Very little is taught about Asian Americans in United States' education institutions at any level of instruction. Evaluations of standard U.S. history and social studies textbooks since World War II show that most are inadequate in their coverage of minority groups to the extent that they have encouraged the perpetuation of negative stereotypes. Inaccurate vocabulary is encountered in materials, as is the casual lumping together of Asians in Asia and Asians in America. Significant historical episodes involving Asian Americans, relevant to all Americans, are still ignored by elementary and secondary courses on social studies and U.S. history. The emphasis of the American educational system on the Western and White-Anglo-Saxon-Protestant traditions is no longer acceptable. The movement for fundamental changes in our educational process toward the goal of cultural pluralism has great potential. Serious consideration of the following is urged to remedy this situation: (1) expansion of bilingual programs and of foreign language programs in general; (2) more accurate representation of nonwestern civilizations; (3) more appropriate treatment of Asian American contributions to the development of the United States; (4) evaluation of instructional materials to rectify distortions or omission of the Asian American experience; and (5) support to study all Asian and Pacific Americans in educational institutions.

(Author/KSM)
I WONDER WHERE THE YELLOW WENT?

DISTORTIONS AND OMISSIONS OF ASIAN AMERICANS
IN CALIFORNIA EDUCATION

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Both Hatas are fourth generation Americans of Japanese ancestry. They serve jointly as Danforth Foundation Associates, Research Associates in History at the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History, Instructors in the Los Angeles County Probation Department Cultural Awareness Lecture series, Advisors on history and civil rights to the Los Angeles City Bi-centennial Committee. As professional historians (with special training in Japanese, Asian American, and U.S. history) they belong to the following organizations: Association for Asian Studies; American Historical Association; Immigration History Association; Organization of American Historians; Historical Society of Southern California; Friends of the Santa Barbara Mission Library; Coalition for Cultural Pluralism in Education; Friends of Far Eastern Art at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; and the United States Naval Institute.
Who are the Asian Americans? If we rely on the textbooks and curriculum materials currently available, the answer is elusive at best. The fact is that very little is taught about the Asian Americans in our educational institutions—at all levels of instruction.

In contemporary California and America we find a wide range of peoples whose ancestry can be traced to almost every significant ethnic and national grouping in those lands which British imperialists once referred to as "east of Suez." Their total number is small in proportion to the total population of the United States. They include Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans from east Asia; Indians, Pakistanis, and other groups from south Asia; Vietnamese, Indonesians, Thais, Malaysians, Filipinos and others from southeast Asia; and a wide representation of Pacific peoples such as Samoans, Guamanians, and native Hawaiians. Some are relatively new to the United States. Others such as the Chinese and Japanese can trace their roots in this nation to the early nineteenth century. But whether they are old or new additions to the American scene, all Asian Americans as well as Asians in Asia have remained largely ignored by educators and textbook authors in California.

Since World War II a number of standard U.S. history and social studies textbooks have been evaluated for their coverage of Asia and the Asian American experience. As early as 1947, for example, the American Council Of Education sponsored the publication of what is now a classic, Intergroup Relations
in Teaching Materials. That study found most textbooks in use throughout the nation to be inadequate in their coverage of minority groups to the extent that they encouraged the perpetuation of negative stereotypes. In 1961, a little more than a decade later, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith sponsored another similar evaluation called The Treatment of Minorities in Secondary School Textbooks. With respect to Asian Americans, that study found that, of the twenty-four texts evaluated, not one contained a "diversified, balanced portrayal of Chinese Americans or Japanese Americans." Moreover, the report observed that

Characteristics such as the strong family unit, reverence for tradition, low rates of juvenile delinquency and crime, and industriousness of many members of this group continue to go unmentioned. Instead, a sense of racial inferiority pervades American history accounts of cheap labor, starvation wages, and popular demand for restriction or exclusion in the late nineteenth century. In terms of occupation, the first Chinese railroad laborers and the later laundrmen and cooks are given no contemporary successors, such as engineers, teachers, doctors, and businessmen. [italics mine]

In 1969, nearly a decade later, two more studies appeared. One was a brief monograph in the Indiana Social Studies Quarterly entitled "The Treatment of Asian Minorities in American History Textbooks." The other 1969 study, Minorities in Textbooks by Michael Kane, was a sequel to the earlier B'nai B'rith Anti-Defamation League study in 1961. Kane's remarks on the treatment of Asian Americans are worth repeating here:
The present 1969 study is unable to report any significant changes in textbook presentations of this topic. [Of the forty-five secondary textbooks evaluated by Kane] not one world history makes any overt reference to the presence of people of Oriental origin in the United States. Of the thirty American history and American problems and civics texts analyzed, two histories and eight problems texts violate the criterion of inclusion by totally failing to mention this minority group. Furthermore, of the eleven American histories and five social problems texts that mention Chinese Americans, and of the ten American histories and six social problems texts that mention Japanese Americans, none meets the dual criteria of comprehensiveness and balance. As a matter of fact, only two textbooks make references to either Chinese or Japanese Americans in contemporary society and these are hardly to be considered complete.5

Since the appearance of Kane's 1969 study, a number of community committees have been established by Asian Americans for the specific purpose of evaluating textbooks for their treatment of the Asian experience in America. At least two of these groups, one in the San Francisco-Berkeley area and another in Pasadena, have been given support by the JACL (Japanese American Citizens League). Recently a similar project was instituted by the Asian American Research Project at California State College, Dominguez Hills. The campus at Dominguez Hills is adjacent to the large Japanese American community of Gardena—perhaps the largest single concentration of Japanese Americans in the continental United States. The campus also borders on the community of Wilmington, which contains large numbers of Samoans and Filipinos; but in Gardena alone, the Asian American enrollment in the elementary and secondary levels is close to
35-37 percent of the total.

The Dominguez Hills project concentrated on texts which were in actual classroom use in the surrounding area. Texts were selected from five levels of instruction: elementary; junior high; senior high; junior college; and four-year colleges and universities. Evaluation criteria conformed to the seven factors utilized in Kane's 1969 study: 1) inclusion or omission; 2) validity; 3) balance; 4) comprehensiveness; 5) concreteness; 6) unity of information; and 7) realism.

At the present time a complete statistical analysis of the collected data has not been completed. This might perplex social scientists, but the historian will find that even the preliminary findings are significant in the distressing trends which continue to appear. The conclusions reached to date are grim, for of the forty-odd texts evaluated, only a handful have been judged to be "minimally adequate" in their overall treatment of the Asian experience in America. In some cases they are still completely ignored; in others they are distorted through blatantly negative stereotyping or well-intentioned but nonetheless condescending caricatures.

In the latter case, there are numerous examples of attempts to erase the pre-1945 images which dealt with Japanese Americans primarily in terms of how, where, and why they allegedly posed a threat to American values and institutions. 6

In contrast to the alien and potentially subversive image which stereotyped the Japanese Americans before they
proved their loyalty in bloody combat during World War II, many contemporary writers now hail them as Asian Horatio Algers who are "outwhiting the whites." But the result is often in the form of overkill, for now the Japanese Americans are hailed as members of a "model minority" whose docile and accommodative posture should be emulated by more militant and aggressive Blacks and Chicanos.

An example of well-intentioned stereotypes distorted by omissions and insufficient information can be found in David Lavender's treatment of post-World War II Chinese and Japanese Americans:

After the war was over, conditions for both the Chinese-Americans and Japanese-Americans improved. The national government and the government of California repealed, or ended certain unfair laws concerning both groups. The national government gave the Japanese-Americans money to help pay for the things that they had lost when they were moved to the relocation camps. Because most of the people of California began to feel more kindly toward both the Japanese-Americans and Chinese-Americans, they were able to buy better homes. Their children did well in school. They found good jobs. They have become an important part of the state's population.

This terse statement fails to mention that the so-called "compensation" paid to the evacuees for their losses was token at best. The Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco conservatively estimated that evacuee losses amounted to $400 million, but Congress actually appropriated a mere $38 million --less than ten cents for every dollar lost--to settle all claims. Moreover, all claims were settled on the basis of 1942
prices, without interest. 11

And have the Japanese Americans indeed become a part of the mainstream of American society? In 1960 a survey showed that college graduates are 11 percent more likely to be found among Japanese American males than among their white counterparts in California. Yet a white male's chances of earning more than $10,000 a year are 57 percent greater than those of a Japanese American. 12

Another basic problem encountered in materials at all levels was that of inaccurate vocabulary. Many texts and their accompanying teacher's guides made no distinction between Asians in Asia and Asian Americans. Moreover, the term "Oriental" is still used instead of "Asian," which is more accurate with respect to geographic identification. Even John Caughey, who acquired some fame—or notoriety depending on your point of view—for his Land of the Free, referred to the early Chinese as "Orientals," "little yellow man," and "Celestials."

. . . In the mines and in the northern towns the little yellow man was already a familiar figure. Because of his small stature, most of Crocker's associates were skeptical that the Oriental would be equal to the heavy work required, but the initial experiment with 50 Celestials proved that Oriental stamina was more than adequate substitute for Occidental brawn. 13

It would seem that educators who approve the use of these texts still view the world through the same perspective as those nineteenth century European-imperialists who dismissed all areas east of Suez as the "Orient," inhabited by
uncivilized, exotic or inferior masses and important only for economic exploitation and colonial adventurism. Obsolescent terms reflect the insensitivity and ignorance of their users, and both Asians and Asian Americans are reminded that even today many American educators perceive reality through the eyes of Rudyard Kipling.

A recurring inaccuracy at all levels was the casual lumping together of Asians in Asia and Asians in America. There is a clear and present danger in the failure to make a sharp distinction between the terms "Asians" and "Asian Americans." In the past, American attitudes toward Asian Americans have closely reflected American relations with nations in Asia.14

It was in part this kind of sloppy generalization which led to the mass evacuation and incarceration of 110,000 Americans of Japanese ancestry during World War II. Especially in light of recent changes in our foreign policy toward Asia, as this nation is forced to re-evaluate its relations with an increasingly powerful and economically competitive Japan and a China which no longer tolerates American meddling in its affairs, it is vital that a clear distinction be made between Asians in Asia and Americans of Asian ancestry. In reviewing the Japanese American evacuation and incarceration, scholars have blamed the government for falling prey to hysteria and racist pressure groups.15 But what about the failure of American educators who permitted negative stereotypes to be perpetuated so as to allow the bigots and racists to prey upon
the irrational fears of the masses? The educational Establishment stands indicted for failing to achieve its prime objective of educating our youth to become an enlightened, rational citizenry.

Students in elementary and secondary survey courses on social studies and U.S. history are largely ignorant of significant historical episodes involving Asian Americans--events which are relevant to all Americans. There is little indication that most students have had sufficient information to appreciate the major role that thousands of Chinese played in the construction of the transcontinental railroad. Moreover, there is no discussion of the overt racism exhibited in the passage of successive federal statutes barring immigration from China or the unannounced invalidation of re-entry permits issued to Chinese who were visiting their homeland\textsuperscript{17}--all of which occurred during the decades immediately following the much emphasized ending of slavery. Nor is there significant treatment of the human dimensions, the psychological and linguistic adjustments and everyday anxieties of men, women, and children who were considered incompetent and legally ineligible to testify in courts against white men,\textsuperscript{18} to go to the same schools with Caucasian children,\textsuperscript{19} or to own the farms that they often developed from wastelands through agricultural techniques and seeds which were unknown to sodbusters on the frontier.\textsuperscript{20} Where are the tales of overt acts of violence against Chinese frontiersmen and their families--often without
warning in the middle of the night—or the numerous other humiliations and degradations which gave rise to the popular and accurate cliche "you don't have a Chinaman's chance?"

Under the subheading "Government restrictions are placed upon immigration of Chinese and Japanese," Mabel Casner and Ralph Gabriel had this to say:

Immigrants came to America not only from Europe but from China and Japan as well. After gold was discovered in California in 1848, workers were scarce on the West Coast. The Chinese were welcomed. They found jobs as cooks and laundrymen, and they also helped to build the Central Pacific Railroad eastward across the Rocky Mountains.

Because the Chinese had been brought up in the terrible poverty of their own country, they were willing to work in America for wages on which other workers could not live. When Americans began to fill up California, they objected to further Chinese immigration because the Chinese worked for such low wages. For the same reason, Americans also objected to Japanese immigration. In 1882 the United States government passed a law forbidding Chinese workers to enter the United States. In 1907 the United States persuaded the Japanese government to prohibit further Japanese immigration to the United States.21

The authors do not mention the Chinese or Japanese Americans elsewhere in their book.

Few students realize that today, many Asian Americans—particularly the new arrivals and the aged without families to help them—remain completely isolated and remote from both the affluent Asian American community as well as the majority society. Because of the early restrictions on Chinese immigration and a history of discrimination which antedated the turn
of the century, Chinese communities in America became tightly-knit urban concentrations similar to the ghettos in Europe. Within the Chinatowns the process of acculturation continued at a slow pace and the persistence of traditional family and social relationships and values was strong. By World War II there were signs of demographic movements out of the Chinatowns and greater social mobility within the majority society. But this process was dealt a sharp setback with the communist conquest of the Chinese mainland in 1949 and the subsequent flow of refugees into overseas Chinese communities. The result has been that the Chinatowns are plagued with overcrowded living spaces, inadequate economic opportunities, and an explosive level of frustration, hopelessness and despair.

The stereotype of the Asian Americans as a successful "model minority" who have "made it" in America is therefore inaccurate and in need of careful re-evaluation. And the following description of San Francisco's Chinatown no longer suffices:

... In Chinatown, the signs on shops, restaurants, and theaters are written in the Chinese language. Oriental silks, embroidered strips of cloth, handsome robes, handcarved tables, and many other Chinese articles are for sale in the shops. On the streets some of the older people wear Chinese costumes, but the young people are usually dressed in American clothes. They go to American schools and colleges and speak the English language.

In U.S. history and government courses what mention is made of the more recent Japanese American evacuation and incarceration in America's own concentration camps?
about the legal precedent established by the Supreme Court and the subsequent legislation which provide the foundation for the federal government’s construction and continued maintenance of concentration camps for political prisoners? An eighth grade textbook entitled California People and Their Government spends one sentence on the evacuation: "During World War II, most Japanese-Americans were forcibly removed from the state and kept in camps far inland." A college-level text said:

... The major exception to a clean record on civil liberties in this war was the wholesale deportation of Japanese-Americans from the west coast to prison camps in the interior. This was reluctantly consented to by the President largely for political reasons, because the West-coast people clamored for it. In Hawaii, where the Japanese-born population was far greater in proportion than on the west coast, not one act of sabotage was performed; and the young Nisei, organized in an infantry battalion, proved to be the toughest of all fighters for America in the Italian campaign.

There was no mention of Title II of the Internal Security Act of 1950. The point is clear. There is much relevance for all Americans in the history of the Asian Americans. Unfortunately, the history of the Asian American experience in this nation is filled with evidence that democracy and its potential for cultural pluralism is more often given in promises than in practice.

The emphasis of the American educational system on the Western and White-Anglo-Saxon-Protestant traditions is no longer acceptable to Asian Americans. Unlike their cautious, conservative parents who were raised in an atmosphere of overt racial discrimination, fear of bodily injury and deprivation
of their basic rights as citizens, young Asian Americans are challenging the monocultural ideal of the majority society which in their eyes causes imperialism abroad and the various manifestations of racial and sexual inequality at home. 29

The movement for fundamental changes in our educational process toward the goal of cultural pluralism has great potential as a realistic response to the tensions and frustrations which threaten our society. But if the concept of cultural pluralism is to be advanced with more success than the old "melting pot" myth, the Asian Americans cannot continue to be forgotten. Asian Americans must be acknowledged, analyzed, and incorporated into the curriculum content of educational institutions at all levels of instruction.

As an organization dedicated to identifying and rectifying areas in need of research and inclusion in curriculum materials and teacher training, the American Educational Research Association might give serious consideration to the following recommendations:

a. That federally funded bi-lingual and bi-cultural programs expand their focus, beyond Spanish-speaking problem areas, to include Asian and Pacific peoples in America who face similar linguistic and cultural obstacles to the acculturation process at all levels of instruction. The recent U.S. Supreme Court decision in the Lau vs. Nichols case (January 21, 1974) should be followed closely with respect to attempts at implementation, future appeals, and case law on the subject.

b. That foreign language offerings and requirements be expanded to cover the major languages of Asia, for the world is no longer dominated by Western Europe or the United States. The traditional
reliance upon English, French, German, and Spanish no longer suffices at a time when Japan is our chief trading partner and the presence of a powerful mainland China cannot be denied.

c. Courses in world civilizations should reflect the fact that powerful and highly sophisticated civilizations existed to the "far east" of the Fertile Crescent long before the rise of comparable societies in the West.

d. In social studies, history and civics courses dealing with surveys of both California and the nation there must be appropriate treatment of the Asian American contribution to the struggles by peoples from many lands in the taming and development of the "frontier."

e. That evaluations of existing curriculum and textbook content seek to rectify any areas of distortion or omission of the Asian American experience, and make a clear distinction between Asian Americans and Asians in Asia.

f. That the educational establishment encourage, support, and sponsor studies of the so-called "other" Asian and Pacific Americans (other than Chinese and Japanese) and demand federal action in the form of more specific census data on groups such as the Koreans, Filipinos, Samoans, Guamanians, and groups from South Asia (Indians, Pakistanis) and Southeast Asia (Vietnamese, Thais, Indonesians, etc.).

At a time when minorities are demanding that our educational system must reflect and serve more honestly and fairly the diversity of sub-cultures which comprise America, Blacks and Browns may claim "tokenism," but the Asian and Pacific Americans can only ask: "I wonder where the Yellow went?" They deserve an answer.
NOTES

1 According to the U.S. Census in 1970, the total population of the United States was 203,211,926. This total included 1,526,106 persons identified as Americans of Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Hawaiian, and Korean ancestry. The figure represents approximately 0.8 percent of the entire population of the United States. In California alone the 1970 Census recorded 170,419 Chinese, 135,248 Filipinos, 14,454 Hawaiians, 213,277 Japanese, and 15,909 Koreans. Census figures were unavailable for other Asian and Pacific peoples such as the Thais, Guamanians and Samoans who reside as citizens of the United States. It is estimated that 46,000 Thais, Guamanians and Samoans reside in the United States but neither the 1970 Census nor agencies of the federal or state governments have hard data. See United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1970 Census of Population: Characteristics of the Population. Volume I, Part A, Section 1 (Washington, D.C., May 1972), p. 41; and the more recent United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Subject Reports, 1970 Census of Population: Japanese, Chinese and Filipinos in the United States (Washington, D.C., July 1973). Also see testimony to the California State Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights during two public hearings on civil rights-related problems of Asian and Pacific peoples in California (June 22-23, 1973 in San Francisco; and November 30 and December 1, 1973 in Los Angeles).


5 Michael B. Kane, Minorities in Textbooks, A Study of Their Treatment in Social Studies Texts (Chicago: Published in cooperation with the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith by Quadrangle Books, 1970), p. 122.
In 1909 a series of publications appeared which added fuel to the alleged "Yellow Peril" and the growth of anti-Asian sentiment. The books of Homer Lea (the most sensational was The Valor of Ignorance which sold 18,000 copies before it went out of print in 1922) predicted that the Japanese would seize the entire Pacific Slope region. The San Francisco newspaperman Wallace Irwin created a widely-believed stereotype of the typical Japanese immigrant in "Hashimura Togo." Irwin described Togo as a thirty-five year old "schoolboy" who spoke comical English, had prominent buckteeth, always smiled, and was ultra-polite; but underneath it all, he was the "crafty Jap." For a concise survey of other authors, see William L. Neumann's America Encounters Japan, From Perry to MacArthur (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), pp. 128-130.

Segregated units of Japanese Americans such as the 100th Infantry Battalion and the 442nd Regimental Combat Team fought in the European Theater of Operations during World War II. Pentagon records indicate that the battle honors of these units made them the most decorated units in the entire history of the United States Army. Official Army statistics show that casualties comprised 314 percent of the units' original strength. See chapter twenty-three entitled "Proof In Blood" in Bill Hosokawa's Nisei: The Quiet Americans (New York: Morrow and Co., 1969), pp. 393-422; and Orville C. Shirley, Americans: The Story of the 442nd Combat Team (Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1946).


17 In 1882 Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act which ended free immigration of Chinese laborers and denied naturalization to Chinese already in this country. The Scott Act of 1888 abruptly invalidated some 20,000 certificates of re-entry granted to Chinese laborers who had left the United States for temporary visits to China. With their permits declared null and void, those Chinese who had left the country were not allowed to return.

18 In 1863 the testimony of Chinese against Caucasians was prohibited in California.

19 The San Francisco School Board attempted to place Asian students in separate schools in 1906. Upon strong protest from the Japanese government, federal authorities were forced to intervene.


26 The Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the Japanese American evacuation on the grounds of "military necessity" and Title II of the Internal Security Act of 1950 provided for the construction and maintenance of "places of detention." On September 25, 1971, President Nixon announced that he had signed the bill to repeal Title II.
