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Model Minorities: Asian Americans and the White-Black Racial Paradigm

by

Jason Tom

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of the requirements for the degree of
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Prof. D'Weston Haywood

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Date

Prof. Richard Belsky

Second Reader

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my late friend Stephen Smith who supported me during difficult times and failure. I will forever cherish the fun and incredible moments we shared. The advice you've given me encouraged me to pursue my goals and has shaped who I am today. Thank you, and I will sorely miss you.

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Abstract

This paper examines the racial wedge driven by Whites between Blacks and Asian Americans during the Cold War on to the present. Model minorities is a term coined by Whites in the 1960s to suppress Civil Rights protests and Black demands. By elevating a minority group through success stories, Whites constructed a means to suppress Black people's organizing for change against systemic racism and oppression.

Preface

Part of the white backlash that historians often overlook is the racial wedge driven by Whites between Asian American and Black minorities. The term model minority was and continues to be a means to denigrate and suppress the voice of Black people demanding systemic change. The framing of Asian Americans as model minorities and perpetuating the stereotypes as successful has allowed racists to construct a false narrative that Asian Americans have been socioeconomically booming and integrated since World War II. What is extraordinarily offensive, tone-deaf, and politically strategic is the ways in which these ideas pit Asians against Blacks to distract from critical issues, such as systemic racism and oppression throughout the country. It is necessary to examine the historical precedence of why and how Whites chose to elevate Asian Americans when they too faced racism and oppression that paralleled Blacks. Why did Asian Americans become role models for all minorities to follow? How was this framing as model minorities used to suppress the voice and demands of Black people? Furthermore, what is the legacy of the racial wedge driven between Blacks and Asians by Whites? By closely examining popular papers of the American press from the Cold War to the present, this paper argues that Whites elevated Asian Americans to suppress Blacks during a crucial threshold of socioeconomic

progress to maintain White hegemony in the United States. The model minority formulation was built on the foundation of a long-standing ambivalence and multi-vocal perception of Asian Americans by Whites and also non-White Americans. The legacy of elevating Asian Americans has sown division amongst different ethnic Asians and a rift between Asians and other minorities, who are demonstrating in solidarity for social reforms today.

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Introduction

On April 14, 2017, Andrew Sullivan, a conservative writer, editor, and blogger for *New York Magazine*, published an article titled, "Why Do Democrats Feel Sorry for Hillary Clinton?," examining Hillary Clinton supporters attempting to place blame on anywhere and anything for Hillary Clinton's presidential election defeat. Sullivan excoriates liberals in his article for labeling people as racists because they don't conform to the leftist agenda. In the article's conclusion, Sullivan assails liberals with what he believes to be a challenge to the liberal imagination of White racism and racial inequality, writing:

Asian-Americans, like Jews, are indeed a problem for the "social-justice" brigade. I mean,

how on earth have both ethnic groups done so well in such a profoundly racist society? How have bigoted white people allowed these minorities to do so well — even to the point of earning more, on average, than whites? Asian-Americans, for example, have been subject to some of the most brutal oppression, racial hatred, and open discrimination over the years. In the late 19th century, as most worked in hard labor, they were subject to lynchings and violence across the American West and laws that prohibited their employment. They were banned from immigrating to the U.S. in 1924. Japanese-American citizens were forced into internment camps during the Second World War and subjected to hideous, racist propaganda after Pearl Harbor. Yet, today, Asian-Americans are among the most prosperous, well-educated, and successful ethnic groups in America. What gives? It couldn't possibly be that they maintained solid two-parent family structures, had social networks that looked after one another, placed enormous emphasis on education and hard work, and thereby turned false, negative stereotypes into true, positive ones, could it? It couldn't be that all whites are not racists or that the American dream still lives?¹

Sullivan's statement shows how Whites continue to drive a racial wedge between racial minorities to distract from race issues. The response was swift from “Ida Bae Wells,” the online moniker for Nikole Hannah-Jones, a Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter for the *New York Times*, writing,

But this is exactly why few people are actually qualified to write *well* and *smartly* on race. They haven't studied it, they sound dumb. Andrew Sullivan may want to start by studying immigration policy to see just *which* Asians are allowed into this country in the 1 place. . .It also kinda hard to believe he thought the whole model minority as a shield against anti-blackness was novel or smart. It's old, wack. ²

Jeff Guo, a former Washington Post journalist and currently a freelance journalist in Washington, D.C. also responded to Sullivan's article on Twitter writing,

I would respond to Andrew Sullivan in two ways. First, there were a lot of incentives for the white mainstream to champion and promote stories of Asian American success after WWII. . .Elevating Asian Americans as ‘deserving’ and ‘hardworking’ was a tactic to denigrate African Americans. This is why the ‘model minority’ label is so distasteful. It is a status conferred by the majority for the majority's own purposes. Sullivan's essay is an echo of the 1960s op-eds asking: ‘if Asian Americans could achieve success, why can't African Americans?’³

¹ Quoted in, Andrew Sullivan, “Why Do Democrats Feel Sorry for Hillary Clinton?,” *New York Magazine*, (2017). <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2017/04/why-do-democrats-feel-sorry-for-hillary-clinton.html>

² Ida Bae Wells, Twitter post, April 2017, 3:51 p.m.

<https://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:4V7Lg0FO9boJ:https://twitter.com/nhannahjones/status/853380229380935681%3Flang%3Dfa+%&cd=2&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us>.

³ Jeff Guo, Twitter post, April 2017, 2:47 p.m. [https://twitter.com/ jeffguo/status/853318969108967424](https://twitter.com/jeffguo/status/853318969108967424).

The positive stereotypes attributed to Asian Americans has been a powerful and often overlooked tool to suppress racial minorities demonstrating for change, particularly Black people. White racists use positive stereotypes to maintain a social structure and racial hierarchy, ensuring black people's relegation to the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder. One such positive stereotype is that Asian Americans do not require government assistance like blacks do because Asian Americans are self-sufficient. Since Asian Americans can lift themselves out of poverty and into middle-class American society without government assistance, they embody American values of self-made success. There may be some truth to the stereotype for a small minority of Asian Americans. However, for the vast majority of Asian Americans, their reality is they continue to struggle as much as other minority groups in the United States.

This thesis will examine how the perception of Asian Americans, specifically Chinese and Japanese Americans, shifted from being foreigners and enemies of the State to becoming model minorities for all other minorities in the United States to follow. Chapter One will address the shift that occurred during World War II. Chinese and Japanese Americans faced social resentment, but a divergence occurred during World War II as the Chinese became allies to the US in fighting against a common enemy, the Japanese. As America emerged from World War II, issues of race relations moved to the forefront of the nation's attention. The media depicted the Chinese as intelligent and also promoted social tolerance for Chinese and Japanese in the postwar world. The Japanese, forced to rebuild after losing their livelihoods and property during wartime internment, became the first Asians to integrate into American society. Chapter Two will address the government's attempt to establish a new post-war status quo, uniting Americans against the threat of communism. Instead, the government revealed deep social divisions that were unaddressed and

waiting to erupt in American society. Chapter Three will examine the 1950's juvenile delinquency crisis that gripped the nation. The juvenile delinquency crisis ran parallel to the Civil Rights movement, but during this crisis, the media began to lay the foundations for America's model minorities. Chapter Four will examine the fight for Civil Rights and its opposition. The chapter argues that without blacks demonstrating for Civil Rights, there would never have been a need to create a model minority. Chapter Five will examine the strategic construction of the model minority by popular news media to counter black demonstrations for social change and federal upliftment. Chapter Six will examine how the Chinese and Japanese attempted to challenge the model minority stereotype by forming their own political movements for racial equality. Lastly, The Epilogue will examine the legacy of the model minority stereotype in today's society.

Chapter 1 – Shifting Perceptions

Before Asian Americans became labeled the model-minorities of the United States, Asians, specifically the Chinese, began immigrating to the United States during the 19th century and were regarded with ambivalence by White Americans. The Chinese provided cheap labor, which was extremely vital to the development of the country, but this also put them at odds with unskilled White laborers who refused to work at a wage equivalent to Chinese immigrants, heightening racial tensions between the two ethnic groups. *Harper's Weekly*, a popular magazine featuring foreign and domestic news, politics, satirical illustrations, and many other subjects, extensively covered Chinese immigrants in the United States but split from the popular 19th-century sentiment of a White America. In the March 20, 1880 issue of the magazine, an article titled "*The Chinese in San Francisco*" portrayed the Chinese as a superior, ancient, and civilized people with no interest in Western civilization or assimilating in the United States, writing, "The Chinese emigrates, but he

does not assimilate. So far as is possible, he preserves in his new home all the manners and customs of the old. Having been born in the 'Celestial Empire,' whose arrangements he regards as perfect, the strange civilization of the West has no attraction for him, and he will have none of it."⁴ The article attempts to elucidate the animosity and hatred toward the Chinese by blaming the vitriol on unskilled White laborers. It also exemplifies the Chinese as hardworking, good, and assimilable people by skilled professional White laborers who are referred to as the intelligent and calm thinkers writing,

The class of labor which the Chinese have cheapened is that generally known as "unskilled." The white man in California demanded four or five dollars a day for the performance of work of this kind, and the Chinaman was willing to do it for half. This has been his sin from the beginning. . . The result has been acts of violence, bloodshed, and murder on the one hand, and on the other certain special class legislation equally iniquitous, the object achieved being simply the repression and injury of the Chinese. And this while intelligent men and calm thinkers have been doing their best to bear testimony to the generally quiet and industrious character of the poor Chinaman, and indisputable capacity he possesses for becoming a good citizen.⁵

Despite the effort by *Harper's Weekly* to reshape popular opinion at the time, the magazine could not temper the sentiment of Chinese as foreigners who were stealing unskilled White employment opportunities. In retaliation, The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 was passed barring the Chinese from immigrating to the United States because of xenophobia. Following the Exclusion Act, Anti-Chinese sentiment amongst unskilled White people culminated in a period where the Chinese were marginalized and a primary target for racial violence in labor disputes. In Rock Springs, Wyoming, twenty-eight Chinese coal miners were slaughtered in Chinatown over a labor dispute, and the instigators were not arrested or held accountable. Thomas Nast, a famous caricaturist and editorial

⁴ "The Chinese in San Francisco", *Harpers Weekly*, March 20, 1880, 182. Accessed November 21, 2020. <https://immigrants.harpweek.com/Default.htm>

⁵ Ibid.

cartoonist caricatured the Rock Spring Massacre in the September 19, 1885 issue of *Harper's Weekly*, titled "'Here's A Pretty Mess!' (In Wyoming)." ⁶ The cartoon also contained a caption, reading, "Chinese Satirical Diplomatist. 'There's no doubt of the United States being at the head of enlightened nations!'" ⁷ Nast's cartoon depicted two Chinese diplomats standing on higher ground as they observe Whites brutally massacre the Chinese, but it is the caption of the cartoon that is prominent. Nast emphasized the irony of White Americans, who believed they were superior when brutal acts of racial violence occurred and went unpunished. Even though the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 created a surge in racial violence toward Chinese immigrants, there was a deep-seated interest in the Chinese because they continued to be represented as possessing ancient traditions, mysticism, and a knowledge that was incomprehensible to Whites.

In the 1920s Earl Derr Biggers and Sax Rohmer published a series of novels featuring a fictional East Asian main character and villain that illustrated and set the late 19th and early 20th-century White imagination of ethnic East Asians. Novelist Sax Rohmer created Dr. Fu Manchu, an East Asian villain that wanted to bring the downfall of Western civilization. According to Jeffrey Richards, a Professor of Cultural History at the University of Lancaster and author of *China and the Chinese in Popular Film: From Fu Manchu to Charlie Chan*, Rohmer's imagination of Dr. Fu Manchu was

Imagine a person tall, lean and feline, high-shouldered, with a brow like Shakespeare and a face like Satan, a close-shaven skull, and long magnetic eyes of the true cat-green. Invest him with all the cruel cunning of an entire Eastern race, accumulated in one giant intellect, with all the resources of science past and present, with all the resources ... of a wealthy government – which, however, has already denied all knowledge of his existence. Imagine

⁶ "'Here's A Pretty Mess!' (In Wyoming)", *Harpers Weekly*, September 19, 1885, 623. Accessed November 21, 2020. <https://immigrants.harpweek.com/Default.htm> See also, Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

⁷ Ibid.

that awful being and you have a mental image of Dr Fu Manchu, the yellow peril incarnate in one man.⁸

The fictional Dr. Fu Manchu may be a supervillain, but he was extraordinarily cunning, intelligent, and mysterious, traits that were attributed to the Chinese at the time. Contrasting the evil Dr. Fu Manchu was Charlie Chan.

Novelist Earl Derr Biggers created Charlie Chan, an East Asian detective that became extremely popular with subsequent adaptation into movies. Charlie Chan reflected the many stereotypes that were attributed to East Asians at the time. Chan was depicted as extremely intelligent, wise, aphoristic, and used the process of reasoning and deduction to solve mysteries that eluded White police, encapsulating readers and movie audiences that considered Chan brilliant. The depiction of Charlie Chan was racist as a series of White actors used yellowface, and the actors spoke with an accented English, but the minor characters were played by ethnic East Asians. Despite the overt racism, the portrayal of Dr. Fu Manchu and Charlie Chan served as an early form of inter-racial exception between Whites and East Asians in the United States. The stereotypes in both characters continued to define the general perception of the Chinese and other Asians in the White imagination. However, with the onset of World War II, America's perception of East Asians, specifically the Chinese and Japanese, began to drastically shift and diverge from these long-standing beliefs. With the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the United States entered World War II against Japan. The Japanese in the United States were declared enemies of the State. China became an ally of the United States during the war, but the country was under Japanese occupation.

⁸ Jefferey Richards, *China and the Chinese in Popular Film: From Fu Manchu to Charlie Chan*, (I.B. Tauris; 1st edition, 2016), chap 2, Kindle.

The Chinese in the United States, now allies fighting against a common enemy, saw the war as an opportunity to challenge Whites' racial hierarchy to gain tolerance and a semblance of equality in American society.

Chinese Americans viewed military service at the onset of World War II as a way to prove themselves as American citizens. Harold Liu, a Chinese American from New York, said, ““In the 1940s, for the first time Chinese were accepted by Americans as being friends because at that time, Chinese and Americans were fighting against the Japanese and Germans and the Nazis. Therefore, all of a sudden, we became part of an American dream. . .it was a whole different era and in the community we began to feel very good about ourselves.””⁹ The war provided an enormous opportunity for Chinese Americans to change their public perception as China and the United States were allies fighting against a common enemy. Wartime propaganda campaigns also eased some of the racist sentiment toward Chinese Americans at home, as an article in *Life* magazine on December 22, 1941 illustrated. It was problematically entitled, “*How to Tell Japs from the Chinese: Angry Citizens Victimize Allies With Emotional Outburst At Enemy.*” The article attempted to promote Chinese American tolerance stating, “In the first discharge of emotions touched off by the Japanese assaults on their nation, U.S. citizens have been demonstrating a distressing ignorance on the delicate question of how to tell a Chinese from a Jap. Innocent victims in cities all over the country are many of the 75,000 U.S. Chinese, whose homeland is our staunch ally.””¹⁰ The article's purpose was to differentiate Chinese people from Japanese people by

⁹ Ronald Takaki, *Double Victory: A Multicultural History Of America In World War II*, (New York, NY: Back Bay Books, 2001), 116.

¹⁰ “How to Tell Japs from Chinese,” *Digital Exhibits*, accessed July 27, 2020, <http://digitalexhibits.wsulibs.wsu.edu/items/show/4416>.

highlighting the differences in facial features, for instance, as indicated by its accompanying pictures.¹¹ By propelling Chinese Americans into the media as allies of the United States, it allowed Chinese Americans to question their acceptance in American society and openly call for reform.

Chinese Americans wanted the exclusionary laws, particularly the 1882 Exclusion Act which barred Chinese Americans from attaining citizenship and immigration, repealed. Japanese propaganda appealed for Asians to unite against the United States, saying, “[The Chinese in the United States] ‘had been relegated to the most menial of occupations, despised and mistreated and at best patronizingly tolerated with a contemptuous humor.’”¹² The repeal of the Exclusion Act became essential for the United States’ war effort in Asia, with President Roosevelt acknowledging, ““By the repeal of the Chinese exclusion law, we can correct a historic mistake and silence the distorted Japanese propaganda.””¹³ In 1943, the Chinese Exclusion Act was repealed, with Congress setting an annual quota of 105 Chinese immigrants to immigrate to the United States. It also allowed Chinese Americans the right to attain naturalized citizenship.

Japanese Americans faced an enormous backlash and became a cause of concern for national security after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. White Americans grew suspicious of all Japanese living in the United States, believing them to be spies collaborating with Japan. On January 20, the *San Diego Union* further instigated the country’s anti-Japanese hysteria, saying, ““In Hawaii . . . treachery by residents who although of Japanese ancestry had been regarded as loyal, has played an important part in the success of Japanese attacks. . . . every Japanese . . .

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Takaki, *Double Victory*, 119.

¹³ Ibid., 119.

should be moved out of the coastal area and to a point of safety far enough inland to nullify any inclination they may have to tamper with our safety here.”¹⁴ Pressured by a nation on edge, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 on February 19, 1942, ordering all Japanese living in the mainland United States to an internment camp. The Executive Order was a direct violation of Japanese Americans' constitutional rights. However, some second-generation Japanese Americans, known as the Nisei, decided to enlist in the military despite their predicament. Those who enlisted hoped to distinguish their allegiance to the United States through military service.¹⁵ Minoru Hinahara, a second-generation Japanese American, said, “I wanted to show something, to contribute to America. . .My parents could not become citizens but they told me, ‘you fight for your country’”¹⁶ Hinahara was one of the many Japanese Americans who enlisted for military service. He served as an interpreter in the U. S. 27th Army Division, participating in Okinawa's invasion. With the conclusion of World War II, Japanese Americans were released from their internment. Japanese Americans were amongst the first Asian Americans to integrate into American society. The government had dismantled the entire Japanese ethnic economy, forcing them to rebuild their lives and livelihoods in a postwar world.¹⁷ The achievements attained by Chinese and Japanese Americans living in the United States during World War II were momentous. In the post-war years, Chinese and Japanese Americans began entering into mainstream American society.

In 1946, the nightly radio series, *The Adventures of Superman*, aired an episode titled,

¹⁴ Ibid., 146.

¹⁵ Takaki says, “During the war, however, 33,000 Japanese Americans made other choices: they decided to seek equality and justice by serving in the U.S. Armed Forces.” Ibid., 161.

¹⁶ Ibid., 141.

¹⁷ Ellen D. Wu, *The Color of Success: Asian Americans and the Origins of the Model Minority*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 146.

“The Clan of the Fiery Cross.” The episode began with Jimmy Olsen going to baseball practice at the Unity House. When Olsen arrived, he witnessed a brawl between two boys, Tommy Lee, an Asian American boy, and Chuck Riggs, a white boy. Tommy and his family had recently moved to the neighborhood and replaced Chuck as the number one pitcher for the squad, which is the primary cause of the tension between the two. Chuck went home and told his uncle Matt about the fight. Matt knew Tommy Lee’s father, Doctor Wan Lee, recently promoted in the Metropolis Health Department as a Bacteriologist. Uncle Matt took Chuck to a Klan meeting and revealed himself to be the leader of The Clan of the Fiery Cross, a White Supremacist group. The Clan of the Fiery Cross went to great lengths to run the Lee family out of Metropolis, injuring Tommy in the process and later attempting murder but is thwarted by Superman every time. Ultimately, Superman stopped Uncle Matt during a baseball match, and the episode closed with the baseball team heading to the hospital to present Tommy with his award, a golden baseball.¹⁸ The depiction of the Chinese in this Superman episode was unfounded before World War II. By communicating to its listeners that a Chinese family can attain a high position in society alongside Whites, the episode served as an early form of social inclusion and social mobility for a minority in the post-war American mainstream media.

Japanese Americans would attain one of the highest degrees of social integration into American society. The post-war labor market was in high demand for semiskilled and skilled laborers due to the expanding military-industrial complex. The military-industrial complex

¹⁸ James Lantz, “Superman Radio Series - Story Reviews 1946: The Clan of the Fiery Cross,” *Superman Homepage* (accessed November 11, 2020), <https://www.supermanhomepage.com/radio/radio.php?topic=radio-reviews%2F070146-fierycross>; Alternatively, the full radio episode can be found here: Eric Francisco, “Superman Crushed the KKK in 1946. Here's Why He's Doing It Again in 2020.,” *Inverse*, 2020. <https://www.inverse.com/entertainment/superman-smashes-the-klan>.

provided many Japanese Americans opportunities to find jobs that resulted in upward mobility in American society.¹⁹ Historian Ellen D. Wu, for example, provides statistics showing Japanese American economic mobility between 1940 and 1960:

Of all Japanese Americans in the labor force in 1940, 3.1 percent held professional or semiprofessional occupations, 11 percent were proprietors, managers, or officials, and 10.6 percent were found in clerical and sales work (for a 24.7 percent total). By 1960, 12.9 percent held professional jobs, 7 percent were proprietors, managers, or officials, and 15.2 percent were found in clerical and sales (for a 35.1 percent total). In contrast, the proportion of Nikkei in domestic work, the nondomestic service industry, and nonfarm laboring positions fell from 7.5, 7.5, and 8.2 percent, respectively in 1940 (for a 23.3 percent total), to 3.3, 7.4, and 3.7 percent, respectively (for a 14.4 percent total), in 1960. Education patterns also suggested assimilation. In 1940, 9.5 percent of Japanese Americans had some college education, compared to 12 percent of native-born whites and 3 percent of blacks. Ten years later, 19.1 and 14.7 percent of Nikkei men and women, respectively, had acquired some higher education, compared to 14 percent of all whites, 4.2 percent of black men, 5.2 percent of black women. By 1960, 23.6 percent of Nikkei men and 16.4 percent of Nikkei women had attended college, while only 19.4 percent of white men, 15.5 percent of white women, 6.2 percent of black men, and 7.1 percent of black women had done so.²⁰

The Superman radio series and the workforce statistics show a growing tolerance for Chinese and Japanese Americans in the United States, though racism was still prevalent. Japanese and Chinese Americans were still perceived as Orientals, the Other, and non-Whites compared to Europeans, factors that still marked them as unassimilable. As Chinese and Japanese Americans were slowly gaining tolerance in American society, Blacks made little progress despite their concerted efforts to achieve a socioeconomic status similar to the Chinese and Japanese.

¹⁹ Wu says, “the demand for semiskilled and skilled labor precipitated by the rapid expansion of the military-industrial complex heralded unforeseen opportunities outside their traditional, segregated niches. Thus, for the first time, Nikkei [first generation Japanese Americans] could finally secure positions in fields that corresponded to their university-level education and training.” Wu, *The Color of Success*, 146.

²⁰ Wu, *The Color of Success*, 148.

Chapter 2 – Blacks Fight for Equality During World War II

During World War II, many Black men enlisted in the armed forces to fight, but they and Black people on the homefront were conflicted about the war. Blacks were skeptical of supporting the United States in another world war for democracy after many Blacks enlisted during World War I and returned home to a country that continued treating them as second-class citizens.²¹ But Civil Rights activist A. Philip Randolph argued against this skepticism, advocating that a German victory and life under Hitler would mean a re-enslavement of Blacks and a return to the status of chattel.²² Black activists knew Blacks would once again enlist and fight for a country that supported segregation, but World War II was different from previous wars. Hitler and Nazi ideology advocated for white supremacy, leading Black activists to believe supporting the war would give them the ammunition needed to shift discussions of race to the center stage in the United States. Civil Rights activist Roy Wilkins portrayed the fight as a racial struggle abroad, saying, “the war had encouraged discussion of the ‘Negro problem,’ making it more ‘heated and constant’ than it had ever been. It had stimulated black Americans, for it was ‘not like other wars. . . .The villains talked of ‘master races’... [and] of the necessity of conquest and slavery.’”²³ Nazi ideology highlighted American hypocrisy. Wendell L. Willkie, a supporter of Civil Rights and the 1940 Republican nominee for President, said, “Our very proclamations of what we are fighting for have rendered our own inequities self-evident. When we talk of freedom

²¹ See, Adriane Lentz-Smith, *Freedom Struggles: African Americans and World War I*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

²² Jonathan Rosenberg, *How Far the Promised Land?: World Affairs and the American Civil Rights Movement from the First World War to Vietnam*, Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006, 138.

²³ *Ibid.*, 154.

and opportunity for all nations the mocking paradoxes in our own society become so clear they can no longer be ignored.”²⁴ The conflict amongst many Black Americans was most apparent in James G. Thompson’s letter to the *Pittsburgh Courier* titled, “Should I Sacrifice to Live ‘Half American?’”

Thompson’s letter expressed the conflict of many Blacks torn between supporting the United States or protesting the war, writing,

Should I sacrifice my life to live half American? Will things be better for the next generation in the peace to follow? Would it be demanding too much to demand full citizenship rights in exchange for the sacrificing of my life? Is the kind of America I know worth defending? Will America be a true and pure democracy after the war? Will Colored Americans suffer still the indignities that have been heaped upon them in the past? These and other questions need answering; I want to know, and I believe every colored American who is thinking, wants to know.

The V for victory sign is being displayed prominently in all so-called democratic countries which are fighting for victory over aggression, slavery and tyranny. If this V sign means that to those now engaged in this great conflict then let we colored Americans adopt the double VV for a double victory. The first V for victory over our enemies from without, the second V for victory over our enemies from within. For surely those who perpetrate these ugly prejudices here are seeking to destroy our democratic form of government just as surely as the Axis forces.²⁵

Thompson’s letter inspired the “Double V” campaign, an effort led by Black newspapers and activists that vowed to fight for a victory against the enemies of democracy abroad and at home for those people and institutions invested in prejudice and racial discrimination. The campaign was highly successful, with governors, periodicals, and publications joining the “Double V” campaign.

In 1941, A. Philip Randolph threatened to lead a march of 100,000 Black people on

²⁴ As quoted in, Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 7.

²⁵ James G. Thompson, “Should I Sacrifice To Live ‘Half-American?’,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, January 31, 1942.

Washington for Black jobs and racial justice and did not relent until President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802. The Order banned racial discrimination in defense industries and established the Fair Employment Practice Committee.²⁶ Despite the impact of the “Double V” campaign and some of the federal concessions it gained, Black veterans again returned home after the war to an American society that still refused to change. Jim Crow laws continued in the south, and the GI Bill, which provided veterans with education, financial loans, and other benefits to aid in their transition to postwar life, was denied to Black veterans.²⁷ The continuous treatment of Blacks as second-class citizens in the post-World War II period spurred many Black people and Black veterans to organize and demand rights after their military service. This culminated in the modern Civil Rights movement of the 1950s.

Yet, paralleling the modern Civil Rights movement of the 1950s was a juvenile delinquency crisis as American teenagers rebelled against American society. The concerns of juvenile delinquency were exaggerated, but Chinese Americans were placed in the spotlight as the media reported the juvenile delinquency crisis as almost non-existent in Chinese communities. The family values instilled in Chinese children were venerated by the media seeking a possible solution to the nation’s juvenile delinquency crisis. The media’s veneration of Chinese values set positive stereotypes attributed to the Chinese as American models.

Chapter 3 – Chinese Wisdom Prevents Juvenile Delinquency

²⁶ “Five Newspaper Join ‘Double V’ Campaign,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, 1942, 14. <https://newscomwc.newspapers.com/image/40802058/?terms=double%20v&match=1>. (Date Accessed 11/9/2020); Christopher Parker, *Fighting for Democracy: Black Veterans and the Struggle Against White Supremacy in the Postwar South*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

²⁷ Hilary Herbold, "Never a Level Playing Field: Blacks and the GI Bill", *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, no. 6 (1994): 104-08. Accessed November 9, 2020. doi:10.2307/2962479. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2962479>.

In the United States, juvenile delinquency was on the rise as early baby-boomers entered their teenage years by the late 1950s. The post-war period's burgeoning economy gave teenagers more leisure time and economic power than previous generations of young Americans. For the first time, teenagers influenced American life and commerce with an affinity for rebellious culture propagated by social transformations such as the television, comic books, and rock and roll music. The fears of the rising juvenile crime rate caused the United States Senate Subcommittee's establishment *on Juvenile Delinquency* in 1953 to investigate the alarming issue. The hearings were held on April 21, 22, and June 4, 1954, and attempted to blame comic books as the root cause of the nation's juvenile delinquency crisis. William M. Gaines, a publisher for Entertaining Comics, was called to testify at the committee, stating,

Nobody has ever been ruined by a comic. As has already been pointed out by previous testimony, a little, healthy, normal child has never been made worse for reading comic magazines. The basic personality of a child is established before he reaches the age of comic-book reading. I don't believe anything that has ever been written can make a child overaggressive or delinquent. The roots of such characteristics are much deeper. The truth is that delinquency is the product of real environment in which the child lives and not of the fiction he reads.²⁸

Gaines's testimony defended comic magazines, informing the Senate committee members that comic magazines did not cause children to grow up and become overaggressive or delinquent despite their beliefs, but alluded to the family's factor in the home where a child is raised. Following the hearings, the *Saturday Evening Post*, an influential magazine to many middle-class Americans, dedicated a five-part series in 1955 entitled "The Shame of America" reporting on the

²⁸ United States. Congress. Senate. Committee on the Judiciary. Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency, *Juvenile Delinquency (Comic Books): hearings before the Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency of the Committee on the Judiciary, United States Senate, Eighty-third Congress, second session, pursuant to S. 190 Investigation of juvenile delinquency in the United States. April 21, 22, and June 4, 1954*, United States Government Printing Office Washington, 1954, 98.

nation's Juvenile Delinquency crisis. The first part of the series by Richard Clendenen and Herbert W. Beaser began by questioning the cause of the crisis, writing, "Teenage crime jumps 45 per cent, gangster rackets thrive in schools, kids from 'good families' become killers and dope addicts. Why? A Senate committee has just completed the most exhaustive study ever made of this question. Two of the investigators—experts who themselves talked to hundreds of young criminals—report their startling findings exclusively in the Post."²⁹

This sentiment was echoed by *New York Times* journalist William A. McIntyre, who reported that a solution to the country's delinquency problem could be found in Chinatown and in the Chinese way of life. Chinese Americans were placed in the spotlight to combat the national issue of juvenile delinquency plaguing American society. McIntyre promoted Chinese ethnic communities as delinquent-free compared to white communities. In his 1957 *New York Times* article, *Chinatown offers Us a Lesson*, he wrote, "Juvenile delinquency increased a phenomenal 32.5 per cent in New York City last year, yet there is one area of Manhattan in which such delinquency scarcely exists. In fact, in the same region even adult crime is seldom heard of. The region is Chinatown."³⁰ McIntyre explained the Chinese-American family structure and how it was, he argued, rooted in Confucian beliefs and values, such as the father being the head of the household, and that the most significant personal sin was to bring dishonor to the family name. The key to McIntyre's article was detailing the daily life of a Chinese American child, writing,

Growing up in such an insulated and emotionally snug family life, the child develops characteristics that seem peculiarly 'Chinese' reservoirs of patience, unflagging capacity for work and dislike for physical violence. (The man who strikes the first blow is the weaker because he resorts to violence when words fail him.) The child also learns to distrust

²⁹ Richard Clendenen and Herbert W. Beaser, "The Shame of America," *Saturday Evening Post*, Vol. 227, Issue 28, preceding p1-1. 1p., 1955.

³⁰ William A. McIntyre, "Chinatown Offers Us a Lesson," *New York Times Magazine*, October 6, 1957, 49.

demonstrativeness, but to be tolerant towards others.

Beyond this, and as universal as brown eyes among the Chinese, is the desire for education. The principal of P.S. 23, Marie Lelash, whose students are 85 per cent Chinese, reports it is difficult to make children who are ill stay home from class. After public school lets out at 4 in the afternoon, the Chinese children go to one of the three language schools in Chinatown for an additional two hours of instruction in Cantonese or Mandarin, and calligraphy. The crowded hours of the day leave little time for the aimless drifting that ends in delinquency. As one parent remarked, 'Our young people don't have time to get into trouble.'³¹

McIntyre showed the family as the most vital single factor to juvenile delinquency's root cause, reiterating William M. Gaines's Senate hearing's beliefs. According to McIntyre, the Chinese offered a lesson to Americans; by raising children on filial piety values and instilling a reverence for education, juvenile delinquency could be overcome, he thought. The stories of non-delinquent Chinese children in the news served as a form of guidance for American families on raising non-delinquent children and attempt to stem the nation's juvenile delinquency crisis. Juvenile delinquency in the 1950s began the process of constructing positive stereotypes that are attributed to the Chinese and Japanese in American society. However, juvenile delinquency was insignificant compared to the racial tensions between Blacks and Whites over segregation in the south. The Civil Rights Movement posed a direct challenge to American society's social fabric as Blacks demonstrated to gain racial equality in American society. As the Civil Rights movement shifted toward radical and militant demonstrations, the Chinese and Japanese were venerated for successfully integrating into American society and placed on a pedestal as model minorities to counter Blacks and their demands for social equality.

³¹ Ibid., 51.

Chapter 4 – Blacks challenge the Status Quo for Civil Rights

In 1951, Oliver Brown filed a class-action lawsuit against the Board of Education of Topeka after his daughter was refused entrance to an all-white elementary school. The case challenged racial discrimination in public schools, and the world's attention was fixated on the case. In a letter to the Supreme Court, Secretary of State Dean Acheson detailed the international attention garnered by the *Brown* case writing,

[D]uring the past six years, the damage to our foreign relations attributable to [race discrimination] has become progressively greater. The United States is under constant attack in the foreign press, over the foreign radio, and in such international bodies as the United Nations because of various practices of discrimination against minority groups in this country. As might be expected, Soviet spokesmen regularly exploit this situation in propaganda against the United States, both within the United Nations and through radio broadcasts and the press, which reaches all corners of the world. Some of these attacks against us are based on falsehood or distortion; but the undeniable existence of racial discrimination gives unfriendly governments the most effective kind of ammunition for their propaganda warfare.³²

In deciding to intervene in a Supreme Court case, the State Department inextricably linked *Brown v. Board of Education* to the country's national security. When the Supreme Court ruled in favor of *Brown* in 1954, the government quickly turned the ruling to their advantage, countering Soviet propaganda. According to historian Mary Dudziak, the Voice of America, a U.S. news agency funded by the American government that relayed domestic affairs internationally, broadcasted that, "the issue was settled by law under democratic processes rather than by mob rule or dictatorial fiat." The *Brown* broadcast received "top priority on the Voice's programs" and was to be "beamed possibly for several days, particularly to Russian satellites and Communist China."³³ The court victory was well received internationally, with many leaders

³² Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 100.

³³ *Ibid.*, 107.

praising the decision as a step in the right direction for race relations in the United States.

Despite the Supreme Court ruling on *Brown v. Board of Ed.*, enforcement of desegregation was left mainly to the states. The states then left the authority to local school districts to implement desegregation procedures resulting in a protracted process to all schools' eventual desegregation. Black students attempted to test the Supreme Court's *Brown* ruling, starting a national crisis with international implications in Little Rock, Arkansas.

On September 4, 1957, nine African American students attempted to enroll in Little Rock's Central High School after the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision with the beginning of a new school year. All nine students were denied admission because they were Black. Arkansas Governor, Orval Faubus, declared that the students' enrollment threatened "imminent danger of tumult, riot, and breach of the peace and the doing of violence to persons and property."³⁴ Faubus ordered the Arkansas National Guard into active service, surrounding the school and turning the Black students away. On September 14, President Eisenhower and Governor Faubus met at Eisenhower's vacation retreat in Newport, Rhode Island, to discuss a peaceful end to the crises. As the governor returned home to Arkansas, he defied the President by making demands of his own, insisting, "he would remove the guardsmen only on condition that the Justice Department recommend a delay in desegregation pending a Supreme Court test of the state's interposition law."³⁵ On September 23, city police held back an anxious White crowd as the Black students walked into the school. When the crowd realized they had been deceived, they rioted. The next day, the mayor of Little Rock issued a telegram to President Eisenhower

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 115.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 126.

requesting assistance. The telegram stated, "I am pleading to you as President of the United States in the interest of humanity law and order and because of democracy world-wide to provide the necessary federal troops within several hours."³⁶ The events unfolding in Little Rock riveted the world's attention, turning Little Rock, Arkansas, into an international crisis within the context of the Cold War, and forcing President Eisenhower to act.³⁷ Eisenhower ordered five-hundred paratroopers from the 101st Airborne Division to be stationed in Little Rock and provide escort for the nine Black students into Central High School. The military presence did not end the crises as white segregationists pushed back against the President's intervention. A referendum was held with a vote of 19,470 to 7,561 to close the schools statewide rather than desegregate. The decision to shut down the schools in Little Rock was a win for white segregationists. It signified one of many attempts on the part of white elected officials and private citizens to suppress Black demands for equality throughout the Civil Rights Movement, even against Court orders and federal intervention. In the *South China Morning Post*, a Hong Kong-based newspaper, the October 4, 1957 issue printed President Eisenhower's news conference on the events of Little Rock, stating,

One of the questions concerning Little Rock had international aspect when the President was asked how an American should answer questions concerning the strife in Little Rock.

He replied that this was very difficult, but a traveller [sic] should explain that the Federal Court order in favor of integration must be sustained.

It should be explained, he continued, that the mass of Americans believe in the sanctity of the courts. While there was much division in the U.S. on the future of the races, particularly as regards social mingling, the population as a whole will be remember its

³⁶ Ibid., 129.

³⁷ See Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 119. Also see, "Negroes Escorted into School," *Manchester Guardian*, September 26, 1957.³⁷

respect for the law and the matter eventually would be settled on that basis.³⁸

Despite the failure of President Eisenhower's federal interventions to uphold the rule of law in Little Rock, Blacks were not deterred and continued protesting for racial equality. By 1960, Civil Rights had become a crucial issue in the presidential campaign between the Democratic nominee John F. Kennedy and Republican nominee Richard M. Nixon. Kennedy vowed to support Blacks in their struggle for equality and an end to segregation if he were elected. Kennedy won the 1960 presidential election with over 70 percent of African American voters, providing him a winning edge against Republican candidate Richard Nixon. After winning, the Kennedy administration proceeded cautiously, fearing a loss of legislative support by southern senators in pursuing Civil Rights legislation too swiftly.³⁹ The modern Civil Rights Movement did not wait for the Kennedy administration to act. In May 1963, after years of critical organizing, demonstrating, and protesting since the mid-1950s, activists launched a campaign in Birmingham, Alabama, causing another international crisis that shifted the world's attention again to the racial brutality occurring in the United States.

On May 3, 1963, thousands of Civil Rights protestors consisting of Black children and teenagers organized for marches in Birmingham, Alabama, to demonstrate against the city's entrenched segregation policies.⁴⁰ In response, Police Commissioner Eugene Connor mobilized the police force to deter the protestors. The media broadcasted the racial violence unfolding in Birmingham, and photographs of protestors being hosed down by the police were seen

³⁸ "Eisenhower Comments On Issue At Little Rock: News Conference In Washington," *South China Morning Post*, October 4, 1957.

³⁹ See, [jfklibrary.org](https://www.jfklibrary.org/learn/about-jfk/jfk-in-history/civil-rights-movement), The Election of 1960, accessed November 10, 2020, <https://www.jfklibrary.org/learn/about-jfk/jfk-in-history/civil-rights-movement>.

⁴⁰ Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 169.

worldwide. The United States Information Agency published a report titled, “Worldwide Reactions to Racial Incidents in Alabama,” and then sent it to President Kennedy. The report, “Assessed in terms of its impact on the American image abroad, the Alabama racial incident was highly detrimental. Worldwide headlines and news stories – particularly first person correspondent’s stories – presented a stark picture of developments in Alabama.” One of the reports detailing the Soviet Union’s coverage of the events in Birmingham wrote, “Commentators say that the ‘bloodthristy events in Alabama [are] now being talked about by the entire world and [constitute] a national shame to America.’” It added that “‘racists atrocities in Alabama have impaired the prestige of the U.S. in the eyes of the world.’”⁴¹ With the world’s attention fixated on the treatment of protesters in Birmingham, the Kennedy administration was under immense pressure to deliver on his campaign promise for Civil Rights legislation. On June 11, 1963, in a televised statement, President Kennedy called on the nation to practice what it preached and support Civil Rights legislation, saying,

We preach freedom around the world, and we mean it, and we cherish our freedom here at home, but are we to say to the world, and much more importantly, to each other that this is a land of the free except for the Negroes; that we have no second-class citizens except Negroes; that we have no class or cast system, no ghettos, no master race except with respect to Negroes? Now the time has come for this nation to fulfill its promise. The events in Birmingham and elsewhere have so increased the cries for equality that no city or State or legislative body can prudently choose to ignore them.⁴²

Before President Kennedy could deliver on his promise for Civil Rights legislation, he was assassinated in Dallas, Texas, on November 22, 1963. Activists and leaders worldwide were

⁴¹ U.S. Information Agency, “Reaction to Racial Tension in Birmingham, Alabama,” May 13, 1963, R-85-63 (A), RG 306, National Archives. <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/304002> (Date accessed November 10, 2020).

⁴² As quoted, John F. Kennedy, “John F. Kennedy: 1963 : containing the public messages, speeches, and statements of the president, January 20 to November 22, 1963,” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States*, 469. <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/p/ppotpus/4730928.1963.001/525?page=root;rgn=full+text;size=100;view=image>

concerned about the uncertainty of Civil Rights legislation in the United States. President Azikiwe of Nigeria believed Kennedy's assassination was "a setback in the struggle for fundamental human rights. . .The slaughter of this typical American reformer shows clearly that among some Americans there is a deep seated hatred of the black man as a human being."⁴³ Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson was adamant about finishing his predecessor's work as a means of honoring his legacy as a civil rights advocate.

As soon as Johnson was sworn in as President, he worked quickly to get Civil Rights legislation passed. On July 2, 1964, President Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act, outlawing discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. Civil rights legislation was monumental and long overdue after countless generations struggled for racial equality, but the legislation did not address the right to vote. Selma, Alabama became the target for a major Civil Rights demonstration as efforts by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (S.N.C.C.) to attempt to register Black voters were thwarted by Whites. According to historian David Garrow, Martin Luther King Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference organized a campaign in Selma, Alabama, because "it was a way to challenge the entire structure of racial exclusion in Alabama politics and to force Lyndon Johnson's hand on a federal voting statute."⁴⁴

On January 2, 1965, the Selma campaign began peacefully, with activists marching to courthouses that barred them from voting. The Selma campaign was met with violence in the second month of demonstrations beginning with the murder of Jimmie Lee Jackson. During a rally on February 18, demonstrators were brutally clubbed by the police. Jimmie Lee Jackson

⁴³ Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 206.

⁴⁴ David Garrow, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference* (New York: William Morrow, 1986), 380.

was attempting to shield his mother from an officer when he was shot in the stomach.⁴⁵ Jackson died from his injuries on February 26. Racial tensions reached a climax on Sunday, March 7, when demonstrators organized a 54-mile march from Selma to Montgomery. When the demonstrators reached the Edmund Pettus Bridge's crest, they saw state troopers on the other side awaiting them. The demonstrators were ordered to disband. When they stood their ground, state troopers advanced. The brutality of the state troopers was captured by the media and was broadcasted in the evening. ABC News interrupted a movie broadcast, *Judgement at Nuremberg*, to present the footage of state troopers beating demonstrators to its audience.⁴⁶ On March 13, President Johnson held a televised press conference to address the events of Selma, saying,

Last Sunday a group of Negro Americans in Selma, Alabama, attempted peacefully to protest the denial of the most basic political right of all--the right to vote. They were attacked and some were brutally beaten.

What happened in Selma was an American tragedy. The blows that were received, the blood that was shed, the life of the good man that was lost, must strengthen the determination of each of us to bring full and equal and exact justice to all of our people. It is wrong to do violence to peaceful citizens in the streets of their town. It is wrong to deny Americans the right to vote. It is wrong to deny any person full equality because of the color of his skin.⁴⁷

After addressing Selma's events, President Johnson called on Congress to pass legislation ending discriminatory voting practices adopted by many southern states. On August 6, 1965, President Johnson signed *The Voting Rights Act of 1965*, assuring all Americans, regardless of their race or color, that the right to vote will not be prohibited by bureaucratic restrictions.

The Civil Rights movement achieved two major pieces of legislation. It brought racial

⁴⁵ Garrow, *Bearing the Cross*, 391.

⁴⁶ Garrow, *Bearing the Cross*, 399.

⁴⁷ Lyndon B. Johnson, "March 13, 1965: Press Conference at the White House," Transcript, Miller Center, 2017, <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/march-13-1965-press-conference-white-house>.

discrimination to the forefront of national and international discussions. However, despite the Civil Rights movement's achievements, some younger Civil Rights advocates believed federal legislation was insufficient in addressing racial inequality. Instead, it was merely propaganda to counter communist claims of American racial division. In 1966, Stokely Carmichael loudly proclaimed in a speech, ““This is the twenty-seventh time that I’ve been arrested. I ain’t going to jail no more. The only way we gonna stop them white men from whuppin’ us is to take over. What we gonna start sayin’ now is Black Power!””⁴⁸ Civil Rights activists such as Carmichael, Robert F. Williams, and Malcolm X believed that Blacks did not need to integrate into mainstream American life. Instead, Blacks needed self-reliance and self-empowerment, which would become the Black Power movement's ideological foundation.

The Black Power movement was appealing to younger Black activists but the methodological differences in achieving equality splintered the Civil Rights movement. In a Special to *The New York Times* article written by Austin C. Wehrwein, entitled “Dr. King Disputes Negro Separatist,” Wehrwein indicates the difference in principles between Martin Luther King Jr. and Stokely Carmichael writing, “The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., disassociated himself today from a ‘Black Nationalist’ stand taken by the new chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. . . Dr. King criticized a S.N.C.C. manifesto that called for ‘all black Americans to begin building independent political, economic and cultural institutions to use as instruments of social change.’”⁴⁹ The Black Power movement, along with

⁴⁸ As quoted, Peniel E. Joseph, *Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York, NY: Henry Holt and Co, 2006), 142.

⁴⁹ Austin C. Wehrwein, “Dr. King Disputes Negro Separatist,” Special to *The New York Times*, *New York Times*, May 28, 1966, 1.

its activists, were portrayed by Wehrwein as combative compared to the Civil Rights movement, concluding, “Observers have found S.N.C.C. generally to be more militant than the older civil rights groups.”⁵⁰ By 1966, the media’s attention shifted as protest movements for social change became more common across the American landscape due to the Vietnam War's opposition. The use of militancy by the Black Power Movement was concerning to mainstream America, leading the media to question Black activists' intentions. The media began to differentiate the two Civil Rights groups, labeling one as “older and more moderate groups (the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Urban League” compared to the “younger and more radical ones (the Congress of Racial Equality and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee)”⁵¹

As the media depicted Black Power activists as radical and willing to resort to violence when demonstrating for social change, there was a need to counteract the ongoing Black demonstrations with minority success stories.

Chapter 5 – America’s Model Minorities: The Japanese and Chinese

In 1965, sociologist Daniel Patrick Moynihan was appointed as Assistant Secretary of Labor under President Johnson to develop a policy for the administration's *War on Poverty*. While serving as Assistant Secretary of Labor, Moynihan published a report entitled "*The Negro Family: The Case For National Action*" (also known as the Moynihan Report). The report used statistical data to bring national attention to what Moynihan believed was the root cause of

⁵⁰ Ibid., 9.

⁵¹ See, Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 239; “‘Black Power’,” *The New York Times*, July 12, 1966; “‘Black Power’: Negro Leaders Split Over Policy Will the Summer Be Long and Hot?,” *The New York Times*, July 10, 1966.

poverty in Black communities. Moynihan's report blamed the deterioration of Black families on the rising amount of lower-class matriarchal families, writing, "At the heart of the deterioration of the fabric of Negro society is the deterioration of the Negro family. The white family has achieved a high degree of stability and is maintaining that stability. By contrast, the family structure of lower class Negroes is highly unstable, and in many urban centers is approaching complete breakdown."⁵² Moynihan also blamed Blacks' dependency on welfare as the main reason for their failure to achieve upward mobility in American society. Moynihan writes, "The steady expansion of this welfare program, as of public assistance programs in general, can be taken as a measure of the steady disintegration of the Negro family structure over the past generation in the United States."

Moynihan's report generated a substantial amount of backlash and rebuttals. Psychologist William Ryan dedicated his book, *Blaming the Victim* to refuting Moynihan's report in 1977. However, by then, Ryan believed Moynihan had won, writing, "Moynihan's critics appeared to win the battle . . . But Moynihan clearly won the war. Subsequent articles, reviews, and columns in *Life*, *Look*, *The New York Times*, and other influential publications supported and adopted the Moynihan thesis and swamped the opposition."⁵³ Ryan believed that Moynihan had convinced the American public that Blacks were in desperate need of federal upliftment, and without it, they were doomed to a cycle of poverty. A key point in Moynihan's report is his comparison of

⁵² Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* (U.S., Department of Labor, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1965), 5.

⁵³ William Ryan, *Blaming the Victim*, Vintage; Revised ed. Edition (December 29, 2010), 64; For rebuttals of the Moynihan Report see, David L. Harvey and Michael H. Reed, "The Culture of Poverty: An Ideological Analysis," *Sociological Perspectives* 39, no. 4 (1996): 465-95. Accessed November 10, 2020. doi:10.2307/1389418 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1389418?seq=1>; Elizabeth Herzog, "Is There a "Breakdown" of the Negro Family?," *Social Work* 11, no. 1 (1966): 3-10. Accessed November 10, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23709869>.

Blacks to immigrant groups writing, “Unusually strong family bonds characterized a number of immigrant groups; these groups have characteristically progressed more rapidly than others.”⁵⁴

Moynihan was vague and did not specifically mention the immigrant groups in his report, but he referred to the Japanese and Chinese. In a *New York Times* article entitled “*Moynihan of the Moynihan Report*,” Thomas Meehan, a defender of Moynihan’s report, wrote,

To prove to his critics, however, that family stability is of more immediate importance than integration, Moynihan has cited the cases of the hundreds of thousands of Chinese and Japanese immigrants who came to this country in the late 19th century, hopelessly poor, unskilled and uneducated, whose descendants have nonetheless achieved astonishing success in spite of racial prejudice--and the fact that they have lived and, to a large degree, continue to live in ghettos. Quoting Census Bureau college enrollment statistics, which sociologists consider a particularly important index of social and economic status, Moynihan has shown that some 44.1 per cent of all college-age Chinese-Americans and Japanese-Americans are today in college as against 21.4 per cent of all college-age whites and only 8.4 per cent of college-age Negroes. Similarly, according to a study made by the B'nai B'rith, nearly 80 per cent of all college-age Jews are enrolled in college. And what, asks Moynihan, do the Chinese, the Japanese and the Jews have in common? Answer: ‘A singularly stable, cohesive and enlightened family life.’⁵⁵

Moynihan’s “The Negro Family: The Case for National Action” led academics to believe the Japanese and Chinese were America’s model minorities and other minorities needed to learn from the Japanese and Chinese to become successful in American society.

William Petersen, a professor of sociology at the University of California at Berkley, published an article in the *New York Times* entitled, “Success Story, Japanese-American Style” on January 9, 1966. Peterson portrays the Japanese as a minority group whose cultural focus is on education, family values, and low rate of juvenile delinquency which has helped them overcome the racial barriers and succeed in American society. The article begins by asking a

⁵⁴ Moynihan, *The Negro Family*, 5.

⁵⁵ Thomas Meehan, “Moynihan of the Moynihan Report,” *The New York Times*, July 31, 1966, 48.

rhetorical question: “which of the country’s ethnic minorities has been subjected to the most discrimination and the worst injustices, very few persons would even think of answering: ‘The Japanese Americans.’”⁵⁶ According to Peterson, there was a divergence occurring after World War II when the Japanese attained a higher degree of education than other minority groups writing, “The key to success in the United States, for Japanese or anyone else, is education. Among persons aged 14 years or over in 1960, the median years of schooling completed by the Japanese were 12.2 compared with 11.1 years by Chinese, 11.0 by whites, 9.2 by Filipinos, 8.6 by Negroes and 8.4 by Indians.”⁵⁷ Adding to their vigorous pursuit of education, Peterson writes that the Japanese Americans were highly selective of their educational field. They did not pursue degrees in liberal arts but in “business administration, optometry, engineering, or some other middle-level profession. They obviously saw their education as a means of acquiring a salable skill that could be used either in the general commercial world or, if that remained closed to Japanese, in a small personal enterprise.”⁵⁸ On the subject of juvenile delinquency and Japanese Americans, Peterson writes, “As these young people adapt to the general patterns, will they also—as many of their parents fear—take over more of the faults of American society? The delinquency rate among Japanese youth today is both higher than it used to be and is rising—though it still remains lower than that of any other group.”⁵⁹ On the subject of family, Japanese American children attended Japanese-language schools after their regular schooling. These Japanese-language schools taught the children the Japanese language but more importantly, “‘Honor your

⁵⁶ William Petersen, “Success Story, Japanese-American Style,” *New York Times Magazine*, January 9, 1966, 21.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 36, 38.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 40.

obligations to parents and avoid bringing them shame.”⁶⁰ With all of the acclaim Peterson gave to Japanese Americans, he unleashed a broadside against Black power activists and their leaders attempting to connect their movement with pan-Africanism in his conclusion, writing,

The minority most thoroughly imbedded in American culture, with the least meaningful ties to an overseas fatherland, is the American Negro. As those Negro intellectuals who have visited Africa have discovered, their links to ‘negritude’ are usually too artificial to survive a close association with this-to them, as to other Americans-strange and fascinating continent. But a Negro who knows no other homeland, who is as thoroughly as American as any Daughter of the American Revolution, has no refuge when the United States rejects him. Placed at the bottom of this country’s scale, he finds it difficult to salvage his ego by measuring his worth in another currency. The Japanese, on the contrary could climb over the highest barriers our racists were able to fashion in part because of their meaningful links with an alien culture. Pride in their heritage and shame for any reduction in its only partly legendary glory-these were sufficient to carry the group through its travail.⁶¹

By juxtaposing the Black Power movement’s attempt to connect with pan-Africanism and Japanese culture, Peterson concluded that Blacks, especially those of the lower classes, will never achieve the distinguished successes of the Japanese.

On December 26, 1966, there was another article published in *U.S. News & World Report* that mirrored Peterson's article, but rather than praising the Japanese, it brought the Chinese to the forefront while denigrating and stereotyping Blacks.

The *U.S. News & World Report* article, “Success Story of One Minority Group in U.S.” was a continuation of “Success Story, Japanese-American Style.” The article praised the Chinese for possessing the same cultural values as the Japanese and comparing the two minority groups saying, “Chinese-Americans could not own land in California, and no corporation or public agency could employ them. These curbs, in general, applied also to Japanese-Americans, another

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid., 43.

Oriental minority that has survived discrimination to win a solid place in the nation.”⁶² The difference between the two articles is the candidness by *U.S. News & World Report* when juxtaposing Chinese Americans and Black Americans. In describing the work ethic of Chinese Americans compared to that of Blacks, the article argued, “Still being taught in Chinatown is the old idea that people should depend on their own efforts—not a welfare check—in order to reach America’s ‘promised land’ . . . At a time when it is being proposed that hundreds of billions be spent to uplift Negroes and other minorities, the nation’s 300,000 Chinese-Americans are moving ahead on their own—with no help from anyone else.”⁶³

On Chinese juvenile delinquency, the article cited statistics given by the Federal Bureau of Investigation writing, “Of 4.7 million arrests reported to the Federal Bureau of Investigation in 1965, only 1,293 involved persons of Chinese ancestry . . . Yet, in every city, delinquency in Chinatown is minor compared with what goes on around it.”⁶⁴ The low juvenile delinquency rate among Chinese was attributed to the strong familial ties and their pursuit of education. In an interview with Victor Wong, President of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association in Los Angeles, Wong said, ““Basically, the Chinese are good citizens. The parents always watch out for the children, train them, send them to school to study. When they go visiting, it is as a family group. A young Chinese doesn’t have much chance to go out on his own and get into trouble.””⁶⁵ The article further denigrated Black activists struggling for equality, writing, “What you find, back of this remarkable group of Americans, is a story of adversity and prejudice that

⁶² “Success Story of One Minority Group in U.S.,” *U.S. News and World Report*, December 26, 1966, 7.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

would shock those now complaining about the hardships endured by today's Negroes.” The article concluded by interviewing a Los Angeles social worker. The social worker believed the Chinese and Japanese were subjected to harsher discrimination than Blacks but managed to integrate into American society, saying,

If you had several hundred thousand Chinese-Americans subjected to the same economic and social pressured that confront Negroes in major cities, you would have a good deal of unrest among them. At the same time, it must be recognized that the Chinese and other Orientals in California were faced with even more prejudice than the Negro today. We haven't stuck Negroes in concentration camps, for instance, as we did the Japanese in World War II. The Orientals came back, and today they have established themselves as strong contributors to the health of the whole community.⁶⁶

The legacy of “Success Story, Japanese-American Style” and “Success Story of One Minority Group in U.S.” was tremendous. The articles constructed the image of the model minority to rebuke Blacks demonstrating for significant social change and elevate the Japanese and Chinese in American society.

In popular media, *Bonanza*, a popular western television series, aired an episode on December 15, 1968, entitled “*Mark of Guilt*.” The episode featured Hop Sing, a popular Chinese character among the *Bonanza* audience, who was thoroughly stereotyped by the white imagination. Hop Sing was effeminate and subservient to a degree, but he also possessed positive qualities, such as an intelligence that the white characters did not possess and an assiduous work ethic as the family cook for the Cartwright household, a white family. In the episode, Hop Sing faced racial discrimination when two white men, Mr. Younger and his friend Davis, cut off Hop Sing's pigtail because they heard “the pig tail gets him into heaven.” The Cartwright boys would avenge Hop Sing by getting his pigtails back from Mr. Younger, who had it hanging on a wall as

⁶⁶ Ibid, 8.

a trophy. As they were headed home, the Cartwright boys were informed that Mr. Younger was murdered, and that one of them was incriminated. Hop Sing demonstrates to the Cartwright family he knows how to prove their innocence using chops, otherwise known as fingerprinting. He explains how the Chinese “have known about chops for a long time and for over a thousand years they’ve signed papers with their chop, marking their chops in pottery so everyone knows who made it.” During the trial, Hop Sing took the stand and demonstrated his prowess in fingerprint identification to the judge. Hop Sing proved the Cartwright boy was innocent and figured out the real murderer after inspecting the murder weapon's fingerprints.⁶⁷ The *Bonanza* episode promoted the model minority stereotype by demonstrating to the show’s viewers how the Chinese were intelligent because Hop Sing was the only one who knew the identification method through fingerprinting from China. By saving the Cartwright boy and figuring out the real murderer using a method that the white characters did not know, Hop Sing became the episode's hero.

As the Chinese and Japanese were being placed on a pedestal for other minorities to imitate, a backlash emerged from Chinese and Japanese communities against the media’s construction of Asian American social and economic success. Racial inequality was still prevalent for both groups. However, the media's platform allowed Japanese and Chinese Americans to bring racial inequality issues into mainstream attention.

⁶⁷ *Bonanza*, Season 10, Episode 13, “*Mark of Guilt*” Directed by Leon Benson, written by Ward Hawkins and Frank Telford, featuring Michael Landon, Lorne Greene, and Dan Blocker. Aired December 15, 1968, in broadcast syndication, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mSS394hO4vI>; A plot summary for the episode can be found here: “Mark of Guilt,” *Bonanza Wiki*, accessed November 10, 2020, https://bonanza.fandom.com/wiki/Mark_of_Guilt.

Chapter 6 – Model Minorities Fight for Racial Equality

The Black Power Movement inspired Chinese and Japanese Americans to become cognizant of their own racial identities in American society. Black Power led to the formation of Japanese and Chinese political movements to unite ‘yellow’ people under a singular identity to gain racial, social, and political equality in American society. The movements were primarily in higher education, attracting young Japanese and Chinese student activists. One such movement was the Asian American Political Alliance (A.A.P.A.).

Created in May of 1968 at the University of California, Berkeley (U.C.L.A.), the goal of the A.A.P.A. was to demonstrate racial solidarity amongst all yellow people and form alliances with other people of color to fight racial oppression. Before the A.A.P.A., people of Asian descent were identified by White Americans as Orientals and the Other. A.A.P.A. activists believed they needed to unify under a singular identity, similar to blacks. By uniting, it would display racial solidarity amongst all yellow people and reclaim a racial legacy that was too often told from the perspective of white racists. According to the scholar Diane Fujino, who chronicled the life of Asian American activist Richard Aoki, A.A.P.A. activists were the first to coin the term and identity of Asian-Americans, writing, “Yuji Ichioka chaired the meetings where the group struggled with this concept and consensually adopted the term ‘Asian American’—Asian for our cultural heritage, American because of our nationality or citizenship . . . Up to that point, we had been called Orientals. Oriental was a rug that everyone steps on, so we ain’t no Orientals. We were Asian American.”⁶⁸ The A.A.P.A.'s greatest achievement was its participation in the

⁶⁸ Diane Fujino, *Samurai among Panthers: Richard Aoki on Race, Resistance, and a Paradoxical Life* (University Of Minnesota Press; 1st Edition, 2012), 170.

Third World Liberation Front strike (T.W.L.F.) in 1969. The T.W.L.F. strike consisted of the Afro-American Studies Union, the Mexican-American Student Confederation (MASC), the Native American Student Alliance (N.A.S.A.), and the Asian American Political Alliance (A.A.P.A.), allying to create educational courses in Ethnic Studies. Before the strike demands were met, the A.A.P.A. voted three to one to end its participation in the T.W.L.F. strike. By then, the Academic Senate voted in favor of creating a department of Ethnic Studies along with courses in Asian, Black, La Raza, and Native American in U.C.L.A.⁶⁹ The creation of black ethnic study courses faced criticism for its academic seriousness. In the March 10, 1969 issue of *The Washington Post, Letters to The Editor*, journalist Joseph Alsop responded to Jack Fruchtman Jr. on creating Black Studies courses in higher education, entitled, “Alsop on Black Studies.” Alsop wrote, “I favor black studies strongly, if they are academically serious, but there is grave reason to doubt the academic seriousness of many of the black studies programs now being launched or demanded. If black studies are not academically serious, they will be no better than a kind of cop-out for the black boys and girls in our universities.” Alsop then juxtaposed the Chinese and Japanese, reiterating the stereotype of how both groups pursue vital fields of study, compared to blacks pursuing insignificant black studies. He wrote,

Two formerly excluded American minorities, long subject to the most bitter discrimination, have escaped from exclusion and gone on to immense success in American society in the last two decades. These are the Chinese- and Japanese-Americans who have been, ironically enough the chief beneficiaries of the civil rights movement . . . Yet I cannot believe that our black minority is going to be aided to escape from exclusion by large numbers of students getting M.A.’s in black studies, especially if black studies are of the cop-out type mentioned above. The way out is for the universities to produce more and more qualified Negro lawyers, doctors, engineers, teachers and on

⁶⁹ Ibid., 203-217.

and on.⁷⁰

Despite the biased criticism toward the academic field of ethnic studies, the A.A.P.A. succeeded in uniting with black activists to create ethnic study courses throughout higher education. The A.A.P.A. disbanded in 1969, but its accomplishments and legacy would carry on in the Yellow Power Movement.

Amy Uyematsu, a student activist at U.C.L.A., drafted an article entitled “The Emergence of Yellow Power in America” in 1969 for *Gidra*, a newspaper-magazine started by student activists calling for yellow solidarity against white racism. Uyematsu acknowledged the unique position that Whites had placed Japanese and Chinese in as model minorities, writing, “The Asian Americans’ current position in America is not viewed as a social problem. Having achieved middle-class incomes while presenting no real threat in numbers to the white majority, the main body of Asian Americans (namely, the Japanese and the Chinese) have received the token acceptance of white America.”⁷¹ According to Uyematsu, the model minority structure supported Whites, who perpetuated racism by suppressing and discriminating against blacks. Uyematsu insisted, “Asian Americans are perpetuating white racism in the United States as they allow white America to hold up the ‘successful’ Oriental image before other minority groups as the model to emulate. White America justifies the blacks’ position by showing that other non-Whites-yellow people-have been able to ‘adapt’ to the system.”⁷² Uyematsu's article in *Gidra*

⁷⁰ Joseph Alsop, “Alsop on Black Studies,” *The Washington Post*, 1969, A20; Also See, Joseph Alsop “Failure of Negro Education Seen in Berkeley Statistics,” *The Washington Post*, 1969, A25; “Chinese, Japanese and Jews Show Way to Advance in U.S.,” *The Washington Post*, 1969, A21; “The Wasps' Decline,” *The Washington Post*, 1969, A19; Robert C. Toth, “Peril To Identity: Japanese in U.S. Outdo Horatio Alger,” *The Los Angeles Times*, 1977, B1.

⁷¹ Amy Uyematsu, “The Emergence of Yellow Power in America,” *Gidra*, Courtesy of *Gidra*, Densho, October 1969, 8.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 9.

attempted to reach a broader audience of Asians, emphasizing the need for all Asians to stand in solidarity against the entrenched white narrative of Asian American success and assimilation. The white narrative and positive stereotypes proved to be superior and too entrenched to shatter as the media continued reiterating the success story of Asian minorities. According to Ellen Wu, in a 1972 segment of *60 Minutes* entitled, “100% Americans,” Mike Wallace interviewed Japanese Americans, reiterating the narrative of their social success

“The model minority,” they are called. They have scrambled into the American middle class from the economic ruin of the concentration camp. Yankee ingenuity, the will to work, a respect for learning and the law—all of them clichés one has to repeat about those super-Americans, the Japanese-Americans. They’ve become the very model of the way that white Americans like to think of themselves.⁷³

The interviewees attempted to dispel the stereotype that the Japanese Americans have “made it” by mentioning the rising divorce rates and crime. However, Wallace responded by asking if the interviewee had encountered any real white racism. The interviewee spoke of his military service, where he was subjected to racial epithets and used as an example of the Vietnamese enemy. However, Wallace countered, “the Japanese-American has it made’ compared to blacks and Chicanos.”⁷⁴

In comparison to the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Power Movement's achievements and successes, the Yellow Power Movement was unsuccessful in bringing attention to the issue of Asian racial inequality and the model minority myth. Yellow Power failed to unify the different ethnic Asians because of old-world animosities.⁷⁵ Despite the Yellow

⁷³ Wu, *The Color of Success: Asian Americans and the Origins of the Model Minority*, 249.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ An example of the failure of the Yellow Power Movement due to old-world animosities could be seen during the Japanese Redress Movement where the Chinese refused to help the Japanese as Takeshi writes, “But to me the

Power movement's failure, Japanese Americans forged ahead with their activism in an attempt to gain redress from the United States government over their internment during World War II.

In 1978, Japanese Americans launched a Redress Movement for violating their constitutional rights during World War II by the United States government. John Tateishi, a child internee during World War II, was voted in as chair of the Japanese American Citizen League for Redress (JACL). Tateishi knew the Redress Movement would be a herculean effort, admitting the odds of success were, ““Optimistically, maybe about a thousand to one,””⁷⁶ as Japanese Americans comprised only one half of one percent of the total population of the country. However, some strongly believed the internment's injustice committed by the United States during wartime needed to be memorialized to avoid a future repeat.⁷⁷ Under Tateishi's leadership, the JACL campaigned to educate the mainstream American public about wartime incarceration. According to Tateishi, the American public based their opinion of Japanese internment on racist misinformation, which was, ““we looked like the enemy, so we therefore were the enemy.””⁷⁸ The education campaign was met with backlash, with objectors reiterating the decision to intern the Japanese were necessary due to concerns of loyalty during wartime.⁷⁹

most surprising response was from the leader of a local Chinese American civil rights organization, who told me his constituency would turn on him if he endorsed our efforts. What I hadn't considered was that while I expected immigrant communities to band together against the majority, they often harbored the memories of their ancestral homes, and with those memories all their old-world animosities. John Tateishi, *Redress: The Inside Story of the Successful Campaign for Japanese American Reparations* (Berkeley, CA: Heyday, 2020) 107, Kindle.

⁷⁶ Tateishi, John, foreword to *Redress: The Inside Story of the Successful Campaign for Japanese American Reparations*, x, Kindle.

⁷⁷ William Yoshino and John Tateishi, “Redress Movement,” *Japanese American Citizens League*, 2000, <https://jacl.org/redress/>.

⁷⁸ Tateishi, *Redress*, 81, Kindle.

⁷⁹ See, “Ex-Aide Calls Japanese Internment ‘Humane’,” *The New York Times*, November 4, 1981, A18; “World War II Internment Is Defended: An Invasion Was Thought Possible,” *New York Times*, November 3, 1981, B13; Also see Tateishi, *Redress*, 144-147, Kindle.

To make matters worse, according to Tateishi, was the loss of democratic President Carter to Ronald Reagan. Tateishi perceived President Carter as liberal and tolerant to issues, such as reparations and social change, whereas Ronald Reagan was a hardline conservative.

Reagan won the presidency, campaigning on economic reforms that retracted social programs, appealing to many white Americans.⁸⁰ Reagan invoked welfare recipients' stories throughout his presidential campaign and presidency, cementing the stereotype that black's primary source of income was from federal welfare.⁸¹ Tateishi was concerned that a conservative president and Senate with a political agenda that targeted social change would be complicated to persuade for redress, writing,

I often marveled at how Reagan, like so many conservatives, could hold worldviews that ignored the complexities that define us as human beings and shape our various cohorts, whether ethnic groups, workforces, societies, or nations. Reagan and his conservatives rejected the idea that social change that brought about equality and integration was good for a society and a civilization, and for the United States in particular—a country that has always thrived on the influx of immigrants.⁸²

Despite Tateishi's concerns of a conservative president and Senate, he hoped President Reagan's familiarity with internment history as governor of California would help the redress movement

⁸⁰ Tateishi writes, "The election of Ronald Reagan threw the entire civil rights and environmental communities into turmoil . . . Reagan began to dismantle much of that earlier work by reducing or ending funding for many of the 1960s 'social change' programs, a term that became, for conservatives, synonymous with budget waste and irresponsible spending." Tateishi, *Redress*, 220, Kindle.

⁸¹ Throughout Ronald Reagan's presidential campaign and Presidency, he promulgated and cemented the stereotype of rich black welfare recipients. Reagan continuously invoked the anecdote of welfare recipients with \$150,000 and affording T-bone steaks, lobsters, Cadillac's, a housing project in New York City with an 11-foot ceiling and a swimming pool. Although Reagan never specifically mentioned a race in his anecdotes, it is widely known he was generalizing blacks and referring to Linda Taylor. See, Gillian Brockell, "She was stereotyped as 'the welfare queen.' The truth was more disturbing, a new book says", *The Washington Post*, May 21, 2019 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2019/05/21/she-was-stereotyped-welfare-queen-truth-was-more-disturbing-new-book-says/>; Lou Cannon, "Speaker Calls President Insensitive: Face-to-Face Meeting Becomes Acrimonious," *The Washington Post*, January 29, 1986, A17; For more on Linda Taylor, see, Josh Levin, *The Queen: The Forgotten Life Behind an American Myth* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 2019).

⁸² Tateishi, John. *Redress*, 220-221, Kindle.

saying, “I knew he was familiar with internment history because it was during his term as governor that opposing factions fought over whether the site of the former Manzanar War Relocation Center should be designated as a historical landmark.”⁸³ In 1980, the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (C.W.R.I.C.) was established by Congress to investigate the facts and circumstances that led to internment. The C.W.R.I.C. would then present its findings to Congress and recommend a remedy.

In December 1982, the C.W.R.I.C. submitted its findings to Congress entitled *Personal Justice Denied*, concluding, “A grave injustice was done to American citizens and resident aliens of Japanese ancestry who, without individual review or any probative evidence against them, were excluded, removed and detained by the United States during World War II.”⁸⁴ In July 1983, the C.W.R.I.C. submitted its recommendation to Congress to remedy the internment. A joint resolution would be passed by Congress and signed by the president acknowledging the injustice committed and apologize on behalf of the nation for the acts of exclusion, removal, and detention. The surviving 60,000 Japanese Americans who were interned during the war would also receive \$20,000.⁸⁵ In 1987, following the commission’s recommendations, President Ronald Reagan signed into law the Civil Liberties Act, formally apologizing to Japanese Americans for their wrongful internment during World War II. During the Japanese campaign for redress, President Reagan believed in the stereotype of Asian Americans as America’s model minorities.

⁸³ Ibid., 222.

⁸⁴ “Justice Denied,” *National Archives and Records Administration (National Archives and Records Administration)*, Summary, 18. (accessed November 10, 2020) <https://www.archives.gov/files/research/japanese-americans/justice-denied/summary.pdf>.

⁸⁵ “Justice Denied,” *National Archives and Records Administration (National Archives and Records Administration)*, Recommendations, 8-10. (accessed November 10, 2020) <https://www.archives.gov/files/research/japanese-americans/justice-denied/part-2-recommendations.pdf>.

President Reagan reiterated that narrative and myth in a 1981 statement, declaring, “Overcoming great hardships, they have lived the American dream, and continue as exemplars of hope and inspiration not only to their fellow Americans but also to the new groups of Asian and Pacific peoples who even now are joining the American family.”⁸⁶ The effort for redress by Japanese Americans was monumental and continues to serve as an inspiration for black activists today, hoping to achieve similar success for the injustices of slavery.

Epilogue – The Proverbial Question

Certainly, African Americans have endured innumerable hardships in the United States because of the country’s long history of deep and systemic racial oppression. The police and vigilante killings of Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, George Floyd, and Breonna Taylor, for instance, have sparked the Black Lives Matter movement (B.L.M.). Demonstrations by B.L.M. have moved discussions of race relations to the forefront of the nation’s attention. The movement has also renewed discussions for black redress over slavery and its legacy of systemic racism. Major cities such as Evanston, Ill.; Asheville, N.C.; Burlington, Vt.; Providence, R.I.; and the State of California have begun to study a course of action for reparations.⁸⁷ Conservatives and opponents of redress for slavery cite the task’s impossibilities, arguing there no primary victims

⁸⁶ As quoted, “Proclamation 4837 -- Asian/Pacific American Heritage Week, 1981,” Ronald Reagan. (accessed November 10, 2020) <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/proclamation-4837-asianpacific-american-heritage-week-1981>.

⁸⁷ Peter Dixon, “U.S. cities and states are discussing reparations for Black Americans. Here’s what’s key,” *The Washington Post*, August 24, 2020. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2020/08/24/us-cities-states-are-discussing-reparations-black-americans-heres-whats-key/>

alive, the costs (trillions of dollars), and its unpopularity with many Americans.⁸⁸ Like the redress for Japanese internment, America needs to reckon with the injustices committed during slavery to educate and emphasize the systemic oppression of Black people.

Asian Americans are put in a precarious situation as they are confronted with choosing between the black-white racial divide. It should be an obvious choice for Asian Americans to side with B.L.M. and other minorities demonstrating for racial and social equality, but the reality is Asians are divided. Viet Thanh Nguyen, a Vietnamese-American and a professor at the University of Southern California, examines the division among Asians on the issue of social change in an opinion piece entitled, “*Asian Americans Are Still Caught in the Trap of the ‘Model Minority’ Stereotype. And It Creates Inequality for All.*” According to Nguyen, Asians have chosen to side with Whites on social issues, writing,

Throughout Asian-American history, Asian immigrants and their descendants have been offered the opportunity by both Black people and white people to choose sides in the Black-white racial divide, and we have far too often chosen the white side. Asian Americans, while actively critical of anti-Asian racism, have not always stood up against anti-Black racism. Frequently, we have gone along with the status quo and affiliated with white people.”⁸⁹

Asian’s have become complacent because of their socioeconomic successes and complicit in maintaining the status quo. The political inaction and lack of solidarity amongst Asians have

⁸⁸ Roger Clegg, “Reparations and Other Silliness,” *Center for Equal Opportunity*, June 26 2019. <https://www.ceousa.org/issues/other-issues/reparations/1318-reparations-and-other-silliness>; David Frum, “The Impossibility of Reparations,” *The Atlantic*, June 3, 2014. <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2014/06/the-impossibility-of-reparations/372041/>; Meera Jagannathan, “Most Americans don’t support reparations for descendants of slaves, even though it’s a hot topic among 2020 candidates,” *Marketwatch*, July 30, 2019. <https://www.marketwatch.com/story/most-americans-dont-support-reparations-for-descendants-of-slaves-despite-it-being-a-hot-topic-among-2020-candidates-2019-07-29>

⁸⁹ Viet Thanh Nguyen “Asian Americans Are Still Caught in the Trap of the ‘Model Minority’ Stereotype. And It Creates Inequality for All,” *Time*, June 25, 2020. <https://time.com/5859206/anti-asian-racism-america/>

caused internal divisions and widened the inequality gap within Asian communities.

Amy Uyematsu detailed the internal divisions within Asians stemming from the model minority myth in 1969, writing, "Filipinos have been relegated to the lowest position, while Japanese and Chinese are rivals for the top."⁹⁰ In the American imagination, the model minorities are from China, Japan, and India. Immigrants from Southeast Asia are often overlooked but are also categorized as model minorities. For example, the Vietnamese began immigrating to the United States at the end of the Vietnam War. The first wave to arrive was privileged. Approximately 140,000 of these Vietnamese people had ties to the South Vietnamese government and had worked alongside the United States throughout the war. Evacuating before Saigon's fall in April 1975, a United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (U.N.H.C.R.) study concluded that the first wave of Vietnamese refugees fared remarkably well in the United States because they were initially from the urban middle class and were educated and relatively skilled.⁹¹ The first wave of Vietnamese refugees became a part of the model minority success stereotype, citing their quick acclimation to American society and socioeconomic progress.⁹²

The second wave of Vietnamese people was nicknamed, Boat People, as they were a part of the mass exodus, stemming from communist Vietnam. Upon arriving in the United States, the 'boat people' had difficulty acclimating to American society because the majority came from a rural background, were undereducated, spoke little to no English, and ended up in poorly paid

⁹⁰ Uyematsu, *The Emergence of Yellow Power in America*, 10.

⁹¹ On the first wave of Vietnamese immigrants, the U.N.H.C.R. reports, "Most of them came from the urban middle class in the south of Viet Nam. Of household heads, more than a quarter had university education and over 40 per cent more had some secondary education. Overall, this group was relatively skilled, urbanized and flexible." United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *The State of the World's Refugees 2000: Fifty Years of Humanitarian Action*, 2000, 90.

⁹² See, Nathan Caplan et al., *The Boat People and Achievement in America: A Study of Family Life, Hard Work, and Cultural Values*, (University of Michigan Press; Reprint Edition) 1989.

jobs.⁹³ The trauma that many second-wave Vietnamese immigrants suffered was largely ignored as Americans favored the first wave's success stories.⁹⁴ The result of the model minority success story is Vietnamese and Southeast Asians, in general, lag behind Eastern Asians and Whites in terms of educational attainment and wage in the United States.⁹⁵

In a documentary film by Raoul Peck entitled, *I Am Not Your Negro*, which examines the penetrating writing of James Baldwin on topics of race, Baldwin posed an extraordinarily intriguing and vital question to white Americans, asking, “why was it necessary to have a nigger?”⁹⁶ Baldwin’s question parallels the question this thesis attempts to answer: why was it necessary to have a model minority? This author posed this question to a classmate, friend, and social studies teacher, Shomari Grant. Grant answered:

When America needs a model minority, it also needs an Other. The foundations of America are built off of niggers who were the Others before the Japanese and Chinese arrival. As America has always had a social structure, when white America decides to uplift an entire ethnic group, there is a need for another ethnic group to stay at the bottom of the social ladder. Model minorities uphold the social structure while the nigger reinforces the foundations. The creation of the nigger also serves as the anti-role model

⁹³ On the second wave of Vietnamese immigrants, the U.N.H.C.R. reports, “A second wave of Vietnamese refugees began arriving in the United States in 1978. These were the ‘boat people’ . . . in general, they were less well educated and had a more rural background than the refugees who arrived in 1975; far fewer spoke English . . . Many of the boat people ended up in poorly paid jobs, often without having had an opportunity to learn English or acclimatize to their new environment.” United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *The State of The World's Refugees 2000: Fifty Years of Humanitarian Action*, (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2000), 90. Accessed November 11, 2020. <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/publications/sowr/4a4c754a9/state-worlds-refugees-2000-fifty-years-humanitarian-action.html>.

⁹⁴ On trauma, the U.N.H.C.R. reports, “Many had experienced persecution in Viet Nam, trauma on the high seas, and harsh conditions in refugee camps in Southeast Asian countries that only reluctantly accepted their temporary presence. Ibid.

⁹⁵ See Agnes Constante, “Largest U.S. refugee group struggling with poverty 45 years after resettlement,” *NBC News*, March 4, 2020, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asia/largest-u-s-refugee-group-struggling-poverty-45-years-after-n1150031>; Katrina Dizon Mariategue and Quyen Dinh, “A National Snapshot of Our Communities,” *SEARAC*, 2020. https://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:CFANwFl6llUJ:https://www.searac.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/SEARAC_NationalSnapshot_PrinterFriendly.pdf+&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us.

⁹⁶ “Why was it necessary to have a nigger?”, *I Am Not Your Negro*, Directed by Raoul Peck (2016; New York City, New York: Magnolia Pictures, Santa Monica, CA: Amazon Studios 2017), Netflix.

for other minorities while the model minority is what they should aspire to be. If a black person fails and falls into the social stereotype, he becomes a product of his environment. When that person is white or Asian, they need help because it is unbecoming of his character. Without a nigger, white racism loses its power, and America's social structure crumbles.⁹⁷

This author posed this question to another classmate, friend, and teacher, Harvey A. Sniffen III.

Sniffen answered:

In the United States our political economy needs several types of individual to maintain capital hegemony. While the majority of workers are White, they too do not receive a fair wage related to their labor. To perpetuate this more, Black Americans are used as a divisionary tool to prevent class unity. Racial tensions prevent collectiveness between the majority White population and minorities. The model minority is used as a means of continued oppression of Black Americans. By presenting an even smaller minority group as some form of near equal to the white majority this notion of a model minority prevents an alignment between Black Americans and Asian Americans just as racism is used to separate Black Americans and White Americans historically.⁹⁸

When racial violence between Whites and Blacks is brought to the forefront of national attention and discussion, Whites, intent on maintaining the status quo, respond by deflecting to Asian Americans' success stories to chastise minorities demonstrating for social change. White Americans constructed the model minority for a singular purpose: to ensure other minorities conform to American society's social and racial hierarchy. As long as the model minority stereotype is sustained, Whites can reiterate the proverbial question to other minorities, who are attempting to challenge the status quo and demand social reform: If the Asians can make it, then why can't you?

⁹⁷ Shomari Grant, Interview with author. New York, NY, October 21, 2020. Notes in author's possession.

⁹⁸ Harvey A. Sniffen III, Interview with author. New York, NY, November 10, 2020. Notes in author's possession.

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