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U.S. ATTITUDES TOWARD WOMEN OF ASIAN ANCESTRY: LEGISLATIVE AND MEDIA PERSPECTIVES

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The image of women of Asian ancestry as erotic and sexual objects dominated the U.S. entertainment industry for decades. The "exotic Oriental" and her sexual objectification haunted the portrayals of Asian women, from Ah-Choi (the Chinese madam) of the 1880s to the Chinese prostitute in the movie *The World of Suzie Wong* (Mason & Patrick, 1960) and the sultry Indian princess in the movie *Far Pavilions* (Bond, 1984). To what extent does this erotic image of Asian American women portrayed in the media reflect the image and sentiment of the American people?

One method of determining a country's sentiment is to examine its national laws. In a representative government like that of the United States, the process of passing legislation must have popular support, or at least no great opposition. For a bill to become law, there must be a majority of favorable votes in the House of Representatives, the Senate, and acceptance by a president's administration. Legislation both influences and is influenced by the values and attitudes of the American people. To the extent that legislators are elected to represent their constituencies, the laws that they pass can be viewed as an indicator of the sentiment of the ma-

majority of the people. To the extent that Americans look to laws for guidance, bills that become law often shape the values and attitudes of the American people. The complex process of lawmaking and the infrequency with which laws are changed result in a relatively stable ideology that can be identified through an examination of U.S. statutes on a particular subject.

To ascertain U.S. sentiment toward women of Asian ancestry, federal legislation on the topic introduced during the past 100-plus years was reviewed. Immigration legislation is one area that has systematically and specifically addressed women of Asian ancestry. Immigration laws govern the admission and exclusion of particular groups of people to the United States. Immigration legislation defines the groups that the United States wishes to include in its citizenry through the granting of and eligibility for immigrant visas. Conversely, immigration legislation also defines those groups that the United States wishes to exclude. Historically, the United States has excluded and kept undesired groups outside of its borders through the denial of legal entry and citizenship and restriction of immigrant status. Consequently, U.S. ideology regarding women of Asian ancestry can be determined through study of its immigration legislation.

This chapter examines federal immigration legislation regarding women of Asian ancestry. Examining U.S. immigration legislation revealed that there have been significant laws addressing Asian women in relationships with U.S. servicemen that defined whether, when, and under what conditions they and their children were allowed to enter the United States.

This review of immigration legislation revealed a continued history of prohibitions against the entry of Asian women, specifically, Asian women who are fiancées or wives of U.S. servicemen stationed overseas and have borne Amerasian (i.e., mixed-race) children. Regardless of the feeling, intent, or wishes of individual servicemen toward the Asian women with whom they became romantically involved, federal legislation established the parameters regarding how they were to behave toward Asian women, and it failed to recognize or legitimize U.S. servicemen's romantic relationships with women of Asian ancestry. Such exclusionary legislation suggests an American sentiment that Asian women are not acceptable for marriage to U.S. servicemen or that Amerasian children are not American citizens. U.S. laws bar the entry of Asian women and Amerasian children resulting in overseas-duty U.S. servicemen returning to the United States without the product (i.e., fiancée or wife and child or children) of their romantic liaisons with Asian women.

BEFORE WORLD WAR II: A LEGACY OF EXCLUSION

The United States entered World War II with legislative prohibitions against the entry of people of Asian ancestry. Three immigration laws firmly

established the exclusion of people of Asian ancestry: (a) the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, (b) the Immigration Act of 1917, and (c) the National Origins Act of 1924.

The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 prohibited immigration of any person from China and barred from naturalization those Chinese immigrants who were already in the United States. Given the tendency of Chinese men to immigrate first, this in effect excluded the immigration of Chinese women to the United States. The 1800s were a time of widespread prostitution in the American West due to the paucity of women. Prostitutes of every nationality were abundant in California. However, the Chinese, as a group, were singled out as depraved "Orientals," and Chinese women were characterized as sexually subservient. The newspapers of the day described Chinese women as "reared to a life of shame from infancy and that not one virtuous China woman had been brought to this country. They were also accused of disseminating vile disease capable of destroying the very morals, the manhood and the health of our people" (Yung, 1995, p. 32).

The Immigration Act of 1917 perpetuated this image by naming all people from Asia inadmissible aliens. It created the "barred zone of the Asia-Pacific triangle" (U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1996, p. A-1-5). This legislation barred all Asians from immigration from 1917 until World War II. At that time, this legislation primarily affected the Japanese, given the hostile relations between the United States and Japan. After the earlier U.S. exclusion of Chinese immigrants, there was an influx of Japanese immigrants to the West Coast. Beginning in 1885, Japan permitted laborers to emigrate to the United States. The Japanese from drought ridden Japan could find a place and the United States received much needed workers. Japanese women immigrated some years after the peak years of the immigration of Japanese men. The majority of the Japanese women came as "picture brides," that is, women married in Japan by proxy to Japanese men in the United States through family arrangement. The practice of arranged marriages and marriage ceremonies by proxy with a photograph of the spouse was antithetical to the European practice of romantic marriage. Those who opposed Japanese immigration considered the practice of picture marriage as immoral (Glenn, 1986). Picture brides reinforced the existing image of Asian women as subservient, immoral, and depraved.

The National Origins Act of 1924 established an annual quota for each nation based on the percentage of people from that nation already residing in the United States as of 1920 and specified that aliens ineligible for citizenship could not enter as immigrants. The National Origins Act also specified that natives of Western Hemisphere countries were nonquota persons (U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service [INS], 1996). This was racially discriminatory in that any people from Europe could immigrate to the United States at will, whereas no one from Asia and the Pacific

Islands could immigrate and all others had to wait for visas based on country-specific annual quotas.

These three federal acts effectively prohibited Asians already in the United States from becoming U.S. citizens, barred further immigration of people of Asian ancestry, and prohibited Asian wives from joining their husbands who were already in the United States. Asian American men found themselves permanently separated from their wives and relegated to "bachelor communities." To remedy this situation, legislation was introduced in 1935 to allow for the entry of Asian wives. The intent of the Alien Wife Bill was to "extend that privilege [immigration] to alien wives of other races ineligible for citizenship." This legislation died in committee. It was reintroduced in 1937 and again in 1939, with the same result—reflecting the unwillingness of Americans to accept Asian women.

These three pieces of immigration legislation, together with the defeat of the Alien Wife Bill, ensured that the Asian American community existing in the United States would not expand and that no new Asian American communities could be established. No other group of immigrants was ever targeted as such for exclusion. The anti-Asian sentiment of the United States reflected in these pieces of legislation, including women of Asian ancestry, was clear. The United States considered any person of Asian ancestry not only unfit for U.S. citizenship, but also unacceptable for entry into the United States.

America entered the World War II era with a firmly established tradition of exclusionary immigration legislation against people of Asian ancestry. Immigration legislation regarding women of Asian ancestry was set within the historical context of the exclusion of all Asians.

WORLD WAR II: SPLITTING ASIAN AMERICANS

On December 7, 1941, Japan attacked the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, provoking a U.S. declaration of war against Japan the following day. On December 11, 1941, Germany and Italy declared war on the United States. World War II forced the entry of the United States into the global arena, leading to its evolution as a global superpower. Both during and since World War II, substantial numbers of U.S. military personnel were dispatched around the world, including various countries on the Pacific Basin and Asian continent.

During World War II, U.S. servicemen were stationed in Europe, China, and several countries in the Pacific. There were approximately 1 million World War II war brides, that is, women of various nationalities who married U.S. servicemen stationed abroad. Between 1944 and 1950, 150,000 to 200,000 couples married in Europe, and 50,000 to 100,000 couples married in Asia (Shukert, 1988). No legislation was enacted to

exclude women of European ancestry from entering the United States to join their husbands. The differential treatment of European and Asian women illustrates the discriminatory image in the United States of women of Asian ancestry.

China as an Allied Country

The first legislation to address the immigration of Asian women was the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 in 1943 (Immigration Act of December 17, 1943). During World War II, the enemy on the European front was Germany. On the Asian front, the enemy was Japan, whereas China became an allied nation in 1941. The repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act, passed in the context of a nation at war, had the effect of splitting Asian groups.

Within the United States, Americans of Japanese ancestry were labeled a potential threat to domestic security and evacuated from the West Coast and imprisoned at alternate locations. This was not done with Americans of German ancestry. Instead of accepting the possibility that security forces were lax on the naval base in Hawaii, the blame for Pearl Harbor was placed on the "otherness" of Asians. Editorial comments like the following expressed the otherness view of Asians held by White Americans:

We thought he [the Japanese] was bound by certain Western standards of international conduct. . . . They are not of the West, and have nothing to do with what we think is right. So Secretary Hull cried bitterly of "infamy" but the attack was not infamous. It was the Japanese acting according to their code. What earthly reason ever existed for expecting them to act according to our code? None. . . . The Pacific enemy will not change his nature. (Brier, 1994, p. 9)

Chinese immigrants, on the other hand, were not imprisoned but hailed as the good Asian. They were cast in a positive light by the newspapers of the day. Appearing daily on the front pages of U.S. newspapers were reports like the following: "*American and Chinese airmen of the United States* [italics added] fourteenth Air Force aided in the victory" (*New York Times*, 1943, p. 5). "Brig. Gen. Edgar Flenn, Chief of Staff of the United States Fourteenth United States Air Force, said . . . *American planes* [italics added] were striking from dawn to dusk to *support the Chinese* [italics added]" (*New York Times*, 1943, p. 5). The Chinese were considered brave soldiers worthy of American support.

Throughout the war, U.S. servicemen traveled to and were stationed in China. Concurrently, Chinese units were traveling to the United States for military training. With the friendly interchange, it became unseemly to exclude the immigration of Chinese people. Two years into the alliance with China, the United States passed the Magnuson Act of December 17,

1943

1943 (Immigration Act of December 17, 1943). The Magnuson Act granted eligibility for naturalization to people of Chinese descent; it effectively repealed the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. Chinese people were no longer excluded from immigration by their ineligibility for citizenship. Although the act allowed for the immigration of Chinese people, it set an annual quota of only 105 immigrants. Chinese women who were wives or fiancées of U.S. servicemen stationed in China during the war were included as part of this numerical quota; this very low quota made the immigration of Chinese women negligible. In contrast, England, another allied nation, was allowed more than 40% of the annual quota for all countries. This made it possible for the English to migrate without waiting as the quota was so large. This quota system continued the United States's basic policy of excluding Asian women (Kim, 1992).

Continued Exclusion of Other Asians and Pacific Islanders

During World War II, U.S. servicemen were also stationed in the Philippines and other island countries in the Pacific Ocean. Although the Magnuson Act repealed the exclusion of Chinese immigrants, it let stand the Immigration Act of 1917, that continued to exclude Pacific Islanders and people from other Asian countries from entry into the United States. The romantic relationships that ensued between U.S. servicemen stationed in the Pacific and the women there are depicted in the movie *South Pacific* (Hammerstein & Osborn, 1958). Americans' unwillingness to accept mixed-race relationships legitimized through marriage is well articulated. Despite the large number of U.S. servicemen stationed in the Pacific, no waivers were introduced or passed to allow for the immigration of Pacific Islanders or other Asian women who became involved with U.S. servicemen.

AFTER WORLD WAR II: DIFFERENTIAL TREATMENT

On May 8, 1945, Germany unconditionally surrendered to the Allies. On September 2, 1945, Japan also surrendered unconditionally. The victorious Allies included Great Britain and the Commonwealth, France, the United States, the Soviet Union, and China. The U.S. military withdrawal from Europe began in August 1945. Troop withdrawal from Europe and the Far East continued through the end of the year. Immediately following the U.S. troop withdrawal the immigration of the women from various nations who married U.S. servicemen began.

After World War II, U.S. military personnel entered Germany and Japan. The United States participated in the postwar occupation of Germany by stationing U.S. military personnel there. Additionally, the United

States, the sole occupying power of Japan, stationed a sizable number of military personnel there.

The War Brides Act and the G.I. Fiancées Act: Preference for European Women

The next piece of legislation reflecting U.S. attitudes toward Asian women was the War Brides Act of 1945. The war in Europe ended in August of 1945. During the fall and winter of 1945, U.S. troops stationed in Europe began returning home. Every day, long lists of servicemen due to land in various ports around the country were published. Newspapers throughout the country published daily a "Schedule of the Arrival of Troops" derived from information provided by Army ports of embarkation in various cities. The schedules appeared as follows:

New York—arrivals, due today, due tomorrow, due Sunday, due Monday, due Tuesday. Newport News, VA, arrived, due today. Boston, arrived, due today. San Francisco, due yesterday, due today. Portland, due yesterday. Tacoma, WA due yesterday. Seattle, WA due yesterday. San Diego, CA due yesterday. Los Angeles, due yesterday. (*New York Times*, 1945, p. 26)

At the same time, news of European wives trying to join their American husbands were also being reported in the newspapers. The December 10, 1945, *New York Times* ran the following stories:

Since Herbert John Lamoureaux, 22-year-old former American soldier, could not swim to his wife, she is determined to sail to him. So said Mrs. Veronica Lamoureaux, attractive brunette English girl, today. . . . "It would have given him great happiness if we could all have been united this Christmas," the former GI's 23-year-old wife said. She added, however, that she was confident she could book passage to the United States. (p. 26)

Mrs. Yvonne Goppert, 21-year-old Briton, was reunited with her American husband yesterday for the first time in seven months. They were married on May 11 and on May 18 Lieutenant Goppert received orders to go to France on a glider towed by a C-46. Mrs. Goppert hid on the plane in a box eighteen inches high, two feet wide and four and a half feet long. The couple spent two weeks honeymooning. (p. 26)

These reports systematically excluded women of Asian ancestry.

Beside the columns reporting the daily arrival of troops were announcements about the arrival of their wives. The *New York Times* reported the following on December 27, 1945:

War brides of the United States soldiers from the Atlantic area will begin to follow their redeployed husbands in January, according to an official Army announcement today. The brides will embark through

Southampton, England, it said. Quotas have not yet been set, but once the movement of brides is started, it will continue until all brides have reached the United States, the War Department orders state. The ship on which brides will sail will be used for this purpose only. (p. 2)

The next day, December 28, 1945, before the first war veterans were barely home from Europe, the United States passed, without committee hearing or floor debate, the War Brides Act. The purpose of the Act was "to expedite the admission to the United States, of alien spouses and alien minor children of citizen members of the United States armed forces . . . provided they are admissible under the immigration laws." The act waived visa requirements and exclusion based on physical or mental defects for women who had married members of the American armed forces. Within months of U.S. servicemen returning to the United States, their British, European, New Zealander, and Australian wives were able to join them, at the expense of U.S. taxpayers. The War Brides Act was passed while European war brides were on their way to the United States.

One year after passage of the War Brides Act, the G.I. Fiancées Act of 1946 was enacted. Like the War Brides Act, this act was passed without committee hearings or floor debate. The purpose of the Fiancées Act was to "facilitate the admission into the US of the alien fiancées of members of the armed forces of the US . . . provided that the alien is not subject to exclusion from the United States under the immigration laws." With the passage of these two acts, all British, European, New Zealander, and Australian wives and fiancées of U.S. servicemen were allowed to enter the United States.

The image of and attitudes toward women from English-speaking and European countries had to have been positive for these two pieces of legislation to go forth with such speed and so little opposition. The policy of inclusion for women of European ancestry is repeated in both the War Brides Act and the Fiancée Act.

This was in marked contrast to the treatment of wives of Asian ancestry. Missing from the newspaper accounts were the stories of U.S. servicemen's wives from the Pacific Islands and China. Also missing were the wives themselves. Typical is the following story of a Chinese woman who married a U.S. serviceman:

When she married Sam in China forty years ago, she had to keep the marriage secret at first. If the military found out, they would have shipped Sam out and the couple would have been separated. He could even have been court martialed and dishonorably discharged. The U.S. government discouraged its soldiers from taking war brides in foreign countries and did everything to prevent such marriages. Since Kun-yi lived with Sam, though married in fact, she was called a foreign prostitute. (Sung, 1990, p. 92)

The War Brides Act and the Fiancées Act let stand the exclusion of Asians. This allowed for the Kun-yi situation and thus continued the policy of excluding Asians, including Asian wives and fiancées.

Limited Inclusion of Chinese Women: China as an Ally

After World War II, the U.S. withdrew its servicemen from China. Chinese women were still restricted from immigration under the limited 105 persons per year quota. To facilitate the immigration of Asian wives, the Alien Wife Bill was reintroduced, for the third time, in 1939. After the start of World War II, when China became an ally, the same bill was again introduced in 1941, then in 1942. In total, this bill was introduced five times without passage. A restricted version of the bill was finally enacted after the end of World War II. The Immigration Act of August 9, 1946 granted Chinese wives of U.S. citizens nonquota status. The effect of this legislation was the long-awaited entry to the United States of those Chinese women married to U.S. servicemen and civilians stationed in China.

This legislation had limited impact because it affected only the Chinese community. The Immigration Act of 1946 only allowed for American men who served in the armed forces during World War II to return to China, marry a Chinese woman, and bring her back to the United States. The men who took advantage of this were predominantly Chinese Americans. This situation was depicted in the movie *Eat a Bowl of Tea* (Cha & Roscoe, 1989). By providing only for nonquota status for Chinese wives, the bill continued the exclusion of all other wives of Asian ancestry.

Limited Inclusion of Japanese Women: Occupation of Japan

Between 1944 and 1950, 50,000 to 100,000 couples were married in Asia (Shukert, 1988). Unlike British, European, New Zealander, and Australian women, Asian women married to U.S. servicemen were still barred from entry into the United States. During World War II, U.S. servicemen were stationed in large numbers in the Pacific Islands and later in Japan during the occupation. Both the War Brides Act and the Fiancées Act barred women of Asian ancestry from joining their servicemen husbands and fiancées in the United States. The War Brides Act provided that alien wives of U.S. citizens who were serving in the U.S. armed forces and were "admissible under the immigration laws, be admitted to the United States." Likewise, the Fiancées Act also included exclusionary language. It provided for the admission of "alien fiancées of members of the armed forces of the US . . . provided that the alien is not subject to exclusion from the United States under the immigration laws."

U.S. forces have been stationed on Japanese soil since 1945. Not

surprisingly, a number of men developed romantic relationships with Japanese women. However, Japanese women, regardless of whether or not they were married to U.S. servicemen, could not immigrate to the United States. In an attempt to address the issue of U.S. servicemen in romantic relationships with Japanese women, the initial Alien Wife Bill was reintroduced in 1947 for the sixth time. In 1947, the bill passed as the Soldier Brides Act. It reflected minimal attempts to counteract exclusion based on race. The Act stipulated that an "alien spouse of an American citizen by marriage occurring before 30 days after the enactment of this Act (July 22, 1947), shall not be considered as inadmissible because of race." These time limitations were later extended, then finally removed.

In contrast to the War Brides Act, no exceptions were made to expedite the speedy immigration of these Japanese wives. Instead, placement of tight time restrictions made immigration almost impossible. Although the time restrictions were later extended, the restrictions echoed the earlier exclusion of women of Asian ancestry.

Differential Treatment and Racial Preference

The differential treatment of women of Asian ancestry compared to women of European ancestry in post-World War II legislation reflected a clear racial preference. The European wives of U.S. servicemen were welcomed and quickly reunited with their husbands in the United States. In contrast, wives of Asian ancestry were initially barred, then later tightly restricted from following their husbands to the United States. The exclusion of women from Asian and Pacific Islander countries resulted in a situation in which servicemen could engage in romantic relationships, even legitimize those relationships with local marriage ceremonies, and still return to the United States without their Asian wives or fiancées. The legislative message about Asian women was that it was acceptable and even expected for servicemen to fraternize with Asian women but not to make them legitimate wives. The legislation protected the overseas servicemen by enabling them to return home unencumbered by their Asian women. This implied that Asian women were acceptable as sexual partners but unacceptable as U.S. citizens or members of U.S. families.

The restrictive legislation regarding women of Asian ancestry perpetuated the myth of the erotic Oriental. The legislation reflected the image of the Asian seductress portrayed in the press and popular media. It relegated Asian women to the images of An-Choi, the Chinese madam of the 1880s; Suzie Wong, the Chinese prostitute in the movie *The World of Suzie Wong* (Mason & Patrick, 1960); and the geisha in the movie *Sayonara* (Mitchner & Osborn, 1957) and the play *The Story of Miss Saigon* (Behr & Steyn, 1989).

THE COLD WAR YEARS

Elimination of Race-Based Exclusions from Naturalization

With the end of the World War II and the spread of Communism from the Soviet Union to China, the United States was into the Cold War years. The nation's security interest was focused on containment of Communism abroad and eradication of Communist influences within the United States. Internationally, the United States was assuming increasing leadership of the Western nations against the perceived expansionist intentions of its former ally, the Soviet Union. As the Cold War heated up, it brought the United States into a military confrontation with Communist forces in Korea and Vietnam.

Within the United States's new role as a world superpower protecting the world from Communism, the 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act, commonly referred to as the McCarran-Walter Act, was passed on June 27, 1952. The McCarran-Walter Act eliminated race as a bar to naturalization. This allowed those people of Asian ancestry who were residing in the United States to become citizens. The act eliminated previous restrictive legislation that barred immigration based on a person's inability to become a U.S. citizen. The Asian wives of U.S. servicemen were no longer subject to exclusion based on race. In response to the elimination of race-based exclusion from naturalization, Japanese women married to U.S. servicemen were able to immigrate. As a result, 85.9% of the immigrants from Japan between 1952 and 1960 were women. (Daniels, 1990).

Although it eliminated race-based naturalization discrimination, the McCarran-Walter Act continued the race-based national quota immigration system. The quotas continued the policy of race-based discrimination. For example, "Ireland had a quota of 17,756 and Germany had a quota of 25,814, while quotas for . . . China (105), Japan (185), the Philippines (100), and the Pacific Islands (100) were negligible" (Kim, 1992, p. 1110).

Elimination of Race-Based Immigration: The Immigration and Nationality Act

Racial equality was in the national spotlight during the 1950s and 1960s. The 1954 U.S. Supreme Court ruling in the case of *Brown v. Board of Education* on the issue of segregation signaled a change in U.S. race relations. Out of this increased focus on civil rights, Congress passed the Immigration and Nationality Act Amendments on October 3, 1965. The 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act eliminated the race-based quotas. For the first time in the history of regulated immigration, each Asian country received the same quota as European countries. Each country received an annual quota of 20,000 immigrant visas, with a ceiling of 170,000 for

the Eastern Hemisphere. In addition, immediate relatives of U.S. citizens were not subject to quota restrictions.

With the passage of this Act, there were no longer any legislative restrictions against the immigration of people from Asia, including Asian women. The barriers to Asians established by the Immigration Act of 1917 that created the "barred zone of the Asia-Pacific triangle" were eliminated (Yung, 1995). With the elimination of race-based barriers to naturalization in 1952 and immigration in 1965, Asian wives of U.S. servicemen could not be categorically excluded from immigration into the United States. However, despite the liberal changes in immigration legislation just described, the exclusion of women of Asian ancestry continued in the legislative treatment of wives of U.S. servicemen in the Korean and Vietnam Wars.

Return to Exclusionary Policies for Amerasians: The Korean and Vietnam Wars

The next immigration legislation to address women of Asian ancestry came in response to the Korean and Vietnam Wars. The Immigration Act of 1982, commonly referred to as the Amerasian Act, excluded women of Asian ancestry in their status as mothers of Amerasians. The idea that Asian women were not acceptable as legitimate spouses for U.S. citizens was thereby continued. Amerasian is a term first used by Pearl S. Buck in 1966 to refer to individuals of mixed American and Asian parentage, specifically children fathered by American servicemen stationed in Asia. However, the servicemen, by definition, cannot be U.S. citizens of Asian ancestry because U.S. officials "consider the physical appearance" (Pub. L. No. 97-359, § 1698(3)(B)) to determine parentage. Without mixed-race appearance, American lineage is not established for children of Asian women and Asian American servicemen.

On June 27, 1950, President Truman committed U.S. military forces to aid South Korea against a Communist-backed North Korean invasion. Three years later, on July 27, 1953, an armistice was signed that signaled the end to the shooting part of the war. The conflict ended in a military stalemate, not an end to the war. The United States continues to station military personnel in South Korea to protect it from communist North Korea. Large numbers of U.S. troops have been stationed in South Korea since 1950.

Simultaneously, the United States was involved in armed conflict in the southern tip of the Asian continent. In Vietnam, fighting erupted between France and the Communist-backed Viet Minh in 1947. The United States, in its role as the world defender of democratic freedom against Communism, supported the French. By 1953, the United States was providing 80% of the cost of France's war effort. After the French defeat in

1954, the United States assumed responsibility for the fight in Vietnam. Between 1954 and the U.S. withdrawal in 1975, increasing numbers of military personnel were deployed to Vietnam and the former French Indochina countries in Southeast Asia.

With the large number of U.S. military personnel stationed in Korea and Indochina, romantic relationships between U.S. servicemen and Korean and Vietnamese women inevitably developed. Despite the passage of the Alien Wife Bill, the Soldier Brides Act, the McCarran-Walter Act, and the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, the United States still found occasion to continue the exclusion of Asian women.

More than 30 years after the United States dispatched servicemen to Korea, it attempted to address the Amerasian question. This was the first legislative recognition of the United States's responsibility for the Amerasian children of U.S. servicemen. On January 9, 1981, the Amerasian Immigration Act was introduced. The intent of the bill was "to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to provide preferential treatment in the admission of unmarried or married son or daughter of a citizen of the United States if [the son or daughter] was born in Korea, Vietnam, Laos, or Thailand after 1950, and was fathered by an United States citizen who, at the time of the alien's conception, was serving in the Armed Forces of the United States during active duty for the United States or for the United Nations Organization" (H.R. 808, 97th Congress, 1st Session).

The same year that Congress was considering passage of the Amerasian Immigration Act, Vincent Chin, a Chinese American, was beaten to death in Detroit, Michigan. The U.S. auto industry was beset by the import of more fuel-efficient Japanese cars. Detroit's 16% unemployment rate was blamed on Japan. In June 1982, Chin, a native born American of Chinese ancestry, went to a bar to celebrate his upcoming wedding. In the bar, two White autoworkers shouted, "It's because of you motherfuckers that we're out of work." Outside of the bar, the same two autoworkers bludgeoned Chin to death with a baseball bat.

In the interests of job protection, Simpson-Mazzoli introduced the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) that was passed in 1982. The target of IRCA was to curb, and eventually eliminate, undocumented aliens working in the United States by establishing employer-based monitoring of INS status (Kim, 1992). Along the same vein of blaming others for U.S. troubles, Congress, in committee hearings, questioned the character of Asian women who were mothers of Amerasians. Committee members were concerned that U.S. servicemen were susceptible to being seduced by Asian women who wished to immigrate if the mothers of Amerasian were allowed immigrant status with their Amerasian children.

Public Law No. 97-359, Section 1698, Preferential Treatment in the Admission of Children of U.S. Citizens, commonly referred to as the Amerasian Immigration Act of 1982, was enacted into law on October 22,

1982. The Amerasian Immigration Act established immigration preference for Amerasians. However, it continued to deny the special relationship of the mothers of Amerasians with the United States through its servicemen. Two conditions under which Amerasian children could immigrate to the United States resulted in the exclusion of women of Asian ancestry. One condition was that only the minor Amerasian child could immigrate, not the Asian mother or other family members. The second condition was that the mother of the Amerasian had to sign an irrevocable release of family rights for the child to immigrate. The release disallowed the mother any future claims on the child. This not only meant forced separation of the Amerasian child from his or her mother, but also no hope of future reunification. Even after reaching adulthood and gaining citizenship, the Amerasian could not sponsor his or her Asian mother as a nonquota relative. Amerasians who immigrated to the United States came essentially as orphans to be fostered by American families.

The proviso of the irrevocable release made clear the United States intent of total dissociation from those Asian women who had relations with U.S. servicemen. Again, this relegated those relationships between Asian women and U.S. servicemen to the status of temporary sexual liaisons. Asian women were acceptable only as temporary romantic partners for the comfort of U.S. servicemen stationed overseas. This time, the added message was that not only were Asian women unacceptable as legitimate wives, but they also were unacceptable as mothers to rear "American" children.

Diplomatic Breakdown and Exclusion Following the Vietnam War

The popular image of women involved with U.S. servicemen in Vietnam is depicted in the play *Miss Saigon* (Behr & Steyn, 1989). This image continues the age-old U.S. concept of Asian women as temporary romantic and sexual partners. The Communist Vietnamese victory in 1975 added an additional incentive for Americans to denigrate Asians and Asian women. The loss of the Vietnam War had profound ramifications for the United States. It was a shock to American self-confidence as a military power and world leader. This resulted in the United States severing all diplomatic relations with Vietnam until 1994, thus preventing Vietnamese Amerasians from immigrating under the Amerasian Immigration Act of 1982.

On August 6, 1987, 12 years after the last U.S. servicemen left Southeast Asia, and under pressure from Vietnam, the Amerasian Homecoming Act (H.R. 3171, 100th Congress, 1st Session) was first introduced in Congress. The purpose of the bill was to permit the immigration of Vietnamese Amerasians to the United States. The bill died in the Committee on the Judiciary. It was introduced again on October 28, 1987, but met the same

fate. On December 27, 1987, provisions for the immigration of Vietnamese Amerasians were passed as part the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act, the Amerasian Immigration Section.

Under extreme pressure from the Vietnamese government, this proviso specifically included the immigration of Vietnamese families. The Amerasian Immigration Section provided for waivers of numerical limitations on immigration for Amerasians and existing exclusionary policies. The waivers meant that adult Amerasians could immigrate and mothers of Amerasians could accompany their children to the United States. However, administrative interpretation of the legislation initially established a condition under which the Vietnamese mother could be excluded. Those family members eligible for immigration with the Amerasian included the Amerasian's spouse, child, or natural mother and her spouse or child. If the accompanying family member was a spouse, then the natural mother "shall not be accorded any right, privilege, or status." Amerasians initially had to choose between their mother and their spouse. Again, there existed a loophole to exclude women of Asian ancestry, once again sending the not-so-subtle message that women of Asian ancestry were not wanted in the United States.

EFFECTS OF LINGERING IMAGES

As discussed earlier, the persistent image of Asian women as erotic, temporary sexual partners for U.S. servicemen reflects the sentiments of the majority of Americans. In turn, the passage of exclusionary immigration legislation reflects and perpetuates the sexual and erotic image of women of Asian ancestry.

Stereotypic Images

The image reflected in law is not limited to Asian women living in Asia. This image also affects women of Asian ancestry born in the United States. Asian American women are exposed to the sexualized images of themselves. Two Asian American women described examples of this type of exposure.

On a tour to Niagara Falls, other passengers kept intimating to Calvert that Yi-fong was just a girl he was taking on an extramarital fling. Although he introduced Yi-fong as his wife, they kept referring to her as his girlfriend and made snide remarks about his leaving his wife at home. People are unable to or refuse to grasp the fact that two people from different backgrounds can be married. (Sung, 1990, pp. 88-89)

Another attitude that seems especially prevalent is the mail-order-bride mentality. Occasionally when I'm with my boyfriend—who is as Anglo

as you can get—total strangers walk up and ask him where I'm from, if I speak English. . . . The same mentality is responsible for a certain class of male that seems to think Asian women are easy to please, utterly subservient and desperately clamoring for Anglo husbands. . . . During lunch in the dorm cafeteria, [a White student] sauntered over and said (this is true), "Hello, Me see you here very long time. Me think you very pretty. I don't like American girls. I only like Asian women." (Kim, 1990, p. M4)

Erotic Images

The capitulation to this erotic image of Asian American women by the Asian American community influences the stigmatization of Asian American women in interracial relationships. "Chinese feel that women who married Americans are not decent. This is a stereotype. For me, that hurt a lot because I feel that I had to prove my character" (Sung, 1990, p. 92). "Intermarriage between Whites and Asians has been seen in recent times by some Asian Americans as evidence of racial conquest and cultural genocide rather than social acceptance and success for the Asian minority" (Kim, 1982, p. 92).

Repeated exposure to erotic imagery of oneself can have a profound effect on the development of the psychosexual identity. The incorporation of this erotic image by Asian American women has led some to feel ashamed of and reject their Asian ancestry.

Second-class treatment like this (Asian women are easy to please, utterly subservient and desperately clamoring for Anglo husbands) has made a lot of American-born Asians ashamed of their heritage in a way that other Americans aren't. You'll probably never catch one of us with a button reading, "Kiss me, I'm Korean." In fact, there is a heavy burden on us to deny all ethnicity and to prove we're just like everyone else, i.e., real Americans. The results are sometimes pathetic. I used to present my middle name as "Susan" instead of "Suhn." (Kim, 1990, p. M4)

> Identity Issues

Every Asian American woman, at some level, must contend with the image of the erotic being that is not acceptable as a legitimate partner in a long-term relationship. When Asian American women consider their identities as Americans with the elements of race, ethnicity, and gender, they do not encounter a society that encourages them to be self defined. Anti-Asian immigration legislation denigrates their worth, and erotic and sexual images objectify them. During the many years of their exclusion Asian American women were unable to participate in the legislative and political dialogue about themselves. After so many years of forced silence,

Asian American women at last can and should engage in a dialogue with the greater population of U.S. citizens through participation in the legislative process so as to shape their own images.

CONCLUSION

Federal legislation of the last 100-plus years articulates enduring images of and sentiments toward women of Asian ancestry. The most common image is that women of Asian ancestry are erotic and sexualized beings. The prevalent sentiment is that women of Asian ancestry are acceptable for temporary romantic liaisons but not as wives or mothers of U.S. citizens. This legislative presentation echoes the erotic, sexualized Asian American woman portrayed in the popular media. In looking to legislation for guidance, many Americans not of Asian ancestry may use these attitudes and images as a priori proof that Asian women are not acceptable for marriage or motherhood. Legislation can then, in turn, be used to legitimize and continue the stereotype of Asian women as erotic sex objects.

The images and sentiments presented through immigration legislation continues to be felt by Asian American women and Asian American communities throughout the United States. More positive images of Asian American women need to be articulated in a number of areas. Scientifically, qualitative research is needed on how Asian American women cope with the erotic images reflected in immigration legislation and the media. Research on the actual self-images of Asian American women is clearly needed. Social scientists need to conduct more research on the confluence of racial, ethnic, and gender identity among Asian American women. Models of identity development are necessary to guide research on gender, race, ethnic minorities, and women in the United States. Finally, more research is needed to examine the effects of these negative images of Asian American women on their relationships.

At the community level, dialogues between Asian American communities and the larger community of U.S. citizens are needed to challenge existing images and sentiments and promote new ones. Institutions of higher education need to support their Asian American female academicians and establish curricula for the teaching of Asian American women. Creative writers and makers of popular media need to develop works that truthfully reflect the lives of Asian American women in all of their complexities. Legislatively, the Asian American community needs to lobby for the elimination of legislation that denigrates Asian American women, such as the Amerasian Immigration Act of 1982. And, as citizens of a representative government, we all need to be vigilant against any legislation that

either promotes a derogatory image of Asian Americans or discriminates against anyone on the basis of race, ethnicity, or gender.

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