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and James S. Lai

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Understanding Asian American Politics

Don T. Nakanishi and James S. Lai



Secretary of Transportation Norman Y. Mineta Recites His Oath of Office. Joined by President George W. Bush, second from left, in the Oval Office at the White House, Secretary of Transportation Norman Y. Mineta, right, recites his oath of office during a ceremonial swearing in, Thursday, February 8, 2001. Vice President Dick Cheney, left, read the oath for the secretary as his wife Danielia Mineta holds the Bible. *Courtesy of AP/Wide World Photos*

THE GROWING ASIAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Large-scale immigration from Asia and the Pacific Islands since the enactment of the Immigration Act of 1965 has had a dramatic impact on many states and regions across the United States. From a predominantly U.S.-born group of 1.5 million in 1970, this diverse group became a largely immigrant and refugee population of nearly 12 million by 2000. Projections estimate that it will continue to increase to approximately 20 million by 2020 (Ong and Hee 1993). The term "Asian Pacific American" reflects the diversity of this ethnic population, connoting a more contemporary, broader political identity than does "Asian American" by including both Asian and Pacific Islander ethnic groups in the United States. Scholars and activists frequently use the term "Asian Pacific American" interchangeably with or in place of "Asian American," and we follow this convention.

In recent years, a number of political scientists and commentators have speculated about whether Asian Pacific Americans will become an influential new force in American electoral politics, perhaps akin to American Jews, because of their dramatic demographic growth and concentration in certain key electoral states like California, New York, Texas, and New Jersey. Many believe that if Asian Pacific Americans, like American Jewish voters, come to represent a segment of the electorate that is comparable to, if not greater than, their share of the total population, they may become a highly influential "swing vote" in critical local, state, and presidential elections. In California, for example, there are over 4 million Asian Pacific Americans, accounting for one in eight residents of the state. If they also become one in eight California voters—who will continue to control the nation's largest number of congressional seats and Electoral College votes—then they could play a strategically important role in national and local elections. Indeed, their voting potential coupled with other attractive dimensions of their political infrastructure (e.g., their campaign fund-raising capabilities) could elevate Asian Pacific Americans to the status of important new actors in American electoral politics.

During the past two decades, there has been an unmistakable increase in the representation of Asian Pacific Americans in electoral politics. In 1978, for example, when the first edition of the *Asian Pacific American Political Almanac* was published, it listed several hundred elected officials who held offices primarily in Hawaii, California, and Washington (Nakanishi 1978). Almost all were second- and third-generation Asian Pacific Americans, with the vast majority being Japanese Americans. In contrast, the tenth edition of the political almanac, published in 2001, lists over two thousand Asian Pacific American elected and major appointed officials in thirty-three different states and the federal government (Nakanishi and Lai 2001). Although most continue to be of the second or third generation, like Hawaii Governor

Ben Cayetano and Washington Governor Gary Locke, a growing number of recently elected politicians have been immigrants and refugees. Former Franklin Township, New Jersey, Mayor Upendra J. Chivukula became the first Asian Pacific American and Indian American elected to the New Jersey State Assembly; city Councilman Tony Lam of Westminster, California, was the first Vietnamese American elected to public office.

These increasing levels of electoral participation and representation are all the more remarkable when they are considered in the context of the historical legacy of disenfranchisement of Asian Pacific Americans in relation to the American electoral system. Early Asian Pacific immigrants in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were disenfranchised and excluded from fully participating in key sectors of American life because of a plethora of discriminatory laws and policies ranging from the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 to *Ozawa v. United States* (1922). The latter forbade Asian immigrants from becoming naturalized citizens. These legal barriers prevented early immigrants from participating in electoral politics of any form—whether the machine politics practiced by waves of European immigrants in the cities of the Atlantic and Midwest states or simply voting for their preferences in a local or presidential election—and substantially delayed the development of electoral involvement and representation by Asian Pacific Americans until the second and subsequent generations during the post-World War II period, over a hundred years after their initial period of immigration. However, this did not mean that the early immigrants did not engage in political activities. They often exhibited strong political resistance to the hostility and discrimination they encountered in the United States. Charles McClain, a scholar of early Chinese Americans, wrote:

The conventional wisdom concerning Chinese and their supposed political backwardness needs to be stood on its head. The nineteenth-century Chinese American community may, because of language, have been more isolated from mainstream society than other immigrant groups in certain respects, but lack of political consciousness was not one of its distinguishing characteristics. There is abundant evidence that the leaders were thoroughly familiar with American governmental institutions, the courts in particular, and knew how to use those institutions to protect themselves (McClain 1994, 3).

McClain's observations are applicable to other Asian immigrants of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries who were politically aware and pursued various forms of civic engagement. These forms were usually limited to those that were afforded to noncitizens at that time, especially legal challenges.

Until recently, Asian Pacific American politics received limited scholarly and media attention. Early works such as Morton Grodzins's *Americans Betrayed* (1949) and Roger Daniels's *Politics of Prejudice* (1968) focused on how American political institutions, especially the major political parties and West Coast state legislatures, had a decisive impact on creating and maintaining a

system of exclusion and discrimination against Asian Pacific Americans. There were few studies on the flip side of that structural condition—how Asian Pacific Americans responded to such treatment and, more generally, how they pursued a variety of political activities in both the domestic and nondomestic arenas during the course of their historical experiences.

This book introduces the burgeoning field of study and policy analysis dealing with the historical and contemporary dimensions of Asian Pacific American politics. It presents significant legal decisions, public policy commentaries, personal reflections by leading Asian Pacific American elected officials, and a comprehensive array of “classic” founding works along with new pathbreaking articles to capture the growing presence of Asian Pacific Americans in the nation’s political processes. Although the readings are drawn predominantly from political science, also represented are cultural studies, ethnic and gender studies, public policy research, anthropology, and sociology, which have all contributed theoretical insights and empirical findings on the politics of Asian Pacific Americans.

ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

This volume consists of four parts. In part 1, “Historical Forms of Civic Engagement and Protest,” some of the major forms of discrimination and exclusion that early immigrant and second-generation Asian Pacific Americans encountered during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—and how they challenged them—are presented. Included in this section are several significant U.S. Supreme Court decisions involving Asian Pacific Americans that set legal precedents and had an impact on their rights of naturalization (*Ozawa v. U.S.* [1922] and *U.S. v. Thind* [1923]) and equal protection (*Yick Wo v. Hopkins* [1886] and *Korematsu v. U.S.* [1944]).¹ These cases also serve to illustrate how Asian Pacific Americans, like other racial minorities, have had a long history of seeking social justice and equal treatment through the courts system.

Part 2, “The Impact of Immigration Laws on Asian Pacific America,” examines how two of the most wide-ranging changes in immigration laws during the twentieth century influenced the demographic characteristics of the Asian Pacific American population. Lee A. Makela analyzes the Immigration Act of 1924, which represents one of the darkest chapters in the immigration history of Asian Pacific Americans because it essentially ended immigration from Asia for nearly forty years. Immigration from Asia was not placed on an equal footing with immigration from Europe until 1965 (Chan 1991). In “Making and Remaking Asian Pacific America: Immigration Policy,” legal scholar Bill Ong Hing analyzes how the Immigration Act of 1965 contributed to the explosive growth and diversification of Asian Pacific Americans during the past three and a half decades, which in turn has led to new opportunities, resources, and challenges for their political organizations and leaders.

Part 3, "The Period of Political Incorporation (1965 to Present)," focuses on how the contemporary Asian Pacific American population, spurred by the African American Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, is pursuing an array of electoral and nonelectoral strategies to enhance their political presence in the nation's political institutions and to confront social issues damaging to their group interests. Along with studies that examine their voting behavior, this section contains works on the involvement of Asian Pacific Americans in transnational political networks, labor and protest movements, and pan-ethnic coalitions. It also features extensive readings on the topics of elected leadership and politics, media, and racial profiling, where Asian Pacific Americans have witnessed diametrically opposite gains and setbacks in recent years.

The selections on elected leadership examine the factors that have contributed to the growing numbers of Asian Pacific American candidates and elected officials, along with personal commentaries by several current Asian Pacific American elected and major appointed officials like Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao, Secretary of Transportation Norman Mineta, Washington Governor Gary Locke, and Oregon Congressman David Wu. The readings on politics, media, and racial profiling examine two of the most controversial episodes of racial profiling that have had adverse effects on the political participation of Asian Pacific Americans: the 1996 campaign finance scandal involving the Democratic National Committee and alleged illegal foreign contributions from Asian nationals and the trial of Dr. Wen Ho Lee, a Chinese American nuclear scientist at the Los Alamos National Laboratories, who was charged with security violations and jailed for nine months.

In part 4, "Contemporary Public Policy Issues in the New Millennium," many of the most compelling public policy issues that Asian Pacific American organizations and leaders have pursued in recent years are examined. The readings include research studies and policy commentaries on affirmative action, Japanese American redress and reparations, labor organizing, race relations and urban unrest, and political redistricting. These policy concerns underscore the fact that despite their popular characterization as the "model minority," Asian Pacific Americans continue to face a number of significant institutional and individual-level challenges to their full participation in American politics and society.

THE GROWING POPULATION AND DIVERSITY OF ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICANS

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the term "Asian and Pacific Islanders" encompasses over twenty-five different ethnic groups, all with their unique cultures and histories of migration and settlement in the United States.

As illustrated in table 1, the expansion of immigration quotas through the 1965 amendments to the Immigration and Naturalization Act had an

Table 1 National Immigration of Asian Americans

<i>Period</i>	<i>From Asia</i>	<i>Asian Pacific, % of Total Immigration</i>	<i>Chinese</i>	<i>Japanese</i>	<i>Asian Pacific Indian</i>	<i>Korean</i>	<i>Filipino</i>	<i>Vietnamese</i>
1851-1860	41,571	1.6	41,397	0	43	0	0	0
1861-1870	64,815	2.8	64,301	186	69	0	0	0
1871-1880	123,736	4.4	123,201	149	163	0	0	0
1881-1890	68,206	1.3	61,711	2,270	269	0	0	0
1891-1900	73,751	2	14,799	25,942	68	0	0	0
1901-1910	325,430	3.7	20,605	129,797	4,713	7,697	0	0
1911-1920	246,640	4.3	21,278	83,837	2,082	1,049	869	0
1921-1930	110,895	2.7	29,907	33,462	1,886	598	54,747	0
1931-1940	15,853	3	4,928	1,948	496	60	6,159	0
1941-1950	32,086	3.1	16,709	1,555	1,761	0	4,691	0
1951-1960	153,444	6.1	25,201	46,250	1,973	6,231	19,307	0
1961-1970	428,496	12.9	109,771	39,988	27,189	34,526	98,376	3,788
1971-1980	1,586,140	35.3	237,793	49,775	164,134	271,956	360,216	179,681
1981-1990	2,817,391	38.4	446,000	44,800	261,900	338,800	495,300	401,400
1991-1994	1,356,447	31.4	282,900	28,995	154,587	79,435	239,465	233,992

Source: Larry Shinagawa, "The Impact of Immigration on the Demography of Asian Pacific Americans," Table 4.

unprecedented impact on the growth of the Asian Pacific American population. Asian Pacific Americans grew eightfold, from 1.5 million in 1970 to nearly 12 million in 2000. At the same time, the population became predominantly foreign born, with approximately two-thirds being born abroad by 1990 (Ong and Hee 1993b; Shinagawa 1996; Wong 1999).

With the emergence of Asian Pacific Americans as one of the fastest growing groups in the nation (2000 U.S. Census), it is important to realize that this is not an ethnically and racially homogeneous population. Tables 2 and 3 illustrate the racial and ethnic diversity that exists among Asian Pacific Americans, which is due to not only the number of different countries of origin but also the large percentage of individuals from interethnic and interracial marriages and backgrounds. In 2000, more than 2 million Asian Pacific Americans were biracial or multiracial.

As multiracial and multiethnic Asian Pacific Americans become more politically involved, one of the primary challenges facing Asian Pacific American organizations will be to develop inclusive structures and issue agendas that can represent the diverse interests of Asian Pacific Americans, as well as reach out and build viable coalitions with other communities. Underlying this challenge is the shift from the traditional biracial black–white paradigm, which has historically defined American race relations, to a multiracial one that includes Latinos and Asian Pacific Americans (Oh 2000; Ong 2000). For Asian Pacific Americans, a political coalition based on a collective group identity (e.g., Asian Pacific American identity) may become increasingly difficult to achieve based on common interests, ideology, and leadership, particularly due to the emergence of multiracial and ethnic-specific identities. The traditional coalition partners that defined minority struggles for political

Table 2 Asian Pacific Population for the United States (2000)

<i>Race</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent of Total Population</i>
Total Population	281,421,906	100.0
Asian Pacific alone	10,242,998	3.6
Asian Pacific in combination with one or more other races	1,655,830	0.6
Asian Pacific; White	868,395	0.3
Asian Pacific; Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	138,802	—
Asian Pacific; Black or African American	106,782	—
Asian Pacific; Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander; White	89,611	—
All other combinations including Asian Pacific	452,240	0.2
Asian Pacific alone or in combination with one or more other races	11,898,828	4.2

Note: The racial group Asian Pacifics consists of the following ethnic groups (2000 U.S. population): Chinese (2,432,585), Filipino (1,850,314), Asian Pacific Indian (1,678,765), Vietnamese (1,122,528), Korean (1,076,872), Japanese (796,700), Other Asian Pacifics—Category includes Cambodian, Hmong, Bangladeshi, Burmese, Indonesian, Pakistani, and Sri Lankans—(1,285,234).

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Redistricting (Public Law 94-171). Summary File, Table PL1.

Table 3 Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander Population for the United States (2000)

<i>Race</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent of Total Population</i>
Total Population	281,421,906	100.0
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	398,835	0.1
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander in combination with one or more other races	475,579	0.2
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander; Asian Pacific	138,802	—
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander; White	112,964	—
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander; Asian Pacific; White	89,611	—
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander; Black or African American	29,876	—
All other combinations including Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	104,326	—
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone or in combination with one or more other races	874,414	0.3

Note: The racial group Pacific Islanders consists of the following ethnic groups (2000 U.S. population): Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (398,835), Native Hawaiian (140,652), Samoan (91,029), Guamanian or Chamorro (58,240), and Other Pacific Islanders—category includes Tongan Tahitian, Northern Mariana Islander, Paulauan, Fijian, Melanesian, Micronesian, and Polynesian—(108,914).

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Redistricting (Public Law 94-171). Summary File, Table PL1.

incorporation in the past will inevitably be challenged in the future. New political alignments between and among minority and mainstream groups will likely emerge in local and state politics that transcend traditional notions of minority politics. Asian Pacific Americans will likely be key actors. As one political pundit of California minority politics observed:

But, because of their heterogeneity, Asian Pacific Americans are not likely to make any ideological difference in American politics, at least not in the way that other powerful ethnic groups have. Their most lasting contribution may be their unique ability to transcend traditional ethnic fault lines; indeed, the political maturation of Asian Pacific Americans may signal a new era in racial politics. (Rodriguez 1998, 22)

For the political maturation of Asian Pacific Americans to signal a new era in racial politics, the group will have to overcome at least two major challenges. First, Asian Pacific Americans have comparatively low voter registration and turnout rates (Nakanishi 1991; Field Institute Poll 1994; Ong and Nakanishi 1996; Asian Pacific American Legal Center of Southern California 1996; Nakanishi 1998). Second, they are the most geographically dispersed and residentially integrated minority group (Rodriguez 1998). Both of these conditions have tended to diminish the impact that their recent population increases might suggest. On the other hand, the rapid population growth of Asian Pacific Americans during the decade of the 1990s has laid the founda-

tion for increased representation, particularly in the formation of political districts with substantial Asian Pacific American populations. According to the Democratic National Committee, for instance, congressional districts with an Asian Pacific American population of 5 percent or more increased from sixty-three districts in 1990 to ninety-six districts in 2000. It was further projected that by the year 2000, there could be at least ten districts in California and Hawaii that will have Asian Pacific American populations ranging from 20 percent to 60 percent. Moreover, this population growth occurred in states such as New Jersey, Minnesota, Oregon, Nevada, and Pennsylvania. In New Jersey, during the 1990s, the number of congressional districts with an Asian Pacific American population of 5 percent or more increased from one to eight (Office of Asian Pacific American Outreach, Democratic National Committee Press Release, October 13, 1999). As a result, Asian Pacific American voters have the potential to play a greater role in future state and federal politics on the U.S. mainland in the new millennium, and it is likely that more Asian Pacific American candidates will also emerge.

FINDING TIES THAT BIND: THE CHALLENGES OF CONSTRUCTING AND MAINTAINING PAN-ETHNIC COALITIONS

Political barriers exist within the Asian Pacific American community due to its rapid population growth and ethnic diversity. One recent political strategy of Asian Pacific American political leaders and community activists on the U.S. mainland has been to build pan-ethnic coalitions within this ethnically diverse population. The perspective of Asian Pacific American pan-ethnicity dates from the late 1960s, during a period of social strife in urban cities across the nation, as racial minority groups protested their lack of political incorporation and injustices. Its goal was to unify diverse groups based on their common racial categorization rather than solely their ethnic heritage. A pan-ethnic strategy represents a very important strategy among Asian Pacific American political activists because of the lack of Asian Pacific majority districts and an increasingly diverse Asian Pacific and Pacific Islander population (Espiritu 1992).

The challenges to constructing and maintaining such political coalitions are many. One such challenge is the salience of race and ethnicity in today's political arenas. In regard to ethnic salience, one contemporary trend in the politics of the state of California, where nearly 40 percent of the nation's Asian Pacific Americans reside, is for ethnic groups to "go it alone" (Cain 1991). This is particularly the case among recent immigrant Asian Pacific ethnic groups (post-1965) who do not necessarily identify with issues that marked the political struggles of more established Asian Pacific American groups during the 1960s. As a result, pan-ethnic coalitions among Asian Pacific Americans, often difficult to construct, have tended to be short-lived.

At the same time, other factors have diminished the potential for a pan-Asian Pacific identity among recent Asian Pacific immigrants, including variations in socioeconomic background such as education and income, generation issues, and homeland politics (Espiritu 1992; Wei 1993; Espiritu and Ong 1994; Lien 1997).

GROWING NUMBERS OF ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN ELECTED OFFICIALS

The number of Asian Pacific Americans elected to local, state, and congressional positions across the nation has continually increased in recent years. Table 4 illustrates the growing numbers of Asian Pacific American elected officials. In 2000, 309 Asian Pacific American held elected offices representing thirty-three states ranging from city school board member to U.S. senator (Nakanishi and Lai 2001). Among them were twenty-five state senators in five states (Colorado, Minnesota, Oregon, Washington, and Hawaii); forty-two state representatives in five states (California, Maryland, West Virginia, Washington, and Hawaii); and fifteen city mayors in seven states (California, Colorado, Illinois, New Mexico, Texas, Washington, and Hawaii).

During the twenty-year period between 1978 and 1998, the greatest increase in Asian Pacific American elected representation on the U.S. mainland occurred at the state and local levels. While Hawaii currently remains the state with the largest number of Asian Pacific American elected officials at all governmental levels, mainland states such as California, Washington, Oregon, and Texas have significantly increased numbers of Asian Pacific Americans in key elected and major appointed posi-

Table 4 Total Number of Asian Pacific Americans Elected Officials in Key Federal, State, and Local Positions

<i>Year</i>	<i>Federal</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>City</i>	<i>Total</i>
1978	5	63	52	120
1979	6	68	69	149
1980	6	69	98	173
1982	6	59	109	174
1984	5	59	109	173
1990	2	111	185	298
1995	8	66	157	231
1996	7	66	181	254
1998	7	67	187	261
2000	8	70	231	309

Source: Compiled by author from the *National Asian Pacific American Political Almanac*, First to Eighth Editions.

tions (*National Asian Pacific American Political Almanac*, 2001–2002). For example, Gary Locke became the first Asian Pacific American elected governor of a mainland state in 1996 in Washington. Governor Locke's acceptance speech is featured in part 3. Another example of the positive growth in elected representation for state-level elected positions has been in California, where a record four Asian Pacific Americans currently serve in the state assembly.²

The number of states in which Asian Pacific Americans have been elected has increased substantially. In 1978 less than a dozen states had Asian Pacific American elected positions, compared with thirty-three states in 2000. Those who are running and winning elections are beginning to reflect the ethnic diversity of the population. Despite the recent growth in elected representation, however, Asian Pacific Americans are still underrepresented in comparison to other racial minority groups and to their share of the population. In California, for example, where Asian Pacific Americans make up one in every eight residents, they would need to increase their representation from four to fifteen of the 120-member California legislature (forty in the Senate and eighty in the Assembly) to reach a hypothetical parity with their proportion of the state's population.

POLITICAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN HAWAII AND THE U.S. MAINLAND

Many differences exist in regard to the political experiences of Asian Pacific American elected officials on the U.S. mainland compared with those in Hawaii, where Asian Pacific Americans have historically attained the greatest elected representation. The first major difference is that, in comparison with Asian Pacific American elected officials in Hawaii, there is a lack of direct representation between Asian Pacific American elected officials and Asian Pacific American constituents on the U.S. mainland. Given the lack of Asian Pacific American majority districts on the U.S. mainland, it would be an unwise political strategy for any Asian Pacific candidate to rely solely on the group's bloc vote. However, Asian Pacific American elected officials and candidates who strategically target Asian Pacific American resources within and outside of their own district can benefit greatly from their political resources, particularly campaign contributions. Therefore, a second difference is that Asian Pacific American elected officials and candidates on the U.S. mainland tend to rely more heavily than their Hawaiian counterparts for support by Asian Pacific American community-based organization leaders, community activists, and the ethnic media for access to political resources. One of the most important resources is campaign contributions, which Asian Pacific Americans have long provided in substantial amounts in local, state, and presidential campaigns (Tachibana 1986; Nakanishi 1991; Nakanishi 1998).

A third difference is that Asian Pacific American elected officials and candidates on the U.S. mainland must rely on different political strategies and resources in order to compensate for the lack of Asian Pacific majority districts than those in Hawaii, where Asian Pacific Americans represent the majority population and hold a majority of the local and state elected positions. In contrast, Asian Pacific American candidates and elected officials on the U.S. mainland may pursue a mainstream campaign strategy (e.g., running as a mainstream candidate who happens to be Asian Pacific American) or a multiracial campaign strategy (e.g., one who builds coalitions between mainstream and minority groups). Asian Pacific American elected officials and candidates on the U.S. mainland may seek to target community leaders (i.e., labor union leaders or community-based organization leaders) who can provide them with access to resources within their ethnic communities. These resources range from providing a mass number of volunteers during get-out-the vote (GOTV) drives to financial contributions. This strategy is optional, depending on the type of campaign strategy pursued by the Asian Pacific American elected official or candidate. Although this political network does not exist for the Asian Pacific American community alone, it has become a key strategy for many Asian Pacific American candidates on the U.S. mainland.

The experiences of Asian Pacific American elected officials on the U.S. mainland are also different from African American and Latino elected officials in one important aspect: they tend to be nonethnic representatives (Cain, Kiewiet, and Uhlaner 1986). In short, Asian Pacific American elected officials on the U.S. mainland emerge from non-Asian Pacific districts that are either heavily white or multiracial. African American and Latino elected officials at the local, state, and congressional levels tend to emerge from political districts in which they represent the majority or a substantial portion of the total population (Browning, Marshall, and Tabb 1990). At the federal level, twenty-three of thirty-nine African American U.S. congresspersons represented districts in 1998 in which the African American voting-age population was 50 percent or more of the population (Bositis 1998). For Latinos, seventeen of nineteen members of Congress were in districts where the Latino population was at least 50 percent (*Capitol Advantage* 2001). In contrast, Asian Pacific American elected officials on the U.S. mainland represent non-Asian Pacific majority districts where Asian Pacific constituents are a minority or are nonexistent. For example, the two congressional seats held by Asian Pacific Americans on the mainland are overwhelmingly non-Asian Pacific majority districts. Therefore, in the absence of elected representation districts with a substantial Asian American population, are there any political agents, at the local level, who represent their interests? The next section addresses the political roles of Asian Pacific American community-based organizations in local governance, particularly in the absence of elected representation.

FILLING THE ELECTORAL VOID: ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE

Asian Pacific American community-based organizations and other community leaders undertake a variety of roles during group political mobilization. Such roles have been heightened due to the fact that the majority of Asian Pacific American candidates on the U.S. mainland represent non-Asian Pacific districts in contrast to elected officials in Hawaii. For example, U.S. Representative David Wu (D-OR) represents a constituency that has less than 3 percent Asian Pacific Americans. During the 105th Congress, only two of the top fifty congressional districts on the U.S. mainland with the largest Asian Pacific American populations were represented by an Asian Pacific American (*National Directory of Asian Pacific American Organizations* 1997–1998).³ For Asian Pacific Americans on the U.S. mainland, the lack of ethnic representation from their largest districts has led to a political void. During the past two decades, Asian Pacific American community leaders, organizations, and activists have played a significant role in helping to fill this electoral void at the local levels.

Asian Pacific American community-based groups can act as a conduit with mainstream elected officials and institutions. For example, in Los Angeles's Koreatown, the commercial and organizational focal point for the largest population of Korean Americans in the nation, Korean American community-based organizations have provided their substantial ethnic community with a political voice in expressing their concerns to mainstream elected representatives and institutions. One such organization is the Korean American Coalition (KAC), a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization representing the interests of more than 500,000 Korean Americans living in Southern California. During the past five years, KAC has conducted an annual legislative luncheon in Southern California with local and statewide elected officials and legislative aides who are invited to Koreatown to meet with Korean American community leaders/organizations. At the fifth annual legislative luncheon on November 12, 1999, five Korean American community-based organizations (Korean American Family Service Center, Korean American Museum, Korean Health Education Information and Research Center, and Korean Youth and Community Center) made presentations to a large non-Korean American legislative group. In the past, the elected officials who have been invited to their legislative luncheons included California Governor Gray Davis, former Governor Pete Wilson, U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer, U.S. Congressman Xavier Bacerra, and Los Angeles Mayor Richard Riordan. Their luncheons have served as a forum to present and discuss issues affecting Korean Americans in Southern California.

Community-based organizations can help recruit and train potential Asian Pacific American candidates. At the local level, the Japanese American

Citizen's League chapter in Los Angeles has held candidate training workshops led by Asian Pacific American elected officials who worked hand in hand toward the goal of increasing elected representation. These workshops usually feature current and past Asian Pacific American elected officials, campaign strategists, and political researchers. At the national level, the Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies, the only national Asian Pacific American public policy institute in Washington, D.C., and the University of California at Los Angeles Asian American Studies Center, a leading research center on Asian Pacific Americans, annually cosponsor a National Leadership Academy for Asian Pacific American Elected Officials in Washington, D.C. Various Asian Pacific American candidates and elected official participants from across the country attend the three-day workshops.⁴ According to the Leadership Academy's 1999 press release: "Fifteen outstanding elected officials—Democratic, Republican, and Independent, from Massachusetts to Hawaii, representing many different ethnic groups—have been selected to attend this intensive training program. During the program, these elected officials will develop the skills they need to advance in their careers and to prepare for higher office."⁵ This three-day event includes various training sessions with current and former Asian Pacific American elected officials, congressional staffers, political and public relations consultants, fund-raisers, and print and broadcast journalists.⁶

The success of the inaugural 1999 Leadership Academy resulted in the formation of the Asian Pacific American Political Education Institute in California. The cosponsors of this political education institute were two of the most visible Asian Pacific American community and academic organizations in Los Angeles County—the Chinese Americans United for Self-Empowerment (CAUSE) and the University of California at Los Angeles's Asian American Studies Center. According to their press release, the mission of the institute was "to gather top notch political consultants, elected officials, community leaders, and media together with individuals who are interested in seeking elected offices for two days of interactive panel discussions and training. . . . Through this institute we strive to enhance the success rate of the Asian Pacific American candidates by discussing issues facing these candidates . . . and provide our community with a better understanding of the mechanics of political campaigns" (Asian Pacific American Political Education Institute 1999).

Another important Asian Pacific American community resource on the U.S. mainland is the ethnic media, which can provide candidates with important media exposure to a large segment of Asian Pacific foreign-born, bilingual population of potential voters and donors. The vast majority of Asian Pacific American ethnic newspapers and television shows cater to them. In Los Angeles and Orange Counties during 1998–1999, there were nearly two hundred different Asian Pacific and Pacific Islander media outlets, ranging from newspapers and journals to radio and television programs (*Asian Pacific and Pacific Islander*

Community Directory for Los Angeles and Orange Counties, 1998–1999). Given their strong influence in reaching the Asian Pacific and Pacific Islander foreign-born population, it was no surprise that high-profile candidates such as Republican Matt Fong, a Chinese American and son of former California State Secretary March Fong-Eu, targeted the Chinese American print media in order to get his message out to prospective Chinese American voters and contributors during his closely contested 1998 bid in California for the U.S. Senate against incumbent Senator Barbara Boxer.

The advantage of targeting the ethnic media was that it provided Fong a cost-effective medium to advertise his campaign to potential Asian Pacific American voters and contributors, who could tip the balance of a close election in his favor. During the Republican primary election, Fong's principal challenger, Darrell Issa, spent \$2 million dollars in radio advertisements alone. While Fong targeted the mainstream media during his campaign, he also focused his limited resources on the Asian Pacific ethnic media. The cost-effectiveness of advertising in Asian Pacific ethnic print media versus mainstream print media can be seen in the following: a full-page advertisement in the *San Francisco Chronicle* costs \$55,000, compared with \$1,200 for a full-page advertisement in *Sing Tao*, a Bay Area Chinese language newspaper with a national circulation of sixty thousand. Fong utilized the Chinese American print media to his advantage and even credited them with helping him win his Republican primary election (Lin and Galbraith 1998).

CONCLUSION

The present and future potential of Asian Pacific Americans and American politics is deeply rooted in historic immigration laws. From the National Origins Act of 1924 to the Immigration Act of 1965, the face of Asian Pacific America has been shaped and reshaped by immigration laws enacted by the U.S. Congress. For example, by allowing Asian Pacific immigration to resume to the United States in 1965, after over forty years of complete exclusion, the Asian Pacific American community represents one of the youngest and fastest growing racial populations in the United States (2001 U.S. Census).

Conceptualizing Asian Pacific American politics requires researchers and students to go beyond customary ways of viewing political participation, such as voting and running for office, and to include myriad other forms of nonelectoral and nondomestic political activities that Asian Pacific Americans have long pursued. However, recent trends strongly suggest that more and more Asian Pacific Americans, especially immigrants and refugees, will register to vote, cast ballots, and run for elected office as they become naturalized (Aoki and Nakanishi 2001).

With their political potential lies future challenges for Asian Pacific Americans such as whether they will be completely integrated into mainstream American institutions. A recent national survey entitled "American Attitudes toward Chinese Americans and Asian Americans," commissioned by the Committee of 100, a Chinese American leadership group, found that other Americans felt uneasy toward Asian Americans in the aftermath of the Wen Ho Lee trial and 1996 campaign finance scandal. In this survey, Asian Americans were viewed as "clannish" and "less likely to be full participants in the entire community as other Americans." Asian American respondents believed that other Americans view them as "permanent aliens," and this perception has contributed to their lack of interest in American politics (Committee of 100 Survey Findings 2001). For Asian Americans, these future challenges of complete incorporation into mainstream American institutions represent the next step that this group must address.

All of the above political behaviors, perceptions, and struggles are vividly captured and reflected in the articles within this anthology. We hope that these articles will stimulate class discussion and encourage future political studies on Asian Pacific American politics. Political scientists in American politics have long neglected this growing and increasingly influential group, and it is our hope that this volume will generate new research questions and a comprehensive understanding of their distinct political history.

NOTES

1. Although the selected articles focus on federal laws, legal historians have noted that many similar lawsuits were filed in state supreme courts.

2. In 2001 the four Asian American members in the California State Assembly are Wilma Chan (D-16), Judy Chu (D-49), Carol Liu (D-44), and George Nakano (D-53). This represents the largest number of Asian American members to serve at one time in the California State Assembly. One previous assembly member, Mike Honda, was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives that same year. Prior to this year, no Asian American woman had been elected to the California Assembly since March Fong-Eu in the late 1970s. After March Fong-Eu, Paul Bannai, Floyd Mori, Nao Takasugi, and Mike Honda served in the California Assembly before the current group of four were elected.

3. At the time, two Asian American members of Congress from the U.S. mainland were Robert T. Matsui (D-CA) and Jay Kim (R-CA).

4. The following thirteen elected officials attended the Leadership Academy for Asian American Elected Officials (May 20–22, 1999): Jon Amores (a Filipino American member of the West Virginia House of Delegates); Kumar P. Barve (an Asian Indian American delegate in the Maryland House of Delegates); Michael Gin (a Chinese American mayor pro tem of the city of Redondo Beach, Calif.); Solomon P. Kaho'ohalahala (a native Hawaiian state representative); Conrad Lee (a Chinese American city council member in the city of Bellevue, Wash.); Joaquin Lim (a Chinese American mayor pro tem of the city of Walnut, Calif.); Karyl Matsumoto (a Japanese American vice mayor of the city of South San Francisco); Hermina Morita (a Japanese American Hawaii state representative); Michael Park (deputy mayor in the city of Federal Way, Wash.); Amy Mah Sangiolo (a Chinese American alderman at large in the city of Newton, Mass.); Paul Shin (a Korean

American senator in the Washington state senate); Benjamin Wong (a Chinese American city council member in the West Covina, Calif.); and Martha J. Wong (a Chinese American city council member in Houston).

5. Leadership Academy for Asian American Elected Officials, press release, May 20–22, 1999, Washington, D.C.

6. Among the elected officials and political experts who participated in the training panels were the following: Representatives Robert T. Matsui (D-CA) and Patsy T. Mink (D-HI); U.S. Delegate Robert A. Underwood (D-Guam); former Representative Norman Y. Mineta, then with Lockheed Martin Corporation; former California Secretary of State Matt Fong, then with the Leadership for America Foundation; Geoffrey Becker, Tarrance Group; Eric K. Federing, KPMG LLP; Scott Gail, Fundraising Management Group; John Jameson, Winning Connections; Samuel T. Mok, International Technology and Trade Associates; Teri Okita, WUSA-TV; Maeley Tom, Cassidy & Associates; John Yang, *Washington Post*; and Judy Yu, AsiaNet.

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