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RONALD TAKAKI

A RESPONSE TO KAREN LEONARD

I wish to thank the editors of *Amerasia* for this opportunity to respond to Professor Karen Leonard's allegations. Addressed "To Whom It May Concern," her statement inflicts undeserved harm and damage to my reputation as a scholar, and may be libelous.

Let me set the record straight by reconstructing the events related to Leonard's statement.

In the fall of 1987 or the spring of 1988, while I was writing my chapter on Asian Indians in the United States, I tried to phone Leonard to ask her whether she would have time to read my rough draft. Though I did not know her, I regarded her as one of the leading scholars on this particular subject and wanted her feedback. As I remember, I called her office directly and did not receive an answer. I was not thinking about seeking a permission slip at that time because I only had a rough draft, and it may not even have included materials that required permission. Due to demands of teaching, writing, and administrative activities, I did not pursue trying to contact Leonard. Also Ms. Jane Singh, who has also done research in the area of Asian Indian American history, had agreed to read my draft chapter on Asian Indians.

In the fall of 1989, *Strangers From a Different Shore* was published. On December 28, 1989, Leonard sent a "Critique of Ronald Takaki's *Strangers From a Different Shore*" to Professor Ling-chi Wang, chairperson of the Ethnic Studies Department, in which she made complaints of improper footnoting in about three or four places, the need for permission for one source, and an allegation of plagiarism. Wang forwarded this critique to the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs. It is simply not true that "some" individuals had sent complaints. There

had been one other complaint. That individual had been fully acknowledged in the book. But this had been added during the galley stage. A footnote had already credited her, but I agreed to elaborate in the citation. Also for "A Note of Appreciation," I initially included the individuals who had read drafts and had given me feedback, and I was willing to acknowledge this other individual because of a thematic contribution. Thus Leonard was the only one that had made allegations to the university.

In his response to Chairperson Wang, the Vice Chancellor stated that he would appoint an administrative officer to inquire into the allegations and that Professor Takaki would be informed about them and the name of the person making them. This was my legal right. The administrative officer who was appointed is a tenured member of the faculty with competence to judge allegations of plagiarism.

On February 12, 1990, I met with the administrative officer and learned for the first time about Leonard's complaint. He said he had reviewed the entire matter and had decided no plagiarism had been committed. In his formal report, he cleared me of Leonard's allegations of plagiarism and recommended that "no further formal action be taken." He also added that the "omnibus citation by paragraph is not unique, having been used by Professor Takaki in an earlier book, *Iron Cages*, and other scholars." He also appended examples of the omnibus citation style from "two other recent books on immigration to the U.S. published under scholarly auspices." He advised me, however, to contact Leonard directly to discuss her complaints and to try to resolve the issues between the two of us. At this point I had still not read her critique.

I did reach Professor Leonard that day. Her behavior was combative, and I found it difficult to explain what had happened on my earlier phone call, or the omnibus style of citation that I had used, or how the permissions department at Little, Brown and Company and I did seek to secure many permission slips, or how I would be willing to make additional citations where I thought they may be needed. Leonard said that she would send me her critique.

A few days later I received it and considered her complaints. I could understand how, with the omnibus style of citation, it was sometimes difficult for the reader to see clearly a specific contribution. This style of footnoting, in which several sources contained in a paragraph are cited together in serial order, is used by many publishers, including the University of California Press and Harvard University Press. The omnibus citation style can be found in the works of nationally recognized scholars—for examples, Eugene Genovese in *Roll*,

Jordan, Roll: *The World the Slaves Made* (Pantheon, 1972) and Lawrence W. Levine in *Highbrow Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Harvard University Press, 1989). As I also explain in my "Responses to Ling-chi Wang, Elaine Kim, and Sucheng Chan," published in this issue, I used the omnibus footnote style in my book, *Iron Cages: Race and Culture in 19th Century America*, published by

RONALD TAKAKI

Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., and no objections or concerns were raised then. In *Strangers from a Different Shore*, I worked very hard to credit works in my footnotes. The footnotes in my book amounted to literally thousands of citations and some sixty pages (small print)—more than one tenth of the book itself.

Acknowledgment is often a matter of judgment, but I decided to make some changes regarding Leonard's contributions in the next printing. For example, in her "To Whom It May Concern," Leonard discusses the way I footnoted "white landlord." This paragraph in my book describes Harnam Singh Sidhu, Punjabi farming practices, and quotes a "white landlord." The footnote (number 28) cites my sources in the order used in the paragraph — "Biographical Sketch of Harnam Singh Sidhu," in Miller, "An Ethnographic Report on the Sikh (East) Indians of the Sacramento Valley," p. 101; Karen Leonard, "Punjabi Farmers and California's Alien Land Law," *Agricultural History*, vol. 59, no. 4 (October 1985), p. 550. I thought readers would be able to see that the discussion on Harnam Singh Sidhu came from Miller and that the information about Punjabi farming practices and the quote from the "white landlord" came from Leonard, and readers checking these two sources will readily see this. But I agreed to change this footnote to read: "Biographical Sketch of Harnam Singh Sidhu," in Miller, "Ethnographic Report," p. 101; see Karen Leonard, "Punjabi Farmers and California's Alien Land Law," *Agricultural History*, vol. 59, no. 4 (October 1985), p. 550 for quote, and pp. 549-62 for Punjabi farming practices.

There was one place where I missed footnoting Leonard as a source for some statistics. I certainly wanted to give her credit for her work, and in footnote 36 I have added her article from which the statistics had been drawn.

Her unpublished essay on Moola Singh, for which I needed permission, has subsequently been published, and I have given it full citation, in footnote 34: Moola Singh, in Karen Leonard, "Immigrant Punjabis in Early Twentieth-Century California," in Sucheng Chan (ed.), *Social and Gender Boundaries in the United States* (Lewiston, New York, 1989), pp. 108-109.

As for Moola Singh becoming a Catholic, the interview done by Leonard is entitled, "Moola Singh: Excerpts from His Life Story." While reading it, I did not realize that his wife, Susanna, had entered the interview at that point. She was Catholic, and I thank Leonard for enabling me to make this correction in the text.

After I had considered the points raised in Leonard's critique, I informed my publisher about the additions and changes I was requiring in the next printing of the book, and this has been done in the Penguin edition. I also phoned Leonard to tell her about my actions and gave her an apology, and she seemed to gladly accept it. On April 5, 1990, I also wrote her a note to inform her about the revisions and apologize in writing. On April 10, in a letter to "Dear Ronald," Leonard wrote, saying she appreciated my response. She also enclosed a copy of an unpublished paper being submitted to *Cultural Anthropology*.

This brings me to the Asian American Studies Association. Leonard's critique was not sent to the Association; what was sent was a very personal attack on me and my book written by Professor Sucheng Chan to try to block my book from receiving an award. It should be noted that Chan herself is writing a book on the history of Asian Americans, the very subject of my study. It should also be pointed out that Chan has also published one of Leonard's essays in a book she edited (see above), and that, according to my information, she will be publishing Leonard's forthcoming book in her Temple University Press series.

As for the remarks that I made accepting the book award at Santa Barbara, I was telling the story about the "Today Show" in order to show how E. D. Hirsch had included Ellis Island and omitted Angel Island on his "list" for cultural literacy and to say how I hoped the award from the Association would help to challenge and change this cultural myopia. I was not trying to flaunt Leonard's feelings toward me and my book, but I regret she viewed it that way.

What Leonard and Sucheng Chan have done has been very distressing and discouraging to me and also others. Many colleagues and friends in Asian American studies and ethnic studies have given me moral encouragement. Many individuals in the community have also expressed to me their concern about the spreading of rumors and allegations against me. While I continue to believe the book is capable of defending itself, I want to express my appreciation to the people who have supported me in this ordeal.