard about the YB and I liked that. I was in the BPP, but I knew I wasn't black. There was this quest for belonging. I didn't want to be like the stereotype of our own people. I said, "Yeah, man, fucking wearing glasses and becoming dentists and lawyers. Fuck that, I'm with the people; struggling for the cause."

GR: What was the Yellow Brotherhood?
Al: We were way before all those other groups, late 1969. We had just gotten out of prison or the service. We realized all these young next-generation gangsters respected us. We thought that we could turn all that respect into something positive. That's how the concept of the Yellow Brotherhood started. It was anti-drug, anti-gang, and pro-school. We were at the forefront of the Asian Movement. Most people from those days will acknowledge that the YBs were the first ones talking shit and kicking ass.

GR: What was it like being in the YB?
Al: Unlike the Panthers, we weren't heroes. We really struggled with denial, particularly among the Nisei. Their thing after the camps was to out-white the whites and don't rock the boat. So many of my generation, my classmates, were doctors, lawyers, pharmacists, and optometrists. That's typical of the baby boomers. But there was also a minority who became gangbangers: the Ministers, the Shokashus; those groups were like a hidden part of the community. People wouldn't acknowledge that we had a problem with gangs and drugs. The Rafu Shimpo, the Japanese-American newspaper, reported day-in and day-out in the obituaries, 15 and 16-year-old kids dying of heart attacks. They had such denial. We were the ones who put the ugly statement out. We went to parents and their kids would be drugged-out and drooling on the rug. But they were in denial that their kids had drug problems.

GR: What types of drugs were people taking?
Al: We had this epidemic in LA and all over the Coast of barbiturates and heroin. They had to turn to guys like the Yellow Brotherhood and say, "Help us save our kids." I think one year there were more than 30 funerals of Japanese-American kids. Groups like AADAP write articles patting themselves on the back about how they salvaged the cities and talk about how their predecessors (and they could only be talking about the Yellow Brotherhood) used to be barbarians. Part of that was true. We weren't academic. We were people from the community working in the community, as opposed to outsiders with their Nikon cameras and 280Zs.

GR: Was the Yellow Brotherhood political?
Al: Very political people would come into the Yellow Brotherhood house and espouse the Red Book. Gangsters didn't give a shit about Red Books; they cared about red pills. We were political in terms of what we did, but we were very reluctant about grandstanding. There was actually a lot of internal struggle in our meetings about just how political we were going to be.

GR: What about other groups in LA?
GK: There was Asian American Hardcore, Joint Communications and there were small groups geographically.

GR: Did people belong to more than one group?
Al: Pretty much one, but we networked a lot.

GR: What was Eastwind?
GK: Eastwind was a Marxist-Leninist group. They were more political. People in Eastwind called themselves "comrades" and they'd go, "You said that Lenin said this, so you're a revisionist." It was so bizarre. They wanted to start attacking other people. They were all my friends, but when they'd talk about purging people, I'd say, "Yeah. Whatever, man." They were pretty elitist.

GR: How did it all end?
Al: There's a time and place for everything. The same problems weren't as apparent. Also, mobilization reached a critical mass and a transition. As we got older, my friends started having kids. There was a transition and we tried getting younger guys to assume leadership positions. But you had to find the right people and the right dynamics. With the YB, you couldn't be just the most intelligent guy, because you also had to be bad. People had to respect you. The transition was the demise of all of those organizations, carrying on those ideals.

GR: Was there a stronger sense of Asian community during the Movement?
GK: It was really splintered. There was this group called the Movement, but then you had the Asians outside and you wonder if they even knew about it.
Al: I grew up in a predominantly black neighborhood. All my time in the service was with blacks. So I've always socially gravitated toward the black culture, just like my peers in East LA gravitated toward Chicano culture. But one of the negative things about all this Black Power, Brown Power, and all this togetherness as social ethnic neighbors, is that it divided us. The first time I ever heard a black call me Jap, I was shocked. The polarizing started then and it continues today.

GR: What's the most lasting effect of the Asian Movement for you?
Al: I went to a function and ran into a kid I hadn't seen for 25 years. I remember him as a high school kid. That kid voluntarily came up to me and said, "You know what man? You guys really made a difference in my life." This guy was very high-risk. If it was one isolated incident, it would've been worth it, but there was more. Too much press goes to how many people died.
GK: To articulate, the Panthers–I have this huge identity behind them. "Former Black Panther" and all of that stuff. But what if they said "Former Asian Movement participant?" People would say, "What the fuck is that?" I don't like that because I am proud of our involvement, our trying to empower the community, trying to get young people to see their identity.

GIDRA

In a communal house, a group of Asians decided to put together a publication that was going to be cool, funny, and politically conscious at the same time. It was named after the Japanese Godzilla foe, the three-headed beast, Gidra. With a revolving staff who smoked sticky green pot (if they could get it), they put together what some say was a predecessor to the mag you're holding. This was in '69 when things were going off in the world. They used the word "fuck," to the dismay of the rightist tightasses, but they got the job done for five years. Funded by donations, a bunch of ads, and whatever sales they could put together, they put this sucker out once every two weeks. One of the early staffers, Eddy Wong (also a member of the Asian Radical Movement, a small group of five or six folks) recalls, "We were getting high and there was a lot going on. It was a great experience, it was fun, it was life or death for some people, since every day brothers and sisters were getting killed in Vietnam. The LAPD were vicious motherfuckers. They were cracking down on protests. Things were changing in the world. We had fun, man." Later on, many staffers found out that one of the "hangers-on" was an FBI informant. Posing as a photographer, he probably could only report that people smoked pot. -EN

Graphic on right taken from *Gidra*.

Left: Vietnam protester with picture of Ho Chi Minh. Right: George Woo, circa 1970. (Both photos by Nikki Arai)

GEORGE WOO by Martin Wang

"I'M TOO CHICKEN TO BE REVOLUTIONARY," SAYS GEORGE WOO, A SAN FRANCISCO STATE UNIVERSITY (SFSU) PROFESSOR WHO EARNED HIS POSITION THROUGH COMMUNITY ACTION AND TAKES PRIDE IN NOT HAVING A PhD. "I'm not dedicated enough to give up my life and everything. I also realize that is not the efficient way to go about things."

He may not be revolutionary, but he's no chicken either. Woo moved to SF's Chinatown from Hong Kong in 1963 at the age of 15, did time in the Navy, and shot photos for *Sunset* magazine before he started hanging out in a coffeehouse frequented by Wah Ching gangsters.

Two things happened there: "One, I became aware of the gang activity. I had an expensive camera, so I decided to get to know them so they wouldn't take it. Second, I empathized with them. One thing led to another, and I started to work with them."

Instead of crime and idleness, Woo suggested that gangbangers organize a town meeting to publicize the community's problems. When members of the Chinese establishment, City Hall, and media got in, the hoods locked the door and told the audience off.

"That blew everybody's minds," he says. "As I worked with them, I emerged as their spokesman. People started looking at me as a gang leader. I didn't give a shit or worry about the establishment."

Woo's work in the Chinese community led to involvement with SFSU's Chinese student group. "We came up with Free University for Chinatown Kids, Unincorporated (FUCK U). At the time, the Chinese student group had a basement, so we had a slide show and talk. Tom Wolfe was doing a story for *Esquire* and I was prominently in it. He said that I had a silver-tipped umbrella. Shit, man, that was a tin-foil tip!"

When students were forming the Third World Liberation Front, demanding a curriculum and system that reflected and respected the community's cultural diversity, Woo was called on to raise community support.

"It was a war. No classes went on because demonstrators would go from class to class and challenge teachers who were still holding classes. To stop the bookstore, we would fill a shopping cart with books and go to the check stand. We'd say, 'Oh, I'm not going to buy these,' and walk out. To break classes, we'd make noise, throw a chair. People threw cherry bombs down the john and pushed people around. The students who participated had violent tendencies, but they were out-gunned, outsmarted, and out-manned by the police, who were very, very violent."

At the rallies, the predominantly Japanese Asian Americans for Political Action (AAPA), IPSA (the Intercollegiate Chinese for Social Action), and Pilipino Action Collegiate Endeavor (PACE) joined with La Raza, the Black Student Union, and supportive white students. This was the first time Asian groups worked together.

"We instigated the Yellow Power slogan here. Of course, one of reasons why it never stuck is because we include the Filipinos. They said, 'Look at us, we're not yellow.' So I said, 'You're right. Asian Power!'"

To Woo, the Third World Strike was the beginning and end of the Asian American Movement. "The student movement did not last that long once the strike ended and an ethnic studies program began." Then he adds, "I don't think there was a movement, because no one really sat down and planned out everything. People would like to think so. If they want to claim credit, so be it."

After the strike, he went back to school despite advice from his friends in the La Raza community. They said the revolution would be over in two years and his response was that afterwards, people would have to pick up their books. Now George Woo is a member of the faculty he struck against.

"They tend to see me as a one-dimensional hell-raiser. If that's the role they assign me, then I have to take advantage of it."

ACUPUNCTURE by Eric Nakamura

In his office, Tatsuo Hirano proudly shows me a diploma dated 1981. It looks like most any other certificate except it has a black pyramid logo with a yin and yang symbol! He tells me that I will probably never see one of these again. Hirano was the only Asian person in the area to be a student in the Black Acupuncture Advisory Association of North America, the first acupuncture school in America.

The New York school was built by people who were tied to political organizations such as the Black Panthers, Black Liberation Army, Young Lords, and White Lightning. A Canadian doctor and a Hong Kong doctor helped them with their studies alongside an American M.D., Richard Taft, who made their studies "legitimate."

Unfortunately, on the day representatives from the National Institute of Mental Health were visiting the center to evaluate it for government funding, Taft was killed. He was found dead in a closet, injected with heroin in an attempt to cover up his murder. Fortunately, the BAAANA was able to find a replacement and the program continued. Hirano continued on his six-year residency/student journey.

"The first day I was doing acupuncture. I was doing it to myself, my friends and my family. The results were effective. People would come in irritable and aggressive; some came with bats. It was a tough area and you had to be tough there to survive, but within 10 minutes everyone would be quiet. Auricular acupuncture was the main program at that time. It was a lounge with people sitting in a circle so there was no mystery; you could see the person come in and get worked on. You could see that person relax and get comfortable. The whole place would be quiet. That neighborhood wasn't typically quiet; it was very impressive. People would come in shaking and sick. The medicine works, but if you quit or not is another question. Some would come since they were in trouble with the law and some would come so they could cut their addiction down so it wouldn't be so expensive."

Tatsuo Hirano photo by Eric Nakamura

Hirano actively participated on the West Coast in anti-drug organizations such as "Go For Broke," and also helped at the Asian Joint Communications in New York City, which had a detox house and organized Asian-American prisoners according to Leftist and collective philosophies. After getting burned out on the Asian-American movement, Hirano turned to something that he felt would fix the imbalances and the internal problems within all people: Chinese medicine.

After talking for about an hour about reasons why the Movement ultimately didn't work out due to inner-movement conflict, I come out with the feeling that Hirano is at peace with himself. He mentions that a meeting or a conference needs to be organized to get everything aired out and healed. Friendships were lost and people are still angry to this day. Hirano believes that the key link as quoted by Mao is "change internal," then society has to do the same." That's why Hirano treats everyone. He says, "I'll check out anything that comes through that door."

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Left to right: Alex Hing talks to Red Guards about meeting Ho Chi Minh (Photo by Nikki Arai). Asian marchers were the only war protesters to snake dance (Photos courtesy of Steve Louie). Following page: Alex Hing in New York City today (by MW).

RED STAR IN AMERICA

Mao	X	Ché	MLK
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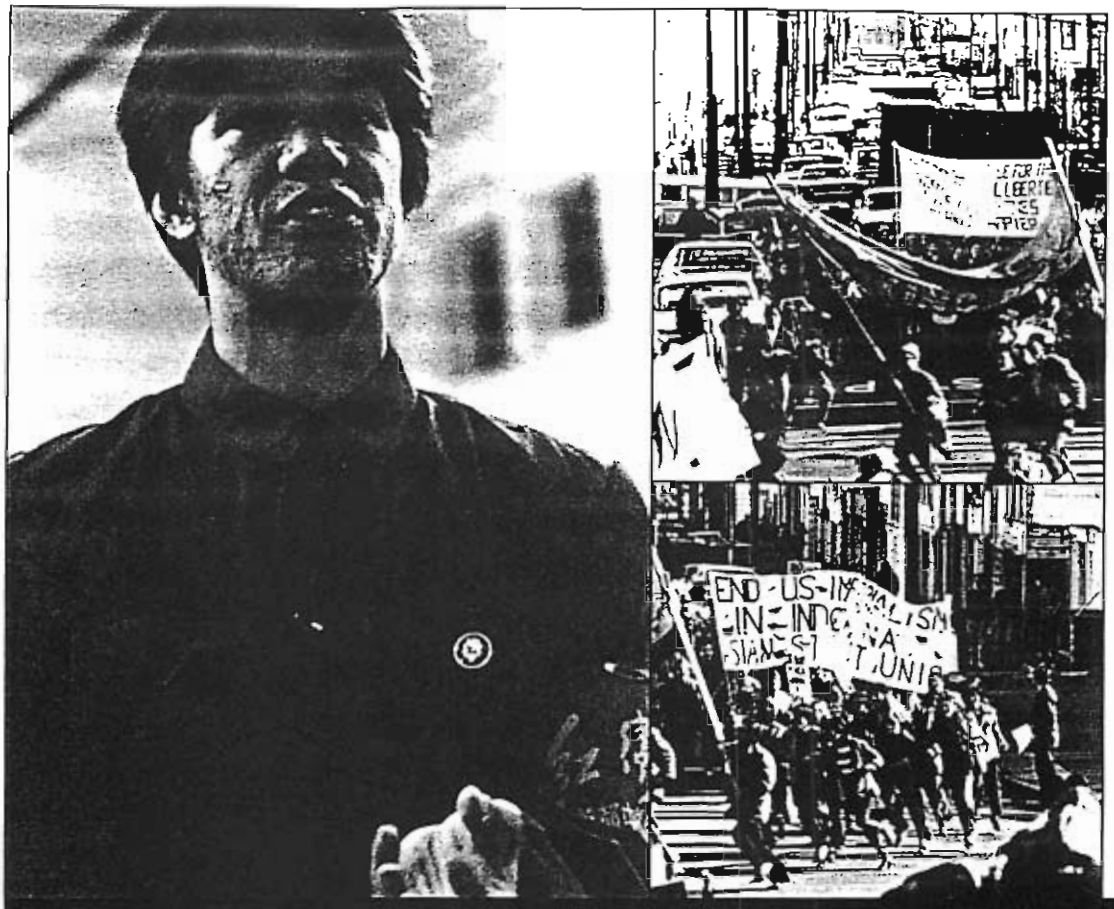
ALEX HING

IWK

by Martin Wong



San Francisco's Red Guard party was named after Mao Zedong's young squad of private property burners, but patterned more closely after the Black Panther Party. Initially gaining inspiration and guidance from the Panthers across the Bay in Oakland, the Chinatown-based Red Guards formed in 1969 to uplift their community and create social change. Minister of Information Alex Hing was one of the co-founders. Now a cook, Union organizer, and Tai Chi instructor in New York City, Hing remains politically and socially active. When I called him from the Marriott Marquis in Times Square to arrange a meeting, he informed me that his group was boycotting that particular hotel because it was non-union. Then he invited me over to his Chelsea flat for morning tea and conversation.

ON GUARD

GR: What were some of the Red Guards' accomplishments?
AH: One of the first things we did was make it acceptable for political forces other than the KMT to exist in Chinatown. That's important because prior to the Red Guards, Democratic party liberals would be branded as communists, and it made it very hard for them to have any political influence. When we came out and said, "We're communists," we established ourselves as the real Left. We participated in the movements for China's gaining a UN seat and also for the United States to have a relationship with Beijing. We created that pull in Chinatown, to make it OK for people to talk about Beijing as China, and not just Taiwan.

We also accomplished some small reforms. The federal government wanted to cut down a Tuberculosis testing center in the community, although at the time Chinatown had the highest rate in the country. We demonstrated to keep that T8 testing center functioning. They wanted to close the traditional Buddhist temple, to turn it into a parking lot. We demonstrated support for the temple so they didn't tear that down. We did a number of those kinds of reforms. We worked in what we called the Asian Legal Services that had a branch of the Asian American Draft Help Center. We had 1,000 cases of people who didn't want to go to the military and kept them out. We actually got four people who were in the military out. So we were quite successful in establishing an anti-war base in the community. I think that we opened up Chinatown for more progressive politics.

GR: What about the breakfast program?
AH: The Panthers set up a free Breakfast for Children program. We tried that, too. The kids who came were African Americans who lived in the projects of Chinatown. So we re-thought it and had an afternoon lunch program for senior citizens. We tried to model ourselves after the Panthers. When it didn't work, we gave it our own characteristics.

GR: Was that food ever stolen?
AH: Liberated. You know, in Chinatown they make these deliveries, just dropping stuff off in front of restaurants. It's just there.

GR: How many people were in the Red Guards?
AH: The high point was 200, right when we opened up in 1969. That's not an exaggeration, but that didn't last long. You can only take so much police repression before people stop coming around. We dwindled down to a hardcore base of around 50.

GR: What was the average member like?
AH: Early 20s. Our youngest member was like 13. We were American-born, but we were actually able to unite with immigrants and take up the struggle for immigrant rights. You hear one immigrant group think that they're better than a more recent immigrant group: they talk funny; they're dirty; they make the community more this, more that. It's really not right. So we then had some old-timers, too. Old pro-China people.

GR: Did you ever go out wearing Mao jackets and all that?
AH: Oh yeah. We'd wear army field jackets and berets. Sometimes we'd wear armbands during public demonstrations.

GR: How long was the Red Guard party together for?
AH: The phenomenon was very short-lived, 2 1/2 years. The main reason why it broke up was political police repression. We couldn't stay in that office if the landlord kept on quadrupling the rent. We couldn't walk down the streets without being put up against the wall, frisked, and asked for ID.

GR: They knew who was involved?
AH: Oh yeah. And our offices were being constantly raided. They didn't need a pretense. They were just looking for stuff.

GR: Did you ever have an arsenal full of guns?
AH: We were armed. In California it's legal to possess arms. Let's leave it at that.

GR: Did you ever have to use them?
AH: It wasn't quite a shoot-out, but one of our members had an armed stand-off with the police. The brother was on parole at the time, Tyrone Won, and they went after him. He wound up hijacking a plane to Cuba. He passed away in Cuba.

IN ASIA WITH THE PANTHERS

GR: What was the relationship between the Red Guards and Black Panthers?
AH: It was as close as it could be given the circumstances. The Panthers were absorbed in their own problems. The police waged an unrelenting onslaught against them. They had to spend so much time fighting off that attack.

GR: Where were you when the Panthers' split started?
AH: I was in China with Eldridge Cleaver. In 1970, I went on this trip to North Korea, North Vietnam, and China. How did it happen? Eldridge Cleaver, who at that time was based in Algiers, hooked up with North Koreans. At that time Kim Il Sung was still alive, the

ONE-WAY TICKET TO CUBA

March, 1969: The Red Guard newspaper reports that "four pigs" bust Tyrone Won on "trumped-up charges" when he walks out of the Red Guard headquarters with a disassembled rifle. Out on parole in July, Tyrone has a distinctive tattoo removed from his left arm by a doctor in a back-alley operation. (A lot of doctors were supportive of the movement.) Then Tyrone, his girlfriend, and a Black Panther who is also on the run, drive to Texas where they possibly rob a bank before driving to Mexico and hijacking a plane to Cuba. This is the last we hear of the Panther.

August,1970: Upon returning from his trip to North Vietnam with the Panthers, Red Guard Minister of Information Alex Hing receives a frantic phone call from Won's girlfriend informing him that Tyrone had hanged himself in his Cuban jail cell. In disbelief, Alex asks Eldridge Cleaver (who had lived in Cuba) to find out more. Eldridge writes a letter to Alex stating that Cuban authorities reported that Tyrone hanged himself and that Tyrone's girlfriend was engaged to a Cuban. When Alex tells the girlfriend's parents all the details, they give the Red Guards a care package full of clothes to send to her.

Sometime, 1978: Alex Hing is practicing martial arts in a park after work when he hears someone say, "Alex?" It's Tyrone's girlfriend. During the Carter administration, she and her son were among the Americans who were allowed to return from Cuba. They're waiting for her husband. She tells Alex that she learned to sew while in prison (all American hijackers were imprisoned because they could be CIA agents), went to school, and then joined a factory. She has two criticisms about Cuba: (1) She disapproves of the country's involvement in the Angolan war because it is not popular among the people and (2) it is too reliant on the USSR, which is social-imperialist, and not truly socialist. Then she goes on to say that she is still socialist and revolutionary, but doesn't want to get in touch with her old friends because she has to get her life together and because she's afraid her phone is tapped. Alex goes back to the park in the weeks that follow, but never sees her again.

-MW

CASTRO TIME

Why in the fuck would a hijacker want to go to Cuba? At the time in the late '60s and early '70s, Cuba became the hottest place to go. Perhaps the best reason for this is because it's only 85 miles from Florida, and the place is run by Fidel Castro, who's looked upon by some as a badass revolutionary. But a lot of the fools who hijacked planes and went to Cuba were into the fact that hijacking a plane to Cuba served as an embarrassment to the US. Prior to 1973, people didn't get their bags checked! So guns, knives, and bombs were easy to get on board. But once a hijacker got into Cuba, in many cases, he or she got screwed. Meeting them at the airport were security guards and police who would put these revolutionaries into jail for their crimes. The African Americans who hijacked their way into Cuba got fucked, as they were left to be nothing but low class citizens once they got out of jail. But the fools who were fugitives running to Cuba got more fucked since Castro didn't want fugitives in Cuba.

One publication mentions that there was a $25,000 fee that a hijacker would have to pay, which was most likely wrong, but another mentions that Castro would collect $2,500 to $3,000 per plane load. For some reason, Castro would let the hijacked plane fly back to the US, but would make the passengers stay in Cuba. He would arrange to have them taken on a tour of Cuba, have them eat good food, give them Che Guevera propoganda. The US would have to pay the fine quickly or else their plane could possibly get impounded.

In 1980, Castro's Cuba opened its borders for outbound refugees. So tons of people got on boats and landed in Miami. But Castro did better, he let folks out of prisons and mental institutions and sent them out to the US, too. This led to shit like what you see in *Scarface*. Those that didn't want to stick around tried to hijack planes to go back home.

-EN

Before you hijack a plan, check out: *Terror in the Skies* (1987) by Captain Thomas M. Ashwood or *The Sky Pirates* (1971) by James A. Arey.

Below: Juan Gonzales of the Young Lords talking at the Red Guard's headquarters (Photo by Nikki Arai)

economy of North Korea was fairly strong, and Koreans wanted to have more public relations. So they invited Eldridge to North Korea and he sent a small delegation there. The North Koreans really got behind the Black Panther Party. Basically, they said that the Black Panther Party was the revolutionary vanguard in the United States. They had the Panthers set up an embassy in North Korea.

GR: Did any other countries do that?
AH: Algeria did that. The Panthers had an office in Paris. Eldridge was in Cuba. At that time, there was this movement of what was called the "non-aligned countries" that was led by Cuba, North Vietnam, and North Korea. They were the leaders. Somehow, people felt that China was too big. So the Panthers ordered a subsequent delegation of American leftists to go to North Korea and they wanted a fairly broad cross-section of the American movements. An 11-member delegation went and David Hilliard asked me if the Red Guards wanted to be represented. So I went.

We went first to North Korea. One of the first things we did was sit around with the North Koreans to plan an itinerary. And they said to all of us in the delegation, "What would you like to see?" I said, "I want to visit the Chinese embassy." You know, I'm a Chinese American, we're the Red Guard. . . Well, everyone in the delegation, their mouths dropped. The image was that North Korea was kind of like a junior China, and they were very sensitive to that. So we weren't supposed to talk about China, but I'm a Chinese American, and I didn't care. So the North Koreans arranged for just me to go to the embassy. The limo comes in to pick me up, and Eldridge asks, "Where are you going?" I say, "The Chinese embassy." He says, "You're not going by yourself," and we all went to the Chinese embassy together, all 11 of us.

Also, while we were in North Korea, the North Vietnamese wanted to meet us. We also wanted to meet them. So they invited us to go to Hanoi because the war was still going on. We couldn't turn that down. So it became complicated because this was supposed to be a big PR thing for North Korea. Then we got invited to go to Hanoi and to China. So we spent three weeks in Korea, three weeks in Vietnam. Coming back through China we would have had an extended trip, but that was the time Huey got released from prison, and Eldridge had to deal with all this inter-party stuff. So our trip to China got cut off and we went to Algiers with Eldridge. That's exactly when the split happened.

We were in North Korea when the whole shootout at the Marin Country Courthouse happened. So Eldridge had to get back to the Panther headquarters in Algiers. When the rest of us got back to the US, the party was in shambles. At the same time the Red Guards had suffered from a lot of political repression, so we dissolved. Basically, we merged with other Asian-American leftists, and became a part of another organization. When the Red Guards dissolved, we actuelly merged with the IWK, which became a national organization with chapters in New York and San Francisco. A lot of ex-students went into the working class. We sought out working class jobs where we could organize and work in unions. That's how I became involved in unions.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the kind of repudiation of Communism, Marxism, and Leninism, a lot of us have had to rethink our politics. Basically, that's where I'm at now: retrenching, trying to make my contributions where I can. So I'm involved with the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, involved in unions and organizing. That's what I do, plus I teach Tai Chi.

GR: Most people who take classes like that seem to be non-Asian.
AH: Yeah. Mainly it's because Asians are falling into their own stereotype. I think a lot of youth now are basically computer nerds, and not really into studying the traditional stuff. Whereas people in Western society are getting fed up with Western values and are beginning to explore this big growth industry in alternative, or what they call "Oriental," medicine. So a lot of people are taking martial arts, Tai Chi, acupuncture, transcendental meditation, yoga, all that stuff. If you go to any of those events, you'll find very few Asians.

From the *Red Guard Community News*, Vol. 1, No. 2, April 9, 1969

Recommended Reading List:

1. Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China*
2. *Malcolm X Speaks*
3. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*
4. Eldridge Cleaver, *Soul on Ice*
5. Felix Greene, *Vietnam Vietnam*
6. Regis de Bray, *Revolution in the Revolution?*
7. Ché Guevara, *Guerilla Warfare*
8. *Diary of Ché Guevara*
9. Chè Guevara, *Reminisces of the Cuban Revolution*
10. *Chá Guevara Speaks*
11. *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*
12. Giap, *People's War, People's Army*
13. Myrdal, *Report on a Chinese Village*
14. *Selected Military Writings of Meo Zedong*
15. *Selected Works of Mao Zadong*
16. K. Marx and F. Engels, *Communist Manifesto*
17. Vladimir Lenin, *The State*
18. C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite*

CULTURAL RENDERING

GR: What were you into when you were growing up?
AH: I think that some of these traditional Asian variety acts are amazing: contortionists, jugglers, magicians. But I loved Bob Dylan. I like Bob because his lyrics are so right-on. No one has a command of English and images quite like he does. He had a profound effect on my consciousness. And Bruce Lee, of course.

GR: What about Bruce Lee?
AH: When he was alive, I was very critical of him because he played Kato. Being an ultra-leftist, I felt, "Oh, here's Bruce Lee playing the servile role and fighting for this white guy. We've got to get off of that." It wasn't until he passed away until I began to appreciate his contributions. He played a major role in having a more positive view of Asians out there. To be that good of a martial artist you've got to put in a lot of work. Maybe it's easier to say let's break out of that and do something easier! If we had a home-grown Jet Li from the US, we'd all be flocking. We wouldn't put that down.

MAKING HISTORY

GR: Do you miss the days of liberating food and standing up to pigs?
AH: I wouldn't do that now and I don't miss it. But I still believe in most of that stuff. Either you're part of making history, or you're not. I think we made a lot of history.

GR: How can people make history now?
AH: I think it's impossible to liberate others without first liberating yourself. People have to be open to different ways of thinking. I'm supportive of everything that moves things forward. If you look at the yin and the yang, there's theory and there's action. There's a time for theory and there's a time for practice. I think we're in a mode now for ideas. More of a retreat.

As Mao showed in the Long March, sometimes a retreat can be turned into an advance. There's no stigma attached to retreating. It's a natural process. People are beginning to understand what was not-so-correct about the past, and to take some of the good things and try to go out and have more practice and add their own generation's stamp to some of our experiences.

I think people should be revolutionary. People should break out of the old mode of things and not accept things as they are. Unfortunately, it takes a system to fall apart in front of your face before people start to look for alternatives.

GR: What type of framework did you envision?
AH: We were going to reclaim our heritage. We were going to break every stereotype that they put in our way, and we were going to show them that we are here to stay and they'd better come to some reconciliation with us. That's the attitude that I still have and I don't let anybody mess with me. I'm still surviving. I still plan to fight and still believe that I'm fighting. We'll see what happens.