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Los Angeles

*Gidra*, the Dissident Press

and the Asian American Movement:

1969 – 1974

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy  
in Anthropology

by

Karen Lee Ishizuka

2015



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## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

*Gidra*,

the Dissident Press and the Asian American Movement,  
1969 – 1974

by

Karen Lee Ishizuka

Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology

University of California, Los Angeles, 2015

Professor Mariko Tamanoi, Chair

The Asian American Movement (AAM) was one of the social movements that constituted the “cultural revolution of the long sixties” and communicating while vetting the ideals and goals of this new Asian American consciousness was *Gidra: The Monthly of the Asian American Experience*, published from April 1969 to April 1974.

Given how vital dissident newspapers have been to social movements, there has been correspondingly little research on their significance. Therefore, based on the contention that analysis of the content and form of an alternative newspaper is best understood within the historical context in which it was produced, I employed a tripartite analysis of context, content and form to analyze all 59 issues of *Gidra*. This data was supplemented by life story interviews of key volunteer staff (n = 10) and a limited on-line survey of readers (n = 20), to ask: what

cultural and political work did *Gidra* do and, by extension, what functions might dissident newspapers play in the life and legacy of social movements?

Situating *Gidra* within the concentric social and political milieus of the exuberant “Sixties,” the “Movement” of progressive thought and action, and specifically the Asian American movement, I determined that *Gidra* communicated the overall goals of the AAM primarily in four themes of: 1) vetting Asian American consciousness, 2) providing Asian American analysis of the Vietnam War, 3) building Asian American community and culture and 4) fortifying Third World solidarity; all through a combination of written and visual mediums that appealed to the intellect as well to the heart.

Extrapolating from the political and cultural work that *Gidra* accomplished - such as acting as public forum for a diversity of perspectives, critiquing as it historicized a movement in the making and providing lessons for future activists, this study contends that social movement newspapers have the unique capacity to: 1) provide an in situ account of the movement as it unfolded, 2) disseminate movement values and culture beyond time and space, 3) capture the ephemeral emotional energy of a movement, 4) serve as a source of new knowledge and 5) provide a history and legacy of a movement for generations to come.

The dissertation of Karen Lee Ishizuka is approved.

Sondra Hale

Lane Hirabayashi

Suzanne Slyomovics

Mariko Tamanoi, Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2015

To:

All *Gidraistas* wherever they may be.

Shirley Kodani for her premonition.

Jim Hirabayashi for having the last laugh.

Bob for cooking.

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This has been a long time in the making - over three decades. Having begun in 1978, I have lived through two marriages, two children, two grandchildren, two and 5/8ths books and, most intrepidly, two complete sets of coursework in the Ph.D. program in anthropology at UCLA to get to this point. Although they will never wade through this *pièce de résistance*, the wind beneath my sails has been my family, who have been my friends, and my friends who have been my family throughout the years. Of the innumerable friends who have been there for me, I will name only a few. Shirley Kodani was the first to say I would do this and I will wear the shawl she proactively saved for me as a graduation gift three years ago when she died, as my true doctoral regalia. Jim Hirabayashi is having the last laugh, having told me I should have finished thirty-five years ago. As a seque into family, my friend and daughter-in-law Dr. Cindy Sangalang has been a trusted colleague as we trudged though the maelstrom of graduate school in overlapping years. My children Thai Binh Etsuko Ishizuka Capp Checel and Tadashi Harukichi Nakamura have been my personal cheerleaders and grandchildren Mina Loy Akira Checel and Gus Ishizuka Checel, my safe havens of respite and restoration.

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## Vita

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BEST SHORT FILM, Film, Video & Interactive Media Festival, American Anthropological Assoc., 2008

FIRST PLACE, 2ND ANNUAL C.L.R. JAMES SCHOLAR ESSAY CONTEST, 2008

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OFFICIAL SELECTION SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL, *Toyo Miyatake: Infinite Shades Of Gray*, 2002

HBO PRODUCERS AWARD, *Toyo Miyatake: Infinite Shades Of Gray*, Savannah Film Video Festival, 2002

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RETROSPECTIVE OF WORK WITH ROBERT A. NAKAMURA, Smithsonian Institute, 1997

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DIRECTOR, MEDIA ARTS CENTER, Japanese American National Museum, 1999 - 2007

MEDIA ARTS DEVELOPER, National Center For The Preservation Of Democracy, 2003 - 2005

SENIOR PRODUCER, Japanese American National Museum, 2002 - 2004

SENIOR CURATOR, Japanese American National Museum, 1996 – 1999

VISITING SCHOLAR, Getty Research Institute For The Study Of Arts And Humanities, 1996 - 1997

CURATOR/PRODUCER/WRITER, Japanese American National Museum, 1989 - 1996

DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT, Pacifica Foundation, 1985 – 1989

CONSULTANT, KCET-TV, 1983 - 1989

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#### Publications

Serve the People: Making Asian America in the Sixties, New York: Verso Press, 2015.

“See What I’m Saying?: Adding the Visual to Oral History,” with Robert A. Nakamura, in Oral History in Communities of Color, Chon Noriega and Teresa Barnett, eds., Los Angeles: UCLA Chicano Studies Center Press, 2013.

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- "Army," Echoes from Gold Mountain, California State University, Long Beach, 1979
- "Oral History in Social Context," Minority Aging Research, San Diego: University Center on Aging, 1979
- "Caretaking: Implications for Retirement", Retirement: Concepts and Realities, San Diego: University Center on Aging, 1978
- The Elder Japanese: A Cross Cultural Study of Minority Elders, San Diego: San Diego State University/ Campanile Press, 1978
- Living on Your Own in San Diego: A Guide for the Older Person, Ed., San Diego, 1976



## Chapter 1: Genesis

*I hate my wife for her flat yellow face  
and her fat cucumber legs, but mostly  
for her lack of elegance and lack of  
intelligence compared to judith gluck.*

When I first read this poem in *Gidra*, the foremost newspaper of the Asian American movement I was, of course, floored. It was 1969. I was twenty-one. It was so out there. But, what was *it* that was being put out? Gall or guts? Audacity or authenticity? Boldness or bad taste? Or, was it a question of what was being outed? Misogyny in general, contempt for Asian women specifically or maybe even - self-hatred? I quickly read through the other stanzas to the end:

*So I hate my gentle wife for her flat  
yellow face and her soft cucumber legs  
bearing the burden of the love she has  
borne for centuries, centuries before  
anglicans and dylans  
playmates and rock  
before me or judith gluck<sup>1</sup>*

This poem was written by Ron Tanaka, a third generation American of Japanese descent like me, which made him my contemporary thus heightening the impact of his poem. It was published in the September 1969 issue of *Gidra: the Monthly of the Asian American Experience*.

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<sup>1</sup> Ron Tanaka, "I Hate My Wife for Her Flat Yellow Face," *Gidra* 1, no. 6 (1969).

The previous year – 1968 – was an historical flashpoint in U.S. history for its extreme, innumerable and immeasurable events. Alarming assassinations and riots at home and the escalating war in Southeast Asia, made even more outrageous by massacres of entire villages, were too shocking and horrifying to be fully grasped. Because of the broad faith and trust Americans had in the U.S. as a force of good for the world during the Cold War, when the government said the war in Southeast Asia was to further democracy and prevent communism, most Americans didn't question it (Appy 2015). And like so many other self-absorbed twenty somethings - especially those who had been colonized and socialized by mainstream American desires - I did not fully comprehend these events, and remained ostensibly impervious to the magnitude of their meaning. It took a poem about cucumber legs and Judith Gluck to bring me to my knees.

When I conducted a Google search of Tanaka, I discovered he was born in Poston, one of the ten U.S. World War II concentration camps for Japanese Americans in 1944, taught at California State University Sacramento for over 30 years, won an American Book Award in 1982 and died in 2007. Missing from the official record was the fact that before he was a respected professor or award-winning writer, as a fledgling poet Tanaka was first published in *Gidra*, the fledgling newspaper of the fledgling Asian American movement.

Social movements have been an American political tradition. The right to vote for women and African Americans, for example, was achieved primarily through mass movements that educated the country and politicians to its importance not only for women and African Americans, but for the good of the nation. Bob Ostertag, who wrote on the journalism of social justice movements, contended that social movements “played a critical role in the constant

process of reinventing American society.”<sup>2</sup> Yet, as social movement scholars Charles Stewart, Allen Smith and Robert Denton Jr. (1984) indicated, “The (mainstream) media are rarely favorable toward social movements (unless success appears to be near) ...or when a social movement does something spectacular or stupid.”<sup>3</sup> Instead it has been up to movement journals and newspapers to spread the word beyond those who were directly involved and move the movement beyond the margins.

In the 1960s and 1970s, hundreds of Americans turned to alternative news sources such as the *Berkeley Barb*, *The Black Panther*, *Los Angeles Free Press* and *Liberation News Service* to fill in what mainstream newspapers left out. Literary critic Morris Dickstein wrote, “The history of the sixties was written as much in the *Berkeley Barb* as the *New York Times*.”<sup>4</sup> Yet there was much news that these major alternative newspapers left out. To fill in this void were lesser-known but equally edifying newspapers such as *Akwesasne Notes*, *El Grito del Norte* and *Gidra* emanating from minoritized communities. Given the preponderance and prominence of such dissident newspapers - both big and small - Osterberg argued, “it is surprising that the history of the social movement press has been studied so little.”<sup>5</sup>

I knew first hand of the impact that newspapers such as *Gidra* had on myself and dozens of others during the transformational years of the Asian American movement. Building upon

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<sup>2</sup> Bob Ostertag, *People’s Movements, People’s Press : The Journalism of Social Justice Movements* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 2006)

<sup>3</sup> Charles J. Stewart, Craig Allen Smith, and Robert E. Denton Jr., *Persuasion and Social Movements* (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland, 1984): 5.

<sup>4</sup> John McMillan, *Smoking Typewriters: The Sixties Underground Press and the Rise of Alternative Media in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011): xiv.

<sup>5</sup> Ostertag, *People’s Movements, People’s Press : The Journalism of Social Justice Movements*.

historical anthropology in relying on an archival source to understand how the past is linked to the present as well as symbolic or interpretive anthropology to understand how a culture interprets itself, the purpose of this research, therefore, was to investigate the impact, significance and value of dissident newspapers on the social movement from which they emanated through an ethnography of *Gidra*, the foremost newspaper of the Asian American movement.

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998) is a professor of Performance Studies and Hebrew and Judaic Studies who has studied the objects of ethnography and theorized what she called the “agency of display.” By examining cultural productions such as museum exhibitions, festivals and world’s fairs, she argued that “display not only shows and speaks, it also does”<sup>6</sup> Similarly, as a cultural production, a movement newspaper not only shows and speaks, it also does. Through this ethnography of *Gidra* grounded in text analysis of all the issues of *Gidra* over its five year lifetime, interviews with key staff and contributors, and a reader survey, my research explored the question of what agency a social movement newspaper had for the life and legacy of the movement of which it was a part. What roles did in play? What functions did in serve? In short, what political and cultural work do social movement newspapers like *Gidra* do?

### **Why *Gidra*?**

Asian Americans are currently the fastest growing racial group in the United States, having increased by 56 percent between 2000 and 2013 (slightly higher than Latinos at 53

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<sup>6</sup> Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* (Berkeley, Los Angeles. London: University of California Press, 1998).

percent during the same time period).<sup>7</sup> Coinciding with this demographic rise, the moniker of “Asian Americans,” and the related term of “Asian Pacific Islanders” are now commonplace. There was, however, a time when Asians in the U.S., falling outside the racial divide of white and black, were inconsequential and nearly invisible. It wasn’t until what historian Arthur Marwick (2005) called the “cultural revolution of the long sixties”<sup>8</sup> that Asian ethnic groups formed a new consciousness, activism and sense of community and transformed themselves into a self-determined pan Asian American social movement.

“Asian American” is therefore is a political identity. Just as Simone de Beauvoir contended that “one was not born, but rather, becomes a woman,” no one was born “Asian American” in the sense that one was born Chinese American, Japanese American, or Filipino American, which were the most prevalent Asian ethnicities at the time. Instead, it was as if Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, and Filipino Americans were born “Oriental” as their cultural identities were obscured into this racialized category that stood at the opposite end of “Occidental” i.e.: American. And, before the global network of the Internet, or even fax machines, communicating the ideals and goals of transformation from “Oriental” to “Asian American” was the movement newspaper *Gidra*.

*Gidra* was the first and longest running newspaper of the Asian American movement, hereafter referred to as AAM. Born at the University of California, Los Angeles, *Gidra* began as a news outlet for UCLA’s Asian American students and moved off campus after its first issue.

*Gidra* was staffed by a largely Japanese American volunteer work force, which reflected the

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<sup>7</sup> Wendell Cox, “Asians: America’s Fastest Growing Minority,” *Newgeography*, January 12, 2015, <http://www.newgeography.com/content/004825-asians-americas-fastest-growing-minority>.

<sup>8</sup> Arthur Marwick, “The Cultural Revolution of the Long Sixties : Voices of Reaction, Protest, and Permeation,” *The International History Review* 27, no. 4 (2005): 780–806.

demographics of the area at the time. (Contrastingly, there were considerably more Chinese Americans in San Francisco and New York.) No single Asian ethnic group was necessarily more politicized than the other. Rather, the ethnicity of the leadership and activism in any given locale tended to reflect that area's demographics. Irrespective of ethnicity however, during the burgeoning Asian American movement, one's ethnic identity was secondary to their political identity as Asian Americans.

As copies of *Gidra* were passed from individual to individual and made their way across the nation, *Gidra* soon reported on and published submissions from Northern California, the East Coast, the Midwest, the Pacific Northwest and Hawai'i gaining a national readership in the process. With a monthly run of 4,000 – 6,000 and eventual subscription base of 900-1,300<sup>9</sup>, *Gidra* became the most widely read and circulated newspaper of the AAM and inspired the formation of other Asian Americans newspapers across the country. Its name *Gidra*, was a misspelling of the relatively obscure Japanese movie monster King Ghidorah<sup>10</sup> (or Ghidrah as it was released in the U.S. in 1965), a nemesis of the wildly popular Godzilla. Both were radioactive super antiheroes born in the aftermath of the devastation of the atomic bombs dropped on Japan during World War II and the attribution of “*Gidra*” as the name of the paper was a nod to a world forever changed in the post-nuclear aftermath.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> From email correspondence with Mike Murase, June 18, 2015.

<sup>10</sup> Interview with Tracy Okida, April 2, 2011.

<sup>11</sup> On the occasion of the 2014 remake of Godzilla, blogger Kevin Lankes wrote in the Huffington Post, “The fact that Godzilla is a giant Hibakusha should not go unnoticed. He’s a reminder of the destructive power of radiation, and the transformative properties of the atomic bomb’s devastation. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/kevin-lankes/godzillas-secret-history\\_b\\_5192284.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/kevin-lankes/godzillas-secret-history_b_5192284.html). Accessed February 5, 2015.

Aware of the significance of the AAM as it was unfolding in the late 1960s, I began to collect and archive AAM materials during the historical moment. Although my extensive collection of buttons and tee shirts were lost or stolen when I loaned them for a display on the AAM, I have amassed an archive of over 350 units of paper-based materials dating from 1968 to 1988. Included are newspapers, newsletters, magazines, pamphlets, directories, reports and proceedings, college readers and anthologies, curriculum materials, literary journals, annotated bibliographies, special journal issues, exhibition catalogues, plays, proposals, theses and dissertations, temple and church publications and small press and self-published books and manuscripts.

Todd Vogel, who edited an anthology on the history and importance of the Black Press, provided a practical and often over-looked explanation for the dearth of scholarship on alternative newspapers. Simply put, he stated, “One major challenge of studying the press is getting our hands on the papers themselves,” adding that the cheap paper stock and the overall ephemeral nature of newspapers resisted the inclination to save and archive them (2001:5). In this light, my nearly complete set of *Gidras* was immediately apparent. When I decided upon *Gidra* as the focus of this dissertation and began my research, I put the word out and I now have a complete set plus duplicates of many issues. I selected *Gidra* as the focus of this study for the following reasons:

#### *Gidra* Was Typical of Dissident Newspapers of the Sixties

*Gidra* manifested the key characteristics that distinguished what is broadly considered “alternative” - or then popularly called “underground” - presses. In this study I generally employ the term “alternative press” to refer to the broad category of non-mainstream press which

covered what the mainstream didn't and "dissident press" to refer to alternative newspapers that were oppositional and advocated social change. *Gidra* was characteristic of both.

Regardless of topic, political bent or target audience, the alternative press differs from mainstream press structurally - the alternative press is organizationally participatory, non-commercial, and non-hierarchical (Sandoval and Fuchs, 2010). Yet, communications scholar John Downing argued, "Everything, at some point, is alternative to something else" and advocated the term "radical media" to distinguish it from conservative, right wing media.<sup>12</sup> Marisol Sandoval and Christian Fuchs similarly argued that the element and label of "participatory media" can also pertain to many right wing media and put forth the term "critical media."<sup>13</sup> I chose to use the term "dissident press," which has been defined as a genre of alternative newspapers on the political left,<sup>14</sup> that seeks to effect social change<sup>15</sup> and helps provide an identity for the dissident individuals/groups they represent and increases their visibility.<sup>16</sup> *Gidra* can also be called "community media," which captures the everyday culture process of the masses (Rennie 2006), is a resource for local social service agencies, political activists and others whose missions and methods are antithetical to existing power structures

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<sup>12</sup> John Downing, *Radical Media : Rebellious Communication and Social Movements* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 2001).

<sup>13</sup> Marisol Sandoval and Christian Fuchs, "Towards a Critical Theory of Alternative Media," *Telematics and Informatics* 27, no. 2 (May 2010): 141–50.

<sup>14</sup> Pew Research Center, "Project for Excellence in Journalism 2004 Annual Report: Alternative Media" (Pew Research Center, 2004).

<sup>15</sup> Rodger Streitmatter, *Voices of Revolution : The Dissident Press in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001)

<sup>16</sup> Christian A. Davenport, "Reading the 'Voice of the Vanguard': A Content Analysis of The Black Panther Intercommunal News Service, 1969-1973." in *The Black Panther Party Reconsidered*, ed. Charles E. Jones (Baltimore: Black Classics Press, 1998), 195.



(Howley 2005), and serves a specific geographical or community of interest and allows non-professionals to actively engage in its production and management (Sandoval and Fuchs 2010). Community media is similar to what others call “grassroots” media, defined as being produced by the same people whose concerns it represents, from a position of engagement and direct participation (Atton 2002).

With the advent of offset printing and the publication of the *Los Angeles Free Press* in 1964, this alternative genre met a growing hunger for news and explanations by an increasingly disgruntled public and by 1969 there were more than 500 such “underground” papers that were read by millions of readers.<sup>17</sup> It was at this peak that *Gidra* began and thrived until, by the end of the Vietnam War and the winding down of the Sixties movements, it ceased publication in 1974 as did the majority of politically driven newspapers.

#### *Gidra* Spanned the Length of the Asian American Movement.

As mentioned, *Gidra* was the first and longest running newspaper of the AAM. It was inaugurated in April 1969, soon after the AAM started with the Third World Liberation Strikes at San Francisco State College and the University of California, Berkeley in the Fall of 1968. It was published monthly until the downturn of this early iteration of the AAM in the mid 1970s when the Vietnam War was over and the country was literally attempting to re-right itself after the social upheaval of the Sixties. While longevity of a newspaper does not necessary correlate with its contribution (Ostertag 2006:4), former Asian American activist Rockwell Chin noted in the early 1970s, that periodicals written by and for Asian American began to proliferate yet many of these publications “never made it beyond Vol. 1, No. 1.” Yet, he added, “if there is an ‘Asian

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<sup>17</sup> Abe Peck, *Uncovering the Sixties : The Life and Times of the Underground Press* (New York: Citadel Press, 1991).

American Movement' publication it is *Gidra*, the most widely circulated Asian American newspaper-magazine in the country.”<sup>18</sup>

By the end of *Gidra*'s five-year tenure, its revolving assembly of volunteer writers, artists and production staff numbered over 300; and except for one issue, they missed only one monthly deadline despite not having a solid source of funding or institutional sponsorship. It was the first Asian American cultural production to give material expression to the raw topics of ethnic anxiety and racial tension, in addition to urgent issues of an intensifying war abroad and the militant fight for relevant education at home. In fighting *against* racism and imperialism and fighting *for* self-determination and Third World esprit de corps, the AAM animated the conversion from “Oriental” to “Asian American” and *Gidra* helped give form and substance to an evolving pan-Asian political culture and consciousness.

#### *Gidra* was Community Based and Nationally Recognized

*Gidra* moved off the campus of UCLA early on in order to become more community based and responsive. As Mike Murase wrote, “During the first year, *Gidra* gradually changed its focus from the campus to the community, from Asian identity to Asian unity, and from “what happened” to “what can we do.”<sup>19</sup> Again, although the volunteer staff of *Gidra* was predominantly Japanese American ethnically, its primary political identity was Asian American. Thus *Gidra*'s subtitle: “The Monthly of the Asian American Experience.”

In addition to its content, despite attempts to be more “businesslike” in its administration, *Gidra*'s primary distribution strategy was also largely community-based. Although *Gidra*

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<sup>18</sup> Rockwell Chin, “Getting Beyond Vol. I, No. 1: Asian American Periodicals,” *Bridge: An Asian American Perspective* I, no. 2 (October 1971): 29–32.

<sup>19</sup> Mike Murase, “Toward Barefoot Journalism,” *Gidra* VI, no. 4 (1974). P. 36.

eventually adopted a library rate, which many colleges subscribed to, its primary means of distribution was by word of mouth and hand to hand. The *Gidra* office quickly became a destination site for visiting activists from around California as well as across the country. Some would come for a day, with out-of-towners often crashing on *Gidra*'s motley assortment of used couches for days. Routinely, they would leave with a bundle of up to several hundred copies to distribute to their constituencies. Most would take them "on consignment" and *Gidra* would never see any return. Even single "sales" would transpire without any monetary exchange.<sup>20</sup>

Despite this haphazard distribution strategy and during a time when alternative presses were rarely recognized by the mainstream, *Gidra* caught the attention of the New York based *Library Journal*, the oldest and largest trade publication for librarians. In an extensive review of *Gidra* in its December 15, 1971 issue, the *Library Journal* wrote,

Like Blacks, Chicanos, Indians and other messed-over ethnic minorities, Asian Americans have abundant reason to assail a system that has sought to emasculate if not destroy them. *Gidra* effectively voices this new consciousness among Amerasians, simultaneously uncovering a century of wrongs committed by the white majority and enunciating a determination to make the future at once different and better than the past.<sup>21</sup>

Other evidence regarding *Gidra*'s national prominence includes professor William Wei's (1993:103) comment that *Gidra* "was prominent and credible enough to be included in the Federal Bureau of Investigation's counterintelligence program." On the ground, activist Nelson Nagai (2001:256) in Sacramento recollected, "*Gidra* became our window to the rest of Asian

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<sup>20</sup> From email correspondence with Mike Murase, June 18, 2015.

<sup>21</sup> Reprinted in *Gidra*, March 1972, p. 22.

America.” And in 2007, *Gidra* was acknowledged in journalistic history as “one of the most notable newspapers” of the era according to the *Encyclopedia of American Journalism* (2007:36).

### *Gidra* was Unaffiliated

Unlike newsletters such as the *Asian American Political Alliance Newsletter* of U.C. Berkeley’s Asian American Political Alliance (AAPA) and subsequent Asian American newspapers such as *Getting Together: The Political Organ of I Wor Kuen*, *Gidra* was unaffiliated with any one institution or ideology. Thereby untethered to the dictates of a specific party line or acting as a house organ to promote the mission of a particular organization, *Gidra* maintained an editorial policy of inclusiveness that reflected the range of issues and interests from reform to radical that was unfurling during that time.

Such a broad mission subjected the newspaper to criticisms of being both “too political” as well as “not political enough.” Articles and graphics included earnest and complex topics such as vetting the new Asian American political identity and analyses of the war in Southeast Asia from an Asian American perspective as well as domesticated DIYs such as how to fix your toilet, grow your own food and make your own pants, which reflected the age of Aquarius and impulse to independence and liberation from capitalism. This eclectic range, while not always erudite, nonetheless chronicled the heterogeneous nature of the AAM in addition to the broader contradictory context of the Sixties culture at large which was countercultural and undeniably hippie as well as revolutionary and cutting-edge.

### *Gidra* Has Not Been Fully Researched

Although *Gidra* has been utilized as source material and given some attention and analysis as an entity, there has never been an in-depth study of its contents nor its magnitude in

the areas of social movement studies, Asian American studies or alternative media studies. Many of the books on Asian America and the AAM have used *Gidra* as a primary source (e.g.: Espiritu 1992, Pulido 2006, Liu, Geron and Lai 2008, Maeda 2009, 2012). Some have given the publication itself a fair amount of attention (e.g.: Wei 1993, Louie and Omatsu, eds. 2001, Watkins 2012). And a few have published errors of fact (Watkins 2012) and, in my estimation, evaluation (Wei 1993). Two journal articles – one in education and the other in communications – took advantage of *Gidra* to explore Asian Pacific Islanders in education (Ryoo 2009) and as an example of the expanded the role of the ethnic press (Lopez 2011). A few doctoral dissertations have also made substantive use of *Gidra* as a primary source (e.g.: Fong 2003, Fu 2005). None have provided a thorough textual analysis of its contents nor analyzed the breadth and depth of its substance and impact.

### **Theoretical Framework**

In order to operationalize the broad question of what significance movement newspapers have played, I conducted an ethnography of *Gidra* to determine: What roles did *Gidra* play in the life and legacy of the AAM? What functions did it serve? In short, what cultural and political work did *Gidra* do? The following concepts describe the theoretic scaffolding upon which this research project was designed.

#### The Politics of Ethnography: The Outsider Within

Aligned with feminist and anti-colonial methodology, as well as symbolic/interpretive anthropology, a reflexive understanding of the researcher's relationship to her field of study is a critical part of what anthropologists James Clifford and George E. Marcus (1986) called "writing culture," (which anthropologists Ruth Behar and Deborah A. Gordon (1995) corrected as

“women writing culture”) and professor of education Linda Tuhiwai Smith further theorized as decolonizing methodology (2001). Understanding the researcher’s gender, class, ethnicity, race, and experience is part of the narrative interpretation and should be incorporated into the ethnographic account (Geertz , Angrosino 2005:734).

In Behar and Gordon’s anthology (1995) Graciela Hernandez wrote on subjectivity and positionality in ethnographic representation. She pointed out that anthropologist and author Zora Neale Hurston rightfully acknowledged her authorial presence in her work, eschewing the standard academic convention that the scholar should stand outside the social relations of the field and use an objective, distant voice. Hurston made clear that she was part of the culture she observed. Hernandez contended, “This development is significant because she challenges and debunks a social science paradigm that prizes objectivity as an indicator of ‘social truth.’”<sup>22</sup>.

In the field of film studies, Teshome Gabriel likewise indicated that Third Cinema filmmakers occupy the same cultural and historical ambience as people they depict on the screen and hence “focus on those with whom they are inextricably linked.”<sup>23</sup> Many feminist and progressive theorists in a variety of disciplines have argued the same, bringing Hurston’s position out of the margins, if not quite centering it within academic protocol. In this tradition I acknowledge that the AAM is a large part of what and who I am today. Having been drawn in by the politics of poetry and seeing first hand how myself and others were transformed from Orientals to Asian Americans provides a personal connection to the movement I now study.

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<sup>22</sup> Graciela Hernandez, “Multiple Subjectivities and Strategic Positionality: Zora Neale Hurston’s Experimental Ethnographies,” in *Women Writing Culture*, ed. Ruth Behar and Deborah A Gordon (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995): 156.

<sup>23</sup> Teshome Gabriel, “Third Cinema as Guardian of Popular Memory: Towards a Third Aesthetics,” in *Questions of Third Cinema*, ed. editors Jim Pines and Paul Willemen (London: BFI Publishing, 1989): 53–64.

While often called “native anthropology,” it is a position that feminist scholars Patricia Hill Collins (1991) and Faye V. Harrison (2008) have fittingly called “the outsider within.”

For many people of color – at home as well as in Third World countries – as Linda Tuhiwai Smith indicated, the concept of ‘research’ is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism (2001:1). People who dwell in as far-flung ethnic enclaves as Los Angeles or New Guinea have experienced professional historians and social scientists who ventured into the village and left with the makings of research paper but without contributing to the community whose daily lives they dissected into “data.” Smith argued for indigenous researchers, who work inside their own communities yet acknowledge that they are essentially outsiders by virtue of the power of their academic education or affiliation. Anthropologist Irma McClaurin (2001) also described this standpoint by indicating that the native researcher represents the speaker/writer’s subjective discourse in the language of the colonizer and thereby acts as a mediator, a cultural broker.

This position includes the caveat that, while an insider, native researchers may know nothing about the particular phenomena or subculture under study (Asselin 2003). Variables of gender, class and generation dismantle even seemingly homogeneous cultures. Another critical factor is that there is no neutrality. As literary critic Phyllis Rose (1985) cautioned, “There is only greater or less awareness of ones’ biases.” A conventionally paradoxical status, Smith warns that this inside-out/outside-in research is a “humble and humbling activity”, an experience I encounter regularly as an outsider within.

Except for my work on the cultural and historical significance of amateur film (Ishizuka 2010, Ishizuka and Zimmermann 2007, Ishizuka 2004, 1997, 1996, 1992), and oral history (Ishizuka and Nakamura 2013, Ishizuka 2003, 1979) my thirty-year academic and artistic career

has been primarily focused on documenting, researching and presenting the ethnic and racial community of which I am a part. These efforts have primarily centered on three topical areas: biographical profiles of Asian Americans (Ishizuka 2009a, 2009b, 2003, 2002, 2001, 1980) the mass incarceration of Americans of Japanese ancestry during World War II (Ishizuka 2006a, 2006b, 2004a, 2004b, 1996, 1994, 1985, 1981) and the AAM of the Sixties and Seventies (2015, 2009b).

On one end of the “humble and humbling” meter, during the zealotry of the movement moment, at one community meeting I was summarily berated by one feverish activist for simply being a graduate student - proof, as it was taken, of being part of the problem. However, more often I experience the other end of the meter. Not having lived through the forced incarceration of WWII or been on the frontlines of the Vietnam War or the Third World Liberation Front strikes, I have been genuinely humbled by the opportunity and privilege of being privy to people’s fears and predicaments, dreams and triumphs – depths of the human experience that I feel compelled to document, historicize and communicate as best I can.

Being the recipient of such knowledge, Smith advocated for the need for indigenous researchers to “research back” in the tradition of “writing back” or “talking back” to the dominant society. (Smith, 2001:7). To “research back” involves a knowledge and analysis of the colonial context that both shaped how we have been seen by others as well as how we perceive ourselves. As we did in the social movements of the Long Sixties, this dual perception, akin to DuBois’ “double consciousness” (1903), leads to a struggle for self-determination and self-knowledge that leads to a recovery of our selves – our history, culture, values and epistemology (Smith 2001). Operationally, it requires an activist mode of “reporting back” to the community and a sharing of knowledge. “Both ways,” Smith concedes, “assume a principle of reciprocity



and feedback.” (Smith, 2001:15.) In this vein, throughout my work, past and present, I have made numerous opportunities to report back to scholarly audiences with the goal of enlarging the canon of U.S. history and culture and, just as importantly, to a community audience whose history and culture it is.

Regarding my study of *Gidra*: I had a piece based on *Gidra* in the exhibition, “1968: Then and Now,” at the Nathan Cummings Foundation in New York City (September 25 to December 20, 2008) and New York University (September 2 to November 20, 2008) on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the iconic year of 1968. I presented a paper on *Gidra* at an international conference on “Japanese and Asian Americans: Racialization and their Resistances,” sponsored by Kyoto University Institute for Research in the Humanities and the UCLA Asian American Studies Center (October 12-14, 2011). I was the consultant for the portion on *Gidra* in the exhibition, “Drawing the Line: Japanese American Art, Design and Activism in Post-War Los Angeles,” at the Japanese American National Museum (October 15, 2011 to February 19, 2012) which was part of Pacific Standard Time: Art in L.A., 1945-1980, an initiative of the Getty Institute. I organized and chaired a panel on *Gidra* featuring key *Gidra* staff sponsored by the Serve the People Institute of Los Angeles. And I worked to have the complete set of *Gidras* digitized and accessible on-line with representatives of relevant institutions that might be able to undertake such a task - the Library of Congress, Densho, a nonprofit organization initially dedicated to conducting oral histories and collecting documents regarding the Japanese American World War II incarceration and the UCLA Asian American Studies Center. At this writing Densho is in the process of digitizing all issues of *Gidra* and placing them in their digital archive.

## Revolutionary Cultural Production

A second framework for this study is the construction of revolutionary cultural production, specifically the subset of the dissident press. From an anthropological viewpoint, the concept of culture is a key element with regard to social movement studies. Until the mid to late 1990s however, the social scientific investigation of the cultural contours of social movements lay dormant until scholars began to look at the intersection of politics and culture (Bourdieu 1993; Berezin 1994, 1997) and specifically how cultural perspectives might inform the study of social protest and activism (Johnston and Klandermans, 1995; Darnovsky, Epstein and Flacks 1995; Jasper, 1997; Reed 2005; Hale 2007; Johnston 2009; Brodtkin, 2006, 2007). Larry Isaac (2008) in particular argued that at their root, social movements were agents of cultural productions. “Regardless of whatever else they accomplish, they produce new cultural forms in the course of struggle.”<sup>24</sup>

For this study, activist anthropologist Sondra Hale’s identification of characteristics of revolutionary art (2007) and social movement scholar T.V. Reed’s categorization of the concept of culture in social movements (2005) provided a framework for investigating elemental qualities of revolutionary cultural production manifested in *Gidra*.

Hale infused her study of political activism by being a working activist herself. In examining the history and impact of the Los Angeles Women’s’ Building on feminist art and culture, she pointed out that the origins of the Woman’s Building, being emancipatory, exhibited the theme of liberation that typified modernism, yet it “also straddled postmodernism with its insistence on ambiguity, a breaking down of dichotomies, a questioning of authority, ... the

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<sup>24</sup> Larry Isaac, “Movement of Movements: Culture Moves in the Long Civil Rights Struggle,” *Social Forces* 87, no. 1 (2008): 33–63.

deconstruction of language ... and conventional definitions of ‘art.’”<sup>25</sup> This “straddling” of modernism and postmodernism, I believe, informed her criteria for what constitutes revolutionary art, which she identified as: 1) a profound relationship to material conditions, 2) relatively unbounded or flexible boundaries, 3) collective, 4) egalitarian, 5) active (especially in the sense of demanding social change), 6) transcultural and 7) disruptive of the dichotomy between subject and object or any other dichotomy.

Reed (2005) is one of the few social movement scholars who has focused specifically on the role of the arts in social protest movements. In looking at culture and activism from the civil rights movement to the Seattle WTO protest in 1999, he categorized the concept of culture in the study of social movements in three interrelated ways: 1) as sub or counter-countercultures, 2) as the production of cultural texts - such as poetry, painting, music, murals, film and fiction, and 3) how the cultural texts, ideas, identities and values generated by resistance movements have reshaped U.S. culture. Reed defined liberatory cultural productions in terms of what functions they play in social movements. According to Reed, cultural productions: 1) encourage - feel the strength of the group, 2) empower - feel their own strength, 3) harmonize – subordinate differences of age, class, region and even ideology, 4) inform internally - reinforce movement values, ideas and tactics, 5) inform externally - express movement goals to others, 6) enact movement goals, 7) historicize - tell the history of the movement, 8) transform - for example, convert anger to focused resistance, 9) critique movement ideology, and 10) make room for pleasure.

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<sup>25</sup> Sondra Hale and Terry Wolverton, *From Site to Vision: The Woman’s Building in Contemporary Culture* (The Woman’s Building, 2007), <http://womansbuilding.org/fromsitetovision/>.

Whether labeled criteria or functions, the characteristics that Reed and Hale identified are part of what makes a cultural production revolutionary. Condensing and culling from these features, I offer the following five primary qualities of revolutionary cultural production.

1. Grounding in Historical/Material Conditions. Because cultural productions are shaped by concrete historical and material conditions, those emanating from the ruling class are a primary means by which dominant standards of beauty and racialized worldviews are promoted, defended and strengthened - in essence, presented as the norm (Tator and Henry, 2000). Poet Audre Lorde (1984:116) defined this mythical norm as being “white, thin, male, young, heterosexual, christian and financially secure.” Revolutionary cultural productions are likewise grounded in their historical and material conditions and have the potential to talk back and work against hegemonic beliefs and values of the domineering society. Theorizing ethnic identity, multicultural theorist Paula Moya (2002:18) noted, “Chicana identity should not be seen as a principle of abstract oppositionality but as a historically and materially grounded perspective from which we can work to disclose the complicated workings of ideology and oppression.” From the field of film studies, Elizabeth Wright (2001) concurred, indicating that Third Cinema “is linked to history and culture and concerned with the relationship between social practice and cultural existence, its aim being to intervene within these layers.”

2. Based in Community. Community is a fluid concept with many definitions, parameters and theories. Anthropologists Vered Amit and Nigel Rapport (2002) argued that the concept of community was too vague and variable to be of much analytical use. However, as the literature in ethnic and movement studies attest, community is a core concept more for its intrinsic value and meaning than for its practical utility. For this discussion I adopt Weber’s definition that community is simply “a sense of belonging together” (Weber 1978:40). Brow

(1990:1) added that this sense of belonging together typically combined both affective and cognitive components, “both a feeling of solidarity and an understanding of shared identity.” The Black Arts Movement (BAM) insisted on the centrality of community (Neal 1968). Historian Gary Okihiro (1988) contended that ethnic studies history may, from one point of view, “be judged good or poor by the extent to which it contributes to our understanding of community.” Literary scholar Elaine H. Kim (1987:109) argued that “without the reconciliation of the self to the community, we cannot invent ourselves,” adding, “This ‘community’ begins with but extends beyond the boundaries of our families, far beyond Chinatown, to wherever resistance to domination is taking place.”

3. Founded in Lived Experiences. Referencing feminist theorists Gloria Anzaldua, Audre Lorde, Chandra Mohanty and Paula Moya, Shari Stone-Mediatore claimed that Third World women in particular found received theoretical discourses inadequate and “have turned to experience-oriented writing to communicate their struggles against an array of patriarchal and neocolonialist institutions” (Stone-Mediatore 2003:1). She argued that experience informs critical social theory and that marginal experience narratives, so often cast aside as anecdotal and not recognized as a form of knowledge, contribute in particular to political thinking and political life (2,5).

One of the most important revolutionary cultural productions to epitomize and exemplify the criticality of the lived experience is *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (Moraga and Anzaldua, 1981). In both content and form, the poems, essays, journal entries, and letters in this volume described the lived experience of being female, racialized and lesbian in a male, white, straight world. Anzaldua: “Because white eyes do not want to know us, they do not bother to learn our language, the language which reflects us, our

culture, our spirit” (165). Not exclusive to the realm of women, writers Frank Chin, Jeffrey Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada and Shawn Wong – yellow men all – similarly wrote “The minority experience does not yield itself to accurate or complete expression in the white man’s language” (Chin, et. al. 1975:xxxvii). Cherrie Moraga and Gloria agreed.

Paula Moya (2002:6) reported that appeals to experience – as well as discussions of identity – have been invalidly judged as theoretically naïve and ideologically suspect. From Asian America, Chin et. al. concurred, saying “The critics have forgotten that the vitality of literature stems from its ability to codify and legitimize common experience in the terms of that experience and to celebrate life as it is lived” (1975:xxxvi).

Lived experience is not only a feminist or Third World value; it has also been a hallmark of anthropology. In the introduction to *The Anthropology of Experience* Edward M. Bruner (1986:5) called lived experience the primary reality. It “sees people as active agents in the historical process who construct their own world,”<sup>26</sup> a process Barbara Meyerhoff (1986) called being the “authors of ourselves.” While the anthropology of experience as theorized by such pioneers as Victor Turner, Edward Bruner and Clifford Geertz may be considered by some to be passé, younger anthropologists such as Jason Throop (2003) laid the groundwork for a return to experience in anthropological theorizing and research.

4. Disruptive of Borders and Offering of Alternative Epistemologies. Revolutionary productions challenge fixed boundaries and barriers and seek to build new knowledges and meaning. Revolutionary art practices reject binarisms such as mainstream vs. alternative, high vs. low, art vs. kitch, male vs. female, theory vs. practice, abstract vs. particular, intellectual vs.

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<sup>26</sup> Edward M Bruner, “Experience and Its Expression,” in *The Anthropology of Experience*, ed. Victor W Turner and Edward M Bruner (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986): 12.

emotional, mind vs. body. African American feminist Barbara Christian (1988:78) wrote, “I sensed the possibility of the integration of feeling/knowledge, rather than the split between the abstract and the emotional in which Western philosophy inevitably indulged.” Hale (2003) pointed out that revolutionary art had “relatively unbounded or flexible boundaries” and was “disruptive of the dichotomy between subject and object or any other dichotomy.” Post colonial theorist Chandra Mohanty (2003: 2) warned that as expansive and inclusive feminists we “need to be attentive to borders while learning to transcend them” With the post-modern focus on context over form, and in particular questioning modernist notions of aesthetics such as formality, quality and beauty, the hierarchies of high/low, mind/body, are dismantled in favor of more fluid interpretations (Duncum and Bracey 2001, Jenks 1995).

Christian also indicated that practice is intertwined with theory through the medium of cultural production. “People of color have always theorized,” she maintained, “but in forms quite different from the Western form of abstract logic.” Rather, she posited, “our theorizing ... is often in narrative forms, in the stories we create, in riddles and proverbs ... since dynamic rather than fixed ideas seem more to our liking” (1988:68). Likewise, Hale (2007:41) maintained that “culture, as it is articulated through art production is simultaneously theory and practice.” Feminist theorist Sandra Harding (2004:2) presented standpoint theory not only as methodology, but also as epistemology and political strategy – “fields and projects that conventionally are supposed to be kept separate.”

Revolutionary cultural practices recommend different ways of knowing and new forms of ethnography. Stone-Mediatore (2003), who specializes in the politics of knowledge, showed how the cultural practice of storytelling elucidated the political and epistemological value of

standpoint theory by translating another's experience into stories. Decades earlier Bruner (1986) presented the notion of ethnography as narrative and a genre of storytelling.

One particular example of recommending different ways of knowing is creative writers Frank Chin and Jeffrey Paul Chan's (1972) theory of racist love and racist hate. A new way of understanding racism from the inside out, they differentiated between "racist hate" - good old-fashioned racism - from "racist love," the basis for the model minority. They argued, "Each racial stereotype comes in two models, the acceptable model and the unacceptable model. ... The unacceptable model is unacceptable because he cannot be controlled by whites. The acceptable model is acceptable because he is retractable. There is racist hate and racist love" (65).

5. Tool of Self Preservation. The last quality distinguishing revolutionary cultural production that is particularly useful for this study is that it functions as a tool for self-preservation (Moraga 1983:xxiv). Emanating from a deep place of anger and frustration as well as conviction and belief that gives rise to its revelatory nature when the right time and context align, revolutionary cultural productions are born out of necessity. Audre Lorde spoke to the politics of poetry when she claimed "Poetry is not only dream and vision; it is the skeleton architecture of our lives. It lays the foundations for a future of change, a bridge across our fears of what has never been before" (1984:37). In other words, "Poetry is Not a Luxury" (Lorde, 1984).

This is not to imply an absence of agency but that this conviction is a drive that is bigger than one's self. Barbara Christian expressed this urgency, "What I write and how I write is done in order to save my own life. And I mean that literally. For me literature is a way of knowing that I am not hallucinating, that whatever I feel/know *is*" (Christian 1988:78). Laguna Pueblo writer Leslie Marmon Silko expressed the same feeling. In her novel, *Ceremony*, her alter ego



declares that stories “aren’t just for entertainment...they are all we have, you see, all we have to fight off illness and death.” Referring to the white man and the matter of life and death, “Their evil is mighty but it can’t stand up to our stories. So they try to destroy the stories ... They would like that ... Because we would be defenseless then.” (Silko 1986:2).

### Dissident Press of the Long Sixties

One particular subset of revolutionary cultural production is what has been variously called alternative, underground, social movement or dissident newspapers. Like the Sixties that spawned the proliferation of these non-commercial, non-mainstream news outlets, scholarly interest in the alternative press has become a legitimate topic of academic investigation. In 1970, at the height of these alternative papers in the U.S., Richard G. Gray, Chairperson of the Indiana University Department of Journalism acknowledged this new field in the first book on the subject to be published by a university press (Glessing 1970). In the preface he wrote, “For the most part, professional journalists and journalism educators have brushed the Underground Press aside as a passing fad – too obscene and too irresponsible to merit close examination. The truth of the matter is, however, that the Underground Press typifies a new brand of journalism in the making.”<sup>27</sup>

“Underground” was the nomenclature of the day. According to Robert J. Glessing (1970) who wrote one of the first books on the underground press, the term “underground press” came from the early 1960s “when most underground papers reflected the American drug culture. Since drugs were, and are, illegal, the name ‘underground press’ caught on and held.”<sup>28</sup> Yet even

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<sup>27</sup> Richard G. Gray, “Introduction,” in *The Underground Press in America* by Robert J. Glessing (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970): xi.

<sup>28</sup> Robert J Glessing, *The Underground Press in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970): 3.

at the time, he noted, editors of this new medium disputed the term “underground.” The *Guardian* in New York City called itself “radical,” the *Movement* in San Francisco considered itself “revolutionary,” and the Los Angeles *Free Press* referred to itself as simply “alternative.” In 1968, even the Underground Press Syndicate, the unofficial organization of so-called “underground” newspapers, denounced the label as “meaningless, ambiguous, irrelevant, wildly imprecise, undefinitive, derivative, uncopyrighted, uncontrollable and used up.”<sup>29</sup>

For the past five hundred years, people have been informed by print. Elizabeth Eisenstein in a book called *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* (1982) argued that more than the capacity to read and write, humankind has been transformed by the technology to reproduce and thereby diffuse the writing via the printing press. Cultural historian Robert Darnton (1982) indicated that the purpose of the study of print communication was to understand how ideas were transmitted through print and how exposure to the printed word “affected the thought and behavior of mankind” and “shaped mans’ attempts to make sense of the human condition.”<sup>30</sup>

To this end another subset of print communication is the ethnic press, which has played a vital role in shaping the history and experience of people of color in this country. Through the centuries, the ethnic press has played a key role in maintaining, serving and organizing their respective communities (Vogel 2001, Hutchinson 1995, Melendez 1997, Kessler 1984, Yoo 1993). American Studies professor Gabriel Melendez (1997) argued that the ethnic press is an “organized movement against cultural erasure.” About the Japanese immigrant press, writer

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid. 4

<sup>30</sup> Robert Darnton, “What Is the History of Books?,” *Daedalus* 111, no. 3 (1982): 65–83.

Lauren Kessler (1984) concluded, “In a country that was openly hostile to their presence, Japanese found a sense of community and source of unity in the native-language publications.” Sociologist Stephen Harold Riggins argued, “Ethnic minority mass media needs to be conceptualized as part of the larger framework of social movements.”<sup>31</sup>

Print has been a major nationalizing feature of Black cultural activity from the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s (Hutchinson 1995) to the Black Arts and Black Power Movements of the 1960s (Smethurst 2005, Salaam 1997, Streitmatter 2001, Gaiter 2005, Baltrip-Balagas 2006, Abron 1993 Durant 2007). The ethnic press did not focus exclusively on their immediate constituency. For example, Black newspapers were among the few that editorialized against the mass incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II (Lipsitz 2001, Doreski 2001, Kurashige 2008).

It is estimated that by the late sixties there were 450 to 500 anti-establishment publications with an estimated total circulation of nearly 500 million (Glessing 1970, Peck 1985). Abe Peck (2013) identified three waves of scholarship on what he refers to as the underground press, which he periodized as beginning in the mid-sixties and was largely done by 1973, (roughly the same lifespan of *Gidra*).

In the first wave were books published in the early 1970s, contemporaneous with the underground papers of which they wrote. Interestingly, the trailblazers were Christian non-profit presses, themselves alternative presses, which reinforces the contention that the alternative press were often the first to cover breaking news that afterwards were reported by the mainstream media. In 1970, Ray Mungo, the co-founder of Liberation News Service (LNS) the alternative

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<sup>31</sup> Stephen Harold Riggins, “The Media Imperative: Ethnic Minority Survival in the Age of Mass Communication,” in *Ethnic Minority Media: An International Perspective*, ed. Stephen Harold Riggins (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1992), 1–22.

news agency that distributed news and photos to hundreds of subscribing dissident newspapers from 1967 to 1981, wrote a personal memoir published by the Beacon Press, a department of the Unitarian Universalist Association.<sup>32</sup> Mitchell Goodman, an anti-war activist compiled a corpus of articles, cartoons and illustrations from underground newspapers that was issued by Pilgrim Press, the publishing house of the United Church of Christ.<sup>33</sup> The third was published by a university press - Robert Glessing's social history of the underground press by the Indiana University Press.<sup>34</sup> In 1972, *The Paper Revolutionaries: The Rise of the Underground Press* by Lawrence Leamer and *Outlaws of America: The Underground Press and Its Context* by Roger Lewis were the first major books on the subject published by commercial presses, an indication of the rising popular interest in this phenomena at the time. None of these publications included *Gidra* or other Asian American dissident presses.

The second wave consisted of books published in the 1980s. Most championed alternative newspapers on the ideological left in the U.S. with two by former underground press editors: David Armstrong of the *Berkeley Barb* (1981)<sup>35</sup> and Abe Peck of the *Chicago Seed* (1985)<sup>36</sup>. In 1981, as a result of PEN member Allen Ginsberg's suggestion that it look into the government's harassment of underground newspapers, and initially based on Ginsberg's own

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<sup>32</sup> Raymond Mungo, *Famous Long Ago : My Life and Hard Times with Liberation News Service* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970).

<sup>33</sup> Mitchell Goodman, *The Movement toward a New America: The Beginnings of a Long Revolution; (a Collage)—a What?* (Philadelphia,: Pilgrim Press, 1970).

<sup>34</sup> Glessing, *The Underground Press in America*.

<sup>35</sup> David Armstrong, *A Trumpet to Arms : Alternative Media in America* (Los Angeles, Calif. Boston: J.P. Tarcher ; distributed by Houghton Mifflin, 1981).

<sup>36</sup> Abe Peck, *Uncovering the Sixties : The Life and Times of the Underground Press*, (New York: Citadel Press, 1991).

collection of clippings, letters and files obtained through the Freedom of Information Act, Geoffrey Rips was asked to gather more information and write a report.<sup>37</sup> Lauren Kessler's review of alternative journalism in American history (1984) and Sally M. Miller's historical analysis of ethnic press in the U.S. (1987) showed that alternative voices were an American mainstay, not exclusive to any particular era. John Downing (1984) also highlighted historicity and widened the lens to include graffiti, video, the Internet, street theatre, performance art and underground radio to illustrate the centrality and diversity of what he termed radical media to American culture. Again, nothing was said about Asian American newspapers.

Notable in the third and current wave of scholarship are the proliferation of terms that further define the intricacies of counter-mainstream media. This trend towards labeling reflects the ascendance of non-commercial media, long beneath the radar of conventional media studies, as a legitimate area of study. To this, Bolivian writer Alfonso Gumucio Dragon also pointed out that the "determination among academics to produce absolute definitions of social realities nudged those realities to conform to them."<sup>38</sup> In addition to the broad-based rubric of "alternative" media (Atton 2002, Bizot 2006,) and the Sixties ring of "underground" press (Lewes 2003, Bizot 2006, McMillian 2011, Stewart 2011, Wachsberger 1993, 2011, 2012), there was also "movement" or "social movement" media (Osterberg 2006, Downing 2008), "dissident" press" (Streitmatter 2001, Pew Research Center 2004, Davenport 1998), "community media" (Rennie 2006, Howley 2005, 2009) and many more such as "counter-information,"

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<sup>37</sup> Geoffrey Rips, Anne Janowitz, and Nancy J Peters, *The Campaign against the Underground Press* (San Francisco: PEN American Center ; City Lights Books, 1981).

<sup>38</sup> Alfonso Gumucio Dagon, "The Long and Winding Road of Alternative Media," in *The Sage Handbook of Media Studies*, ed. John Downing, et. al. (Sage Publications, 2004).

“participatory,” “Third Sector,” “activist,” “radical,” “critical,” “nano,” “grassroots,” and “tactical” media (Downing 2008, Sandoval and Fuchs, 2010).

All were devoted to the media of the predominantly white new left. The lone exceptions were three books on the Black Press (Vogel, 2001, Hilliard 2007, Durant 2007) and a compilation of Enriqueta Vasquez’s writings from *El Grito del Norte* (Longeauz y Vasquez, Espinoza & Oropeza, 2006) - as well as a three essays in Ken Wachsberger’s *Voices from the Underground* on the Mohawk nation’s *Akwesasne Notes*, the Young Lords Party’s *Palante* and *The Black Panther Intercommunal News Service*. Again, *Gidra*, despite having been recognized by the mainstream *School Library Journal* in 1971 and considered one of the most notable newspapers of its era in the *Encyclopedia of American Journalism* in 2007, was either overlooked or not known to these authors.

### **Research Design**

To address the question of what cultural and political work dissident newspapers accomplished in the life and legacy of the movements of which they were a part, I conducted an ethnography of *Gidra* within the framework of the AAM by examining three interconnected sets of inquiry: 1) two-part text analysis of the contents of all (59) issues of *Gidra* which included identifying themes in *Gidra* in relation to the goals and visions of the AAM, as well analysis of the format and style of *Gidra*, i.e.: techniques and approaches *Gidra* used to get across those messages, 2) interviews with key cultural producers of *Gidra* (n=10) and 3) an on-line survey to find out how readers were impacted by *Gidra* (n = 20). The crucial data set was determined thorough a text analysis of content and form. Life history interviews intended to determine the personal experiences of *Gidra* contributors constituted a second-level set of inquiry to enhance

and contextualize the text analysis. The general reader survey was created as a third level data set.

In the tradition of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967), I analyzed data as it was collected; shaping theories and hypotheses from data that arose from the local circumstance (in this case the cultural production of *Gidra* within the context of the AAM) and the local actors' interpretations of circumstances (in this case the cultural producers of *Gidra*). This approach to analysis as summarized by Bernard (2006) had ideological as well as practical manifestations. For example, pragmatically, such data-derived methods helped tweak the interview guide to better ascertain the goals of the study and continually informed how emergent themes might be collapsed or expanded. Ideologically, it worked to ensure that categories, definitions, assessments and the various factors that constitute knowledge or theory were defined and emanated from the local circumstance and by the local actors themselves rather than from a superimposed or dominant structure. This was particularly important for me as a so-called insider or native researcher concerned with theory emanating from the narrators or actors, which Leong (1995) called lived theory and Moraga and Anzaldua (1983) called theory in the flesh.

#### Text Analysis of Content and Form

As an entity, I examined all the issues of *Gidra*, from its inception in April 1969 to its last issue in April 1974 for form and content in both written and visual texts. Written texts included news articles, first-person commentaries, editorials, letters to the editor, calendar entries and creative writing such as poetry. Visual texts included illustrative and interpretive graphics and photographs, illustrations, cover art, and political cartoons. Written work was inclusive of any illustrations and visual work was with and without text. These comprised the units of analysis (from now called "units"). Because these units were widely variable – including different

mediums (written and visual) and lengths (with written texts as short as a calendar entry or as long as a four page essay) – units were not co-equal. Therefore numerical analysis alone (i.e.: number of units per theme or topic) was not the sole determining criteria in analysis. The other two criteria for determining themes in *Gidra* were degree of epistemological substance in adding new or increased knowledge, as well as interest to and reaction by the reader as determined by letters to the editor and submitted articles of retort or concurrence.

Content analysis focused on identifying themes in *Gidra* starting with going back and forth between the units and goals and objectives of the AAM and adding more themes and subthemes as revealed by the data as suggested by Wilms et al. (1990), Miles and Huberman (1994) and Hsieh and Shannon (2005). In addition, building on previous assessments that dominant American social movement studies have become detached from the realities of actual social movements (Bevington and Dixon 2007, Flacks 2004) and in concert with feminist, anti-colonial methodology, sociological categories of goals, objectives and themes were grounded in actual spheres of activism that comprised the AAM.

Two sets of data matrixes were designed. The first consisted of a chronological listing of the contents (i.e. units of analysis) of each issue. In this initial matrix, columns included year, issue date, title, author, form (e.g.: editorial, letter to the editor, feature article, Calendar entry), possible themes and one column for notes. Therefore, each row presented each unit by date, title, author, form, theme and notes as needed. Constant memoing, the equivalent of process recording or field notes, provided running notes about coding and potential hypotheses. Strauss and Corbin (1990:68) recommended using actual phrases from the text to name themes, which they call in vivo coding. One example from my study is the often used phrase, “serve the people” which was both a rallying call and descriptor for community service projects.



The second data matrix sifted the units of analysis entered in the first matrix and cross-referenced them to determine themes. I began with AAM themes that arose from the literature as per Wilms et. al (1990) and Miles and Huberman (1994) and added others as they appeared in *Gidra*. Marvin Opler (1945) theorized that the identification of themes was a key step in analyzing culture. While social scientists now employ many different terms such as codes, labels, incidents, segments, units, concepts and chunks, I utilized Opler's concept of "themes" and "expressions" as advocated by Agar (1979, 1980) and Ryan and Bernard (2003). Opler established three principles for thematic analysis that were pertinent to my study: 1) themes are only visible through expressions in data; 2) some expressions of themes are obvious and culturally agreed upon while others are subtler, symbolic or even idiosyncratic; and 3) cultural systems comprise sets of interrelated themes. As indicated, themes and their hierarchy were based on: a) the quantity of units on each theme, b) the level of embedded analysis that contributed to new knowledge and understanding of those themes and c) reader response and interest as gauged in letters to the editor and submitted articles of retort or concurrence. I also noted what content and themes were not included in *Gidra*. Reflective of the social context of the times, the most glaring omission was any reference to what is now known as LGBTQ issues, which at the time was closeted and hence silenced.

Formats of expression were analyzed and presented in a separate chapter on Form. The different formats were examined for ways the creators embedded theoretical ideas, expressed structural evaluations of inequity and injustice, how they moved the felt-experience of individual inequities to understanding in structural terms, and how they developed a collective identity by redefining personal experiences in terms of collective issues (Brush 1999).

## Life Story Interviews of Cultural Producers

Interviews of key staff and contributors to *Gidra* complemented and enhanced analysis of context, content and form. An open-ended interview schedule was developed as a basis for the interview and customized for individuals based on biographic research conducted on the individuals. Anthropologists, sociologists, historians, gerontologists, ethnomusicologists, folklorists, journalists, documentary filmmakers and many others utilize unstructured, open-ended interviewing as a standard method of gaining data about the lived experience. Through the years and within different disciplines, this basic methodology has been called by various names and theorized in a multiplicity of ways. Historians pioneered the qualitative methodology they called “oral history” in the 1940s as a method of historical documentation using interviews with living survivors of the era under investigation (Frisch 1990, Grele 1991). Anthropologists further theorized the methodology as “life history” (Langness 1965; Langness and Frank 1981; Watson and Watson-Franke 1985) and “person-centered interviewing,” used primarily in psychological anthropology (Levy and Hollan 1998, Hollan 2001) and “personal narrative,” associated with linguistic anthropology (Ochs and Capps 1996, 2001).

I adopt the term “life stories,” a distinction sociologists and anthropologists have employed to differentiate topic-directed, focused personal narratives from more comprehensive biographic histories of a person’s entire life (Bertaux and Kohli 1984; Ginsberg 1987, Atkinson 1998). This method is particularly suited for this study as life stories center the experiences of everyday people. Life stories can bridge individual experience and codify knowledge in addition to tapping into human agency and social dynamics (Laslett and Thorne 1997). This method of research has been widely used in studies of social movements (Rogers 1987; della Porta 1992; Brodtkin 2007; Trevino 2001). Historian Gary Okihiro (1996:209) maintained, “Oral history is

not only a tool or method for recovering history; it also is a theory of history which maintains that the common folk and the disposed have a history and that this history must be written.”

### On-Line Reader Survey

The third set of inquiry was an interactive digital survey intended to ascertain what people thought about *Gidra* then and now. I formulated twenty-two multiple choice and fill-in questions with input and advice from six *Gidra* staff.<sup>39</sup> One staff member, Jeff Furumura, is currently an information technology professional and generously volunteered his services to construct the digital survey. After a card introducing and summarizing the purpose of the survey, each question appeared on a separate screen and was illustrated with images from *Gidra*. (See [www.hrisguy.com/survey/Gidra.html](http://www.hrisguy.com/survey/Gidra.html) and Appendix for complete survey.)

I worked with the exhibition curator and designer of the exhibition *Drawing the Line: Japanese American Art, Design and Activism in Post-War Los Angeles* at the Japanese American National Museum that ran from October 15, 2011 to February 19, 2012 to make the survey available on site at the museum well as on the exhibition’s website. In the end, however, technical difficulties, software incapacities and limitation of resources prevented the availability of the interactive survey on site and on their website. Furumura then generously created a Facebook page for the survey, however time required to promote the site and expertise required to aggregate responses were too consuming to keep up. We were able to obtain a sample size of 20, which I do not believe is statistically significant given the universe of *Gidra* readers and contributors. Although a full investigation of *Gidra*’s readership lay outside of the scope of this dissertation, to fully assess a newspaper’s role, it would be important to take into consideration

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<sup>39</sup> Doug Aihara, Jeff Furumura, Bruce Iwasaki, Mike Murase, Tracy Okida and Evelyn Yoshimura.

how it was actually received by its audience.<sup>40</sup> While some sense of reader reception and reaction was ascertained through letters to the editor and the interviews conducted, a more complete assessment would substantially further understanding of *Gidra*'s roles and functions.

### Chapter Summaries

In the field of alternative media studies, analysis of the content and form of alternative newspapers is best understood within the historical context in which it was produced (Vogel 2001, Sandoval and Fuchs 2010). Similarly, in the field of art history, at the most basic and fundamental level, there are three key elements: form, content and context (Belton 1996). Content is the thematic subject matter or messages the maker communicates to the audience, what the work is about. Form is the expressive medium through which the content is conveyed. Context is the circumstance or social milieu in which the work under consideration was produced.

This tripartite structure can be applied to the analysis of any cultural production since every cultural production consists of these three fundamental components. In studying the Black press, Todd Vogel (2001) indicating “analysis of content and form, best understood within the historical context, demonstrate ways printed words dealt with issues of inequity, racism and identity.”<sup>41</sup> Singer songwriters Chris Iijima and Nobuko Miyamoto explicitly used content, form and context to analyze their music during the AAM (1973). They wrote that content drives their music, emphasizing that their music is an extension of their politics and not the other way

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<sup>40</sup> Jenny Kitzinger, “Audience and Readership Research,” in *The Sage Handbook of Media Studies*, ed. John Downing (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2004), 167–79.

<sup>41</sup> Todd Vogel, *The Black Press : New Literary and Historical Essays* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2001).

around. They likened form to a bottle without which, no one could access the contents. They identified two types of context: of time – “whether it be unions in 1900 or Asian (American) identity in 1970; and context of space – the who, what, where, and why of the work – as circumstantial factors that affect the politics of the work itself.<sup>42</sup>

Chapters 2, 3 and 4 of this dissertation adopt this three-fold structure to present the findings of this study: the context in which *Gidra* was produced and consumed, analysis of the content of *Gidra* vis a vis themes, and examination of the forms through which the content was conveyed. Chapter 5, titled Function, concludes the dissertation with a discussion of the study findings in terms of the research question of what work - roles and functions - a social movement newspaper conducted for the social movement of which it was a part.

### Context

Chapter 2 frames the study within concentric circles of the animated climate of the Sixties, the social movements of the era and specifically the AAM. Context has been a key concept in linguistic anthropology. Alessandro Duranti and Charles Goodwin defined context at its fundamental level, as “a frame (Goffman 1974) that surrounds the event being examined and provides resources for its appropriate interpretation.”<sup>43</sup> As previously discussed under the theoretical framework of revolutionary cultural production, in order to understand a cultural production, it is important to know what was going on in the time and space it was produced, the circumstances that gave rise to its production. Regarding the analysis of alternative media, Marisol Sandoval and Christian Fuchs (2010) maintained that such media need to be situated

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<sup>42</sup> Chris K. Iijima and Joanne (Nobuko) Miyamoto, *A Grain of Sand: Music for the Struggle by Asians in America*, album liner notes (New York: Paredon Records, 1973).

<sup>43</sup> Alessandro Duranti and Charles Goodwin, eds., *Rethinking Context: Language as an Interactive Phenomenon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). 3.

within the context of visions of an alternative society.<sup>44</sup> More specifically, Bob Osterberg (2006) argued that social movement newspapers must be seen within the particular movement of which it was a part.<sup>45</sup>

### Content

Chapter 3 discusses the themes expressed in *Gidra* in relation to the goals and spheres of activism that comprised the AAM. The units of analysis were discrete written and visual works that appeared in *Gidra* and were entered into two data matrixes as described previously under Methodology. The first level of analysis was to determine if and how *Gidra* manifested the goals and objectives grounded in the different spheres of activism that comprised the Asian America movement as identified in a review of published literature on the AAM (Wei 1993, Liu, Geron and Lai 2008, Maeda 2012) along with my own experience of having been a participant in the AAM. The second level of analysis was to determine specific themes embedded in *Gidra*. It must be emphasized that the process of labeling and categorizing necessarily imposes a sense of order and organization on an essentially dynamic and evolving “movement.” In addition, units often reflected more than one goal, objective or theme. In that case I included the unit under consideration in all categories that it reflected.

### Form

Chapter 4 analyzes the various mediums *Gidra* deployed to communicate its contents. *Gidra* utilized and took advantage of a variety of visual as well word-based expressions. Written texts included those standard in newspapers in general, namely news articles, commentary,

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<sup>44</sup> Sandoval and Fuchs, “Towards a Critical Theory of Alternative Media.”

<sup>45</sup> Bob Ostertag, *People’s Movements, People’s Press : The Journalism of Social Justice Movements* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 2006).

editorials, and letters to the editor. Also included were formats generically adopted by alternative newspapers such as poetry and short stories and a calendar of events. Visual texts included photographs, graphics and political cartoons; again all mediums regularly used by traditional and alternative presses.

### Function

Chapter 5 concludes the dissertation with a discussion of the agency of social movement newspapers through a deliberation of *Gidra*'s short and long-term significance. Briefly, *Gidra* worked as an outlet for expression, aired a diversity of perspectives, acted as a public forum, helped develop political identities, combined the intellectual with the artistic, embedded lessons for present day and future activists and evaluated the AAM as it was happening. Extrapolating from these empirical findings, I concluded that distinctive extracurricular functions that dissident press can play include: providing an in situ account of a social movement as it unfolded, help circulate movement culture, capture the emotional energy of a movement, serve as a source of new knowledge and provide a history and legacy of a movement. In short, beyond providing alternative news, social movement newspapers simultaneously function to shape the contours and legacy of that social movement even as it contemporaneously reported on its issues and activities.

### **Relevance**

Although newspapers have been a mainstay of social movements they have been given relatively little scholarly attention (Ostertag 2006). Correspondingly, of the many books on the social movements of the Sixties, just a handful give mention or include the AAM. And in the field of Asian American studies, there has been little on the AAM of the Sixties (Fujino 2008, Maeda 2009) and even less on its newspapers. This study therefore, fills deep voids in: 1) the

history and significance of alternative newspapers, 2) social movement studies of the Long Sixties and 3) Asian American studies.

### Alternative Media Studies

Print has been demonstrated to be a major organizing force for social movements (Leamer 1972, Armstrong 1981, Peck 1991, Streitmatter 2001, Ostertag 2006, McMillian 2011). Yet given the centrality of newspapers as a major organ of the Sixties movements, specialists have noted that it is surprising that they have been given such little scholarly attention (Ostertag 2006, Greenwald 2011). In addition, among the published books on the dissident press of the Long Sixties, not one included *Gidra* or any other AAM publication. This study will contribute to the understanding of the role dissident newspapers played in social movements. Especially in light of the exclusion of Asian American social movement newspapers from the growing body of scholarly work on the radical press, this will be the first comprehensive study to explore an Asian American alternative newspaper.

In the tradition of the ethnic press that has functioned to maintain, serve and organize their respective communities, newspapers of racial and ethnically based movements such as *Gidra* gave voice and agency denied by the mainstream media. As the Black Panther Newspaper was a nationalizing feature for Black cultural politics (Gaiter 2005, Baltrip-Balagas 2006, Abron 1993), this study will show how *Gidra* was likewise a politicizing force in the making of Asian America.

### Social Movement Studies

Despite the considerable literature on social movements of the Sixties, there is glaringly little on the AAM. In 1989, activist and educator Elizabeth Martinez pointed out, “Not one of the twenty-four books (on the progressive social movements of the 1960s) seriously recognizes



Asian American protest.”<sup>46</sup> Almost twenty years later, AAM scholar Diane C. Fujino still found that “Asian American activism barely registers on any political radar.”<sup>47</sup> This study of *Gidra* provides empirical evidence of the vitality of the AAM.

As Bob Ostertag maintained, movement newspapers showed how social movements “played a critical role in the constant process of reinventing American society.”<sup>48</sup> *Gidra* showed how the AAM contributed to the elaboration of this country by bringing the question of race to the anti-Vietnam War movement, strengthening the American identity toward a more inclusive, multicultural character and broadening the enduring project of civil rights beyond black and white.

### Asian American Studies

Social movement journalism can only be understood in the context of the particular social movement of which each journal is a part (Ostertag 2006, Sandoval and Fuchs 2009). *Gidra* was part of the AAM that created a political consciousness and new epistemology that changed how Asians in America are viewed and, as importantly, how we viewed ourselves. *Gidra* was not only a conduit for news and information regarding the AAM, it also acted as and a forum for vetting new ideas, and served as a Petri dish for growing new personal and collective identities and subjectivities. This study of *Gidra* will thereby augment the field of Asian American Studies, which Diane Fujino (2008) argued has produced relatively little scholarship on the AAM in light of having been born out of the AAM. *Gidra*'s articulations, expressions,

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<sup>46</sup> Elizabeth Martinez, “Histories of ‘The Sixties’: A Certain Absence of Color,” *Social Justice* 16, no. 4 (1989): 175–85.

<sup>47</sup> Diane C Fujino, “Who Studies the Asian American Movement?: A Historiographical Analysis,” *Journal of Asian American Studies* 11, no. 2 (2008): 127–69.

<sup>48</sup> Bob Ostertag, *People's Movements, People's Press: The Journalism of Social Justice Movements* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 2006),

representations and assessments afford a rare window into how the AAM looked, sounded and felt like as it unfolded in situ.

## Chapter 2: Context

Linguistic anthropologists Alessandro Duranti and Charles Goodwin defined context as “a frame (Goffman 1974) that surrounds the event being examined and provides resources for its appropriate interpretation.”<sup>49</sup> As cultural productions are shaped by concrete historical and material conditions, revolutionary cultural productions can only be understood within the context of the particular movements and larger surrounding social history and cultural and structural conditions from which they sprang. Social movement scholars David A. Snow, Sarah A. Soule and Hanspeter Kriesi indicated, “Metaphorically, contextual conditions constitute the soil in which movements grow or languish.”<sup>50</sup> In an early book on the history of the alternative press, Roger Lewis stated, “It is a truism which should nevertheless be stressed that the alternative press is a product of its time.”<sup>51</sup>

This ethnography of *Gidra* begins with an examination of the historical, social and political milieus in which it was produced. For *Gidra*, as well as all social movement newspapers of the era, that setting was what was broadly called “the Sixties,” more specifically therein, it was located in the corpus of social movements often referred to as “the Movement,” and more specifically still, within the Asian American movement (AAM).

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<sup>49</sup> Duranti and Goodwin, *Rethinking Context: Language as an Interactive Phenomenon*. 3.

<sup>50</sup> David A Snow, Sarah Anne Soule, and Hanspeter Kriesi, *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2004), p. 12.

<sup>51</sup> Roger Lewis, *Outlaws of America: The Underground Press and Its Context* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1972).

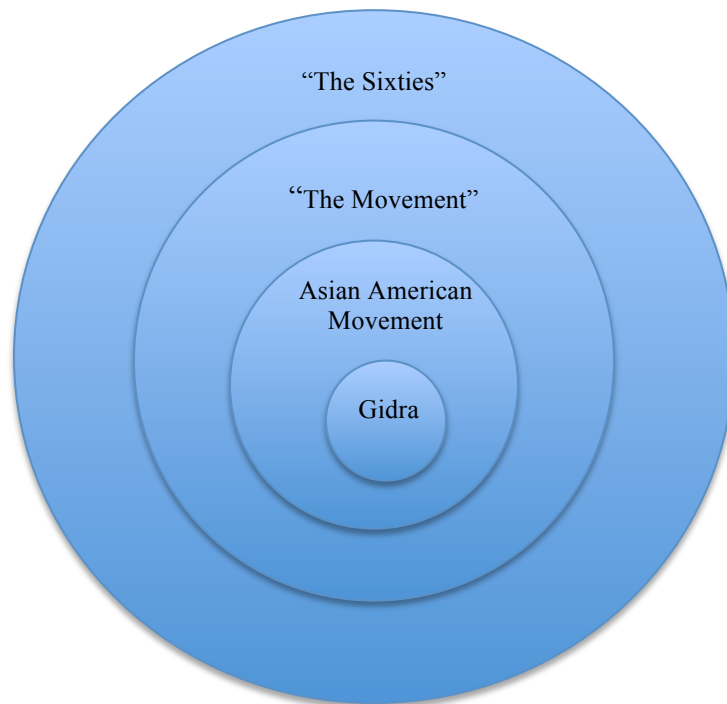


Diagram 1: Concentric social and political contexts of Gidra.

### **“The Sixties”**

*Life* magazine was one of America’s most iconic publications from the late 1930s into the 1980s. Ubiquitous on coffee tables in middle class homes around the nation – and widely circulated around the world - it functioned like an unofficial authority on American culture and the state of the American experience. In December 1969, *Life* published a “Special Double Issue” titled “The ‘60s Decade of Tumult and Change,” claiming that it was “a span perhaps richer in experience than any other that Americans have lived through.”<sup>52</sup> Whereas *Life* covers

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<sup>52</sup> “The ‘60s: Decade of Tumult and Change,” *Life* 67, no. 26 (December 26, 1969).

were usually emblazoned with a single dramatic image of a personality, place or event to symbolically represent its contents, this cover featured a jumbled collage of images in an attempt to do the same. Included were a self-possessed JFK, a radiant soon to be “Jackie O,” a resolute Nixon, a beatific MLK, a cocky Muhammad Ali, the mop-haired Beatles, an apprehensive LBJ, an astronaut on the moon, the completely bandaged face of a Vietnamese insurgent, a coffin draped with an American flag, a line of well dressed Black marchers, Pope Paul VI, Ho Chi Minh, Coretta Scott King, Joe Namath, Barbra Streisand, Marilyn Monroe and Snoopy. It was the cacophony that was “the Sixties” in America.

### The Long Sixties

The era that is commonly, if undeterminably, called “the Sixties” spanned more than a decade. Indeed, some say it spanned three decades - the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s (Gosse 2005, Dubinsky et. al 2009). And some even say it isn’t over yet (Dohrn 2001, Varon 2014). British historian Arthur Marwick (1998) dubbed the era the “long sixties” defining it as beginning in 1958 and ending in 1973-4. Political theorist Fredric Jameson (1984) likewise periodized the Sixties as having begun in 1957 in the Third World with the decolonization in British and French Africa, and ending in 1974 with the end of the Vietnam War and the onset of a worldwide economic crisis.

In the *Life* special edition on the Sixties at what would have been the end of the decade, the editors had a premonition of the continuing force of the era. Declaring the Sixties as “a time of tremendous forces and changes (that) will be analyzed and argued about for years to come,” it forecast that the burning issues of the 1960s would carry over into the 1970s and “it is

impossible to predict when they will end.”<sup>53</sup> This “never ending” theme echoed through the decades. In 1985, social movement scholar Wini Breines wrote, “The spectre of the 1960s, to paraphrase Karl Marx, haunts the 1980s,” to which she added, “Conversely the eighties haunt the sixties generation as the political realities of the present crush the utopian visions and experiments, the might-have-beens, of those days.”<sup>54</sup> In 1994, American historian David Farber declared, “Americans can not seem to let the sixties go gently into the night. While the 1970s disappeared before they even ended and the 1950s succumbed to a nostalgic fog, the 1960s stay hot.”<sup>55</sup> In 2001, former fugitive Bernadine Dohrn noted, “The sixties began in 1954 and the real news is that they’re not over yet.”<sup>56</sup>

The quantity and breadth of interdisciplinary scholarship on “the Sixties” in the past forty years is evidence of its enduring nature. A cursory review of the dozens of books published in the past decade alone reflect the widespread significance and fascination the Sixties continues to have on the United States and the world.

Former left wing turned right wing extremists Peter Collier and David Horowitz republished their 1989 book called *Destructive Generation* with new material because, as they maintained, the Sixties is still “decanting its poisonous old wine into new bottles.”<sup>57</sup> Other books in the last decade lambasted the Sixties progressive social movements as futile and fraudulent

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Wini Breines, “The Sixties Again,” *Theory and Society* 14, no. 4 (1985): 511–23.

<sup>55</sup> David Farber, *The Sixties: From Memory to History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

<sup>56</sup> Bernadine Dohrn, “Sixties Lessons and Lore,” *Monthly Review* 53, no. 7 (2001), <http://www.monthlyreview.org/1201dohrn.htm>.

<sup>57</sup> Peter Collier and David Horowitz, *Destructive Generation: Second Thoughts About the Sixties*, copyright (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2006)/.

(DeGroot 2008) carried out by “pampered young people” (Fischer 2006:19) who, in particular “had parents affiliated with the Communist party and other Marxist organizations” (Heineman 2001:37).

On the other hand, there has been new information as well as renewed assessments of the contributions the Sixties made to American history (Carlisle and Golson 2008, Farber 2007, Isserman and Kazin 2008), popular culture (Marqusee 2005, Monteith 2008), politics (Braunstein and Doyle 2002, Gosse and Moser 2003, McConnell 2004, Meyer 2007), and literature (Charters 2002; Smethurst 2005).

In American politics, for example, historian Terry Anderson noted that in 2004, during the presidential campaign between John Kerry and George W. Bush, both launched attack ads concerning the other candidates’ military service during the Vietnam War. And that four years later during the 2008 presidential campaign, Sen. John McCain ran ads showing himself as a prisoner of war in Vietnam, “implying that it was unpatriotic to oppose the war he supported in 2003 - Iraq.”<sup>58</sup> Anderson as well as others (Hayden, 2009, Joseph, 2010) tied the phenomenon of the election of Barack Obama, the first African American president of the United States to the enduring struggles of the Sixties.

On the world wide front, an international conference was held in 2005 with papers published in 2009 on the importance the era had in shaping global consciousnesses (Dubinsky 2009). Other anthologies assessed local legacies of the Sixties around the world (O'Donnell and Jones 2010) as well as the global legacy of the iconic year of 1968 in particular (Kurlansky 2004; Suri 2007).

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<sup>58</sup> Terry H. Anderson, *The Sixties*, 4th Edition (Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2011).

In the field of philosophy, the concept of postmodernism was argued to have originated in the cultural and political upheaval of the 1960s (DeKoven 2004). And popular and journalistic renderings of the Sixties (Altman 2007; Brokaw 2007; Etheridge 2008; Farber 2007) speak further to the continuing interest in the era.

The fact that younger scholars have taken academic interest in the Sixties is further indication of the era's long lasting impact. While most early scholars of the Sixties lived through and were personally impacted by the era, younger scholars have taken serious and sustained interest in studying and conducting new research on the Sixties. In 2008, for example, an interdisciplinary academic journal called *The Sixties: A Journal of History, Politics and Culture* was originated by a group of scholars that self-reportedly were "too young to have been fully in the thrall of the Sixties, but just old enough to know that we missed something big."<sup>59</sup> Carrying on the theme of the never-ending Sixties, their website indicates, "In addition to research essays and book reviews, *The Sixties* includes conversations, interviews, graphics and analyses of the ways the 1960s *continue* to be constructed in popular culture." (Italics mine)

The Sixties exuded a sense of immediacy and determination that was contagious then and, according to Dubinsky et. al., is a reason that the Sixties still resonate today. "The tragic problems of war and poverty, racism and sexism, imperialism and colonialism, could not wait. It is this feeling of urgency ...to challenge regimes of power and war that extended both around the world and into or most intimate relationships, that continues to draw so many of us to the period."<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Jeremy Varon, Michael S Foley, and John McMillan, "Time Is an Ocean: The Past and Future of the Sixties," *The Sixties* 1, no. 1 (2008): 1–7.

<sup>60</sup> Karen Dubinsky et al., eds., *New World Coming : The Sixties and the Shaping of Global Consciousness* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2009).



## The Multifaceted and Confounding Sixties

Underground press veteran and journalism professor Abe Peck summarized the confounding nature of Long Sixties as “Fire power and flower power; rock festivals and rocks thrown at cops; body counts, body bags, body paint – all became part of the national landscape.”<sup>61</sup>

As recently as November 2014, the editor and co-founder of *The Sixties* journal, Jeremy Varon, reiterated the never-ending theme of the Sixties for American history. “Throw a dart at any year in the oversized target that is the 1960s and you will hit on something big in American history.”<sup>62</sup> He went on to name some of the major events of the era: the March on Washington, the publication of *The Feminine Mystique* and the assassination of John F. Kennedy in 1963, the Beatles on *The Ed Sullivan Show* and the Civil Rights Act in 1964, the summer of both love and urban unrest in 1967, the Tet Offensive, assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy, and Democratic National Convention in 1968, Woodstock and the moonshot in 1969. Varon concluded, “Momentous in its own right, each of these events stands in for whole epoch-defining narratives, whether the end of innocence, or the advent of feminism, or the turning of the Vietnam War.”<sup>63</sup>

In the December 26, 1969 special double issue on the Sixties, the editors of *Life* dissected this mixed bag of events by narrating the decade as having unfolded in two stages: “the brisk feeling of hope, a generally optimistic and energetic shift from the calm of the late 1950s,”

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<sup>61</sup> Peck, *Uncovering the Sixties : The Life and Times of the Underground Press*.

<sup>62</sup> Jeremy Varon, “It Was Forty, Fifty, Sixty Years Ago Today: The 1960s in American Myth and Memory,” *The American Historian*, November 2014.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

followed by "a growing swell of demands for extreme and immediate change when the decade exploded over race, youth, violence, lifestyles, and, above all, over the Vietnam War."<sup>64</sup> Three decades later, in 2005 Van Gosse, American historian of the post-World War II left, divided the era into two phases: 1955-1965 "when radical dissent slowly re-emerged as a current in American life" and 1965-1975 "when a militant, vastly larger New Left demolished the old system of Cold War liberalism."<sup>65</sup> In addition to bifurcating the era, other scholars and commentators assigned moral imperatives, dichotomizing the Sixties into the "Good Sixties" (1960-1964) epitomized by Camelot and the American royalty of JFK, RFK, and MLK, and the "Bad Sixties" (1965-1975) notably characterized by the assassinations of RFK and MLK sexual revolution, escalating anti war protests, rebellions and riots, (Gitlin 1993, Heineman 2001, von Bothmer 2010).

This dichotomy of the Sixties into "good and "bad" clearly begs the question: from whose perspective? At its core, such a value-laden bifurcation reflects a mainstream perspective that fueled dissident newspapers such as *Gidra* to talk back against the status quo and with it, imposed values the dominant society. From this standpoint, the "Good Sixties" were considered good not because what took place was inherently virtuous or noble but because they were considered non-threatening from the perspective of middle America.

To people of color in this country –so-called "minorities" to the white majority – and to progressive activists (also a minority) the daily realities of racial discrimination and segregation, as well as Cold War politics defied the branding of the early Sixties as "good" (Maeda 2012, Veve 2009). For example, even as the Civil Rights Act was signed in 1960, African Americans

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<sup>64</sup> "The '60s: Decade of Tumult and Change."

<sup>65</sup> Van Gosse, *Rethinking the New Left: An Interpretive History* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

were still barred from eating in restaurants. Even as John F. Kennedy established the Peace Corps in 1961, he launched the devastating covert Bay of Pigs invasion. Even as Jackie Robinson became for the first African American inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1962, 23,000 federal troops - including 160 marshals wounded and two people killed – put a stop to the violent protest of James Meredith’s admission to the University of Mississippi.<sup>66</sup>

Jaime Veve, a former member of the Young Lords Party and a Vietnam veteran, contended that the Good Sixties/Bad Sixties debate was held by a minority of activists - Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) in particular - and popularized by a few - a handful of well-known New Left writers - that held the power of the pen. In contrast, he pointed out “there was another layer of activists, in the millions, who were not well known, did not write, did not become intellectual authors, and in many cases did not fully realize their historical role.”<sup>67</sup>

According to political historian Julian E. Zelizer (2015), the early Sixties as an apex of liberalism - upon which the “good sixties” is based - is a myth. The massive legislative strides of the Sixties – Medicare, Medicaid, voting rights, civil rights, war on poverty, immigration reform, environmental regulation, federal aid for education - Zelizer argues were passed only after and because of the years of social movement protest and strategy that preceded them. In addition, he indicated that this window of legislative advances was short lived and followed by a rash of conservative backlash. Feminist writer Eleanor J. Bader likewise specified, “While progressives have also called up images from this beleaguered decade (the Sixties), conservatives have

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<sup>66</sup> Tom Hayden, *The Long Sixties : From 1960 to Barack Obama* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2009).

<sup>67</sup> Jaime Veve, “‘Tear It Down’: Reflections of a Veteran,” in *New World Coming: The Sixties and the Shaping of Global Consciousness* (Toronto, 2009), 399 – 405 .

triumphed in seven of the last 11 presidential elections – 1968 to 2008 – victories that can be partially attributed to backlash against sixties excesses, both real and imagined.”<sup>68</sup>

While some considered the Sixties beneficial, others painted the same era as detrimental. Arthur Marwick quipped that left, right or center, all “seem to agree that, for good or ill, *something* (Marwick’s italics) significant happened in the sixties.”<sup>69</sup>

### **“The Movement”**

Media scholars Marisol Sandoval and Christian Fuchs (2010) maintained that alternative media needs to be situated within the context of visions of an alternative society.<sup>70</sup> Not only was *Gidra* a product of the Sixties, it was a product of what participants fondly, and ambiguously, called “the Movement.” “What really made the era unique,” Terry H. Anderson professed, “were the various movements that merged together during and after 1968 to form a Sixties culture that advocated liberation and empowerment.”<sup>71</sup> Tom Hayden (2009:5) claimed there were more social movements in the Sixties than at any other time in American history. As mentioned, Zelizer (2015) attributed the legislative advances of the Sixties less to politicians and more to the power of the movements – most notably the Civil Rights movement - that exerted pressure on the politicians and created the right conditions for legislation to be enacted. And so engaging was its aura, women’s movement scholar Sara Evans (1979) maintained that it was “almost a mystical

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<sup>68</sup> Eleanor J. Bader, “‘Framing the Sixties’ Exposes the Scapegoating of an Era,” *Truth-Out.org*, n.d., accessed May 26, 2013.

<sup>69</sup> Arthur Marwick, *The Sixties: Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy, and the United States, C. 1958-C. 1974* (Oxford [England] ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1998),

<sup>70</sup> Sandoval and Fuchs, “Towards a Critical Theory of Alternative Media.”

<sup>71</sup> Anderson, *The Sixties*.

term” referred to as simply “the Movement.” She reflected, “ ‘the movement’ implied an experience, a sense of community and common purpose.”<sup>72</sup>

What is a social movement? Basically, according to Snow, Soule and Kriesi (2004) who edited one of the most comprehensive anthologies on social movements, “Social movements are one of the principal social forms to which collectivities give voice to their grievances and concerns about the rights, welfare, and well-being of themselves and others by engaging in various types of collection action...”<sup>73</sup> Social movement scholars Jeff Goodwin and James Jasper added the element of anti-mainstream forces with their definition, “A social movement is a collective, organized, sustained, and non-institutional challenge to authorities, power holders, or cultural beliefs and practices.”<sup>74</sup> Marcy Darnovsky, Barbara Epstein and Richard Flacks specified the element of marginalized communities in their definition of a social movement as “collective efforts by socially and politically subordinated people to challenge the conditions and assumptions of their lives.”<sup>75</sup>

In addition to a sense of collectivity and motivation to challenge imposed conditions, a key emotional characteristic of “the Movement,” was a wide-reaching feeling of shared goals (Dubinsky et. al. 2009). Throughout the world, the Long Sixties was a time of intense political, social and cultural activism driven by the shared goal of restructuring power relations within and

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<sup>72</sup> Sara Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women’s Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979). 102.

<sup>73</sup> Snow, Soule, and Kriesi, *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*. P. 3

<sup>74</sup> Jeff Goodwin and James M Jasper, *Rethinking Social Movements : Structure, Meaning, and Emotion* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004).

<sup>75</sup> Marcy Darnovsky, Barbara Leslie Epstein, and Richard Flacks, eds., *Cultural Politics and Social Movements* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995).

between societies and nations. Decolonization in Africa, the Cultural Revolution in China, and many more events in many more places such as Vietnam, Northern Ireland, Paris, and Mexico City reshaped the geopolitical realm from the conservative 1950s. In 2007, four hundred people from around the world gathered at a conference in Canada to contemplate “The Sixties and the Shaping of Global Consciousness.” More than just “acting local but thinking global,” the conference claimed that one of the defining features of the political and cultural movements of the era was “the feeling of acting *simultaneously* with others in a global sphere.”<sup>76</sup> (Italics mine)

Abe Peck summarized, “Whatever their differences, New Left, black and brown power, antiwar and feminist organizations – known collectively as the Movement – shared a disdain for authority, a zeal for expression, and mocking mistrust of conventional wisdom.” He added, “The political Movement and the various lifestyle movements influenced each other, rejecting both an imperial foreign power and a conformist way of life.”<sup>77</sup>

“Whose New Left?”<sup>78</sup>

After what Gosse (2005) called a “cottage industry” of books on the New Left that appeared in the late 1980s (Gitlin 1987; Isserman 1987; Katsiaficas 1987; Miller 1987), Winifred Breines (1988) pointed out that it was mostly white, male, former new leftists who were writing, reviewing, and being written about, thereby “reconstituting the male voice that predominated twenty years ago.”<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Dubinsky et al., *New World Coming : The Sixties and the Shaping of Global Consciousness*.

<sup>77</sup> Peck, *Uncovering the Sixties : The Life and Times of the Underground Press*. iii.

<sup>78</sup> Winifred Breines, “Whose New Left?,” *The Journal of American History* 75, no. 2 (1988): 528–45.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

In the U.S., the term the “New Left” is often used to reference the progressive political province of the Sixties. Popularized by sociologist C. Wright Mills in 1960, he identified “the young intelligentsia,” which he defined as students, young professionals and writers opposing apathy and authoritarianism, as the new agents of change for the coming era in contrast to the proletarians of the Old Left, which he described as “Victorian” Marxists fixated on a “labour metaphysic.”<sup>80</sup> Although Mills never stated that the New Left was predominantly white and male, in 1960 when he wrote his “Letter to the New Left,” at the time, the constituency to which he spoke - “students, young professionals and writers,” i.e.: “the young intelligentsia” –were overwhelmingly white and male. And the “New Left,” has since been broadly acknowledged as being a mostly white student, male dominated movement (Breines 1988, Martinez 1993). As historian John McMillan reminded, the U.S. in the 1960s was (and still is) largely culturally and politically segregated and as the elongated decade unfolded, Black - and also female - radicals operated on different tracks. Regarding the Women’s Movement, McMillan contended that women “deliberately seceded from the male-dominated New Left to launch their own social and intellectual revolution.”<sup>81</sup>

Gosse (2005) attempted to revision the term “New Left,” refuting its centrality on youth, whiteness and maleness, and instead characterized the New Left as “a movement of movements,” or “a constellation of overlapping but distinct movements.”<sup>82</sup> Gosse referred to “the movement” in distinction to the New Left as “a much larger constellation of social protest

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<sup>80</sup> C. Wright Mills, “Letter to the New Left,” *New Left Review*, no. 5 (October 1960).

<sup>81</sup> John McMillan, “‘You Didn’t Have to Be There’: Revisiting the New Left Consensus,” in *The New Left Revisited* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), 6.

<sup>82</sup> Gosse, *Rethinking the New Left: An Interpretive History*.

activity that either grew out of the New Left (e.g., gay liberation, radical feminism and the hippie counterculture), or influenced and inspired the New Left (e.g.: the civil rights and black power movements.)”<sup>83</sup>

Within this constellation of movements, Gosse identified two basic types. Some were driven by explicit and immediate policy goals that could be met by government reform like the Civil Rights movement, which demanded federal action to abolish discrimination and segregation, and the anti-Vietnam War movement, which called for withdrawal of U.S. military forces from Southeast Asia. To the extent that these goals were met, the movements themselves either ended or transformed themselves into something new. Other movements, Gosse contended, “aimed at longer term and more diffuse *cultural revolutions* (his italics) that would change the actual character of American society.” These movements’ - such as the Black Power and Women’s movements - goals were not specific campaigns that could be met by government means. They succeeded in not only gaining particular victories but instigating massive social changes that profoundly altered the consciousness’s of millions of Americans.

The labels “New Left,” “the Movement” and “cultural revolution of the long sixties” have all been used to refer to the politically progressive Sixties. The marker of “New Left” - comprised primarily of white students, young professionals and writers, as primary agents of change - ignores critical questions of gender, race and class and hence remains too problematic for this study. Reference to “the Movement,” while resonant with Sixties activists and reflective of the nostalgia of the moment, is overly dependent on that cohort and too imprecise to be a definitive or descriptive designation. Although I disagree with Arthur Marwick’s contention

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid. 6-7.

<sup>83</sup> Marwick, *The Sixties: Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy, and the United States, C. 1958-C. 1974*.



that most of the activism of the Sixties was “thoroughly imbedded with the entrepreneurial, profit-making ethic,”<sup>84</sup> his descriptive conclusion that the Sixties resulted in a “genuine ‘revolution’ or ‘transformation’ in material conditions, life styles, family relationships and personal freedoms for the vast majority of people” embodies the broad changes and impact of the era far better than the terms, “New Left” or the “Movement.”

### Social Movement Studies

Besides being a source of interminable nostalgia and subject of popular fascination, the structure and significance of social movements has become a specialized field of academic inquiry.

Social movement studies have undergone a number of paradigm shifts since the 1960s (Edelman 2001; Escobar 1992; McAdam 1995; Morris 2000; Opp 2009). In a shift away from seeing movements narrowly in terms of collective behavior and relative deprivation, theories known as resource mobilization and political process reconceptualized social movements as organized, rational and institutional. Resource mobilization theory analyzed movements as organizational in structure and argued that resources such as leadership, communications networks, time, money and business/political connections were needed for a group to become mobilized (McCarthy and Zald 1977). The political process or political opportunity process model (McAdam 1982; Meyer 2004) likewise focused on external conditions identifying dimensions of opportunities present in a society for political action. Framing was further theorized and considered by some to function along side resource mobilization and political opportunity process as a central dynamic in understanding social movements (Benford and Snow 2000; Johnston and Noakes 2005).

Even as the first round of scholarship led to elaborations of the models of resource mobilization and political process, investigation of internal structures of meaning and the cultural content of social movements were deemed missing (Muller 1992, Brodtkin 2007, Goodwin, et al. 2001, Jasper 1997; Reed 2005). This second generation study of what “real human beings do inside movements or in reaction to them” (Morris and Mueller 1992:x), moved social movement studies beyond a structural-political framework without totally abandoning the importance of structure. Morris (1992) noted that while human action cannot be reduced to impersonal social structures neither are they enacted by detached cultural actors given that they are also embedded within a structural context that shape their actions and limit their options.

In the past twenty years there has been increased attention to the subjective terrains of the cultural, the creative and the personal aspects of social movements (Williams 2004). Some determined that dominant American social movement scholarship have become detached from realities of actual social movements and have called for more movement-relevant approaches (Bevington and Dixon 2007, Flacks 2004). Sociologist and former SDS member Richard Flacks (2004) challenged, “In what way does the validation, elaboration and refinement of concepts provide usable knowledge for those seeking social change?”<sup>85</sup> Cultural and political commentator Jeff Chang noted that cultural change is often the dress rehearsal for political change. “Or put in another way, political change is the final manifestation of cultural shifts that have already occurred” (King 2010).<sup>86</sup> From a cultural perspective, social movements have been studied as counterculture (Braunstein and Doyle 2002; McConnell 2004) and oppositional

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<sup>85</sup> Richard Flacks, “Knowledge for What? Thoughts on the State of Social Movement Studies,” in *Rethinking Social Movements* (Lanham, MD.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004).

<sup>86</sup> This is an emphasis in Chang’s book, *Who We Be: The Colorization of America* (St. Martin’s Press, 2014).

consciousness (Mansbridge and Morris 2001; McConnell 2004), with increased focus on identity (Meyer, et al. 2002), emotions (Goodwin and Jasper 2004; Goodwin, et al. 2001) and in terms of stories and narrative (Kling 1995, Davis 2002, Ganz 2001, Polletta 2006, Tilly 2002).

This cultural turn has produced empirical scholarship on a variety of more subjective aspects of social movements. For example, many have examined the roles that the arts and music played in social movements (Eyerman and Jamison 1995, 1998; Garofalo 1992; Peddie 2006; Reed 2005; Roy 2010). Emotions have been reincorporated into research on social protest (Goodwin and Jasper 2004; Goodwin, et al. 2001; hooks 2000; Reed 2004). The consequence of social movements and activism on individual lives have been explored conceptually (Brush 1999; della Porta 1992; Personal Narratives Group 1989) as well as through interviews of activists (Chepesiuk 1995; Cieri and Peeps 2000; Etheridge 2008; Mast and Mast 1996), biographies (Branch 1988, 2006; Fujino 2005; Ransby 2003) and autobiographies and memoirs (Boggs 1998; Davis 1975; Hayden 1988; Kochiyama 2004; Lewis 1998; Smith and Koster 2008; Trevino 2001; Malcolm X 1968). Social activism has also had substantive impact on personal and collective identity (Brush 1999; Hunt and Benford 2004; Kuo and Roysicar-Sodowsky 1999; Polletta and Jasper 2001; Stryker, et al. 2000).

Anthropology's contribution to social movement studies lies in theoretically informed ethnography. As the study of the particular and the local, ethnography has the ability to show how activists strategize to create and deploy political identities, achieve goals and develop persuasive ideologies of a just future (Brodkin 2005: 304). For example, Verta Taylor (1989) and Nancy Whittier (1995) – separately as well as together (1992, 1995) – have provided theoretical understanding of collective identity construction through their work on the women's movement and lesbian feminist mobilization. Karen Brodtkin (2007) studied how activists gave birth to

themselves as political beings through her study on immigrant rights and labor activists. Sondra Hale grounded theory regarding revolutionary cultural production in her empirical study of the Los Angeles Women's Building (2007)

The American Anthropological Association acknowledged the significance of the Sixties for the discipline during its 2004 meeting with a session titled, "The 1960s Radical Restructuring of Anthropology: The Making of Anthropology as We Know It." Five years later Association of Senior Anthropologists president Herbert S. Lewis concluded that although other disciplines were likewise affected, "it may be that anthropology has been the most deeply, drastically, and permanently altered by the 1960s."<sup>87</sup>

### Social Movement Spillover

Social movements are not conceived immaculately. A vast literature of empirical and theoretical works provide evidence and examples of how social movements beget as well as influence other social movements laterally. And influence does not only flow one way but is often circular and compound. For example, the civil rights and New Left movements influenced the women's movement (Evans 1979, McMillan), and in turn the women's movement influenced other movements (Ling 1989, Whittier 2004). Similar multiple avenues of influence have linked a variety of movements, most notably the impact of the civil rights movement on virtually all subsequent social movements in the 1960s and 1970s (McAdam 1988; McAdam 1995).

Social movement influence also disperses transnationally. The most familiar example lies with Martin Luther King, Jr., namely the inspiration he gained from Gandhi's principle of non-violence. Mao Tse Tung thought was influential to black radical thought (Ho 2008; Kelley and

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<sup>87</sup> Herbert S. Lewis, "The Radical Transformation of Anthropology: History Seen through the Annual Meetings of the American Anthropological Association, 1955-2005," *Histories of Anthropology Annual* 5 (2009): 200–228.

Esch 2008) and Chairman Mao twice expressed support for the African American struggle (Zedong 2008a; Zedong 2008b).

Theoretical work on the mutual influence of social movements, also referred to as diffusion, developed against the “movement-centric” theories that determined individual social movements as the fundamental unit of analysis (McAdam 1995). Political sociologist Sidney Tarrow (1994) argued that social movements arose within the context of a political culture that provided opportunities to develop or adapt repertoires of contention, link to existing social networks and appropriate cultural frames of meaning. The basic assumption underlying these theories is that social movements are not discrete entities like organizations (McAdam 1995) nor are they self-contained and narrowly focused (Meyer and Whittier 1994). Instead, social movements are constituted by a number of “formal organizations, informal networks and unaffiliated individuals engaged in a more or less coherent struggle for change” (Meyer and Whittier 1994) and are part of “broader ‘movement families’ or ‘cycles of protest’ in which they are embedded (McAdam 1995). Inter-related, they influence each other both directly and indirectly in a variety of characteristics and by a variety of mechanisms.

Noting that there were many empirical studies of the mutual influence among social movements but little theoretical explanation, social movement scholars David S. Meyer and Nancy Whittier (1994) were among the first to hypothesize how and why ideas, tactics, styles, participants and organizations of one movement “spill over” to affect other social movements. Both contemporaneously and successively, they noted that movements impact each other directly as well as affect the larger terrain in which they struggle (280). Emblematic of this two-part taxonomy was the American protest cycle of the Long Sixties, which was initiated by the civil rights movement. Called an “early riser movement” it gave birth to spin-off movements on

behalf of other subjugated communities such as women, so-called ethnic minorities, and LGBTQ. Spin-off movements drew broad inspiration from initiator movements, crafting their own practices according to cultural specifics and their own histories of struggle and activism. Rather than merely copying ideas, McAdam pointed out these later social movements were “creative adapters and interpreters of the cultural ‘lessons’ of the early risers” (1995:229). Regarding the AAM in particular, Karen Umemoto (1989) argued that while it was inspired and indeed borrowed much from the Black Power movement, the AAM devised its own approaches.

### **The Asian American Movement**

Bob Osterberg (2006) argued that social movement newspapers must be seen within the particular movement of which it was a part. As such, *Gidra* was a major voice and vehicle of the AAM. Being the first and longest running non-sectarian newspaper of the AAM, it gave material expression to the values and goals of the movement and became a public forum for vetting new ideas and forms of knowledge.

“The Forgotten Revolution”<sup>88</sup>

Scholarship of the Long Sixties in the United States is dominated by imagery of flower power on one hand and threat of black power on the other. The literature of the social movements of the era make little mention of the Chicano/a Movement (Munoz 2007) or the American Indian Movement (Langston 2003) and even less of the AAM (Fujino 2008b; Liu, et al. 2008; Maeda 2009; Omatsu 1989; Wei 1993) and the Puerto Rican Movement (Rodriguez-Morrazzani 1998; Torres and Velazquez 1998).

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<sup>88</sup> Gordon Lee, “The Forgotten Revolution,” *Hyphen*, no. 1 (Summer 2003).

In the inaugural issue of *Hyphen* magazine, subtitled “Asian America Unabridged” veteran Sixties activist Gordon Lee called the AAM, “the forgotten revolution.” Speaking to a primarily young pan Asian audience, the opening banner read, “Thirty-five years ago, young activists had to fight to become Asian American. Now, our radical heritage has been lost in the generation gap.”<sup>89</sup> Activist educator Elizabeth Martinez (1989) pointed out, “The most serious neglect is in the treatment of Asian Americans. Not one of the twenty-four books (on the progressive social movements of the 1960s) seriously recognizes Asian American protest.”<sup>90</sup> Nearly twenty years later, AAM scholars Diane C. Fujino (2008) and Daryl J. Maeda (2009) likewise, concluded, “Asian American activism barely registers on any political radar”<sup>91</sup> and there is “the near-total absence of Asian Americans from the existing historiography on social activism during the civil rights and black power period.”<sup>92</sup>

Of the major overviews and anthologies on this era, only a few such as Alexander Bloom and Wini Breines (1995) and Max Elbaum (2002) mention the AAM as being part of the U.S. social movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Even in 2010, books like *The Hidden 1970s: Histories of Radicalism*,<sup>93</sup> in providing a new view of the activism of the 1970s - a time when the AAM was at full speed - failed to include any aspect of Asian American activism. Despite this omission there was a vibrant national AAM that moved Americans of Asian Pacific Island (API)

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Martinez, “Histories of ‘The Sixties’: A Certain Absence of Color.”

<sup>91</sup> Diane C. Fujino, “Who Studies the Asian American Movement?: A Historiographical Analysis,” *Journal of Asian American Studies* 11, no. 2 (2008): 127–69.

<sup>92</sup> Daryl J. Maeda, *Chains of Babylon : The Rise of Asian America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009). 13.

<sup>93</sup> Dan Berger, *The Hidden 1970s: Histories of Radicalism* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2010).

descent from the subaltern position of “Oriental” to redefine ourselves as a cultural and political force in the United States.

Before the AAM, there was no such entity as an “Asian American.” Instead there were Japanese, Chinese and Pilipino Americans, the ethnicities that constituted the majority of Asians in the United States at that time, each with distinct languages, histories and cultures. But to mainstream Americans, not only were they undifferentiated, they were orientalized - lumped together as “Orientals.” As Edward Said (1979) maintained, orientalism is a wide cluster of false assumptions underlying Western attitudes toward Asia and the Middle East that served as justification for European and American colonial and imperial aspirations. This political doctrine rendered the Orient - and hence “Orientals” - as weak and suitable for colonization, both abroad and at home.

Not only did the AAM enact the transformation from “Oriental” to “Asian American,” the AAM also renovated the identity of the United States. As we took our place in the history of U.S. as people of color, Asian Americans strengthened the multi-ethnic and multi-racial foundation of American history and identity. As we looked like the enemy during the Vietnam War, Asian Americans brought a new level of energy and critique to the anti-war movement. As we learned of the unconstitutional mass incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II, Asian Americans expanded the concept of civil rights beyond black and white.

### Prehistory

Except for a handful of Asian students and diplomats before them, Chinese and Japanese were the first Asian ethnic groups to immigrate to the U.S. They were actively recruited as sources of cheap labor for the expanding Western United States in the mid to late 1800s. In the prevailing racist and orientalist social milieu in which they found themselves, however, these



recruits were soon accused of taking jobs away from white workers. Although they made up less than one half of one percent of the U.S. population, the media dubbed them the “yellow peril” that threatened to take over White America (Daniels 1977, Takaki 1998). Being non-white in a Eurocentric society with a long legacy of white supremacy, Asians in the U.S. were thrust to the side along with African Americans, Latinos and American Indians in the dichotomy that divided the West from the Rest. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1888 cut off further Chinese immigration and the Immigration Act of 1924 soon stopped immigration from Japan and Korea as well. It was during this liminal era that Asians that were left in America were positioned in what David Palumbo-Liu (1999) called “the medium space between white owners and black laborers.”<sup>94</sup>

By the 1960s, Japanese and Chinese Americans were strategically moved from being the Yellow Peril to “a model of self-respect and achievement” (*U.S. News & World Report*, 1966), “better than any other group in our society” (*New York Times Magazine*, 1966) and “out whitening the whites” (*Newsweek* 1971). A version of Orientalism, this concept of “model minority” was promulgated in the midst of the cultural revolution of 1960s and aimed surreptitiously at African Americans as fervently as Asian Americans. The *U.S. News & World Report* article declared, “At a time when it is being proposed that hundreds of billions be spent to uplift Negroes and other minorities, the nation’s 300,000 Chinese-Americans are moving ahead on their own, with no help from anyone else.”<sup>95</sup> Ethnic Studies professor Keith Osajima (1988) pointed out that the model minority thesis sent a political message to the growing Black Power Movement “diffusing their claim that America was fundamentally a racist society, structured to keep minorities in a

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<sup>94</sup> David Palumbo-Liu, *Asian/America: Historical Crossings of a Racial Frontier* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999).

<sup>95</sup> “Success Story of One Minority Group,” *U.S. News and World Report*, 1966.

subordinate position.” By defining success in narrow, materialistic terms the model minority “confirmed that the United States was indeed the land of opportunity.”<sup>96</sup>

During the early years of making the United States their home, Asians in America were not just victims but pro-actively engaged in numerous acts of resistance. For example, Japanese sugar plantation workers in Hawaii repeatedly struck for better conditions and pay in the early 1900s. Filipino farmworkers in Central California went on strike as early as 1934 and initiated the grape boycott in the mid 1960s for which Chicano activists are better known. During World War II, four Japanese Americans resisted the mass forced incarceration and took their grievances all the way up to the Supreme Court; and sixty-three Nisei men behind barbed wire resisted the draft until their rights as citizens were restored. It is against this hundred-year history of racialization, orientalism and resistance that the AAM arose.

### Beginnings

Nineteen sixty-eight was a watershed year for Asian Americans as well as for the world. In addition to the iconic upsurges that erupted globally, 1968 marks the beginning of the AAM technically, historically and spiritually.

Technically, the AAM began in 1968 with the first known organization to come together under an inter-ethnic Asian American banner - the Asian American Political Alliance (AAPA) at the University of California, Berkeley (Niiya 2001:123-24; Maeda 2009:52, Huen 2001:279). As its primary founder, Yuji Ichioka is credited for coining the term “Asian American” as a political expression of self-definition in opposition to the previous imposed label of “Oriental” (Espiritu 1992, Kang 2002, Maeda 2001:2). While a graduate student at U.C. Berkeley, Ichioka

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<sup>96</sup> Keith Osajima, “Asian Americans as the Model Minority: An Analysis of the Popular Press Image in the 1960s and 1980s,” in *Reflections on Shattered Windows: Promises and Prospects for Asian American Studies*, ed. Gary Y. Okihiro (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1988), 165–74.

and his wife Emma Gee noticed that there were individual Asians who regularly participated in progressive political activities. Thinking that an ethnically based coalition of Asian students was in order, Ichioka and Gee culled the roster of members of the Peace and Freedom Party for Asian names to form the Asian American Political Alliance (AAPA), (Espiritu 1992, Maeda 2009).

Understanding that Asian ethnic groups were relatively small and had negligible political clout, AAPA defined and utilized the concept of Asian American to bring separate Asian ethnic groups together under a pan-Asian banner as a political necessity. Notably, AAPA subverted the Orientalist tradition of lumping all Asians together into an oppositional vehicle of self-definition and empowerment. Originally used to coalesce anti-Asian sentiment, racial profiling was re-purposed by AAPA into a political tool to build commonality and solidarity. “The Asian American Political Alliance is ...a people’s alliance to effect social and political change. We believe the American society is historically racist and one which has employed social discrimination and economic imperialism, both domestically and internationally...”<sup>97</sup> Now, forty years later, the term Asian American has lost its progressive edge as it has been appropriated into mainstream parlance and generally used apolitically as an ethnic signifier by both progressives as well as conservatives.

Publicly, the origin of the AAM emerged at the Third World Strike at San Francisco State College in 1968, in which Asian Americans played a major role.<sup>98</sup> More than any other single event, the Third World Strike gave legs to the idea of Asian America conceptualized by AAPA at U.C. Berkeley earlier that year. Across the bay from Berkeley, a multiracial coalition calling

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<sup>97</sup> “AAPA Perspectives,” *AAPA Newspaper* I, no. 6 (1969): 31–32.

<sup>98</sup> Asian American Studies Dept, San Francisco State University, *At 40: Asian American Studies @ San Francisco State* (San Francisco: Asian American Studies Dept, San Francisco State University, 2009).

itself the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF) led the longest student strike in U.S. History, succeeding in establishing the first ethnic studies classes in the nation (Umemoto 1989, Dong 2002, Maeda 2009, Asian American Studies Department, San Francisco State University 2009). The Third World Liberation Front was formed as a coalition of the Black Student Union, Latin American Student Organization, Mexican American Student Coalition, Native American Student Organization; and three Asian organizations: Intercollegiate Chinese for Social Action (ICSA), Pilipino American Collegiate Endeavor (PACE) and the Asian American Political Alliance (AAPA) (Umemoto 1989:40). The San Francisco State Strike, headed by the multi-racial and heavily Asian infused TWLF, was not only a founding moment for the AAM, but, according to Maeda (2009), this singular event exemplified the clash between competing paradigms of identity - of assimilation, embodied by S.I. Hayakawa, and leftist tactics embodied by the new Asian American.

Spiritually, the AAM had multiple and independent births not only on campuses but in the streets and communities across the country (Liu et.al. 2008, Wei 1993), problematizing the notion that the AAM was essentially a student movement. If the AAM was born in 1968 on the campus, it was conceived a decade earlier in the street. Before there were campus radicals there were street rebels characterized by the same Asian American pride, rage against the system, and nerve to do go up against it. Although most of them were, no-doubt, bona fide thugs, some could be called what British Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm (1959) termed “social bandits,” pre-political insurgents who flaunted authority and championed the masses against oppression. Considered “gangs,” on their turf, might - not white - was right. Although they were delinquents

in the eyes of the law, Afro-American Studies professor William Van Deburg (2004) called social banditry “the act of being bad for a good reason.”<sup>99</sup>

And for many Asian American social bandits, the reason was racism. Social movement scholars Aldon Morris and Naomi Braine (2001) indicated there is a relationship between physical segregation and the development of oppositional consciousness. During WWII, when 120,000 Japanese Americans were effectively segregated from America by barbed wire barriers. AAM scholar Diane Fujino (2008) contended that this wartime segregation, compounded by post war racial covenants facilitated the development of an oppositional consciousness among Japanese Americans. As one former gang member declared, “Japanese American youths formed gangs because they felt they had to prove they weren’t the ‘buck-toothed, slant-eyed’ traitors that the U.S. government had portrayed them to be.”<sup>100</sup>

The broader issues of racism and imperialism that gave rise to the social movements of the era were not limited to the young, and first responders were not only under thirty. Although the AAM, like all social movements of the Long Sixties, was deeply aligned with the youth movement, there were a significant number of Asian American middle-aged activists. For example, Japanese, Chinese and Filipino professionals and clergymen formed Asian Coalition for Equality (ACE) in 1969 in Seattle. Around the same time, a similar group – of activists over thirty bent on action – came together in New York City. In addition to being middle aged, the leadership of Asian Americans for Action, called Triple A, were primarily women, among them Yuri Kochiyama who is perhaps best known for having cradled Malcolm X as he died. Besides

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<sup>99</sup> William L. Van Deburg, *Hoodlums: Black Villains and Social Bandits in American Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

<sup>100</sup> Glenn Suravech, “Code of Honor: Japanese American Gangs, 1950-1965,” *Rafu Shimpo*, December 18, 1993, p. A8.

ACE and Triple A, there were a number of individual older activists who took leadership roles in national movements such as Larry Itliong and Philip Vera Cruz who were in their 50s and 60s when they founded the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee in 1965, later to become the United Farm Workers (UFW). Koji Ariyoshi, who met Mao Zedong and Chou Enlai while he was in the Military Intelligence Service (MIS) during WWII and Goso Yoneda, who changed his name to Karl in honor of Karl Marx, were nationally known labor organizers. Grace Lee Boggs, almost 100 years old at the time of this writing, cut her revolutionary chops in in the Black liberation movement in the 1940s and 1950s.

### Review of Literature on the Asian American Movement

Like the proverbial blind men describing an elephant, the early AAM looks different from different perspectives. The only five full-length works published specifically on the AAM epitomize various sides of the elephant that is the AAM. Each acknowledged the AAM to be multi-faceted, yet privileged one facet as predominant.

In the first book to be written on the topic, titled *The Asian American Movement* (1993), William Wei depicted the movement as “a middle class reform movement” whose goal “was and is an effort to realize the ideal of a culturally pluralistic society,” in order “to develop a unique but cohesive identity” and “institutionalize itself by founding counter institutions on campuses and in communities.”<sup>101</sup> Wei credited Asian American reformers who “were learning to function effectively within the American political system” as having established organizations in order to “increase Asian Americans’ influence on the wider society and advance their interests more effectively” (10). On the other hand, he mitigated the impact of revolutionary organizations. His argument rested on his analysis that by the mid 1970s, “they lapsed into

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<sup>101</sup> William Wei, *The Asian American Movement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993).

sectarianism, vying for power in the radical community and fighting each other over the correct political line” (10). Although scholars and former radicals alike acknowledge the factionalism that disturbed all social movements, sectarianism among the left is not sufficient grounds upon which to diminish their impact on the AAM as a whole. Furthermore, Wei believed that “most participants of the Asian American Movement ... were more interested in finding a place for themselves in American society than in changing it in any fundamental way” (209). In this way, he portrayed the AAM as a depoliticized exercise in self-affirmation, rejection of negative stereotypes and inclusion into American society.

In direct contradistinction, in the anthology *Legacy to Liberation: Politics and Culture of Revolutionary Asian Pacific America* (2000), editor Fred Ho claimed the AAM was “overwhelmingly radical and revolutionary,” and in contrast and response to Wei, emphasized that it was uniquely so “in comparison to other U.S. social movements” of the times.<sup>102</sup> Although the AAM’s radical aspects were not as singular as Ho argued, neither were they as inconsequential as Wei maintained.

In addition to social change, the AAM was also driven by the search for meaning and community as people of color in America. In the anthology of writings by former activists *Asian Americans: The Movement and the Moment* (2001), editors Steve Louie and Glenn Omatsu highlighted how the Asian American political movement was deeply personal. As Omatsu (2001) indicated, “in the process of fighting injustice and changing society, all activists must also transform themselves. Otherwise, greater political awareness promotes an attitude of arrogance

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<sup>102</sup> Fred Ho, ed., *Legacy to Liberation: Politics and Culture of Revolutionary Asian Pacific America* (San Francisco: Big Red Media and AK Press, 2000).

marked by impatience and disdain for others and a belief that political change can be created and managed by an elite.”<sup>103</sup>

It can be argued that personal transformation is endemic to all movements whether driven by reformist or revolutionary politics. Despite differences in perspective and analysis, Louie and Omatsu’s emphasis on the personally transformational nature of the AAM was shared by both Wei’s reformist camp as well as Ho’s revolutionary bloc.

Michael Liu, Kim Geron and Tracy Lai argued in *The Snake Dance of Asian American Activism* (2008) that much of the previous scholarship on the AAM narrowly consigned it as a matter of rebelliousness by young Americans. They maintained that this narrow view failed to capture the deep-rooted social forces that gave rise to the AAM and used tenants of social movement theory – grievances, framing, political resources - to analyze the AAM. Liu et. al. also place a longer lifespan on the AAM, not concluding at the end of the Long Sixties, but continuing into the 1980s and even to post 9/11.

Daryl Maeda’s *Chains of Babylon: The Rise of Asian America* (2009) was a cultural history of the rise of Asian American activism and identity. He argued that cultural critiques of racism and imperialism, the twin “Chains of Babylon” of his title, “informed the construction of Asian American identity as a multiethnic formation committed to interracial and transnational solidarity.” Maeda’s focus on cultural manifestations followed critical theorist Lisa Lowe’s dictum that, “Where the political terrain can neither resolve nor suppress inequality, it erupts in culture”<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Glenn Omatsu, “Listening to the Small Voice Speaking the Truth: Grassroots Organizing and the Legacy of Our Movement,” in *Asian Americans: The Movement and the Moment* (Los Angeles: UCLA Asian American Studies Press, 2001): 309.

<sup>104</sup> Maeda, *Chains of Babylon : The Rise of Asian America*, ix.



Daryl Maeda wrote another book in 2012 called *Rethinking the Asian American Movement*. Coming on the heels of his earlier book on the AAM, his “rethinking” was not in relation to his previous study but primarily to Wei’s pioneering 1993 book on the AAM. Maeda indicated there have been new documents and scholarly accounts that emerged in the two decades since Wei’s book that called for a new interpretation of the AAM. However, he didn’t acknowledge the fact that there were intervening works since Wei’s 1993 book, including Ho’s 2000 revolutionary anthology, Louie and Omatsu’s 2001 anthology of essays by former activists, Liu, et. al.’s 2008 analysis as a social movement and Maeda’s own 2009 cultural history.

In Maeda’s 2012 “Rethinking” book he identified three “reconsiderations” of the AAM: 1) identifying the AAM’s central framework as power and self-determination rather than civil rights; 2) the AAM called for revolution that would end U.S. racism, imperialism and capitalism; and 3) the inherently multiethnic, interracial and international coalitional nature of the AAM.<sup>105</sup> While none were intrinsically new or revelatory, having been addressed to varying degrees in previous books and articles including his own, the strength of his *Rethinking* book is providing a succinct, textbook overview of the AAM.

#### Asian American Movement Goals and Objectives

The AAM was not a monolithic movement. Rather, on the ground, individuals participated in various overlapping spheres of activism. Sociologically speaking, these spheres of activism were both objectives and methodologies by which to attain larger goals. Adherents gravitated to one or more spheres with which they had a personal affinity, skills, or passion. As

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<sup>105</sup> Daryl J. Maeda, *Rethinking the Asian American Movement* (New York and London: Routledge, 2012). 4-5.

spheres of activism inevitably overlapped, people often participated in one or more. Together this activism comprised and was conducted under the umbrella of the AAM.

In the late 1960s, Kwame Ture (then Stokely Carmichael) and Charles V. Hamilton's theory of internal colonization in their book *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation* (1967) struck a chord not only in African Americans who were ready to take the tenants of the civil rights movement to another level, but to other people of color who shared the subjugation of being non-white in the United States. Ture and Hamilton stated that in order to carve out a place for themselves in the politico-social order, "Black people in the U.S. must raise hard questions, challenge the very nature of society itself: its long-standing values, beliefs and institutions. To do this we must first redefine ourselves. Our basic need is to reclaim our history and our identity from what must be called cultural terrorism."<sup>106</sup> In other words, the first task was to self-determine a collective political identity (reclaim history and identity) after which collective action (raise questions and challenging values, beliefs and institutions) could be enacted.

Almost thirty years later, after the study of social movements was professionalized, Joseph M. Kling (1995) came to the same conclusion: that the construction of collective action is inseparable from the construction of personal biography. Kling argued that social movements are constituted by the stories people tell to themselves to each other. "They reflect the deepest ways in which people understand who they are and to whom they are connected."<sup>107</sup> For Kling, "all

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<sup>106</sup> Kwame Ture and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation*, Second edition (Vintage, 1992).34.

<sup>107</sup> Joseph M Kling, "Narratives of Possibility: Social Movements, Collective Stories, and the Dilemmas of Practice" (New Social Movement and Community Organizing Conference, University of Washington School of Social Work, November 1, 1995).

movement politics are identity politics in one form or another,” hence, “social movements are constructed from identity-based narratives.”<sup>108</sup>

Pushed by contextual factors of racism in the U.S. and the imperialistic war in Southeast Asia and pulled by identification with the Black Liberation Movement at home and Third World Liberation Movements abroad, Asian Americans came together to form their own movement. Broadly speaking, some came seeking to redefine an empowered sense of collective consciousness, community and culture. Others came eager to right the wrongs wrought by racism and colonialism/imperialism that had diminished Asian American agency and empowerment in the first place. Grounded in these two major overlapping streams by which individuals were drawn into the movement, the fundamental goals of the AAM can be articulated as: 1) regaining and strengthening agency and empowerment as pan Asian Americans and 2) working for social justice for all people.

Goal: Regaining and Strengthening Agency and Empowerment as Asians in America. In social movement studies, as Ture and Hamilton found on the ground, creating a collective identity is seen as a precursor to collective action (Kling 1995, Hunt and Benford 2004). Called boundary work by Taylor and Whittier (1992), often the gateway to the construction of collective identities is opposition to a collective other; and for non-white people in the U.S. it was opposing assimilation into the dominant white world. Yet becoming Asian American was not just simply opposing Whiteness and donning a pan-Asian identity, what Daryl Maeda (2009:16) called a state-sponsored identity in order to gain traction with agencies and institutions. As activist and attorney Chris Iijima (1997) theorized, the construction of racial identity was not just a group

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

reaction to being “raced.” Instead, racial identity had, at its core, a political character.

According to Iijima, being Asian American meant political resistance to racial oppression.

Objectives within this goal:

1. “Oriental” to “Asian American”. As obvious as it may seem, since Asians were clearly not white, the biggest step in redefining themselves against what Ture and Hamilton called “cultural terrorism,” was to self-define themselves, which began by deliberately decide not to seek inclusion, acceptance, assimilation, integration into the white world. Gordon Lee wrote, “Choosing to be Asian American was about deciding to be Asian and not white. It was about rejecting racial stratification and stereotypes of who Asian people were in the United States, and taking a stand on the side of oppressed peoples.”<sup>109</sup>
2. “Serve the People”/Community Building. Part of implementing self-empowerment and self-determination was assuming responsibility for the health and welfare of Asian American individuals and communities. Community needs replaced campus concerns and the AAM made a transition from student to community activism (Chin 1973, Dong 2009). Activists organized a variety of activities to build a healthy and robust community, including self-help groups, health fairs and service organizations.
3. Fighting Redevelopment of Historical Enclaves. As city redevelopment agencies partnered with private development companies to replace resident hotels, mom and pop businesses and small farmers with parking lots, hotels and condominiums, activists worked to preserve historical ethnic enclaves such as the International Hotel in San Francisco’s Chinatown/Manilatown, Little Tokyo in Los Angeles and rural

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<sup>109</sup> Lee, “The Forgotten Revolution.”

- hamlets in Hawai'i. Due to community intervention, while much was lost, these sites were not totally erased and alternative provisions were created.
4. Asian American Studies and Student Organizing. Like the histories of other non-white people in the United States, little to nothing about Asians in America was taught in schools. The fight for ethnic studies was the campaign that first gave legs to the AAM. Asian American students were among the leaders of the Third World Strike at San Francisco State College, the longest college strike in U.S. history. Soon thereafter, students initiated Asian American Studies classes - and later centers and departments – across the nation.
  5. Historical Recovery. Closely related in motivation but not student or campus based, community-based historical reclamation projects involved young and old in the effort to educate themselves and each other about their own histories. For example, Asian American activists were the first to bring attention to the WWII camps for public scrutiny and commemoration. The anniversaries of the U.S. bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were likewise commemorated especially in light of the aggression in Southeast Asia.
  6. Asian American Cultural Productions. The cultural significance of social movements has been well established (Miller 1994, Williams 2004, Isaac 2008). The political values inherent in the AAM found concrete material expression through cultural productions like newspapers, poster art, music, film, poetry, literature and theatre. Together they not only reflected a new Asian American consciousness, they created a new Asian American culture.

Goal: Working for Global Social Justice. With a regained sense of agency derived from developing an oppositional Asian American consciousness, as simple as it may seem, the second overall goal can be summed up in working for worldwide justice. As Seigo Hayashi said about *Gidra*, “We can state our long-term goal very simply: We want to make this world a better place for all people to live.”<sup>110</sup> In order to, as Ture and Hamilton stated, “carve out a place for themselves in the politico-social order,” the newly determined Asian American needed to put their consciousness into action. Some were specific campaigns that worked toward definite goals such as ending the war in Southeast Asia. Others were on-going efforts like supporting labor and women’s issues.

Objectives within this goal:

1. Ending the War in Southeast Asia. The new political identity as *Asian Americans* was strengthened by identifying with Asians in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia during the Vietnam War. The Asian American anti-war effort was not so much motivated by pacifism as it was by what was considered genocide against Asians (Murase 1972, Wong 1972). Maeda (2009:124) and before him Bruce Iwasaki and Mike Murase in *Gidra* (1972-1973) pointed out that in protesting the war in Vietnam, Asian Americans linked the war in Asia with a system of anti-Asian racism in the U.S. Asian contingents to anti war rallies and marches brought the issue of racism, and specifically genocide, to the U.S. anti-war movement.
2. Supporting Third World Struggles at Home and Abroad. The term Third World came into its own during the Cold War after the Bandung Conference (1955), an historic international event that brought together non-aligned nations of color and posed an

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<sup>110</sup> Seigo Hayashi, “The *Gidra* Story,” *Gidra* II, no. 4 (April 1970): 9–15.

alternative to western dominance. For ethnic minority movements in the U.S., the term “Third World” became a unifying concept and was adopted as a more accurate and appropriate designation than “minority,” which belied a Eurocentric hegemony. At home, Asian Americans supported the Black Liberation, Chicano/a and American Indian movements. Abroad, it supported efforts like the Zengakuren movement in Japan, the Red Guard in the People’s Republic of China and the anti-Marcos regime in the Philippines.

3. Women’s Rights. The issues of Asian American and other women of color differed from those of the white feminist movement (Moraga and Anzaldua 1981, Roth 2003, Breines 2006, Kao 2009). One of the major differences was because men and women of color are subjugated by racism, women of color did not define men as the oppressor (Holvino 2001). Mary Kao wrote, “Women and men came to the Movement with gender role baggage from our 1950s upbringings. The struggle to let go of this baggage for both men and women embodied the struggle against male chauvinism.”<sup>111</sup>
4. Workers Rights. Labor has been the bedrock of the history of Asians in the United States as successive Asian workers were originally brought to the U.S. as sources of cheap labor. At the height of the civil rights movement when the Immigration Act of 1965 revoked restricted immigration from Latin America, Asian and Africa, new waves of immigrants became new sources of labor. Major campaigns included better conditions for the Alaska Cannery Workers in Seattle and garment workers in San

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<sup>111</sup> Mary Uyematsu Kao, “Three-Step Boogie in 1970s Los Angeles: Sansei Women in the Asian American Movement,” *Amerasia Journal* 35, no. 1 (2009): 113–38.

Francisco as well as the hiring of Asian American construction workers in New York's Chinatown.

5. Leftist Organizing. There were many revolutionary Asian American organizations that promoted the end of capitalism and the establishment of socialism or communism. The earliest included the Red Guard Party and I Wor Kuen (IWK), which merged together and later morphed into the League of Revolutionary Struggle (LRS). Other revolutionary Asian American organizations included Wei Min She and Katipunan ng mga Demokratikong Pilipino (KDP).

### Endings

Having come into its own in that iconic year of 1968 when the world and particularly the U.S. was on fire, the AAM began to wind down in the mid 1970s along with the “long sixties” in general. Because the Vietnam War had such a galvanizing effect on the AAM, it had a correspondingly deflating impact on the movement when it ended. Maeda (2009: xi) pointed out that in addition, after the war the political landscape of Asians in the U.S. changed with the wave of anti-communist Vietnamese refugees to the United States, which tempered the “perhaps overly romantic view of Asian American radicals” who viewed all Vietnamese as being anti-American.

The different spheres that constituted the AAM underwent both organizational and attitudinal changes. Ideologically, among Asian American left groups, party building was prioritized over mass organizing and many organizations dissolved or merged with multi-racial groups. Service organizations adopted more professional approaches even as mainstream agencies absorbed community workers. And other spheres that had been part of the constellation



of the AAM such art and culture and women's organizations, became more concentrated and specialized with their own issues and interests (Liu, et. al. 2008:99).

On a broader level of the "Long Sixties" and "the Movement," activist-scholar Glenn Omatsu argued that the most critical factor in the demise of the Asian American - and all social movements of the era - was the "devastating corporate offensive of the mid 1970s."<sup>112</sup> Mass struggles were accused of creating too much democracy with too little governability. Federal deregulation and nationwide privatization resulted in the restoration of economic power to the upper class (Harvey 2005).

*Gidra* was not only shaped by the dynamics of these concentric contexts - the long and multifaceted "Sixties," the social, political and cultural dynamic known to many as "the Movement" and specifically AAM - but simultaneously worked to proactively shape all three.

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<sup>112</sup> Glenn Omatsu, "The 'Four Prisons' and the Movements of Liberation: Asian American Activism from the 1960s to the 1990s," in *The State of Asian America: Activism and Resistance in the 1990s*, ed. Karin Aguilar-San Juan (Boston: South End Press, 1994).

### **Chapter 3: Content**

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore the question of what agency social movement newspapers had for the life and legacy of the movement of which they were a part. What roles did social movement newspapers play? What functions did it serve? In short, what political and cultural work did they do?

As indicated in the discussion on research design, I employed a basic grounded theory approach identifying analytic categories through memoing according to Bernard (2006). The units of analysis were discrete written and visual works contained in all 59 issues of *Gidra* that I entered chronologically into a data matrix by date, title, author, form, content and notes as needed. A second matrix was designed to determine themes after Opler's (1945) principle that themes are only visible through expressions in data and identification of themes is a key step in analyzing culture. Life history interviews of primary *Gidra* contributors and results from the limited on-line survey were used to enhance and contextualize the text analysis.

In order to better understand the entity of *Gidra*, this content analysis begins with a look at the intentions, inner workings and self-evaluations of *Gidra* as presented to its readers within its pages.

#### ***Gidra on Gidra.***

In alignment with the philosophy of collectivity and accountability that was characteristic of anti-racist and anti-colonial movements of the Sixties, *Gidra* regularly took readers behind the scenes in the form of articles and editorials to expose its journalistic mindset. In addition to short periodic monthly editorial statements, there were three primary articles that not only elucidated



From today's vantage point this statement may sound more naïve than discerning, more well meaning than well versed. Yet in the context of the times, this editorial is as reflective of the passion and commitment of the many dissident newspapers of the confounding Sixties as it was the hopes and dreams for the infant *Gidra*. Declaring that *Gidra* was dedicated to telling the "truth," it was also as close to a mission statement an anti-establishment entity of the Sixties could be. Acknowledging the general anxiety and concern regarding the "problems of fellow human beings" and distrust of the position and power of mainstream media that "determine who is heard," it reflected the philosophy of the oppositional Sixties. Promising to offer "honest expression of feeling or opinion, be it profound or profane, innocuous or insulting," it epitomized the goals of the dissident press.

Although *Gidra* was the first alternative newspaper for and by Asian Americans, the statement did not stipulate ethnically specific content or constituency. Instead the statement transcended the social construction of race and reflected the overriding goal of dissident newspapers in general which was to eschew – and indeed talk back to – position and power.

### *The *Gidra* Story*

A year later on the occasion of *Gidra*'s first anniversary, Seigo Hayashi, under the pseudonym "Bear," wrote a long (seven pages including two pages of photographs) reflective and analytical account of *Gidra*'s first year. In the context of the Sixties, written and visual materials such as pamphlets and posters often went unattributed and undated, either intentionally in deference to the emphasis on "collective" vs. "individualistic" activity (two key words of the political Sixties) or unintentionally due to too much work and too little time or concern for such details. Therefore Hayashi's inclusion of names and dates in the narrative provides indispensable documentation of the history of *Gidra* that otherwise would have gone unrecorded.

Following a profile of nine key staff members, including himself, Hayashi related a chronicle of *Gidra*'s birth and first year of life as well as critical analysis of what it meant in relation to the AAM.

*Gidra* was conceived on February 5, 1969 after five members of UCLA's Oriental American Cultural Project (OACP), the precursor to the Asian American Studies Center, proposed a publication by and for Asian American students to the university. The proposal was rejected by the Vice Chancellor in charge of university-community relations who indicated the university wanted a scholarly journal instead. "Joined by a bond of disillusionment," Dinora Gil, Laura Ho, Tracy Okida, Mike Murase and Colin Watanabe "without journalism experience or technical knowledge" decided to each donate \$100 (which was a sizable amount for students in 1969) and "gave birth to the idea that was to be GIDRA."<sup>113</sup>

In naming their new creation, they wanted to reflect a pan-Asian identity yet rejected those with nationalistic connotations. To manifest the new Asian American consciousness they were a part of, they yearned for a "name to build a new meaning around." The effort was narrowed down to "Yellowstone" and "Epicanthus," both of which symbolized the tongue-in-cheekiness that would characterize the newspaper throughout its lifetime. As Hayashi tells it, "more out of increasing fatigue and desperation" they opted for "Gidra," a giant caterpillar, a "good monster" that helped battle Japanese movie giants Godzilla and Rodan, according to Tracy Okida, who came up with the name. Almost two months later they discovered that *Gidra* was a misspelling of "Ghidorah" and that rather than a giant caterpillar or "good monster" it was a three-headed villainous beast.

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<sup>113</sup> Hayashi, "The *Gidra* Story."

Within weeks after the first issue, *Gidra* had a half dozen more volunteer staff. The need for more room as well as the original goal of connecting to community prompted a move off campus to what soon became known as the “*Gidra* House” – an attempt at communal living as well as a production site. Besides the five human occupants and “two dogs, two cats, a turtle and a bird,” the *Gidra* House soon became a gathering place for the Los Angeles AAM prompting Yuji Ichioka, who had coined the term “Asian American” when he founded the Asian American Political Alliance while a grad student at U.C. Berkeley and who was at the time a newly hired staff of the OACP to remark, “This is the only place I’ve ever been where you wipe our feet when you go outside.”<sup>114</sup>

Hayashi wrote that despite the “feeling of togetherness that went beyond ideology...in the end, it was the ideological cracks that were to prevail.” Hayashi indicated, “The initial idea was to print everything submitted regardless of language, attitude or viewpoint.” As contributions to the second issue came in, some felt that editing was necessary while others thought editing was a form of censorship. “As the paper demanded more and more attention, some questioned whether *Gidra* was becoming an end in itself rather than a means to an end.” Some felt that direct community work was more important. Others felt that *Gidra* could become an effective means of promoting community work. Original founding members Dinora Gil and Laura Ho as well as early staffer Susie Wong decided to leave *Gidra* and work on organizing students at UCLA. Their efforts resulted in the formation of the Asian Radical Movement (ARM) and six months later all three were arrested for politically related activity.<sup>115</sup> Hayashi

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> According to the Hayashi article, one received a six-month suspended sentence and two years probation. Another waived her right to a jury duty in exchange for reduced charges from

wrote that they represented the “more politically oriented or ‘radical’ element of the staff” and evaluated that in their absence, “*Gidra* became more moderate and less bold.” Their departure also left the remaining staff predominately Japanese American and male.

Hayashi indicated that the paper’s moderate stance brought community acceptance as well as subscriptions and advertisements that supplemented financial support from the UCLA Asian American Studies Center. *Gidra* instituted a formal staff organization in an attempt to become more organized but Hayashi assessed that although defining areas of responsibility worked for awhile, it was detrimental in the long run. Indicative of many progressive initiatives then and now, “The people who were responsible grew tired and no provision was made for the development of new people. In fact, the existence of the hierarchy tended to inhibit the development of new leadership.”

Hayashi felt that *Gidra*’s challenges were related to those of the AAM, namely arriving at a consistent ideology and bringing in new people. Speaking as much on behalf of the AAM as for *Gidra*, he stated, “We can state our long-term goal very simply: We want to make this world a better place for all people to live.” Yet, he added insightfully, “It is a very broad statement of policy and as such, is almost useless as a guide for making day-to-day decisions.” Hayashi concluded, “At this stage in *Gidra*’s and the Movement’s development ... rather than ‘running things down’ to others, we must spend more time listening, questioning, learning and understanding.”

### *Toward Barefoot Journalism*

Despite the disclaimer that the article was not intended as a collective or official synopsis, published as it was in the last issue and written by one of its founders and leaders –

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felonies to misdemeanors. The third, with five others, elected to dismiss their attorneys and act as their own counsel and was awaiting trial at the time the article was written.

Mike Murase – *Toward Barefoot Journalism* nonetheless acted as an organizational summation, marking the end of a major AAM institution and hence also reflecting a critical turning point in the AAM itself.

Along with photographs and graphics, Murase’s tour de force occupied twelve of the last issue’s 79 pages. After summarizing the events of the first year (which were covered in Hayashi’s article), Murase indicated that by the end of the second year, over 200 volunteers had come in and out of *Gidra* and they concentrated on “developing an awareness of our own history, a sensitivity and identification with our community, and an international perspective”<sup>116</sup> – which encompassed three of the objectives of the AAM as outlined in the previous chapter.

Like Hayashi, Murase deliberated the problem of the hierarchy within *Gidra*. In order to disassemble it and develop leadership and organizational qualities among all staff, a system of rotating monthly coordinators was initiated in July 1971. Along with structural changes, *Gidra* reiterated its non-partisan stance, which was basically an attempt to actualize its original goal of “dedication to the truth,” as declared in the inaugural issue. In so doing Murase publically laid out the predicament they were up against in achieving that goal.

On one hand, some readers criticized *Gidra* for being too one-sided, too negative and too subjective in their analysis. “Partially in response to such criticisms, but mostly because we wanted to change ourselves, we consciously struggled to eliminate acrimonious rhetoric and to present constructive alternatives for our readers.” One of the results in the ensuing months was a “hodge-podge of do-it-yourself ideas that included recipes for ethnic foods, directions for a vegetable garden, tips on how to buy a used car, and instructions for sewing your own pants, and shirts, and hats.”

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<sup>116</sup> Murase, “Toward Barefoot Journalism.”



On the other hand, there were other readers who wanted *Gidra* to take a more radical political stance and be more directive. They “scowled at the ‘how-to-do’ articles, labeling them ‘petty boojiwah’ or ‘imitations of white hippie counterculture.’” Murase wrote that in trying to present a progressive viewpoint in a principled way, they published a wide range of perspectives in a variety of styles. “The paper's diversity of perspectives stems from our varied attempts at defining ourselves. We tried to extend the role *Gidra* plays in the ongoing revolution both through collective policy decisions and our personal interactions. Therefore there is much more freedom than consistency in our pages.”

Expressing gratitude to “our subscribers and advertisers, our friends and our parents --and the Asian American Studies Center at UCLA who, from time to time, subsidized us,” Murase acknowledged that they were not able to meet the financial burden of rising costs, “both in our own bills and *Gidra*'s.”

These three articles on *Gidra* provide insight into some of the dilemmas and decisions a dissident paper faced in their mission to “tell the truth” and practice participatory democracy yet meet the structural demands of publishing a monthly paper. The transparency the writers observed revealed the inevitable yet often hidden tension many progressive organizations experience between being an end to itself (publishing a monthly newspaper) and being a means to an end (furthering the larger social movement of which it was a part). In a damned if you do and damned if you don't dilemma, *Gidra* found itself criticized for being too radical by some and not radical enough by others. Murase's indication that by the end of the second year they concentrated on “developing an awareness of our own history, a sensitivity and identification with our community, and an international perspective” provides a segue into a discussion of if

and how *Gidra* reflected the major goals and objectives of the AAM as well as a discussion of the primary critical themes *Gidra* embodied.

### ***Gidra* and the Asian American Movement**

I began content analysis by determining if and how *Gidra's* contents reflected the goals and objectives, (or spheres of activism) of the AAM as articulated in the previous chapter. I began with the AAM goals and objectives because *Gidra* was created as a tool in service to the broadly defined AAM and strove to reflect the heterogenous nature of the AAM as a whole. Confirming this standpoint was data derived from interviews with founders, long-term staff and contributors to *Gidra*, who all indicated that rather than an end to itself, they viewed the newspaper as a vehicle of the larger AAM. Everyone indicated that the goal of the paper was to reflect and promote issues and topics that were of interest and concern to the evolving community of newly self-identified Asian Americans. In addition, none had ambitions to develop *Gidra* into a self-sustaining business enterprise or had personal desires to become professional journalists or go into the publishing business.

In the process of analysis I found that, not surprisingly, units often reflected more than one AAM goal or objective. In this case I listed the unit under all the goals/objectives that it reflected. For example, there were numerous articles, essays and poems commemorating the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. These reflected the objective of historical recovery. However, many also drew attention to the horrors of war and racist military policies connected to the war in Southeast Asia and hence were also entered under ending the war in Vietnam. In the case of the poems on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, they were also entered under cultural production. These overlaps in units reflect the interconnections of themes as well – how the historical

recovery of the past was connected to present day issues and how cultural productions creatively expressed Asian American issues and concerns.

Analysis confirmed that *Gidra* indeed reflected each of the goals and objectives of the AAM. Table I: Asian American Goals in *Gidra* provides a summary with representative units from *Gidra* as concrete examples of how *Gidra* manifested those goals and objectives. Objectives of each goal are listed in order of the quantity of units in *Gidra* from highest to lowest. Therefore, for example, under the first goal of Regaining and Strengthening Agency and Empowerment as Asians in America, there were the most units published on the subtheme of Oriental to Asian American and the least on Fighting Redevelopment of Historical Enclaves. Likewise, under the second goal of Working for Global Social Justice the most units were on Ending the War in Southeast Asia with the least on Revolutionary Organizing. Note however, as indicated in Chapter 1 under Research Design, that units of analysis were not of equal size or weight, i.e.: a four-page essay and a political cartoon were each a unit of analysis. Therefore quantity of units does not correlate with how much physical space or importance a topic or theme was given within the pages of *Gidra*.

In reality, the AAM goals and objectives as stated were more intertwined than situating them into boxes may imply. On the ground, they manifested themselves more in overall spheres of activism than by agreed upon goals and objectives. And assigning labels adds to the superimposition of organization on a “movement” that was heterogeneous to begin with and that constantly evolved over time. On a concrete level, the many units that could be assigned to multiple objectives provide evidence of such overlap.

To present a full discussion of how each AAM goal and objective was covered by *Gidra* is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Instead, the purpose of the following tables is to

document that each of the AAM goals and objectives were indeed reflected in *Gidra* and provide a listing of a variety of units under each as examples. These sample units listed are not comprehensive but are meant to reflect the variety of units that reflected each objective. In contrast, a full narrative analysis of the four major themes in *Gidra* will be provided in the section that follows.

**Table Ia: How Gidra Reflected AAM Goal of Regaining/Strengthening Agency**

<b>GOALS</b>	<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>EXAMPLES IN GIDRA</b>
Regaining & Strengthening Agency & Empowerment as Asians in America	"Oriental" to "Asian American"	<i>Yellow Power!</i> (April 69), Middleman Minority (May 69), <i>Orientalism in America</i> (May 69), <i>Emergence of Yellow Power in America</i> (Oct 69), <i>Letter to a Sansei from a Whitey</i> (Oct 69), <i>I am Curious, (Yellow?)</i> Oct 69, <i>We Are Americans</i> (Nov 69), <i>Yellow &amp; Proud Necessary but not Sufficient</i> (Nov 69), <i>Quiet Americans</i> (Dec 69), <i>White Male Qualities</i> (Jan 70), <i>Amerasian Generation</i> (Feb 71), <i>Asian Nation</i> (Oct 71),
	"Serve the People"/ Community Building	<i>Title II</i> (May 69), <i>Directory of Community Orgs</i> (Aug 69), <i>AA Hard Core</i> (Feb 70) <i>Yellow Brotherhood History</i> (April 70), <i>Serve the People</i> (Aug 70), <i>Nisei Week Community Drug Offensive</i> (Sept 71), <i>Amerasian Publications</i> (Sept 71), <i>Hawaii Huli</i> (Mar 72), <i>Welfare Fund Drive</i> (July 72), <i>Koreans in America</i> (Dec 72 )Special Issues on Street People (Mar 71), <i>Middle Years</i> (Aug 71), <i>Youth</i> (Oct 72)
	Asian American Cultural Production	<i>Oriental American Exhibit</i> (April 69), <i>People's Page: Poems</i> (69-74), political cartoons on AA stereotypes (April - July 69); <i>Kill that Gook, you Gook!</i> (May 72 cover graphic), <i>On AA Music</i> (Feb 73), graphic novel style 3-art piece on imperialism, Japanese militarism & PRG Seven Point Proposal (Sept 72)
	Historical Recovery	<i>Failure of Democracy in a Time of Crisis</i> (Sept 69), <i>Manzanar, 1969</i> (Jan 70), <i>Activism 1946 Style</i> (Dec 70), <i>Anti-Asian Legislation</i> (Feb 71), <i>U.S. War Crimes in the Philippines</i> (July 71), <i>Filipino Farmworkers in Am. History</i> (Dec 71), <i>This Land is My Land, Hawaii</i> (Feb 71), <i>Chinatown: A Century of Oppression</i> (Nov 71), <i>Street Gangs</i> (Jan, June, July, Aug 73), <i>Sen Katayama, 1859-1933</i> (Oct 73), <i>Running Down our Colonized Mentality</i> (April 74)
	Asian American Studies & Student Organizing	<i>Third World: Response to Oppression (on TWLF Strike)</i> (April 69), <i>Report on first AA Studies Conference UCB</i> (Oct 69), <i>Relevance of Ethnic Studies</i> (Nov 69), <i>AA Studies, What's in a Name?</i> (July 71), <i>Student Rights (HS)</i> (Jan 73), <i>AA Studies: Food for Thought or Indigestion</i> (Aug 73)
	Fight Redevelopment of Historical Enclaves	<i>Int'l Hotel</i> (Nov 70), <i>Redevelopment or the Rape of Little Tokyo</i> (Feb 73), <i>Special Supplement: Redevelopment in Little Tokyo</i> (Aug 73), <i>Housing Crisis in LT &amp; Case for Blackmail in Seeking Reparations</i> (Dec 73)

**Table Ib: How Gidra Reflected AAM Goal of Working for Global Social Justice**

<b>GOALS</b>	<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>EXAMPLES IN GIDRA</b>
Working for Global Social Justice	End War in Southeast Asia	<i>AA Against the Crime of Silence (Dec 69), AA for Peace Rally (Jan 70), The Nature of G.I. Racism (June-July 70), Cold Draft (70-71), Nam: Prison Torture (May 71), Winter Soldiers (June 71), Notes from a Mtng with the Central Comte of the Vietnamese Women's Union (June 71), Hiroshima-Nagasaki Indochina: No More Bombs (Aug 71), Why an Asian Contingent (May 72), Medical Supply Drive (Oct 72), Laos: A Nation in Struggle (Mar 71), A Separate Peace: War (May 73)</i>
	Third World Solidarity at Home	<i>Grapes are Coming! (June 69), Aid to Alcatraz (Jan 70), Indian Brothers (April 70), Asians Support Panthers (May 70), Chicano (Sept 70), Chicano Moratorium (Oct 70), Third World People's Anti-War Conference (July 72), Nation Building at Wounded Knee (April 73), From Manzanar to Wounded Knee (May 73),</i>
	Third World Solidarity Abroad	<i>US to Return Okinawa (Dec 69), Asian Foreign Policy (Dec 69), Japanese Movement (Sept 70), Japanese Militarism Rising( Dec 70), Okinawa: A People's Struggle (April 71),Tiao-Yu T'ai: Stop the Plot! (May 71), Pak Jung Hi: Colonial Lord May 71), US War Crimes in the Philippines (July 71), Political Persecution in Taiwan (July 71), Struggle at Sanrizuka (Dec 71), Ampo Funsai (Feb 72), The Marcos Blacklist (Dec 73)</i>
	Women's Rights & Issues	<i>Yellow Prostitution (April 69), Special Issue on Women (Jan 71), G.I.'s &amp; Asian Women (Jan 71), Women's Herstory (Jan 71), Asian Street Sisters (Mar 71), Anti-Imperialist Women's Conference (May 71),Women's Analysis (Sept 71), Women in China (Sept 72), Sisterhood is a 10 Letter Word (Feb 73), It Ain't All Smiles and Sukiyaki (April 73), Freedom Fighting in the Philippines (Aug 73), Vietnamese Women &amp; Culture (Sept 73), Ain't I a Woman (April 74)</i>
	Workers Rights/Labor Struggles	<i>Resthaven Not Hiring From Neighborhood (Dec 70) Power to the Workers (Jan 71), Minority Pickets (Jan 72), On Strike! Shut It Down!: Hawaii's Plantation Strikes (April 74)</i>
	Revolutionary Organizing	<i>Red Guard Party (May 69), Alex Hing at UCLA (June/July 1970), Letters from Alex Hing from U.S. People's Imperialist Delegation to N. Vietnam, N. Korea &amp; China, (Aug &amp; Oct 70)</i>

## Themes in *Gidra*

Themes in *Gidra* were determined by: 1) how often they appeared, i.e.: quantity of articles, essays, letters, etc., that reflected particular concepts, 2) how pervasive they were across different types of cultural ideas and practices, 3) epistemological substance of the units in defining, clarifying, adding to areas of knowledge, and 4) reader interest as gauged in letters to the editor and submitted essays. Based on these criteria, and notwithstanding overlap, I located four major themes in the contents of *Gidra*, which also correspond with AAM goals and objectives.

- 1) Vetting Asian American Identity and Consciousness,
- 2) Asian American Perspectives on the War in Southeast Asia
- 3) Building Asian American Community and Culture
- 4) Third World Solidarity at Home and Abroad

### 1. Vetting Asian American Identity and Consciousness

The construction of collective identity is a critical component of social movements, necessary for creating a sense of “we-ness” and collective agency (Snow 2001), generating political activism (Kling 1995, Hunt and Benford 2004), sustaining commitment over time, (Gamson 1991), and personal transformation (Polleta and Jasper 2001, Giugni 2004). As indicated in the previous chapter, against the backdrop of white dominance and racist policies and practices, the first task was to reject white standards and imposed mainstream boundaries in order to redefine who Asians in the U.S. were, which meant transformation from the status of “Oriental” to developing a pan-Asian American political consciousness and culture. Stemming from this regained place of self-determination and empowerment, the second goal was to work for a better world for all people, which both reinforced and enacted the evolution of a pan-Asian

political identity and consciousness. In this context, the psychological and political transformation from “Oriental” to “Asian American” on a personal and collective level was a critical issue for the AAM especially during the first years of *Gidra*’s tenure.

Beginning with the first issue, the vetting of a new Asian American consciousness was played out publicly as *Gidra* published articles and editorials on divergent points of view and readers often responded with counter-articles and letters to the editor. Because of *Gidra*’s inclusive and non-sectarian philosophy, a variety of different opinions were made public for readers to contemplate, discuss and debate. Unbound to any one organization or ideology, *Gidra* chronicled as it incubated the evolving development of the new Asian American political consciousness as it unfolded in real time.

*Yellow Power*. In the inaugural issue of *Gidra* in April 1969, “Yellow Power!” by Larry Kubota, was one of the first manifestos of the new Asian American political consciousness. While there were previous written materials describing the meaning of this new sensibility issued by the U.C. Berkeley Asian American Political Alliance (AAPA) in 1968 and early 1969, “Yellow Power!” in *Gidra* was the first to be widely available. In journalistic style, a boxed quote at the top of the article beneath the title summarized its message. It read, “Yellow Power is a call for Asian Americans to end the silence that has condemned us to suffer in this racist society.” Although “yellow” was an early term of self-reference among Japanese immigrants to the U.S. in the 1920s,<sup>117</sup> the Sixties usage by Asian Americans took it from the declaration of

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<sup>117</sup> In a 1922 article in the Japanese American newspaper *Rafu Shimpo*, the author declared he would rather Japanese be considered yellow (*oushoku minzoku*) than white (*hakujinshu*). See Fuminori Minamikawa “Vernacular Representation of Race and the Making of an Ethnoracial Community of Japanese in Los Angeles” in *Japanese and Asian Americans: Racializations and Their Resistances*, Kyoto University, 2012.



“Black Power,” which upheld the emphasis on color in the newly adopted determination not to be white.

Recounting incidents in the history of racism against Asians, and pointing out that Asians in the U.S. had previously adopted the assimilative tactic of adaptation, Kubota announced, “Today however, is the dawn of a new era. We have finally reached the limits of our tolerance and have begun to explore a new alternative,” the “rejection of the passive Oriental stereotype and birth of a new Asian – one who will be recognized and deal with injustices.” Throughout the article Kubota defined underlying precepts of the AAM under the name of “Yellow Power.” Transformation from Oriental to Asian American: “Yellow Power means that we as Asian Americans are seeing greater control over the direction of our lives.” Securing self-empowerment and self-determination: “Yellow Power is a call to reject our past and present condition of powerlessness.” Anti-racism and the imperative to talk back: “Yellow Power is a call for Asian Americans to end the silence that has condemned us to suffer in this racist society...” Third World solidarity: “...and to unite with our Black, Brown, and Red brothers of the Third World for survival self-determination, and the creation of a more humanistic society.”

Another article that communicated the values and goals of the new Asian American consciousness was “The Emergence of Yellow Power in America” by Amy Uyematsu. Also deploying the term “yellow power,” like Kubota’s, Uyematsu’s article reflected identification with the tenants of Black Power as well as an attempt to name the still nascent social movement. The name “Yellow Power” never took on the prominence of Black Power and, after trying on other labels like “Amerasian” and “Asian Nation,” the term “Asian American Movement” was ultimately adopted.

“The Emergence of Yellow Power in America” was written by Uyematsu as a class assignment for one of the first Asian American classes taught at UCLA, evidence of how much the state of knowledge of what would come to be known as Asian American Studies was developed by students. For example, soon after it appeared in *Gidra*, an instructor at the University of California, Berkeley wrote to *Gidra* requesting forty-five copies for his class on Chinese Americans.<sup>118</sup> It also has since become the most anthologized article from *Gidra*. The article was reprinted in its entirety in a four-part series in the *Los Angeles Free Press*, which used it as the front cover headline that claimed “YELLOW POWER ARRIVES!”<sup>119</sup> An excerpted version was selected for inclusion in the first published anthology on Asian America, *Roots: An Asian American Reader* (UCLA Asian American Studies Center, 1971). And an excerpt was chosen as one of two entries on Asian Americans in “*Takin’ it to the streets*”: *A Sixties Reader* (Oxford Press, 1995) which is one of only two books on the social movements of the Sixties that included Asian American activism. Accounting for its historical and personal resonance, historian Scott Kurashige indicated that the article, “crystallized simultaneously the anger and the aspiration of her generation.”<sup>120</sup>

In the article Uyematsu, who became a high school teacher and published poet, identified four main concepts that articulated the nascent movement’s intellectual and philosophical underpinnings. The first was the concept of identity. The supremacy of whiteness required all

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<sup>118</sup> Letter to Editor from Alan S. Wong, Instructor, San Francisco State College, *Gidra* I, no 9, December 1969: 4.

<sup>119</sup> Amy Uyematsu, “Yellow Power: Radical Vision Grows Among Asian Americans,” *Los Angeles Free Press* 6, no. 276 (November 31, 1969): 3. (first of four-part series)

<sup>120</sup> Scott Kurashige, “Amy Uyematsu,” in *Words Matter: Conversations with Asian American Writers*, ed. King-Kok Cheung, 2000, 252–69.

people of color to ruggedly declare their decolonized identity, as the shout-out “Black is Beautiful” symbolized. Black Panther and AAPA spokesperson Richard Aoki assessed, “In the past I didn’t think the identity issue was that important, but I realize that unless you have your identity, you can’t go to the political level.”<sup>121</sup> The second idea was that Asian Americans must come into their power both personally and politically. A vicious cycle, the normalization of inequality led to acquiescence on the part of Asians and by so doing perpetuated White supremacy. Third was the significance and challenge of creating a united front. The most obvious challenge was the multiplicity of Asian ethnicities, each with their own language, culture and history, the diversity of which was compounded by both historical antagonisms between ethnic groups as well as social and economic stratifications. The fourth and final point was, as Kubota had written previously, that the yellow power movement must join the Third World Revolution “for the creation of a more humanistic society.”

Both Kubota’s and Uyematsu’s articles provided a blueprint for the new AAM at a time when the movement was just taking seed. Less polemical and more pragmatic regarding the personal transition from “Oriental” to “Asian American,” was a third article published during *Gidra*’s first year: “The Oriental as a ‘Middleman Minority,’” by Alan Nishio (*Gidra*, May 1969). Speaking back to the claim that Asian Americans were model minorities, which was propagated by articles in the mainstream press several years earlier (*U.S. News and World Report* 1966, *New York Times Magazine* 1966, *Newsweek* 1971), Nishio explained how that pigeonhole was used as a pawn in U.S. race relations. He indicated that because Asian Americans were small in number and were not a threat to the mainstream, they had no real base of power. As a

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<sup>121</sup> Diane C. Fujino, *Samurai Among Panthers : Richard Aoki on Race, Resistance, and a Paradoxical Life* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012): 169.

result, being Orientalized, they played a unique role in race relations, namely being used as an example to be followed, “a minority group that has achieved success through adaptation rather than confrontation.”<sup>122</sup>

The deeper significance of Nishio’s article, however, was that instead of simply denoting how Asians in America were being used as a buffer by the mainstream in the conflict between whites and people of color, Nishio signified the psychological imposition that role had on Asians as individuals. “Because Orientals have no power of their own, they feel themselves in a highly vulnerable position. Because of their comfortable economic status, Orientals feel that they must defend the system. They act as the ‘well-fed’ houseboys of the Establishment, defending the plantation from the ‘lowly’ field slaves.” This article is also significant because this self-reproach was the first time in the newly developing evolution of an Asian American consciousness that such pointed and personal self-criticism was leveled publicly.

Besides this contrition, Nishio, who went on to be a university vice president, included what he felt were the consequences of this wrong action. “As long as Orientals fulfill their roles successfully, but not so successfully as to endanger or compete with the elite, their esteem and status will be protected by the elite. In times of increasing stress and confrontation, however, Orientals may be used by the Establishment as the scapegoat upon which other minorities can vent their frustrations.” Pointing out how “Orientals” have been manipulated, in a change of terminology, Nishio dropped the term “Oriental” that he had been using and, in deploying “Asian American,” defined the new term as well. Speaking against racism, he wrote, “We must act as Asian Americans in rejecting the stereotypes of the Establishment.” Like Kubota and Uyematsu, Nishio stressed empowerment and Third World unity: “We must develop an independent base of

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<sup>122</sup> Alan Nishio, “The Oriental as ‘Middleman Minority’,” *Gidra* I, no. 2 (May 1969): 3.

power and align ourselves with other members of the Third World for mutual self determination and self defense.” Reflecting the themes of community control and development, he concluded his article with, “As Asian Americans we must begin to delineate the needs of our community, organize around these needs, and start to become a viable political force in American society.”<sup>123</sup>

*Americans or Yellow?* Naming was a critical part of the process of self-definition as the evolution from “colored,” to “Negro,” to “Black,” to “Afro-American,” to “African American” attests (Baugh 1991). Ture (formerly Carmichael) and Hamilton stated, “We shall have to struggle for the right to create our own terms through which to define ourselves and our relationship to the society, and to have those terms recognized.”<sup>124</sup> Such politics of liberation resonated with other socially colonized peoples and naming became understood as an elemental aspect of self-determination, which art critic Lucy Lippard called, “the active tense of identity.”<sup>125</sup>

An example of the debate regarding naming and labels was reflected in a series of articles in *Gidra* between November 1969 and March 1970. It was launched by an essay titled, “We Are Americans,” written and submitted by David Ota. The presenting issue was his proposition that the term “Americans of Japanese descent” be used in place of what he called the “self-deprecating title of ‘Japanese-Americans.’” An example of the importance of semantics and self-

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<sup>123</sup> Although Nishio may have been the first to publicly articulate this analysis so articulately, he was not alone in this collective self-criticism. For example, in the July 1969 issue of *Gidra*, a letter to the editor similarly and more sarcastically stated, “The Asians of today ... give lip service to their heritage while struggling to be less colored and more white than other minorities. To date they have made excellent house niggers and uncle toms.”

<sup>124</sup> Kwame Ture and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation*, Second edition (Vintage, 1992).

<sup>125</sup> Lucy R. Lippard, *Mixed Blessings : New Art in a Multicultural America* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1990). 19

descriptors to the process of empowerment, his reasoning was that Asian in the U.S. were Americans first and foremost. “It is time we realize that our search for our identity begins with a conception of our Americanism and ends with a demonstration of our Americanism.”<sup>126</sup>

Ota was not your standard assimilationist, however. He agreed with the oppositional stance that “Japanese Americans have always been considered second rate citizens,” even going so far as to proclaim that “there will be no more camps because we will either be free or dead.” He called for activism but not by demonstrations or mass protest because “too much of our thinking so far has been influenced by black literature.” Instead, he declared “by action I mean that we rock the boat by waiving the American flag, waving the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence,” adding “Anyone who wishes to deny us our social, economic and political rights will have to destroy us, the American flag and the Constitution.”

This article evoked a flurry of responses in the forms of letters to the editor, submitted articles of rebuttal, and a reply by Ota. This dialogue on paper functioned as a public forum for debate and discussion. One letter to the editor agreed with Ota and indicated the reader would like to see the article reprinted in the newspaper of the Japanese American Citizens’ League.<sup>127</sup> The first article of rebuttal was submitted by Steve Tatsukawa who considered Ota’s article naïve. Tatsukawa refuted, “We must not cover up the actual American reality with a lot of idealistic jive-talk.”<sup>128</sup> Instead, he argued that American reality was fueled by power, not democracy professing that, “American ‘democracy’ has failed in times of crises.” Citing the incarceration of Japanese Americans in 1942, the Watts rebellion in 1965, the repression of

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<sup>126</sup> David Ota, “We Are Amerians,” *Gidra* I, no. 8 (November 1969): 5.

<sup>127</sup> “Letters to *Gidra*,” *Gidra* I, no. 9 (December 1969): 7.

<sup>128</sup> Steve Tatsukawa, “No Time to Play,” *Gidra* I, no. 9 (December 1969): 5.

demonstrators at the DNC convention in 1968 and the closing of People's Park in 1969 as examples, he submitted that it was the American power structure that forced people into concentration camps and ghettos, and unleashed police brutality in Chicago and Berkeley. Tatsukawa wrote that a positive ethnic identity was important but not enough. He ended his article by claiming that before real change can occur, Asian Americans must decide whether they are willing to take the step from talk to action. Five months after Tatsukawa submitted this article, he was one of the students at a mass anti-war rally at UCLA on May 5, 1970 protesting Nixon's bombing of Cambodia who was beaten and arrested by the Los Angeles police. Soon after, Tatsukawa joined the volunteer staff of *Gidra*.

In the following issue (January 1970), David Ota responded to Steve Tatsukawa's response. Ota accused Tatsukawa of having no concrete proposals for change, instead tossing about the term "revolution" like a "faddish frisbee." Giving the example of Polish, Greek, Italian and Irish communities being able "to raise their position in society by telling themselves and others that they were Americans," he determined that although Asians were not a white ethnic group, "It worked for others and it will work for us." Ota picked up Tatsukawa's gauntlet and flung it back challenging "We, Americans of Japanese descent, have a choice between two actions: Tatsukawa's aggressive and revolutionary action – whatever it may be and my militant patriotism with liberal motives. Time has run out for sitting and debating; it's time for a decision and action. Choose your weapons." <sup>129</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> David Ota, "A Time to Choose," *Gidra* II, no. 1 (January 1970): 5.

In the March 1970 issue of *Gidra*, Frank Kofsky,<sup>130</sup> an Assistant Professor of History at Sacramento State College, wrote that as an historian he felt compelled to correct the fallacies in Ota's argument. He pointed out that although prejudice against White European immigrants did exist, it was not of the magnitude directed at non-whites. "Thus there were no laws preventing Catholics and Jews from intermarrying with Protestants, (or) owning land in the state of California; and of course no mass imprisonment of loyal white European aliens in World War II." In addition, he stated that it was not what Ota called the "community expression of Americanism" that won acceptance for these European immigrants, it was instead, as he stated, "their white skin, and that alone."<sup>131</sup>

In the same issue directly next to "We Are Americans" was another article titled "Yellow and Proud" pronouncing an opposite viewpoint. Existing side by side for readers to read one after the other, with their opposing key words of "Americans" on one side and "Yellow" on the other, it presented two different ways Asian American identity was interpreted and should be actualized.

The author Danny Li, while expressing delight that an Asian awareness was finally emerging among youth, challenged, "What comes after the rhetoric, after graduation?"<sup>132</sup> Referring to college as "four years of oral masturbation on cultural identity," after graduating, he claimed that although Asians might still eat in Chinatown or go to Nisei Week festivities, after

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<sup>130</sup> Frank Kofsky (1935-1997) was an author, jazz critic and professor of history at what is now California State University at Sacramento from 1969 until his death in 1997. From <http://www.sfgate.com/news/article/Frank-Kofsky-2793270.php>

<sup>131</sup> Frank Kofsky, "The Nature of Racism," *Gidra* II, no. 3 (March 1970): 4.

<sup>132</sup> Danny Li, "Yellow and Proud," *Gidra* I, no. 8 (November 1969): 5.



college they would embrace a capitalistic, materialistic way of life. He feared that “Asian Americans have Uncle-Tommed so hard just to get a piece of the action” that the ultimate conclusion will be “a struggle to get from the position of the oppressed to that of the OPPRESSOR.” This, he stated, was the contradiction that eventually must be faced.

“Unless something more substantial than *Gidra* and ‘Ethnic’ Studies is found, in five or ten years, 95 percent of us Asian Americans will be seen driving in our Mustangs to our \$15,000 a year job with the Defense Department.” (The average income in 1969 was \$8,486.) He accused *Gidra* of not going “far enough in your Third World consciousness bit,” and challenged the paper to address the dilemma of talking the talk while in college and walking the walk after graduation.

White as Right. In the June 1969 issue was a letter in response to an article in the UCLA campus newspaper on the newly formed Asian American Studies Center at UCLA. In part it read, “For all practical purposes, I am a ‘white man,’ whether or not the white world is willing to accept me as one. In fact, I get the shock of my life every morning when I wake up, look in the mirror, and see a Chinese man staring back at me!”<sup>133</sup>

Together with pronouncements like: “I wear a shirt and tie, not a Chinese robe. I speak English, not Mandarin. Though I eat Chinese food, I’d prefer steak and potatoes. I believe in Jesus Christ, not Confucius,” his declamation assumed the requisite that the only way to be American was not to be Asian. Being Chinese and being American were mutually exclusive, therefore since he wore a shirt and tie (instead of a Chinese robe), spoke English (instead of Mandarin) and was a Christian (instead of a Confucian), “for all practical purposes,” he figured

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<sup>133</sup> Edward C. Long, “Reflections in a Slanted Eye,” *Gidra* 1, no. 3 (June 1969).

he was “a White man.” After so many years of being faced with this contradiction, I am sure many readers identified or sympathized with him.

And many readers did not. In the next issue came a rebuttal from a R. Wu, who was a high school junior. Wu opined that assimilation and rejection of one’s heritage was not the answer. Employing the still-common term “Oriental,” Wu wrote, “By trying to be white, the Oriental is saying that the white man’s way of life is better than his own. Orientals (should) be accepted for their differences as well as their similarities.”<sup>134</sup> Exuding an anti-assimilationist stance, he put forth a multicultural perspective that co-existence rather than cultural absorption was the new world order. This young respondent, Robert Wu, would go on to become *Gidra*’s youngest columnist.

In the area of marriage, miscegenation was illegal, in some states until 1967. In the January 1970 issue of *Gidra*, an anonymous article titled “White Male Qualities” opened with the blatant statement, “I intend to marry a White man.” Rhetorically posing the question of why, she answered that it is because he is “tall, handsome, manly, confident, poised, protective, domineering, affectionate and imaginative.”<sup>135</sup> She explained, “It seems that Oriental girls who marry White men are looking for this stereotype and will not settle for the short, ugly, unconfident, clumsy, arrogant Oriental man that we are all plagued with.” She went on to say, “Oriental women also have stereotypes – small, long black hair, gentle, obedient, loving, very womanly, quiet and beautiful.” Adding, “None of these are derogatory, but all complimentary. Women like to be thought of in his way.”

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<sup>134</sup> R. Wu, “Blind Reflections?,” *Gidra*, July 1969, 2.

<sup>135</sup> “White Male Qualities,” *Gidra* II, no. 1 (1970): 5,16.



Fig. 2: Editorial cartoon that accompanied article “White Male Qualities.” *Gidra*, II, no 1 (1970): 5.

The article grew more complex as it continued. Regarding male-female relationships, the anonymous writer went on to specify, “the Oriental boy seems to like those girls who evoke little of their Orientalness.” Indicating that one of her old boyfriends was Japanese American, she said that “he seemed to dislike all and any interest exhibited about Yellow identity. He wanted to continue to pretend he was White.” While it could be argued that it was she who was pretending to be white, was this belief a projection of her own self-deception, a genuine critique of Asian Americans, or perhaps a combination of both? Not surprisingly this provocative article elicited several demonstrative responses – by both males and a female - that were published in the next issue (February 1970). All disparaged the writer for being “misguided,” “immature,” and “sheltered,” and criticized her copious use and misuse of generalizations and stereotypes.

“Yellow Prostitution” was an article in the inaugural issue of *Gidra*. Notwithstanding its contents, the title alone signaled boldness and defiance. In the late 1960s, reference to skin color

was still off-color so to speak. Folks were just getting used to Negroes being Black, the Brown Berets had recently formed, and the only previous popular application of “yellow” in terms of race was the Anti-Asian “yellow peril” campaign of the late 1800s and early 1900s.

“Prostitution” was another reference that was unsavory. Together “Yellow Prostitution,” like Ron Tanaka’s poem, “I hate my wife for her fat yellow face,” was audacious and daring.

Written by Dinora Gil, one of *Gidra*’s original founders, the article addressed gender inequality and did so by speaking to Asian American women in no uncertain terms. Its primary themes of identity, gender and race were problematized by self-criticism and sarcastic self-deprecation. “It is not enough that we must ‘kow tow’ to the Yellow male ego, but we must do this by aping the Madison Avenue and Hollywood version of White femininity. All the peroxide, foam rubber and scotch tape will not transform you into what you are not. If Revlon came out with a rack to stretch legs – guess who would be the first to use it?”<sup>136</sup>

In the next issue, a letter to the editor responded to this article by asking, “what’s wrong with female prostitution?” While his question was seemingly rhetorical, he went on to proffer, “The practice is to respect, love and honor, and should not be knocked at by a female who is angry probably because of her own deficiencies.” Concluding with “Speaking through my cock, I can say that the yellow women are beautiful, and their role of yellow prostitution is wholly a yellow pearl,” he embodied sexism as well as racism. Not to be outdone by sexism, *Gidra* responded with its own version: a drawing of a voluptuous naked Asian female with the editorial note, “Dinora Gil has no visible deficiencies.”<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Dinora Gil, “Yellow Prostitution,” *Gidra* I, no. 1 (April 1969): 2 & 4.

<sup>137</sup> Name withheld, “Letters to *Gidra* ‘Prostitution,’” *Gidra* I, no. 2 (May 1969). 2

## 2. Asian American Perspectives on the War in Southeast Asia

While the theme of Asian American political identity dominated *Gidra*'s first year, commentary on the Vietnam war built up slowly but soon proved to be the most dominant theme in the newspaper as determined by quantity of units, quality of epistemological articulation, insight, and understanding as well as reader reaction and response.

The AAM was born at the peak of the anti-Vietnam War movement. By 1968, U.S. troops in Vietnam reached 550,000, with over 16,500 killed and 110,000 wounded in that year alone. By 1968, the anti-war movement was also at its zenith. Within the year Asian Americans started coming together against the war as self-identified Asian contingents. Liu et. al. maintained, "The Vietnam War was a central issue that permeated the AAM's consciousness."<sup>138</sup> Asian contingents to anti war rallies and marches brought the issue of racism, and specifically genocide, to the U.S. anti-war movement. Instead of chanting, "Bring the Troops Home!" Asian Americans carried banners that demanded, "Stop Killing Our Asian Brothers and Sisters."<sup>139</sup>

*Gidra* first reported on the war in June 1969 with a brief mention of an Asian American soldier from Hawai'i killed by friendly fire and a submitted article advocating conscientious objection to the draft. The war did not appear again until September 1969 with a short announcement for a meeting of the "Asian American Mobilization and Education Committee to End the War in Vietnam, the first Asian American anti-war organization mentioned in *Gidra*. It indicated, "Unlike most social action and civil rights groups, this organization is composed of old and young – second and third generation Asians, who have united for a common cause." No

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<sup>138</sup> Michael Liu, Kim Geron, and Tracy Lai, *The Snake Dance of Asian American Activism: Community, Vision, and Power* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2008). 60.

<sup>139</sup> Paul Wong, "The Emergence of the Asian American Movement," *Bridge: An Asian American Perspective* 2 (1972): 33–39.

further mention of this organization was found. However, this notice specified that the meeting would be held at the home of Dewey Ajioka who was an English instructor at Los Angeles City College and one of the speakers at the first Asian American anti-war rally in Los Angeles, held on January 17, 1970. Upon researching Ajioka, I discovered that on February 6, 2006 the public radio series *Storycore* featured him as a 89 year old retired teacher who regularly sketched homeless people which he supplemented with a short bio of each person.



# asian americans for peace

**MY LAI-HIROSHIMA**  
"it's no real loss,"  
(Iowa housewife)

## RALLY JAN. 17 SAT. TIME: 1 PM

**PLACE:** On Weller St./Between 1st St. and 2nd St.  
**ASSEMBLE:** Union Church (in Little Tokyo) 12 PM

120 No. San Pedro Street [See map of Little Tokyo on page 2]

**SPEAKERS:** Reverend Sozaburo Watanabe [retired issai minister], Monique Truong [daughter of Truong Dinh Dzu, leading South Vietnamese political prisoner], Warren Furutani [field director of the JACL], Reverend Richard Wong [Methodist minister], Yuji Ichioka [Asian Americans for Peace].

### ASIAN AMERICANS AGAINST THE CRIME OF SILENCE

**BREAK THE SILENCE:** We Asian Americans will not give tacit consent by remaining silent—  
**HOW MANY MORE MUST KILL AND BE KILLED BEFORE OUR GOVERNMENT'S MADNESS  
ENDS IN VIETNAM?**

**STOP THE KILLING:** We Asian Americans declare our firm opposition to the American war in  
Vietnam.

**STOP THE WAR:** We Asian Americans believe that American Vietnam policy is politically and  
morally bankrupt.

**STOP THE KILLING:** We Asian Americans demand the immediate cessation of American military  
action and the withdrawal of American troops.

**BREAK THE SILENCE:** We Asian Americans appeal to you, our fellow Asian Americans, who are  
concerned with justice and peace, to join us and speak out against the war.

The above statement is sponsored by the ASIAN AMERICANS FOR PEACE and has already been endorsed by the following prominent individuals:

**PROFESSORS:**

Dewey Ajioka, LACC  
Philip Huang, UCLA  
Harry Kitano, UCLA  
Mitsuru Katsoka, UCLA  
Sumio Matsuda, ELACC  
Robert Suzuki, USC  
Kazumitsu Kato, Cal State L.A.  
Patricia Shirazko Traylor, USD  
Alan Nishio, UCLA  
Kazuo Higa, LACC  
Ronald Takaki, UCLA  
Jim Omura, UCLA  
Franklin Odo, Occidental  
Nadine Hata, Cal State Dominguez Hills  
Anna Matsuihii, USC  
Yuji Ichioka, UCLA

**MINISTERS:**

Rev. Sozaburo Watanabe, Methodist  
Rev. Richard Wong, Methodist  
Rev. Ari Takemoto, Buddhist  
Rev. William M. Shinto, Baptist  
Rev. Peter Chen, Methodist  
Rev. John Doami, Buddhist  
Rev. Edward Iwamoto, Methodist  
Rev. Roy Sano, Methodist  
Rev. Masao Kodani, Buddhist

**PROFESSIONALS & OTHERS:**

Fred Miwa, artist  
Betty A. Wong, musician  
George Takei, actor  
Ernest Harada, actor  
Frank Gee, M.D.  
Jan Kayahara, M.D.  
Ray Fay, M.D.  
Kiyoshi Sonoda, dentist  
David M. Miura, dentist  
David Woo, lawyer

Robert Takasugi, lawyer  
Harry Mock, lawyer  
Hiroshi Fujisaki, lawyer  
Harry Mizoguchi, pharmacist  
David Jeng, pharmacist  
Masako Watanabe, dress designer  
Jeffrey Matsui, Associate  
National Director, JACL

Warren Furutani, Field Director, JACL  
Alan Kumamoto, National  
Youth Director, JACL  
Ethnic Concern Committee, JACL  
John J. Saito, L.A. County  
Human Relations Commission  
Collin Kajioke, social worker  
Jane Kurohara, social worker  
Pei-Ngor Chen, social worker  
Tom Takenouchi, social worker  
Karen L. Ishizuka, social worker  
Harold Itatani, businessman  
Robert A. Nakamura, photographer  
Cathy Okamura, analyst  
Jim H. Matsuoka, aircraft technician  
Ken Yoshikawa, engineer  
Sumi Ujimori, electrical designer  
James Okazaki, traffic engineer  
Mori Nishida, community worker  
Richard Foguchi, community worker  
Walter S. Yanagita, architect  
Frank Sata, architect  
Kaz Umemoto, architect  
Yosh Kuromiya, landscape architect  
A. Yamada, teacher  
Richard Umemo, teacher  
Christina Wong, teacher  
Pam Chow, teacher  
Agnes Suzuki, teacher  
Terry Murase, teacher  
Marian Sato, teacher  
Cynthia Ong, teacher

MOTHERS:  
Jeane Wong  
Mary Miyashita  
Janice Shindo Chang  
Hide Sasaki  
Dora Jeng  
Liz Itatani  
Rei Osaki  
Kate Huang  
Mitsu Sonoda  
Enid Odo  
Joanne Kumamoto  
Margaret Lee  
Sue Embrey  
Grace Mizoguchi  
Mitsuko Murase

Ted Tajima, teacher  
Yvonne Wong, teacher  
Harry Kawahara, teacher  
Frieda Mock, teacher  
Feelee Lee McCann, teacher  
Sumire Ajioka, teacher  
Louise Sakamoto, librarian  
Jane Kawahara, R.N.  
Hide Murase, dentist  
Agnes Yoshikawa, dental hygienist  
June Takei, dental hygienist  
John H. Ho, draftsman  
Elsie Uyematsu, adm. asst.  
Marion Fay, editor  
Stephanie Lee Takenouchi, secretary  
Larry Kubota, research consultant  
Victor J. Ong, accountant  
Jean Kato, housewife  
Keith Harada, microbiologist  
John Fujikawa, gardener  
Ted Tani, automatic lathe operator  
Emma Gee  
The Gidra Staff

STUDENTS:  
Linda Fujikawa  
Mike Murase  
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Eugene Toya  
Eddie Wong  
June Ikemoto  
Karen Chomori  
Steven Tatsukawa  
Kay Funakoshi  
Dianne Jue  
Ann Matsuoka  
Robert Nakagawa  
Jennie Suzie Wong  
Wendy Sahara  
Tracy Okida  
Ivan Ohta  
Howard S. Lau  
Kenneth Chen, Jr.  
Judy Inmaru  
Arthur Mio  
George Abe  
Peggy Sonoda  
Cathy Sonoda  
Ann Sonoda  
Wayne N. Omokawa  
Ron Hirano  
Lloyd Fujizawa  
Kikue Santohigashi  
William Zaima  
Michael Hiranuma  
Janice Yen  
Dexter Ing

Mary Tani  
Nancy Takeda  
Lily Zaima  
Terry Unemoto  
Eileen Keiko Higa  
Kenyon Chan  
Irene Miyagawa  
Gary Yung  
Irene Hiramoto  
Janet Lim  
Rodney Ogawa  
Suzy Wong  
Kathy Toda  
Carol Hatanaka  
Ken Nakazawa  
Paula A. Higashi  
Stewart Kwoh  
Kenneth Y. Hanada  
Merilynne Hamano  
Doris Mori  
Russell Kubota  
Morgan Chu  
Duane Kubo  
Alan Ota  
Carol Mochizuki  
Clyde Higa  
Charles Sakugawa  
Roland Chow  
Don Asakawa  
Cynthia Endo  
Ron Matsuuchi  
David Takashima  
Evelyn Ohno  
Phyllis Miura  
Andre Miura  
Seigo Hayashi  
Amy Murakami  
Arnold Wong  
Elaine Tani  
Naomi Uyekawa  
Alan Lee

Fig. 3: Full-page announcement for first Asian American rally against Vietnam War in Los Angeles with list of endorsements. The author is listed in the middle of the second column. *Gidra*, Vol. II, no. 1 (January 1970): 16.

In the February 1970 issue, Mike Murase reported on the first specifically Asian American march against the war in Los Angeles held the previous month at which Ajioka was a speaker. Placards shouted “Asia for Asians, No Vietnamese Ever Called Me a Fat Jap, Remember Manzanar.”<sup>140</sup> Later, Murase reported that Yuji Ichioka, then associate director of the Asian American Studies Center at UCLA, pointed out the uniqueness of the Asian American perspective on the war by quoting a woman who wrote that the victims of the My Lai massacre were a “bunch of worthless Asians in a part of the world that’s already over-populated anyway.”<sup>141</sup>

Articles on the war appeared sporadically until the May 1970 issue after Nixon’s invasion of Cambodia escalated not only the war in Southeast Asia but also the anti-war effort at home. It marked a turning point for Asian American anti-war activity and particularly for *Gidra* as it attracted new staff members and its office became a community-wide gathering place for Asian American activities locally as well as a destination point for Asian American activists around the country visiting Southern California. In my estimation, articulating an Asian American analysis of the war is perhaps *Gidra*’s greatest epistemological contribution.

While fighting against an unjust war like other anti-war activists, Asian American activists had substantive differences with the mainstream anti-war movement with regard to underlying values and philosophy. A book on the Sixties dissident press claimed that the war ended “with an outcome sought by the underground press, which had correctly contended that Vietnam was of little strategic importance to the U.S and posed no threat to America’s national

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<sup>140</sup> Mike Murase, “Asian Americans March for Peace,” *Gidra* II, no. 2 (February 1970).

<sup>141</sup> Murase, “Toward Barefoot Journalism.”



security,”<sup>142</sup> In contrast to this perspective, the Asian American analysis was different in both tone and substance. Rather than arguing impersonally from a state perspective regarding “strategic importance” and “national security,” Asian American anti-war efforts were based on identification with and support for Southeast Asians.

Identification with and Support for the Vietnamese Perspective. One of the most subjective reasons Asian Americans came together as a pan-Asian political movement was because of understandings that emanated from their collective identification with the Vietnamese. Asian American activists literally grew up and came of age with the Vietnam conflict. As *Gidra* staff writer Bruce Iwasaki expressed in a 1973 article, “The U.S. involvement in Vietnamese affairs began around the time we were born; stayed hidden from the national consciousness during our years of innocence; escalated as we matured; and has reached climactic proportions while our generation gains the will and seeks the means to end that involvement. Much as we forget, ignore, or grow numb to it, the war has been a constant shadow in our lives.”<sup>143</sup>

As mentioned, one of the turning points that escalated both the war in Southeast Asia as well as the anti-war efforts at home was the invasion of Cambodia in the Spring of 1970. Asian American students at UCLA were among those beaten and arrested at a UCLA rally on May 5, 1970 protesting the invasion of Cambodia as well as the killings at Kent State University and Jackson State College. In the May 1970 issue, Tracy Okida reported that when the Los Angeles Police Department was brought in to break up the rally, Steve Tatsukawa - who had been a

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<sup>142</sup> Peck, *Uncovering the Sixties : The Life and Times of the Underground Press*. iv.

<sup>143</sup> Bruce Iwasaki, “You May Be a Lover but You Ain’t No Dancer: Helter Skelter,” *Gidra* V, no. 1 (January 1973): 16–17.

contributor to *Gidra* - was beaten, arrested and charged with felonious assault with a deadly weapon: four rocks found in his pocket. When *Gidra* staffer Colin Watanabe went to Tatsukawa's aid, Watanabe was arrested for interfering with the duties of the police.<sup>144</sup>

*Gidra* founder Mike Murase wrote that many Asian American students in attendance at that rally witnessed for the first time indiscriminate arrests and brutalities that worked to politicize them. He quoted Amy Murakami as saying, "I thought the police was supposed to serve and protect people, but they were picking out people and attacking them, and intimidating those who had already been handcuffed by beating them with sticks. After what I've seen today, I don't have any compunction about calling them pigs." Identification with the Vietnamese was reiterated when Russell Kubota observed, "The thing that really bothers me, besides the beating I saw, is that I can't imagine what American soldiers in Vietnam are doing to the Vietnamese when I see policemen beat the shit out of us. At least we can run home, but the Vietnamese can't go anywhere."<sup>145</sup>

Murase also indicated that the *Gidra* office served as a community outpost for the Asian Strike Committee that organized educational meetings and issued leaflets to inform the community about the events that took place at UCLA, and the precipitating events of the fatalities at Kent State and Jackson State as well as the escalating war in Indochina. With most of the *Gidra* staff participating in the heightened anti-war activities in addition to putting out the May issue, the following month was the first and only time they failed to publish an issue. Soon thereafter, many leaders from the Asian Strike Committee joined the *Gidra* staff, among them Steve Tatsukawa, who had been beaten and arrested at the UCLA riot, and Bruce Iwasaki who

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<sup>144</sup> Tracy Okida, "Heads Popped," *Gidra* II, no. 5 (May 1970): 3.

<sup>145</sup> Murase, "Toward Barefoot Journalism."

would become *Gidra*'s most prolific writer, having penned over 30 pieces between May 1970 and April 1974.

Asian American support for the Vietnamese perspective was symbolized on the back cover of the May 1971 issue with a drawing of a Southeast Asian woman and child and the declaration, "Victory to the People's War." Rather than just appealing for peace and an end to the war, the Asian American stance of advocating the Vietnamese viewpoint of self-government and an end to imperialistic interference was expressed throughout *Gidra*. This perspective was reflected in *Gidra*'s many reports on the war such as: 1) the 1971 Anti-Imperialist Women's Conference in Vancouver, Canada that brought six women from the North Vietnam, South Vietnam and Laos met to with 200 women from North America in an effort to end the war.<sup>146</sup> (Pat Sumi, a frequent contributor to *Gidra*, was an organizer of the conference); 2) the 1972 Third World People's Anti-War Conference in Gary Indiana, the first national coalition of activists of color;<sup>147</sup> 3) the 1972 Nisei Week in Los Angeles when 150 youth of the Thai Binh and Van Troi Youth Brigades - "a group of young Asian (American) brothers and sisters who have united to show our opposition to the genocidal war being waged by the U.S. government against the Southeast Asian people, and to show our love and support to the just struggle of our Vietnamese cousins" – marched in the parade;<sup>148</sup> and 4) the 1972 nationwide Vietnam Medical

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<sup>146</sup> "Solidarity with Our Indochinese Sisters and Brothers," *Gidra* III, no. 5 (May 1971): 9–13.

<sup>147</sup> "Third World People's Anti-War Conference and Statement from Asian Contingent, Third World People's Coalition," *Gidra* IV, no. 7 (July 1972): 3. Third World Peoples' Coalition, "Third World Coalition," *Gidra* IV, no. 8 (August 1972): 7.

<sup>148</sup> Mike Murase, "Nisei Week," *Gidra* IV, no. 9 (September 1972): 2–3. Van Troi Anti-Imperialist Youth Brigade, "Statement from the Van Troi Anti-Imperialist Youth Brigade," *Gidra* IV, no. 9 (September 1972): 4. Thai Binh Brigade, "Statement from the Thai Binh Brigade," *Gidra* IV, no. 9 (September 1972): 5–6.

Supply Drive initiated by AMMO (Asian Movement for Military Outreach) that transformed moral support into direct action by raising over \$5,000 sent to Vietnam for medical supplies.<sup>149</sup> Each of these articles expressed the Asian American anti-war standpoint that adopted a Southeast Asian perspective and demonstrated moral and direct support for the victims of the U.S. aggression against Southeast Asians.

Racism in the Military. Racism in the military was a subtheme in the Asian American analysis of the war. An interview with Sam Choy on his racial harassment by fellow G.I.'s in Vietnam, and subsequent retaliation and imprisonment was reprinted from *Getting Together*, the I Wor Kuen (IWK) newspaper published out of New York.<sup>150</sup> (Howard Zinn also included the interview of Sam Choy in his book *Peoples History of the United States* (1980).) Another article called "The Ballad of Ho Chang," was a fictionalized account of a Japanese American soldier killed in combat<sup>151</sup>

One of the first essays documenting the racist behavior of the U.S. military in Vietnam was an article called, "The Nature of G.I. Racism" written by Norman Nakamura in the combined June/July 1970 issue of *Gidra*. Recently returned from a tour in Vietnam, he wrote that generalized disrespect and mistreatment of Vietnamese was the norm because soldiers were taught that no Vietnamese could be trusted and that even South Vietnamese soldiers were not dependable. He wrote that because racist behavior was not only sanctioned but taught by the U.S. military, G.I.'s generally felt morally exonerated of responsibility or guilt, were officially

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<sup>149</sup> Asian Movement for Military Outreach (AMMO), "Vietnam Medical Supply Drive," *Gidra* IV, no. 10 (October 1972): 15.

<sup>150</sup> "A Long Way From Home," *Gidra* II, no. 5 (1970): 10.

<sup>151</sup> I. Lerik, "The Ballad of Ho Chang," *Gidra* II, no. 5 (May 1970): 9. (Adaptation for *Gidra* from an article originally published by Zendik Papers of Hollywood.)

immune from reprimand or punishment, and felt culturally and physically superior to the Vietnamese.<sup>152</sup>

Nakamura's article was the source and inspiration for an editorial written by Pulitzer Prize winning journalist Frank Orr in an unnamed news source. Orr concluded, "Mr. Nakamura comes to the same conclusion many others have – that we should be out of Vietnam – but for a specific reason: (quoting Nakamura) 'It seems ridiculous and hypocritical to be antagonizing the very people you are supposed to be aiding ... Rather than bringing civilization to Vietnam, the American GI has brought racism to the Vietnamese people.'"<sup>153</sup>

In the July 1971 issue, former Marine Mike Nakayama wrote about his testimony at the Winter Soldier Investigation in Detroit. He testified that in boot camp, he was made to stand up and turn around so his fellow recruits could see "what a gook looks like." Notwithstanding this humiliation, Nakayama fought fearlessly and went on to be awarded a Bronze Star, which did not keep him from almost being left for dead. "When I was shot, I had shrapnel in my skull, my eardrums were blown out, my lung was pierced. ... I was just laying there and finally I said, 'Hey man, when are you going to deal with me?'" and they said, 'Oh you can speak English, we thought you were a gook.'"<sup>154</sup>

Nakayama analyzed his experience within the broader historical and sociological context of Asians in America. "Our experiences are similar to those of our parents fighting for equality abroad while their families back home were incarcerated in concentration camps, similar to the experiences of our Asian sisters who have been accosted and propositioned while walking down

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<sup>152</sup> Norman Nakamura, "The Nature of G.I. Racism," *Gidra* II, no. 6 (1970).

<sup>153</sup> Frank Orr, "GI Racism Revisited," *Gidra* II, no. 8 (1970): 19.

<sup>154</sup> Mike Nakayama, "Winter Soldiers," *Gidra* III, no. 6 (1971): 12.

the streets of their communities; similar to the experience of trying to become 100% American and finding out the controlling element of society has set social and economic limitations on people of color.”<sup>155</sup>

Bruce Iwasaki’s Analyses of the War. *Gidra* reported on anti-war events and issues of concern to Asian Americans that were unavailable in both the mainstream commercial and alternative presses. In addition, *Gidra* published many analytical articles on the Vietnam War that substantively increased the readers understanding and knowledge of the complexities of the war and contributed considerably to the development of an Asian American epistemology. Most were written by Bruce Iwasaki. Mike Murase called Iwasaki “the disciplined and principled in-house expert on Vietnam,” who “deliberated in his usual analytical and long-winded way.”<sup>156</sup> As demonstrated by the insight and acumen apparent in his articles, Iwasaki evinced what Raymond Williams called a diagnostic understanding of the situation in which they lived.

When Iwasaki began writing about the war in May 1972, the war had been going on for six years, playing out in the morning papers and the nightly news to a numbing degree. The My Lai massacre occurred in 1969, the invasion of Cambodia in 1970 and the Pentagon Papers leaked in 1971. Reflecting the basic *raison de’tre* of the dissident press, in his first article Iwasaki pointed to the media’s duplicity with the state’s war effort, “That Nixon has unleashed more bomb tonnage upon Asians in three years of ‘winding down’ the war than Johnson as he was escalating it shows the incredible media deception that has been played upon the American people.”<sup>157</sup> In another, he linked lack of comprehension of the war with the inability to stop it.

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Murase, “Toward Barefoot Journalism.” 45.

<sup>157</sup> Bruce Iwasaki, “Escalation: Bombs and Deceptions,” *Gidra* IV, no. 5 (May 1972): 14–15.

“The institutions of education and media have systematically befuddled the American people's understanding of the true nature of this war and hence how to attack it.”<sup>158</sup>

In the next eighteen months, Iwasaki wrote ten lengthy articles (of 1½ to 4 pages each) analyzing and explaining various aspects of the exceedingly complex military engagement. He interpreted phrases and incidents that were heard daily but not fully understood. He described Nixon’s policy of “Vietnamization,” - equipping and training South Vietnam’s forces and assigning them an increased combat role while reducing U.S. troops – from an Asian perspective as “Nixon’s plan for having Asians kill Asians.”<sup>159</sup> Rather than just call the war imperialistic, Iwasaki broke it down decriing, “We will not introduce an understanding of the war’s imperialistic nature by printing bolder type on leaflets or shouting louder slogans at rallies.”<sup>160</sup> Instead, he identified three ways the U.S. role in Vietnam was imperialistic. First because of the U.S.’s direct commercial interest in Vietnam. Iwasaki cited (as well as interjected an interpretation) a March 1966 article in *Fortune Magazine* as stating, "South Vietnam has considerable natural wealth that could be developed (read: exploited) to its fullest potential only if the war ended." Secondly that militarism was indispensable to the domestic economy. “Among the top 100 corporations, 65 are significantly involved in the military market. Military spending has been responsible for a large part of the economic growth since World War II.” And third, that multinational corporations had financial reasons for wanting to preserve the "free world." In other words, “It is free when there is free enterprise.” Iwasaki quoted John Kennedy

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<sup>158</sup> Bruce Iwasaki, “In Fortune’s Eyes,” *Gidra* IV, no. 7 (July 1972): 4–7.

<sup>159</sup> Iwasaki, “Escalation: Bombs and Deceptions.”

<sup>160</sup> Iwasaki, “In Fortune’s Eyes.”

as saying, "American ways can form the tastes and desires of newly emerging countries – when our aid ends, the need for our products continues."

In September 1972, *Gidra* reproduced a stand-alone pamphlet that had been designed in graphic novel style – with cartoon drawings and bubble dialogue – but with considerable more textual exposition. It was illustrated by *Gidra* illustrator Alan Takemoto and while the writing was credited to a group of three people, it is clear from the wording, which simplified and summarized the major points of three of Iwasaki's previous articles, that he was the primary author.<sup>161</sup> Reproduction of one page of the four-page *Gidra* spread is presented in the next chapter on form and style utilized by *Gidra*.

The first illustrated story was called "Sister, brother, there's far too many of you dying. US imperialism," which simplified Iwasaki's July 1972 four page essay on imperialism. "If the U.S. were not at war ... the American economic system would face a depression. ... It is a militarized economy. People complain about the cost of welfare or education, but for 25 years, 61% of our tax money has gone directly to the war machine."<sup>162</sup>

The second story, "Rising suns, rising guns Japanese militarism: an introduction," was taken from Iwasaki's August 1972 essay on Japan's role in Vietnam. Using Okinawa as an example – that although it was under Japanese rule, the U.S. still used the island as a military

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<sup>161</sup> Thanks are extended to Alan Takemoto who is the only one I found who had a copy of the original pamphlet. From the back cover, credits were listed as: Production: Leaflet Committee, Vietnam Summer Offensive, Drawings by Alan Takemoto; Written by Greg Fukuda, Bruce Iwasaki, Nick Nagatani; Typesetting and layout: *Gidra*; Funding: Asian Movement for Military Outreach; Distribution: Amerasia Bookstore; Creative Legacy: Centuries of Struggle.

<sup>162</sup> Bruce Iwasaki, Greg Fukuda, and Nick Nagatani, "Sister, Brother, There's Far Too Many of You Dying. U.S. Imperialism; Rising Suns, Rising Guns, Japanese Militarism: An Introduction; Words to Actions: The PRG Seven Point Peace Proposal," *Gidra* IV, no. 9 (September 1972): 14–17.



base for bombers bound for Vietnam - Iwasaki showed how U.S. imperialism and Japanese militarism had worked hand-in-hand. Quoting a Chevrolet dealer ad that read, "Remember Pearl Harbor when they tried to take your country from you? They are back with cheap imports to take your jobs, pensions and Social Security," Iwasaki illustrated how "the racism in America equates Asian Americans with Asians in Asia."

The third and last story was "Words to actions, the PRG seven point peace proposal," which deconstructed the concepts of "self determination" and "liberation" and simply explained the seven-point peace proposal. The graphic story indicated, "To our parents, self-determination may be in acquiring an education" yet "self-determination and national liberation to our Vietnamese brothers and sisters ... can only be interpreted as a WAY OF LIFE. Support the Vietnamese Seven Point Peace Proposal. Unite in OUR struggle for self determination and liberation."

In another article, with insight and a dose of self-criticism, Iwasaki acknowledged that although Asian Americans identified with the Vietnamese, he cautioned, "Vietnam's victory should inspire us - but we shouldn't get a high off of it." He stated that while their multi generational courage and dedication is beyond our western grasp, using them as an "agency for our liberation, diminishes their achievement ... Vietnam is not just some kind of organizing tool." Iwasaki, who is currently a Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge, counseled, "The Vietnamese have stripped the Emperors clothes; we must spread the news. They have opened our eyes to our genocidal past, our bloody present, and future potential of our own liberation. By forcing us to see what we really are, Vietnam's revolution lets us seize the possibility of our own."<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Iwasaki, "You May Be a Lover but You Ain't No Dancer: Helter Skelter."

## Building Asian American Community and Culture

Although the theoretical idea of community was a founding principle of Asian American studies when it was first conceived in the late 1960s, when tangible problems emanating from the Little Tokyos, Chinatowns and Manilatowns across the country were uncovered, community needs overtook campus concerns and the locus of activism shifted from the seasonal status of students to the perennial actuality of real life. Even as Asian Americans fought against outside forces of racism and imperialism, they turned inward by nurturing a consciousness of agency and responsibility to strengthen their collective selves and communities.

Commitment to community had been one of *Gidra*'s stated goals from its inception. It was one of the reasons they moved off campus and it continued to be a major emphasis throughout its lifetime. Community building was a wide theme that was manifested in many subthemes in *Gidra*. In a sense, all the units in *Gidra* were in service to the community.

Articles reported on some of the first mobilization efforts around local and national Asian American issues like the campaigns to reinstate the Los Angeles County Coroner Dr. Thomas Noguchi who had been suspended on racial grounds in 1969<sup>164</sup> and the repeal of Title II of the Internal Security Act. These were among the early exercises of the nascent AAM in putting ideology into practice and because these campaigns were successful, they proved to the young participants that activism and protest could work and were worth the effort. The experience of participating in a campaign that, in the end, is successful, works to validate political participation and encourages further activism.

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<sup>164</sup> Seigo Hayashi, "Rebel with a Cause: The Story of Dr. Thomas T. Noguchi," *Gidra* II, no. 1 (January 1970). Also news articles on his firing (April 1969), hearing (July 1969) and reinstatement (September 1969)

That the success of the Noguchi campaign strengthened the AAM themes of agency and empowerment as well as working for social justice was evident in an article on the thank you dinner for Noguchi's attorney. To a crowd of over 500, master of ceremonies actor George Takei opened by saying, "You have helped create a new Japanese American community, actively involved in the democratic process." Victor Shibata, speaking on behalf of the self-help group Yellow Brotherhood remarked, "We have fought City Hall and won."<sup>165</sup>

The nationwide campaign to repeal Title II of the Internal Security Act of 1950 that granted the government the power of preventative detention was likewise successful and also helped Asian American activists to form coalitional alliances with other groups concerned with civil liberties.<sup>166</sup> For example, articles in January and March 1970 reported on the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) Committee to Repeal Title II's visits to the American Indians who occupied Alcatraz for eighteen months in an attempt to reclaim stolen Indian land that had become surplus federal property. Delegations of Japanese Americans ranging from ages 15 to 60 brought crates of food and clothing to the various tribes who had come together for the first time as a group called Indians of All Tribes (IAT).<sup>167 168</sup>

"Serve the People". Although "community" has been considered vague and variable as a social scientific tool (Amit and Rapport 2002), for social movements of the 1960s and 1970s,

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<sup>165</sup> Audre Miura, "Isaac Honored," *Gidra* I, no. 6 (September 1969): 1 & 10.

<sup>166</sup> Masumi Izumi, "Repeal of Title II of the Internal Security Act of 1950 (Emergency Detention Act)," *Densho Encyclopedia*, accessed April 16, 2015, [http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Repeal\\_of\\_Title\\_II\\_of\\_the\\_Internal\\_Security\\_Act\\_of\\_1950\\_%28Emergency\\_Detention\\_Act%22%29/](http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Repeal_of_Title_II_of_the_Internal_Security_Act_of_1950_%28Emergency_Detention_Act%22%29/).

<sup>167</sup> "Aid to Alcatraz," *Gidra* II, no. 1 (January 1970): 3.

<sup>168</sup> Marlene Tanioka and Aileen Yamaguchi, "Asians Make Waves to Alcatraz," *Gidra* II, no. 3 (March 1970): 6-7.

the concept of community - which at its core was simply the subjective feeling of belonging together - served a greater purpose as an organizing tool. More than a geographical space, it was a multiple site where theory met practice, acting as a touchstone by which a variety of progressive agendas were shaped and measured.

The Black Panthers popularized the term “Serve the People,” although it originated with Mao Zedong who in turn was inspired by the revolutionary writer Lu Xun in 1942: *Fierce-browed, I coolly defy a thousand pointing fingers / Head-bowed, like a willing ox I serve the children*. Through this provenance, “To serve the people” was an orientation to community building, a manifestation of collective identity, and became the rallying call that led Asian Americans to transform their communities as they transformed their lives.

When Bob Nakamura, who often provided photos for *Gidra*, first heard the idea of serving the people, it was liberating, vindictory and instantaneous. “We’re not part of the larger white society; integration and assimilation are myths. So what can you do? Make money? At the end of the day you’re still not part of anything. Serving the people made me feel useful, relevant when I used to feel irrelevant. All of a sudden with that one idea of ‘let’s get together and serve the people,’ the thought that you could actually affect change gave me a sense of value, of empowerment really. It was an epiphany.”<sup>169</sup> As Asian American Studies scholar Elaine H. Kim indicated, “Without the reconciliation of the self to the community, we cannot invent ourselves. This ‘community’ begins with but extends beyond the boundaries of our families, far beyond Chinatown to wherever resistance to domination is taking place.”<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> From interview with Bob Nakamura, July 10, 2010.

<sup>170</sup> Elaine H Kim, “Defining Asian American Realities Through Literature,” *Cultural Critique* 6 (1987): 87–111.

Long time activist Mo Nishida, who was a key founder of two primary community organizations in the Los Angeles area - the Pioneer Project and Asian American Hard Core - expounded on the meaning of term “Serve the People” in a *Gidra* article in August 1970. He indicated that the phrase had a deeper meaning than its face value of simply helping people, which he likened to missionary activity that fostered dependency. Nishida argued that “Serve the People” meant institutional change, i.e.: “structural development of new community institutions ... to make change permanent. ... We must create an atmosphere that can help develop our people to the point where they can and will control their own destiny.”<sup>171</sup>

Foremost among the commitment to build and fortify community were self-help and other service organizations that in the parlance of the era were called “Serve the People programs.” In Los Angeles, the gravitational center of Serve the People programs was the Asian Involvement program of the Japanese American Community Services, known as JACS-AI, which quickly evolved from providing referrals to direct service. As the article announcing its new office in the Sun Building in Little Tokyo indicated, the program was called “Asian Involvement (or AI, pronounced ‘I’, which means ‘love’ in Japanese.)”<sup>172</sup> There they worked with organizations such as the Japanese Chamber of Commerce, Pioneer Project (assisting needs of the elderly), Asian American Hard Core (dealing with drug abuse), Joint Communications (communicating with Asian American prisoners), Oriental Service Center (an early pan-Asian service provider), Yellow Brotherhood (youth and drugs), Asian American Social Workers (professional organization), Asian Sisters (drug education and counseling), the Japanese Welfare Rights Organizations (advocating on behalf of welfare recipients), Creative Workshop (working

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<sup>171</sup> Mo Nishida, “Serve the People,” *Gidra* II, no. 7 (August 1970). 14.

<sup>172</sup> “JACS Promotes AI,” *Gidra* II, no. 4 (April 1970): 19.

with youth), Amerasia Bookstore, Involved Together Asians (located on the Westside) and the Asian Women's Center (health and welfare).<sup>173 174</sup>

Bringing Together Unlikely Partnerships. One of the significant characteristics of the Serve the People programs in Los Angeles was the ability to bring together unlikely partnerships - of students, professionals and street people - as well as generations of all ages. Young and old came together to form the Pioneer Center and Pioneer Project, a support group. A coalition of street people, students and professionals came together around Asian American Hard Core (AAHC), a self-help group to help ex-offenders adjust to life outside of prison and prevent recidivism.<sup>175</sup> Students provided transportation and other support services. Established professionals were instrumental in positioning Hard Core as a viable alternative to incarceration. Los Angeles coroner Thomas Noguchi provided Hard Core with its first residential facility. Jeffrey Matsui, of the Pacific Southwest Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), social worker Jim Miyano of the Los Angeles County Probation Department and John Saito of the Human Relations Commission worked in the background and helped broker the system and legitimize this grassroots organization. Mo Nishida recalls that Shin'ya Ono was paroled to Hard Core after serving time for his part in the Weathermen Days of Rage in Chicago.<sup>176</sup>

Ray Tasaki had been member of the Tiny Black Juans gang who was paroled to Asian American Hard Core instead of being sent to Folsom prison. Tasaki helped start Asian Joint

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Rocky Chin, "The House That JACS Built," *Bridge: The Asian American Magazine* 2, no. 6 (1973): 5-10.

<sup>175</sup> "Asian American Hard Core," *Gidra* 1, no. 9 (December 1969): 14.

<sup>176</sup> From interview with Mo Nishida, November 18, 2013.

Communications, a program to connect prisoners with the outside through letter writing and visits. Beginning with the April 1970 issue periodically through October 1973, *Gidra* published over twenty letters they received from incarcerated Asian Americans at the California Correctional Institution (CCI) in Tehachapi, California Rehabilitation Center (CRC) in Norco, Youth Training Services (YTS), Soledad State Prison, and the California Institute for Men in Chino. It also published reports on visits and two analytical essays on the prison system by Judy Chu, who is currently a member of the California State Congress.<sup>177 178</sup>

The first letter, printed in the April 1970 issue, was from an inmate in the California Correctional Institution who wrote to *Gidra* saying he and a fellow inmate “just got hip to *Gidra* last week” when a member of Asian American Hard Core mailed him four back issues. He wrote, “We find your periodical quite interesting and relevant to people like us. We get along up here because we know who we are, what we are, and are proud of our golden heritage.” He cautioned, “*Gidra*, Be cool! Don’t go too far out on militant or revolutionary doctrines. For you on the staff who are pseudo communists, socialists, revolutionaries, etc., we have a saying up here, ‘If you play, you gotta pay.’ To you who are dedicated to this movement, be prepared for what ever comes down.” He ended with a P.S., “My birthday is April 20<sup>th</sup>. I would shore appreciate a subscription to *Gidra* for a birthday present.”<sup>179</sup>

In the August 1972 issue, Asian Joint Communications issued a full-page manifesto along with a half page of definitions, an article on a case at Lompoc Federal Penitentiary and a

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<sup>177</sup> Judy Chu, “Prisons and the Asian American: From the Inside and Outside,” *Amerasia Journal* 2, no. 2 (1974): 67.

<sup>178</sup> Judy Chu, “Feeling Prison Blues and Getting Prison Pinks: A Look at the California Institute for Women,” *Gidra* V, no. 8 (August 1973): 7.

<sup>179</sup> Ted Saito, “A Letter from ...Golden Brother,” *Gidra* II, no. 4 (April 1970): 27.

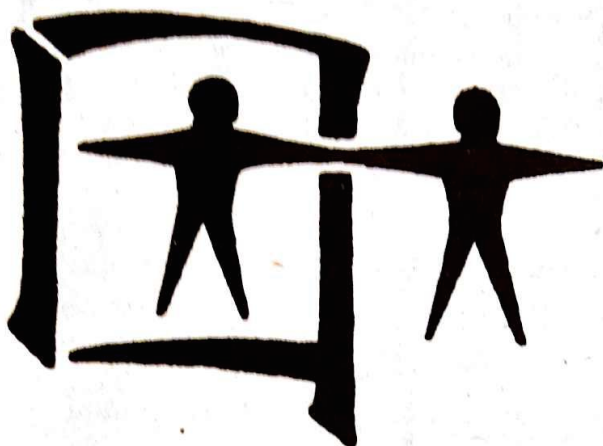
letter from an inmate. It stated that there are over 1,000 Asian America men and women in California's prison who "are a minority lost within a minority," considered too small and insignificant to warrant programs they can relate to. Rephrasing the goals of the AAM for a prison population, it declared, "We Asian Joint Communications feel that we must educate our community about the realities of prisons so that they can become more sensitive to our people inside. We must also educate our brothers and sisters inside about what it means to be Asian Americans, what it means to be a person of color in this country ... This awareness is the first step in redefining ourselves and building a new consciousness."<sup>180</sup>

In the October 1972 issue, they provided an explanation of their logo.

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<sup>180</sup> Asian Joint Communications, "Asian Joint Communications," *Gidra* IV, no. 8 (August 1972): 14–15.





### Explanation of J. C. Emblem

In recent issues of *Gidra*, you may have noticed this symbol accompanying articles about Asian Joint Communications. Judging by the number of questions we have received, many of you have wondered what it represents. We hope that its meaning might be made more clear by explaining how we arrived at this symbol - that by sharing its meaning we may gain understanding; that from understanding we may draw

^ this character (Chinese and Japanese)  
^ represents a person

⊠ this character (an enclosed person) represents a prisoner

人人 this symbol is commonly used to represent solidarity or unity

By slightly modifying the original character for the sake of design, we arrived at 人々 this symbol, which represents Asian Joint Communications, expressing 1) our Asian identity, 2) the solidarity we feel and seek to create between brothers and sisters in the joints and brothers and sisters in the community.

Struggle with us  
Asian Joint Communications

Fig. 4: Explanation of Asian Joint Communications logo. *Gidra*, Vol. IV. no. 10. (October 1972): 12.

Yellow Brotherhood (YB) was another self-help organization that was started by former members of a Japanese American gang in Los Angeles called the “Ministers.” The original Ministers disbanded in 1962 after a shoot-out with the Buddha Bandits sent some to prison and others into the service. When former member Victor Shibata returned from the Air Force he found that his community had changed drastically. A new adversary had moved into the neighborhood - a drug epidemic that killed thirty-one Japanese American youth in a single year. He also found that the original street code of honor – the brotherhood of never abandoning your friends – was gone. Asian American youth were no longer merely fighting and committing minor crimes. Instead, hard drugs were creating addicts, youth were overdosing, and kids were dropping out of school in alarming numbers.<sup>181</sup> Not only was nothing being done about these problems, they were largely ignored by a shocked community who had just begun to regain their footing after their mass incarceration of WWII.

In November 1968, Victor and other original Ministers met to talk about what could be done. After many meetings with youth, alarmed parents, old gang friends and concerned community members, they formed the Yellow Brotherhood in February 1969. Yellow Brotherhood developed a variety of programs - both conventional and unconventional - around education, extracurricular activities and sports and work projects.<sup>182</sup> Older members – although only in their early twenties, sponsored younger members and were responsible for making sure their people stayed off drugs and stayed in school.

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<sup>181</sup> From interview with Victor Shibata, February 27, 2011.

<sup>182</sup> Julia Aihara, “Yellow Brotherhood: Food for Thought,” *Gidra* I, no. 9 (December 1969): 2, 12.

In addition to directly helping youth, YB had adopted a generalized Serve the People policy. When *Gidra* moved off the campus of UCLA and into the *Gidra* House, YB helped clean the house and later played a vital role in distributing and circulating issues.<sup>183</sup> They were also one of the first groups to rally around the firing of Los Angeles County Coroner, Dr. Thomas Noguchi leafleting the community with fact sheets about the case and attending every hearing that lasted two months. They enlisted and received the blessings of the reverends of Centenary United Methodist Church who let them use their building as a meeting place, study hall and site for their car wash fundraisers. One *Gidra* reporter quipped, “Now they’re washing cars instead of stealing them.”<sup>184</sup>

Further evidence of the capability of Serve the People programs to bring together different sectors of the community – and in this case, the wider renowned society - was YB’s fundraising campaign in March 1970. Among the many speakers at the Kick-Off Dinner, which also included testimonials by YB members, were Senator Daniel K. Inouye and the Hon. John Aiso, the first Japanese American appointed as a judge on the U.S. mainland. Senator Inouye, who lost an arm fighting in the segregated 442<sup>nd</sup> Regimental Combat Team and would be awarded the Medal of Honor for his bravery, told the audience that he doubted young people then would respond in the same way if faced with similar discrimination but “I am certain that many would be on the streets rightfully demanding a change in policy.”<sup>185</sup> In addition to Japanese American luminaries there were public figures from mainstream society – Lamar

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<sup>183</sup> Hayashi, “The *Gidra* Story.”

<sup>184</sup> Seigo Hayashi, “Yellow Brotherhood,” *Gidra* II, no. 4 (April 1970): 18.

<sup>185</sup> “Yellow Brotherhood Dinner,” *Gidra* II, no. 4 (April 1970): 32 & 30.

Lundy of the Los Angeles Rams, considered one of the best defensive ends in NFL history,<sup>186</sup> and Louis Zamperini, Olympic long distance runner in the 1936 games in Hitler's Germany. No mention was made in the article of how these public figures came to speak at the YB dinner. Neither was there commentary on the notable fact that Zamperini, who would be the subject of a New York Times No. 1 best selling book and subsequent Hollywood movie - spoke at a predominantly Japanese American event after having been a severely mistreated prisoner of war in Japan during WWII. Indeed, the eventfulness of the evening seemed to go unnoticed by *Gidra* as the article itself appeared on the last page of the issue and Lundy and Zamperini were merely listed along with six others as speakers of the evening without mention of their celebrity status.

Historical Recovery. As Carmichael/Ture and Hamilton expressed, "Our basic need is to reclaim our history and our identity from what must be called cultural terrorism."<sup>187</sup> In the December 1970 issue, Pat Sumi wrote, "Most young Asian activists believe themselves to be the first of their people to be politically progressive and actively involved in radical politics" because of the "stereotype designed to make us believe that all our people quietly endured the racism and oppression of American society in order to make it." Yet, she pointed out that in the history of Asians in this country there had been a long tradition of struggle. Therefore, "*Gidra* will make it a policy to print stories of the struggles to help create a sense of our history and to serve as examples of courage and exemplary action to us."<sup>188</sup> Sumi herself, while perhaps best known for

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<sup>186</sup> Richard Goldstein, "Lamar Lundy, Lineman on the Rams' Fearsome Foursome, Dies at 71," *The New York Times*, February 26, 2007, [http://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/26/sports/football/26lundy.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/26/sports/football/26lundy.html?_r=0).

<sup>187</sup> Ture and Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation*.34.

<sup>188</sup> Pat Sumi, "Activism, 1946 Style," *Gidra* II, no. 11 (December 1970): 14.

her work organizing soldiers in the G.I movement and being a member of Eldridge Cleaver's 1970 Anti-Imperialist Delegation to North Korea, North Vietnam and the People's Republic of China, wrote many more articles recovering the history of Asians in the U.S. Among them were partial lists of atrocities against Chinese Americans and anti-Asian legislation (February 1971) and U.S. war crimes in the Philippines (July 1971).

Two historical events in particular captured the concerns of *Gidra* staff, contributors and readers: the unprecedented mass round up of Japanese Americans into what has come to be known as American concentration camps and the now substantiated deliberate and unnecessary bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki during World War II.

In the late 1960s, the existence of ten barbed wire enclosed camps across the U.S. that held 120,000 Japanese Americans during WWII, two-thirds of whom were American citizens by birth, was still relatively unknown by the general public. In the September 1969 issue, *Gidra* published "The Failure of Democracy in a Time of Crisis," which combined a personalized account of the mass incarceration and its relevance to civil liberties by sociologist Isao Fujimoto of the University of California, Davis. In it Fujimoto recounted, "I was then eight years old –too young to know my rights but old enough to realize that something was wrong. Also, as a product of an ethnic ghetto, I've internalized the subtle ways in which the larger society reminds one to stay in his place. Like many other Japanese Americans, I've been infused with a philosophy that stresses: 'Let's make the most of a bad situation and push ahead.' This diverted me from critically appraising the past, the understating of which is directly relevant to many of the issues that all of us – not just minority Americans – face today."<sup>189</sup> The essay had been read in its

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<sup>189</sup> Isao Fujimoto, "The Failure of Democracy in a Time of Crisis," *Gidra* I, no. 6 (September 1969): 6–9.

entirety on KPFA-FM, Berkeley on January 16, 1969. A month after *Gidra* published it, a modified version appeared in *The Black Politician* in October 1969 and it was also reproduced in *Roots: An Asian American Reader* in 1971. Given what little information was widely available at the time, especially from a personal point of view, its reproduction for so many different types of audiences is testimony to its significance.

Accompanying Fujimoto's article was a narrative of one man's experience of having to leave his home and being taken to camp during WWII. "This story was told to me by a middle-aged Nisei, a gardener now, who had been heir to a grocery chain before the United States government had repossessed his family's belongings and business during the Second World War. He is an American citizen by birth, Japanese through ancestry and a gardener through injustice."<sup>190</sup> The title of the piece was "Ask Not What the Country Can Do For You...", an obvious reference to John F. Kennedy's famous inaugural address of January 1961.

In the January 1970 issue, there were four units on the camps. The main article was a picture story about the first pilgrimage to Manzanar, one of the ten government-run detention camps for Japanese Americans during WWII the camp and the closest to Los Angeles. The second unit was a news report on the pilgrimage written by four people that is now perhaps the only document that recorded facts about the trip. A group of 150 persons from age three to 83 made the 280-mile pilgrimage from Los Angeles to Manzanar, which was sponsored by the Organization of Southland Asian American Organizations, in one bus and 20 cars. The purpose of the pilgrimage was to bring attention to the campaign to repeal Title II of the Internal Security Act of 1950, to clean up the grounds and restore the monument and pay tribute to those who had imprisoned there.

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<sup>190</sup> D. Woo, "Ask Not What the Country Can Do For You ...," *Gidra* I, no. 6 (September 1969): 7.

The third was a reprint of a 1942 New Year's greeting originally published in the Manzanar Free Press that provided insight into the conflicted but rationalized state of mind of the young Nisei who published it. It began with, "Greetings to you for a Victorious New Year, people of America, from your kindred 50,000 citizens inside barbed wire fences." Expounding their Americanism, it said in the two years they have been detained, "The tragic experiences of evacuation, the untold volume of business losses of the evacuees, the unwarranted hatreds engendered toward us by some people because of our hereditary kinship with the Asiatic foe – these we write off the ledger. On the other side stands our gratitude to the American people for sanctioning the effort of this government to look after the welfare of our children, our aged, and sick."<sup>191</sup> The editorial introduction stating that it was a reprint from 1942 made clear that, "It is not the opinion of the *Gidra* staff."

The fourth unit on the camps in this issue was a news blurb indicating that a pamphlet on "The Rooseveltian Concentration Camps for Japanese-Americans, 1942-46" was available for purchase. The news blurb described the pamphlet as criticizing people like Earl Warren who was then governor of California and popular columnist Walter Lippman for building public sentiment in favor of the incarceration and leaving the reader "with a dim outlook on the future of minorities during wartime conditions."<sup>192</sup> Apparently unknown to *Gidra* staff at the time, upon researching Austin J. App, the author of the pamphlet, I found that he was a controversial German-American professor who has been called the first major American holocaust denier.<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> Manzanar Free Press, "A Victorious New Year to You ...America," *Gidra* II, no. 1 (January 1970): 4.

<sup>192</sup> "Concentration Camp Pamphlet on Sale," *Gidra* II, no. 1 (January 1970): 18.

<sup>193</sup> Austin App, Wikipedia entry, accessed April 27, 2015; Peter Knight, *Conspiracy Theories in American History: An Encyclopedia*, vol. Vol. 1 (ABC-CLIO, 2003):322.

As mentioned, there were many articles, essays and poems in *Gidra* commemorating the World War II bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki each year on its anniversary. The first was in August 1970, the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the bombings. The cover featured a grainy image of one of the atomic blasts with faint Japanese characters that were translated in small, hardly perceptible type: “KO-RO-SU-NA (Do not kill.)” The feature article was the text of a speech by Yuji Ichioka he delivered at the Hiroshima-Nagasaki Commemoration in San Francisco that year,<sup>194</sup> followed by two poems that emotionalized Ichioka’s fact laden speech.<sup>195 196</sup> All three made the connection between the mass destruction of Asians in WWII to the mass destruction of Asians in Vietnam, linking the AAM themes of historical recovery and the fight to stop the war.

An article in the next issue by Bruce Iwasaki brought out the significance of the event for the still evolving Asian American, thereby relating the past this time with the present issue of the evolving political identity as Asian Americans. He quoted one of the speakers, Rev. Roy Sano, as stating that Hiroshima and Nagasaki “helped us define who we are.” Iwasaki reported that Rev. Sano “noted that the bombings demonstrated that yellows, indeed all Third World people, are expendable as far as American foreign policy is concerned. Asians must be involved because apparently, ‘Asians can be jettisoned to keep the ship of state afloat.’”<sup>197</sup>

Articles and poems illustrated with drawings and photographs commemorated Hiroshima and Nagasaki pointing out its connection to the Vietnam War for the following three years. In

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<sup>194</sup> Yuji Ichioka, “Hiroshima-Nagasaki: Twenty-Five Years Later,” *Gidra* 2, no. 7 (August 1970): 6–7.

<sup>195</sup> Joanne (Nobuko) Miyamoto, “Hiroshima-Nagasaki,” *Gidra* 2, no. 7 (August 1970): 8.

<sup>196</sup> Foo Gwah, “Hiroshima Revisited,” *Gidra* II, no. 7 (August 1970): 9.

<sup>197</sup> Bruce Iwasaki, “Flashes!,” *Gidra* II, no. 8 (1970): 5.



the August 1971 issue Pat Sumi wrote a lyrical poem connecting the 600,000 souls that “flew way/blown by the earth/by an experiment,” during WWII and the “1,000,000 more souls (that) have flown away” during the Vietnam War with obon, the annual Japanese Buddhist event of remembering those who have gone before us that occurs each summer. “Burn brightly candles of memory/So no more souls need wander the world/searching for peace.”<sup>198</sup> An information piece in question and answer form followed the poem, asking and providing responses to if the use of nuclear bombs was a necessity, why the atomic bombs were used, what the lessons both Hiroshima/Nagasaki and Indochina had for Asian Americans and what should be done.

In 1973, *Gidra* printed a speech by the now renown Japanese American futurist, popularizer of science, theoretical physicist and best selling author Michio Kaku at a Hiroshima Day Commemoration sponsored by SESPA, Scientists and Engineers for Social and Political Action, where he and other scientists took a public oath not to participate in war research. Kaku said that as a graduate student he wondered why two atomic bombs had been dropped when one was enough to devastate Japan into submission. The answer, he found was, “The U.S. military wanted to vaporize Nagasaki simply because they wanted to test both types of bombs (uranium and plutonium) on live targets.” Kaku pointed out that the equivalent of a Hiroshima bomb had been dropped on Vietnam and Cambodia every week for seven years. “The casualties of Hiroshima and Nagasaki number in the hundreds of thousands. The casualties of Vietnam and Cambodia number in the staggering millions.”<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> Patricia Sumi, “Hiroshima-Nagasaki Indochina,” *Gidra* III, no. 8 (August 1971): 15.

<sup>199</sup> Michio Kaku, “Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Vietnam: When It Rains It Pours,” *Gidra* V, no. 10 (October 1973): 22.

### Third World Solidarity at Home and Abroad

While the term “Third World,” attributed to French anthropologist Alfred Sauvy<sup>200</sup> is often thought of as un/underdeveloped nations, Frantz Fanon (1963) and more recently historian Vijay Prashad (2007) emphasized that it is not so much a place as a project. “Third World” became a unifying concept during the Cold War when representatives from of Africa, Asia and the Middle East came together at the Bandung Conference in opposition to the first world of western industrial nations and the second world of the eastern bloc. W.E.B. Du Bois sent a message to the Bandung Conference stating, “We colored folk of America have long lived with you yellow, brown and black folk of the world under the intolerable arrogance and assumptions of the white race.”<sup>201</sup> What Maeda (2012) labeled interracialism and internationalism was, in the parlance of the movement, standing with other people of color at home and overseas in Third World solidarity.

For the final issue of *Gidra* in March 1974, frequent contributor Pat Sumi was asked to contribute something. She submitted a speech she delivered at the Third World People’s Solidarity Conference the previous month. The other main speakers were Angela Davis of the National Committee Against Racial and Political Repression, Clyde Bellacourt of the American Indian Movement and Ramsey Munoz of the La Raza Unida Party. Titled *Third World People: Shoulder to Shoulder*, it provided a historical basis for the concept of Third World Unity. Recounting the history of U.S. imperialism and colonialism, she argued “our existence as Asian American people was conditioned by the very same social and historical factors which

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<sup>200</sup> Susan Slymovics, “‘Every Slight Movement of the People ...is Everything’ Sondra Hale and Sudanese Art,” *Journal of Middle East Women’s Studies* 10, no. 1 (n.d.):38.

<sup>201</sup> Cynthia Ann Young, *Soul Power : Culture, Radicalism, and the Making of a U.S. Third World Left* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006)

conditioned the lives of other Third World peoples in this country.” Therefore, she concluded, by understanding this heritage, Asian Americans “are finding great strength and courage for the trials ahead of us.”<sup>202</sup>

Coalition building across ethnic, racial, ideological and state lines for a common cause was a conscious strategy during the AAM that enabled organizations and groups to combine resources in order to be more effective than if each acted alone. As Asian America was inextricably part of the larger project of the Third World, activists participated in Third World campaigns both around the block as well as around the world.

Third World Solidarity at Home. Across the U.S., Asian American activists supported efforts of other ethnic and racial movements as well as built various Third World coalitions. Espousal for the Black Liberation movement, for example, went beyond just being inspired. Both through individuals and ideology, multiple coalitions were built. People like Grace Lee Boggs and Yuri Kochiyama each began their political activism within the Black movement. Asian Americans Richard Aoki, Guy Kurose and Lee Lew Lee were active members of the Black Panther Party. Even as Black Panthers read Mao Zedong, Asian Americans were schooled by Malcolm X, Frantz Fanon and Stokely Carmichael. In May 1970, *Gidra* reported that Yale University’s Asian American Student Association (AASA) supported Black Panthers Bobby Seale and Erica Huggins during their trial in New Haven.<sup>203</sup> Bill Lann Lee, then a student at Yale who went on to serve as Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights, wrote a statement of

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<sup>202</sup> Pat Sumi, “Third World People: Shoulder to Shoulder,” *Gidra* VI, no. 4 (April 1974): 66–67.

<sup>203</sup> Asian American Students Association, Yale University, “Asians Support Panthers,” *Gidra* II, no. 5 (May 1970): 4.

support that was read at a major press conference.<sup>204</sup> Don Nakanishi, a founding member of Yale's AASA who would become director of the UCLA Asian American Studies Center, and along with Lowell Chun Hoon, would found the *Amerasia Journal*, the first and longest running academic journal on Asians in America, recalls that AASA helped Asian businesses board up their storefronts in anticipation of looting during the Seale rally.<sup>205</sup>

*Gidra* championed the Chicano/a movement in such articles as upholding the grape boycott and reporting on the Chicano Moratorium. The grape boycott was initiated when Filipino American grape workers in California's Central Valley struck in 1965 and escalated into a national campaign after being joined by Chicano farm workers who merged with the Filipino union to become the United Farm Workers (UFW). Staff written articles appeared in the June 1969 issue<sup>206</sup>, the year before the boycott succeeded in gaining contracts granting workers better pay, benefit and protection, and again in October 1973 when the Teamsters union collaborated with agribusiness to undermine the UFW's efforts.<sup>207</sup> *Gidra* also published an article written by Philip Vera Cruz, co-founder of the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee that initiated the grape strike.<sup>208</sup> Part memoir of his twenty plus years as a farmworker working in and around Delano, which he considered his hometown, and part documentation of the exploitation of grape

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<sup>204</sup> From email from Don Nakanishi, April 21, 2012.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> Suzi Wong, "Grapes Are Coming!," *Gidra* I, no. 3 (June 1969): 4.

<sup>207</sup> "The Wheels of Justice Do No Move as Fast as Nature Grows Grapes," *Gidra* V, no. 10 (October 1973): 4-5.

<sup>208</sup> Philip Vera Cruz, "Sour Grapes: Symbol of Oppression," *Gidra* II, no. 10 (November 1970): 4.

workers, it was the first personal account written by a Filipino farmworker and was reproduced in the first Asian American anthology, *Roots: An Asian American Reader* (1971).

In September and October 1970, *Gidra* printed articles about the Chicano Moratorium, which at that time was the largest anti-war demonstration in Los Angeles with almost 40,000 people.<sup>209</sup> The Moratorium became mainstream headline news when the police broke up the rally, violence erupted and scores were injured, more than 150 arrested and four killed. As Chicano poet Alurista put it, “The police called it a people’s riot, the people called it a police riot.”<sup>210</sup> Both articles in *Gidra*, the first by Wayne Miyao (September 1970) and the second, a reprint from a Chicano Moratorium pamphlet (October 1970), sought to explain the facts behind the rally that were misrepresented by the mass media. *Gidra* staffer Duane Kubo was a film student at UCLA and accompanied fellow student David Garcia to cover the event. “People were scattering all over the place, cops were beating up marchers. That was one of the first events that I attended that put us right in the forefront of what was going on and I thought, wow, we need to document these things.”<sup>211</sup>

*Gidra* supported the American Indian movement and covered the occupations of Alcatraz and Wounded Knee. On December 21, 1969 and February 14, 1970, the Japanese American Citizens League’s (JACL) National Committee to Repeal Detention Camp Legislation, and Committee to Repeal Title II respectively sponsored food lifts to the encamped Indians of All Tribes (IAT) during their eight-month occupation of Alcatraz Island in San Francisco. Nisei

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<sup>209</sup> Wayne Miyao, “Chicano,” *Gidra* II, no. 8 (September 1970): 5.

<sup>210</sup> Alfredo Gutierrez, *To Sin Against Hope: How America Has Failed Its Immigrants: A Personal History* (New York & London: Verso Books, 2013). P. 100.

<sup>211</sup> Interview with Duane Kubo, September 8, 2012.

fishermen volunteered their boats to transport fresh meat, produce and fruit as well as rice and canned food, citing the common bond of having also been incarcerated by the U.S. government during WWII.<sup>212</sup> “We hung the banner, ‘Japanese Americans Support Native Americans’ over the symbolic gifts. We explained to many curious passers by the relationship between our Title II repeal campaign to the Indians’ symbolic struggle to right the Great Wrong.”<sup>213</sup> Another article appeared in April 1970 (*Indian Brothers* by Geraldine Kutaka).

*Gidra* extensively covered the occupation of Wounded Knee, first with a four page article in the April 1973 issue that included a chronology of U.S. Indian policy and a Statement of Policy by the Independent Oglala Nation upon whose land Wounded Knee was located.<sup>214</sup> In the May issue an article on the Manzanar Pilgrimage reported that along with letters of support by dignitaries, the chair read a statement from the Manzanar Committee in support of Wounded Knee, drawing on the similarities between the two sites. The statement noted, “Today, the person in charge of the Bureau of Indian Affairs is the same person who was in charge of the relocation centers for Japanese during World War II.” It concluded with, “...we must realize that Manzanar is right now, this minute, our Wounded Knee. If we support one, we must support the other. It’s the same struggle with many fronts.”<sup>215</sup> A second article reported that a contingent of Asian Americans from Los Angeles arrived at Wounded Knee on Easter morning to join the pilgrimage to break the blockade. The article expressed, “The Asian brothers and sisters at Wounded Knee

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<sup>212</sup> “Aid to Alcatraz,” *Gidra* January 1970, p. 3.

<sup>213</sup> Tanioka and Yamaguchi, “Asians Make Waves to Alcatraz.”

<sup>214</sup> Merrilynne Hamano, “Nation Building at Wounded Knee,” *Gidra* V, no. 4 (April 1973): 1, 4–6.

<sup>215</sup> Mike Murase, “Manzanar,” *Gidra* V, no. 5 (May 1973): 4–6.

are representing all of us who feel the growing unity between the Native American and Asian struggle in America.”<sup>216</sup> Within the week, two American Indians who lay siege to Wounded Knee would be shot and killed. After their deaths, 71 days of occupation, and reports of between 400 to 1,200 arrests, the siege ended.

Third World Solidarity Abroad. International Third World solidarity was manifested in three subthemes: 1) looking to Asia and other Third World countries for progressive role models, 2) awareness that Asians at home were conflated with Asians abroad and 3) criticism of the militarism, fascism and imperialism of governments of Asian countries.

Feeling and being treated like aliens in their own country, many Asian Americans looked to Asia and other Third World countries for progressive role models. Many were inspired by and studied the Zengakuren in Japan, the Red Guard in China and the anti-Marcos struggle in the Philippines. Asian leaders like Mao Zedong, Ho Chi Minh and Corazon Aquino commanded worldwide attention and, for the first time, provided overdue relief from the prevailing stereotypes of Suzie Wong and Charlie Chan (Liu et. al. 2008).

*Gidra* announced the screening of the Chinese film *The East is Red* (1965), dramatizing the history of the Chinese Revolution under Mao Zedong, which was popular among Asian American activists in the U.S. (March 1970). *Gidra* featured articles in support of the movements against militarism and facism in Japan (September 1970, December 1971), Korea (April 1971) the Philippines (July 1971, August 1973), Okinawa (July 1972) and China (November 1972, October 1973). It featured articles on the women of Vietnam (March 1970, September 1973), Cuba (April 1972) and China (September 1972). The first page of the March 1971 “Special Street People’s Issue” featured a poem by Ho Chi Minh from his Prison Diaries

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<sup>216</sup> Merrilynne Hamano, “From Manzanar to Wounded Knee,” *Gidra* V, no. 5 (May 1973): 7–9.

that read in part: “People who come out of prison can build up the country / Misfortune is a test of people's fidelity./ Those who protest at injustice are people of true merit./ When the prison doors are opened, the real dragon will fly out.”<sup>217</sup>

In addition to looking to the Third World for inspiration and education, another theme was that what happened internationally in Asia would affect Asian Americans as well. Or, as Bruce Iwasaki wrote, "the racism in America equates Asian Americans with Asians in Asia."<sup>218</sup> *Gidra* had reported how in the Vietnam War, Asian American soldiers were used as an example of what the enemy looked like, abused, and often left for dead because they looked like “gooks” (May, June/July 1970, May, June 1971). And how returning soldiers brought home the hatred for men and women who looked like the enemy they had been taught to hate and kill (June/July, September 1970, January 1971, May 1972). In addition, *Gidra* published many articles on how Japanese Americans were targeted during WWII when the U.S. was at war with Japan as well as how Chinese Americans were conflated with “Red” China by J. Edgar in his testimony that “Red China has been flooding the country with its propaganda and there are 300,000 Chinese in the U.S., some of whom could be susceptible to recruitment though ethnic ties...”<sup>219</sup>

This understanding that Asians in America were conflated with Asians in Asia was evinced when Asian Americans coalesced in Third World solidarity as well both at home and abroad. When the Asian American, Black and Chicano/a students at California State University, Long Beach joined forces as the Third World Organization, they issued a statement that was

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<sup>217</sup> Ho Chi Minh, “Word Play,” *Gidra* III, no. 3 (March 1971): 3.

<sup>218</sup> Iwasaki, Fukuda, and Nagatani, “Sister, Brother, There’s Far Too Many of You Dying. U.S. Imperialism; Rising Suns, Rising Guns, Japanese Militarism: An Introduction; Words to Actions: The PRG Seven Point Peace Proposal.”

<sup>219</sup> Jerry J. Enomoto, “Hoover’s Yellow Peril: An Open Letter to J. Edgar Hoover,” *Gidra* I, no. 6 (September 1969): 2.



published in *Gidra*. In part it indicated “We as Asian American students at Cal State Long Beach have always felt that the war in Southeast Asia has had a direct and most injurious effect on us. And that the increase of hostilities by U.S. troops in Asia is also an increase of hostilities upon us as Asian Americans.”<sup>220</sup>

Alex Hing of the Red Guard took that understanding to a higher political level by linking it with why Asian Americans must take an active and vigilant stand. Hing (as well as Pat Sumi, representing Movement for a Democratic Military (MDM)), was part of the 1970 U.S. People’s Anti-Imperialist Delegation to North Korea, North Vietnam and the People’s Republic of China led by Eldridge Cleaver.<sup>221</sup> From the trip, Hing wrote several letters to *Gidra*. In October 1970 *Gidra* published a lengthy letter he wrote when the delegation was in North Korea. Referring to the “‘Nixon Doctrine’ of making Asians fight Asians,” Hing posed, “What does this mean for Asian-Americans?” Reminding the reader that the U.S. government incarcerated Americans of Japanese ancestry during WWII because the U.S. was a war with Japan, he declared, “Asian-Americans must play a more significant and active role in the anti-U.S. imperialist movement within the United States because our fate in Amerika is intimately bound up with the fate of Asians in Asia.”<sup>222</sup>

The third subtheme was criticism of militarism, facism and imperialism of the governments of Asian countries. As part of a concerted commitment to internationalism, Asian

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<sup>220</sup> Cal State Long Beach Asian American Student Alliance, “Third World - CSCLB,” *Gidra* II, no. 6 (July 1970): 5.

<sup>221</sup> According to an article in *Gidra*, others on the delegation represented Women's Liberation, Ramparts Magazine, International Liberation School, New Haven Panther Defense Committee, the Black Panther Party and Newsreel. Patrell, “Glad They’re Back,” *Gidra* II, no. 9 (October 1970): 4.

<sup>222</sup> Alex Hing, “Letter from Alex Hing of the Red Guard Party from North Korea,” *Gidra* II, no. 9 (October 1970): 6.

American activists rallied against imperialism around the world and were especially critical when their ancestral countries were involved. One issue that received considerable attention in *Gidra*, whose staff was primarily Japanese Americans, was protest against rising Japanese militarism and imperialism (December 1970, January 1971, August, September 1972). Specific issues included objecting to the complex and related issues of Japan's 1969 take-over of the Tiao-yu Tai islands (April 1971, May, July 1971), the 1970 renewal of the U.S. Japan Security Treaty known as "Ampo" (September 1969, September 1970, February, August 1972), and the 1971 reversion of Okinawa to Japan (September, October, December 1969, April, November 1971, January, May, July 1972).

The first article in *Gidra* regarding Okinawa and the U.S. Japan Security Treaty in September 1969 was, interestingly, a reprint from *Muhammad Speaks*, the newspaper of the Nation of Islam under Elijah Muhammad. Although it was outside the paper's primary interest area of African Americans and specifically Black Muslims, the article reported that members of Asian Americans for Action were among those who were arrested at the United Nations after a demonstration of about 250 people demanded the withdrawal of all U.S. forces and nuclear and chemical weapons from Okinawa, the reversion of Okinawa to Japan, and an end to the U.S. Japan Security Treaty. While Asian Americans for Action, known as Triple A would soon be known to *Gidra*, (*Gidra* reprinted an article on Okinawa from the Triple A Newsletter the following month<sup>223</sup>), Triple A was first made known to *Gidra* readers through *Muhammad Speaks*. Both this fact as well as the article itself reveal the mutual ties each racial group had with

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<sup>223</sup> Judy Kanazawa, "Okinawa," Reprint from Asian Americans for Action Newsletter, *Gidra* I, no. 7 (October 1969): 5.

the other. The article also noted that this was the first demonstration in the U.S. held in support of the movement and people of Japan and Okinawa.<sup>224</sup>

When the news of Marcos declaring martial law in the Philippines in 1972 traveled to the U.S., it elicited both outrage and support from the Filipino American community which was comprised of both U.S. born Filipino Americans who had no direct connection to the Philippines as well as post-1965 immigrants who had close, continuous links to the islands. A year after martial law was declared, what was commonly called the “Marcos Black List,” a listing of Filipino Americans - some of whom had never been to the Philippines nor were involved in anti-Marcos activities - was widely circulated throughout Filipino communities in the U.S. causing pervasive alarm and suspicion. An article in *Gidra* indicated that the Philippine Consulate maintained that there was no blacklist but simply a record of “those who are not a credit to our nation in the United States.” The article quoted a representative of the National Committee to Restore Civil Liberties in the Philippines (NCRCLP) who indicated that leaders in the Filipino communities who “at some time might prove dangerous to the regime” were targeted.<sup>225</sup> (Preventive insurrection was also embedded in Title II of the Internal Security Act that provided for the arrest of those who are suspected of future acts without due process of law as well as J. Edgar Hoover’s testimony that Chinese Americans “could be susceptible (of Chinese communist recruitment) through ethnic ties.”<sup>226</sup>)

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<sup>224</sup> “Asians Arrested,” Reprint from Muhammad Speaks, *Gidra* I, no. 6 (September 1969): 2.

<sup>225</sup> Pacific News Service, “The Marcos Blacklist: Another Symptom of the Growing Oppression in the Philippines,” *Gidra* V, no. 12 (December 1973): 6.

<sup>226</sup> Enomoto, “Hoover’s Yellow Peril: An Open Letter to J. Edgar Hoover.”

## Conclusion

In summary, text analysis of *Gidra* confirmed that the newspaper indeed reflected the many spheres of activism, goals, objectives and issues and concerns that together comprised the AAM. Indeed, as Seigo Hayashi maintained, *Gidra's* goal was basically synonymous with that of the AAM as a whole. “We can state our long-term goal very simply: We want to make this world a better place for all people to live.”

One area that went untouched in *Gidra* were articles related to lesbian, gay, bi-sexual or transgender issues. Homosexuality and bi and transgendered sexuality were generally closeted in the late sixties and early seventies. In 1973 homosexuality was declassified as a mental disorder by the American Psychiatric Association. (It wasn't until 1990 that the World Health Organization decided the same.) In 1975, a year after *Gidra* ceased publication, an essay on Asian American homosexuality in *Bridge* magazine professed to be the first publication on the subject in an Asian American journal.<sup>227</sup>

Four major themes, all reflecting various aspects of the AAM, dominated *Gidra's* contents: 1) Vetting Asian American Identity and Consciousness, which was critical in the early stages of the AAM for developing a collective identity upon which collective activism was grounded; 2) Asian American Perspectives on the War in Southeast Asia, which provided some of the most cogent analyses of the Southeast Asian War from an Asian American perspective; 3) Building Asian American Community and Culture, which was *Gidra's* stated intention from the beginning and was manifested throughout its lifespan and 4) Third World Solidarity at Home and Abroad, another founding value that began with the inspiration of the Black Liberation

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<sup>227</sup> Daniel Tsang, “Losing It's Soul?: Reflections on Gay and Asian Activism,” in *Legacy to Liberation: Politics and Culture of Revolutionary Asian Pacific America*, ed. Fred Ho (San Francisco: Big Red Media, 2000), 59–64.

movement at home and identification with embattled Southeast Asians during the Vietnam War and grew to embrace all oppressed people of color around the world and around the block.

## Chapter 4: Form

Having presented a discussion of the contents of *Gidra* in the last chapter, this chapter discusses the various forms by which the contents were conveyed. As cultural theorist Stuart Hall contended, “It is only through the way in which we represent and imagine ourselves that we come to know how we are constituted and who we are.”<sup>228</sup>

From an anthropological standpoint, in terms of the anthropology of experience, Edward Bruner (1986) noted that the difficulty with experience is that we can only experience our own lives. Borrowing from Dilthey, Bruner argued that the only way to understand another’s experience, as well as share our own, is through the medium of expressions. “Expressions are the peoples’ articulations, formulations and representations of their own experience,” he stated and “the advantage of beginning the study of culture through expressions is that the basic units of analysis are established by the people we study rather than by the anthropologist as alien observer.”<sup>229</sup> As Chapter 3 explored how people experienced their culture, this chapter examines how those experiences were expressed.

In asking in what ways movements move, sociologist Larry Isaac argued that at their root, social movements were agents of cultural production. “Regardless of whatever else they may accomplish, movements produce new cultural forms in the course of struggle.” More to the point of this chapter, Isaac indicated, “that not only the event but the *form* (his italics) of

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<sup>228</sup> Stuart Hall, “What Is This ‘Black’ in Black Popular Culture?,” *Social Justice* 20, no. 1/2 (1993): 104–14.

<sup>229</sup> Bruner, “Experience and Its Expression.”

movement cultural production about the event ... can matter in when and how movements move.”<sup>230</sup>

*Gidra* used two basic forms by which it bottled its contents: written texts, which included news articles, first-person commentaries, editorials, letters to the editor, calendar entries and creative writing such as poetry; and visual texts - illustrative and interpretive graphics and photographs, illustrations, cover art, and political cartoons.

### **Written Texts**

News articles and opinion pieces are the primary means by which a newspaper expresses its content. This discussion on written formats utilized in *Gidra* will focus on three secondary categories of written texts. Two are conventions of newspapers in general: editorial commentaries and letters to the editor; and one that was specific to alternative papers of the long sixties, namely poetry by the people. All three iterated issues, subject matters and themes found in *Gidra* with the added dimension of a level of subjectivity and emotions that are not, as a rule, elements in news articles and even essays. Editorials, letters and poems have the freedom - expectation even – to express biases, exuberance or loathing, in essence the passion that, in Isaac’s terminology, made a movement move.

#### Editorials

Beginning with *Gidra*’s polemic birth announcement in its first issue that stated it was dedicated to “honest expression of feeling or opinion, be it profound or profane, innocuous or insulting, from wretched or well-off,”<sup>231</sup> editorials were a regular feature in *Gidra*. The October

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<sup>230</sup> Larry Isaac, “Movement of Movements: Culture Moves in the Long Civil Rights Struggle,” *Social Forces* 87, no. 1 (2008): 55.

<sup>231</sup> *Gidra*, *Gidra* No. 1, no. 1 (1969): 2.

1969 editorial reiterated *Gidra*'s inclusive policy. "*Gidra* is intended to provide an open forum for discussion of issues affecting the Asian American community. As such, we avow no allegiance to any organization, but we solicit the support of all."

Many of *Gidra*'s editorials ruminated on the state of society's ills or shared the arduous process of putting out a newspaper with little money and a shifting volunteer staff. William Wei surmised that these editorials were "pessimistic maanderings about life in general and *Gidra* in particular," serving as "a catharsis for the writer."<sup>232</sup> Certainly, there were editorials that could be interpreted as "pessimistic" or "cathartic," but they were, in essence, much more. *Gidra*'s editorials put into practice the ideology of transparency, self-criticism and accountability that were hallmarks of a revolutionary organization. And in their open, self-evaluative philosophy, in such instances *Gidra* called itself out. The March 1973, editorial read "Yawn. These confessions, though meant to be self-critical, often become self-serving. And predictable. When will we learn from them? How long before we implement both the political wherewithal and the open vibes necessary to get better at communicating?"<sup>233</sup> Pessimistic and cathartic? Perhaps. Honest and real? More likely.

The editorial of December 1973 admitted that several staff members mentioned "da blurbs," as they were called in-house were "usually very dismal in content and gloomy in intention," and called for a blurb that was not "such a downer." To which the editorial replied, "It's not that easy" considering the times they were in. "There is no gas, no heat, no meat, no jobs... Our nation's leader is dangerously crazy ...our brothers and sisters are actually killing

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<sup>232</sup> Wei, *The Asian American Movement*. 105.

<sup>233</sup> Editorial, *Gidra* V, no. 3 (March 1973): 2



themselves through gang violence or with drugs...” The editorial ended with, “It’s not easy to write a blurb that is not such ‘a downer.’ All we can do is hope for the best and work to make the best come true. We’re in times when all we can really depend on is ourselves. And together we are strong.”<sup>234</sup> In the last editorial of April 1974, calling them “mediations,” the editors indicated that these were usually the last thing written, “often by someone with eyes stinging for want of sleep three hours before we’re due at the printers.”<sup>235</sup> It acknowledged that they “have been suffused with frustration and worry somewhat more often than gladness or even hope.” Nonetheless, *Gidra* staffer Doug Aihara recalls receiving feedback at that time that many people indicated they read them on a consistent basis.<sup>236</sup>

There were two main themes embedded in the editorials. One took the reader behind the scenes, recounting the arduous and often mundane process of putting out a monthly paper, stripping away any smoke and mirrors in order to be open and accountable. They revealed *Gidra*’s policies and practices and the thought process behind them. In stating why they had a special issue on what they called the “Middle Generation” (August 1971), for example, the editorial disclosed, “whatever had molded our individual growth into radical political involvement ... the great influence came from our relations with our parents.... We, who protested the exploitation of sisters, would call upon mom for dinner without a qualm.... But when we discovered the racist oppression that had forced our parents into their position, we reflected – and were ashamed. ... Our elders, once the source for our individual negative rebellion, became under this positive analysis, the motivation for our collective work.”

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<sup>234</sup> David Monkawa, “Some Depressing Info for Third World Artists:,” *Gidra* VI, no. 1 (January 1974): 24.

<sup>235</sup> Editorial, *Gidra* VI, no. 4 (April 1974): 2.

<sup>236</sup> From interview with Doug Aihara, September 16, 2013.

The April 1972 editorial admitted, “It’s been awhile since we’ve been so excited, energetic, frustrated, disappointed, confused, down and up so many times in working on a single issue.” It went on to explain that that issue was intended to be the second women’s issue until a female staffer, “questioned the validity of an issue without any real input from the men.” So at the last minute they had meeting with some of the male staff, which resulted in new issue on men and women. The majority of articles were still about women “that should be of interest to both men and women.” “But most importantly,” the editorial revealed, “the spirit of the issue changed. It was no longer women struggling alone but women and men struggling together.” This editorial revealed the broader perspective held by Asian American and women of color that “the women’s struggle shouldn’t be separate from the rest of the total struggle.” Not that all was inter-gendered bliss. The editorial also revealed, “Some men harbored ill feelings that they had been left out. Some women felt the sense of sisterhood had been broken. ... But then that’s what this whole struggle is all about.”

The July 1972 editorial ruminated upon a quandary that all political organizations face then and now, but which is not often discussed in public or passed on from generation to generation: the practical need for funds to carry out its mission with the ideology of being anti-capitalist. The editorial stated that *Gidra* and *Chinese Awareness*, a local Chinese American publication, had their First Annual Chow Mein Fun Brunch which “drew sufficient funds to get us to this point, period.” From that point, the editorial stated, “contradictions arise: do we continue to drain money from the community or do we try to find other outside means of support?” It indicated that the previous month they made an effort to acquire funds from Asian American businesses, but most of the businesses felt the paper was too radical. The editorial indicated that by reaching out on a personal level, some businesses were willing to lend support.

Yet the editorial postured, “Still the question remains ... What changes must be made in *Gidra* to make it ‘more palatable’ ...and if we made those changes, would *Gidra* be *Gidra*?” The editorials often ended with a hypothetical question, intimating that there was no definitive answer. The result was that the reader was left more engaged in the thought process.

The other theme embedded in editorials was self-reflection and evaluation - of both *Gidra* and the AAM of which *Gidra* was always mindful of being an integral part. In the spirit of the AAM value on self-criticism, editorials were often self-evaluations of *Gidra*'s policies and practices as well as reflexive commentary and criticisms on the state of the AAM. In the February 1970 issue, for example, the editorial demonstrated a keen awareness of the privilege of education and the fact that it often had counter-revolutionary consequences. “The people of both the Asian American Movement and the New Left are deeply rooted in academic tradition. The result of an average of over twelve years of ‘education’ has led to vast amounts of rhetoric or artificial eloquence and sophisticated intellectualizing.” Twisting the knife, it referenced the stridency of political correctness by adding, “Rhetoric and insistence on ideological exactness rather than action has restrained progress as much as repression by outside forces of resistance.”

On the occasion of its first year anniversary in April 1970, *Gidra*'s editorial put forth some of the policy changes that were based on feedback from their readers. *Gidra*'s publication of these internal decisions demonstrated the staff's accountability to their constituency. And now such documents have become primary empirical “data” that helps better understand the inner workings of dissident newspapers and alternative organizations.

Most policy changes centered around the use of language. Stating that their initial policy, like that of all alternative presses, was that all ideas deserved to be heard regardless of the language used, the staff found that profanity and rhetoric caused some readers to react so

strongly to the language that they dismissed everything, including the message. Therefore in the effort to further *Gidra*'s goal of understanding and change, they decided to eliminate four letter words if the message was unaltered by their deletion, to accompany rhetorical words and phrases such as "exploitation," "oppression" and "imperialism" with explanations and examples to clarify their meaning, and remove inflammatory words like "pig" and "honky" whenever they seemed to hinder rather than promote communication and understanding. On the other hand the editorial also stated that readers should understand that strong language does not invalidate the idea being expressed. On the contrary, "Strong language, when not used flippantly, usually indicates an urgency that should not be ignored."<sup>237</sup>

The other change was more structural, both literally and figuratively. According to Wei (1993:105), by the end of 1971, editorials were called "fine print messages" because they appeared in small print. These micro-font editorial musings were tucked in somewhere along with the table of contents and staff listing. *Gidra* had attempted to alter their infrastructure several times. In May 1971, the editorial stated, "*Gidra*, despite claims to the contrary, has become an establishment, complete with a hierarchy and an inertia that inhibits growth and change." Therefore "next month the hierarchy of *Gidra* will come tumbling down as the entrenched decision makers will be stripped of their powers." They stated that the next issue would be "entirely in the hands of new people with new ideas." And hoped that by rotating responsibilities periodically *Gidra* could remain fresh and responsive and "avoid the stagnation that claims many of the institutions within our society."<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> Editorial, *Gidra*, Vol. II no. 4, (April 1970): 2.

<sup>238</sup> Editorial, *Gidra*, Vol. III, no. 5 (May 1971): 4.

A year later, in the May 1972 issue, the editorial again criticized the habit of using rhetoric by stating that its use was all too common in movements for social change as well as *Gidra*. “Rhetoric rushes in where analysis fears to tread. This happens a lot in the movement for basic social change; it has sometimes been true of *Gidra*, this issue too. Okay for shorthand or spirit boosting, but this practice obscures both broader and deeper communication of ideas.” In order to deepen their own political education, *Gidra* indicated that it was going to initiate a series of study sessions within the staff. “Besides examining office tasks and social interaction, we are attempting to understand the objective conditions that affect us as Asian Americans.” By tying political education to practice, it added, “Furthermore, we hope our research and discussions will generate alternatives and ways to achieve them.”<sup>239</sup>

In May 1973, the editorial acknowledged the heterogeneous constituency of the AAM, while underscoring the importance of collective behavior. “*Gidra* is made up of different individuals with different political perspectives ... But whoever we are as individuals, we at *Gidra* are dedicated to putting time and effort into creating a vehicle. A vehicle, which is part of a political process – a process toward change.” It went on to emphasize that part of the political process was working together, learning from each other, the readers and the community at large. “*Gidra* is only a vehicle, controlled by us, that can reach, touch many people – and more, with your help. Help in writing articles, distributing, giving *Gidra* to a friend, giving us constructive criticism, working with us to put out the paper. *Gidra* is only a vehicle. People make it move. Help us. Together we can make it happen.”<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> Editorial, *Gidra*. Vol. IV, no. 5 (May 1972). 2.

<sup>240</sup> “Editorial,” *Gidra*, Vol. V, no. 5. (May 1973).

## Letters to the Editor

Letters to the Editor have been a standard feature of newspapers and periodicals. They are a channel by which the public can communicate their thoughts and feelings about specific articles or aspects of the publication or the publication as a whole. In this way they are ostensibly taken as a reflection of the state of mind of the populace as well as a site for democratic communication. Journalists and publishers, on the other hand, have tended to regard letter writers as “cranks or eccentrics and are unrepresentative of either public opinion or of articulate publics in the community”<sup>241</sup> who “chronically vent their emotions in print.”<sup>242</sup> So pervasive is this attitude, the assumption that most letter writers are crazy or extreme is known in the field of journalism as the “idiom of insanity” (Williams et. al. 2011, Ogan et. al. 2005). However, such a disparaging stance has also been challenged. One criticism suggested that such an attitude was a way for publishers and journalists to “renounce their responsibility to make democracy work.”<sup>243</sup> In *Gidra*, there was significantly more evidence that letters to editor did indeed constitute a forum for public debate and discussion rather than manifest an “idiom of insanity.”

Certainly *Gidra* received scornful letters that could be regarded as emanating from the poison pen of cranks or eccentrics. In the fourth issue of July 1969, time enough for *Gidra* to be circulated, were two venomous letters among many flattering ones. One began, “Found your

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<sup>241</sup> Thomas J. Volgy, Mary Kay Langan Krigbaum, and Vicky Moshier, “Some of My Best Friends Are Letter Writers: Eccentrics and Gladiators Revisited,” *Social Science Quarterly* 58, no. 2 (September 1977): 321–27.

<sup>242</sup> Emmett H. Buell, “Eccentrics or Gladiators? People Who Write About Politics in Letters-to-the-Editor,” *Social Science Quarterly* 56, no. 3 (December 1975): 440–49.

<sup>243</sup> Karin Wahl-Jorgensen, “The Construction of the Public in Letters to the Editor: Deliberative Democracy and the Idiom of Insanity,” *Journalism* 3, no. 2 (August 2002): 188–204.

filthy, dirty, rotten rag on my front porch this A.M. and want to say that it actually nauseated me and caused me to vomit. Notice that you seem to be greatly concerned and fearful that you might become like us white people, so would like to suggest that you print your dirty rag in your own language ... Hope the printing ink you use is not poisonous as the only thing I can use your dirty rag for is to wipe my ASS.”<sup>244</sup>

The other letter harangued in misspelled and grammatically challenged fashion and was published as received:

I dont no what is wrong with you poor minority groups ... I can see why you are all in such a fix. Now take the black man why hasnt he been able to get anywhere on his own. He had a land of his own. His own black brothers sold them as slaves. Also China. Also Japan. Its only been in the last 20 years that they have been able to come out of there ancient ways. Take the Mexican they have more resources then we do in America and yet they havent been able to do anything on there own. ...Your all a bunch of hand outs ... without the white man youd all be in one hell of a mess.”

The letter went on, repeating the phrase, “I’m glad I’m White” (with the word “White” underlined) at least three times in between long paragraphs of rant. It was signed, “From a happy White mother.”

Cranks? Possibly. Emotional? Certainly. Yet, these were also actual reflections of the public, no matter how minor they may have been. More sophisticated but no less racist was a letter in the February 1970 issue. Beginning with “After reading an issue of your magazine, I almost died laughing. It’s even more ridiculous than the trash written by The Black Panthers,”

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<sup>244</sup> Letter to the Editor, *Gidra*, Vol. I, no. 4 (July 1969): 5.

the letter writer who requested that his name be withheld went on to state, “What you people should realize is this is a white man’s world. In the final analysis we will run it as we see fit... Let’s face it: we set the standards of the world. I am not bragging or advocating racial superiority; I am merely telling it like it really is.”<sup>245</sup> That the letter writer was male was revealed when he wrote, “Although I am just an average white man in America, I was king in the Orient.” Seguing easily from racism into sexism, he continued, “I always had a hard time trying to go with white girls, but I didn’t have to try to get the prettiest oriental girls in Los Angeles, Tokyo, Hong Kong, Saigon, Singapore, etc. ... Take UCLA. The Japanese girls are just trying to get dates with us white guys.”

In the next issue were two letters in response to this racist and sexist assertion, engaging in a dialogue on paper. One wrote, “King, you have already proven to us that your ‘whiteness’ is so much tofu,” ending with “May I remind you that an erected penis is not the sign of a man or a human being?”<sup>246</sup> Suspicious of the “idiom of insanity,” another wrote, “I don’t believe that letter! Was it real or did one of you dream it up? ... It’s so filled with ignorance it’s unbelievable! Does such a being exist?”<sup>247</sup>

Letters to the editor also praised as well as criticized *Gidra*. Letters of praise came from near and afar. A letter from a staff person at the *Village Voice* wrote that they published an article on *Gidra* and that its author Howard Smith mentioned *Gidra* on ABC radio (May 1970:13).

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<sup>245</sup> Name withheld, “Letters to *Gidra*,” *Gidra* II, no. 2 (February 1970): 4.

<sup>246</sup> Marcia Lee, “Letters to *Gidra*: King,” *Gidra* II, no. 3 (March 1970): 4.

<sup>247</sup> Marie Ochi, “Letters to *Gidra*: Impressed,” *Gidra* II, no. 3 (March 1970): 4.



One unusual source of letters came from the prison population. There were over twenty letters to *Gidra* from incarcerated men between 1970 and 1973 that showed that *Gidra* penetrated the prison system and acted as a conduit to the outside world. The first was from Richard in Soledad who explained that his mother was Japanese and his father was Irish, Scottish and Indian. “I find being half and half has taught me some painful experiences, I’ve wondered how many others have gone through it as I have. Are there any? I’ll call them half and half on *Gidra* staff?” He asked if anyone on the *Gidra* staff would be interested corresponding with him adding that it would give him a “chance to learn more about my Asian brothers and sisters, ‘cause in 27 years, I’ve never had or carried a conversation with an Oriental girl or boy. So really you’re a stranger to me but I do want to know you.”<sup>248</sup>

Another letter - and response – touched upon the already charged area of male-female relationships and sexism, made more complex by the fact that the males were incarcerated. Seven men in Soledad North wrote to *Gidra*, “Through your newspaper we have acquired a sense of identity and awareness... All this is good but we still lack something. Many of us have nobody within our own peer group of the opposite sex to correspond and relate with. So, ...we are warmly welcoming any Asian sisters ...to write to us. ...Please do not fear us because we are prisoners, our only difference is that we are separated by walls for we are of the same root.” All signed their first and last names, what ethnicity they were and their post office box numbers.

Along with this letter was printed a response from “the *Gidra* sisters” that illustrated the no win situation both sides were in. Their letter sincerely explained that they had mixed feelings of wanting to support the incarcerated men but not wanting to get personally involved. Then they added gender politics. “We, as women, also live in a kind of a prison. ... We sisters are also

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<sup>248</sup> Richard, “Mas Que Solo En Soledad,” *Gidra* II, no. 7 (August 1970): 18.

confined to play certain roles – we’re always expected to be supportive and comforting. ... perhaps unknowingly you are helping to perpetuate our confining roles...” Obviously versed in the group process that activists engaged in, their response ended with, “We would like to know how you feel about what we had to say and if you have comments and/or criticism, we would like to hear from you so that we may better understand your feelings.” Whereas the men ended their letter with “Very Truly Yours,” the sisters signed off with “All power to the righteous Soledad-North bros!” This exchange illustrated the conflicting states each party inhabited. Both parties were evidently being sincere and open. The women revealed they were functioning from within a web of progressive politics, a web of their own making. Whereas the confined men were caught in a different web altogether, a web that they admittedly got themselves into but over which they had no control. Sequestered outside the normal socialization process of Sixties politics, they were manifested their best public etiquette in reaching out to the opposite sex, yet were oblivious to the double entendre into which they wrote themselves.

Letters also contained constructive criticism. One letter expressed, “Hey, *Gidra* is mighty fine but you brothers and sisters don’t put enough of Filipino and Filipino-American viewpoints on this society in *Gidra*. You people are making us feel as if we aren’t Asian, to the point where we’ll stop buying *Gidra*.” *Gidra* responded that they agreed Filipino subject matter was lacking and added, “However, we feel it is the responsibility of those who have the resources regarding the events, personalities and ideologies of the Filipinos. We more than welcome any materials regarding Filipinos. (May 1971).

Another letter, and its response by another reader, shed light on the how the AAM was considered by non-activist Asian Americans. This dialogue demonstrates the utility of letters to the editor in being able to reveal personal perceptions not often aired but no doubt shared by

many. The letter writer felt he/she had to write and “spill the beans” that “the movement is a sham ... Our real reason is to get together and have big ethnic dinners ... big conferences and retreats where we can meet and talk and brag and show off ... have some place to crash when we visit San Francisco or Los Angeles. ... For myself, the movement means friends I can get stoned with, ... contacts I can make to help me later on professionally .... ” It was signed, “An Asian American student, University of California, Santa Barbara.” *Gidra* did not respond but a reader did. First criticizing the writer for not having the “commitment to put your name down,” she went on to explain that there were many types of people involved in the movement. Some really care and “keep the movement going; but they are a minority. Then there are ... people like yourself who have not committed themselves to anything yet. ... There are a lot of people in this category within the movement,” adding in parenthesis, “(which is one reason that keeps me from becoming directly involved with it.)”

Several writers were, at the time or became, well-respected persons in their fields in a variety of areas. The letters are as notable for how widely read and regarded *Gidra* was as for the relevance of their contents.

Don Nakanishi was the director of the UCLA Asian American Studies Center for twenty years, from 1989 to 2009. In 1970 he was an undergraduate at Yale University and wrote to the Ford Foundation inquiring whether Asian Americans were able to apply for their minority fellowships. The letter of response he received from the Foundation and Nakanishi’s letter of rebuttal were printed in their entirety in the February 1970 issue of *Gidra*. The Ford Foundation letter began with “This is in response to your letter of December 26. You asked whether Asians (I assume you mean Orientals) are eligible to apply for the ...” and went on to explain that they

were not, indicating “Of the Oriental students who graduate from high school, approximately 90 per cent go on to college.”

Nakanishi’s rebuttal started by echoing the wording of the Ford Foundation letter. “This is in response to your letter of January 12,” Nakanishi began. “In my letter to you on December 26, I asked whether Asian Americans (I did not mean Orientals) were eligible to apply for the Ford Foundation Fellowships to Negroes (I assume you mean Blacks), Mexican Americans (I assume you mean Chicanos), Puerto Ricans and American Indians (I further assume you mean Native Americans).” After questioning the basis for the Ford Foundation representative’s statistics, summarizing the history of Asians in the U.S. and informing him that the vast majority of Asian Americans, like himself, came from lower middle class backgrounds who would never have been able to go to college, if not for “such a substantially endowed university such as Yale,” Nakanishi ended with, “I would appreciate it if you would reconsider your present discriminatory policy toward Asian Americans in your Doctoral Fellowship program and inform me of your decision.” Such boldness on the part of an undergrad to boldly confront one of the world’s most venerated foundations demonstrates how Nakanishi had the chutzpah to co-found the *Amerasia Journal*, now the premiere academic journal in Asian American Studies, when he was only an undergrad as well as how he had the determination to go up against the University of California to win a landmark three-year fight to gain tenure, many years later.

In the April 1972 issue *Gidra* printed a letter from a Lance A. Ito, then a 22 year old UCLA undergrad, who would become world famous for being the judge in the O.J. Simpson murder trial. He wrote to *Gidra* urging action against a racist caricature of Nixon with slanted eyes with the caption, “Tricke Dickee. Nixon with Oriental eyes.” He wrote, “Asians in this country are seemingly fair game for all ignorant, racist institutions in our racist society. I appeal

to the readership of *Gidra* to act to bring an end to this anti-Asian racism.” Stating that the NCAAP would be quick to defend their community if so targeted and that Chicanos succeeded in banishing the Frito Bandito from television, the future judge challenged, “Where are all the Asian attorneys? ... The self-hate of assimilation cannot be allowed to render this generation of Asians timid and impotent.”<sup>249</sup>

In February 1974, Philip V. Vera Cruz, former Vice-President of the United Farm Workers of America wrote to *Gidra*, which had printed one of his articles, “Sour Grapes: Symbol of Oppression” four years earlier. With it he enclosed two poems with the modest disclaimer, “Of course, I’m not a professional writer, but I do a little writing now and then in my own way - in my uneducated personal style.” In his letter, the labor leader whose organization the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee initiated the grape boycott, and later merged with the National Farm Workers Association to become the United Farm Workers, also indicated how much worse farmworkers in the Philippines were under Marco’s martial law. “It is illegal to demonstrate, organize, strike or even talk to people. The workers of Dole and Del Monte pineapple plantations of 19,200 acres (the largest in the world) and 17,249 acres (second-largest) respectively in Mindanao, Philippines, have no union. They are paid an average rate of 14 cents per hour compared to an average of \$3 in Hawaii.”

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<sup>249</sup> At the end of Ito’s letter was an Editor’s Note that indicated that in checking the image Ito referenced, *Gidra* found another a few inches away of a topless Asian woman in the middle of the rising sun of the Japanese military flag with the caption, “Miss Japan.” The editorial stated, “Racism cannot be separated from sexism ... in a society where material profit for a few is held above the value of human beings, we are taught to look at each other in terms of stereotypes and images, rather than as fellow human beings. ... We must remember that no one is free until everyone is free.” “Feedback,” *Gidra* IV, no. 4 (April 1972): 15.

## Poems

Farm Workers poor and lowly  
Rise earlier than the sun  
To start your daily toil -  
A job that's never done.  
  
With care they till the soil  
For precious seeds to sow;  
With hope for better harvest,  
They tend the plants to grow.<sup>250</sup>

...

Philip Vera Cruz' poems, such as this excerpt from *Farm Workers Feed the World*, were among the many that were published throughout *Gidra*'s five year lifespan. In an editorial introduction to a short piece fiction, *Gidra* wrote, "Attempts have been made to integrate a political perspective with the personal lives of those in our community. That elusive synthesis of theory and practice has been our goal. Sometimes the journalistic form works against this attempted combination of ideology and lifestyle. ... That is one reason *Gidra* has always had a 'Peoples Page' devoted to the creative expression, usually in verse, of the community."

Although *Gidra* printed several short stories, it was poems that dominated the creative cultural production in *Gidra*. Poems were published in almost every issue from the first to the last. The "People's Page" was typically a presentation of between four and eight poems which were often accompanied by drawings. In addition to this dedicated space, poems also accompanied other elements such as cover art, introducing the theme of the issue (such as the excerpt from Ho Chi Minh's Prison Diary that began the special issue on street people in March 1971), appeared as stand alone units, and supplemented letters like the one above from labor leader Vera Cruz' and the one below by Soledad Central inmate Harry K. Miyaji.

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<sup>250</sup> Philip V. Vera Cruz, "Farm Workers Feed the World," *Gidra* VI, no. 2 (February 1974): 8.

In October 1973 Miyaji wrote to *Gidra* saying that the organization Asian Joint Communications sent copies of *Gidra* to Soledad Central, where he was imprisoned. He wrote, “We have a group of Yellow and Brown Asians called the Sons of Hawaii. We would like to say that we are glad to see that all of you are doing something. We know the struggle is harder as the commitment deepens.” He wrote that the California prison system was the largest in the world, because they were often given indeterminate sentences such as five year to life, “Thus Corrections can play God with our lives.” Saying that there are the usual grievances of bad food, poor medical treatment and overcrowding, “it’s nothing compared to the total arbitrariness of the bureaucracy that rules every aspect of our existence. The racial antagonisms traditionally fostered by the guards to divide and rule is fast breaking down. But it is still being tried, and to keep us together we need to maintain a strong alliance between political activists on the street and us.” Obviously articulate and considered, Miyaji also included a poem to further express his feelings.

Within a prison’s enclosure  
Hidden from public exposure,  
There is a hate and bitterness  
More vast than any sea.  
  
For social ignorance we pay with time  
Social outcasts are we,  
Where no hope for freedom can be  
Caged like animals for none to see.

...

Most poems in *Gidra* expressed themes of the Asian American movement such as collective identity, racism, injustice, Vietnam War, as well as topics poets everywhere have lyricized in their attempts to understand and express life, love, war and peace. Most were simply soulful or soulfully simple. Others were more complex and read more opaquely like the

following by “Foo Gwah”<sup>251</sup> that opened the issue that commemorated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

After announcing that two  
Hundred Saints had been dropped  
from the Catholic calendar  
and others made optional  
the Vatican said yesterday  
that no saints have been  
stripped of their halos  
& that catholics can go on  
venerating even those  
who never existed.

Meanwhile, a Zen monk  
too tall for a halo  
too round for a cross  
too ONE for a trinity  
chatted with an audience  
of butterflies & told them  
that he had uncovered  
the bones of a caterpillar.<sup>252</sup>

Shin'ya Ono had been a member of the Weather Underground. The following is an excerpt from his autobiographical poem “Stormy Weather,” which was written while serving time in a Chicago prison for his actions with the Weatherman Days of Rage in 1969. It was published in the November 1970 issue of *Gidra* along with a photo of Ono being held by a one policeman while another held a billy club over Ono's head ready to strike that was credited as being reprinted from *The Guardian*. (The original photo was taken by David Fenton of the

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<sup>251</sup> Apparently a pseudonym. Foo Gwah means bitter melon in Cantonese.

<sup>252</sup> Foo Gwah, “Unititled Poem,” *Gidra* II, no. 7 (August 1970): 3.



Liberation News Service (LNS).<sup>253</sup> Recounting his life in verse, the poem is an example of how the political is also personal.

I am an Ono  
who once was  
a good Japanese  
obeying Mother (OKASAMA)  
i did well at AZABU Academy  
Forest Hills High School.  
Columbia College (Class of '64)  
and all that.

When I was little  
OKASAMA said: whatever you do  
don't be satisfied unless you become  
the top person in it.  
Maids and neighbors used to say:  
what a brilliant child? He could even be  
a foreign minister  
someday.

I'm in jail now  
one of the two black sheep  
in the ONO FAMILY (military officers, educators,  
bankers, ambassadors, and me)  
YOKO and SHIN'YA.

...

I am Shin'ya  
and Asian  
who in the film *Vietnam*  
cannot help  
seeing  
his own face  
in the faces of the Vietnamese.

...

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<sup>253</sup> Shin'ya Ono, "A Weatherman: You Do Need A Weatherman To Know Which Way The Wind Blows," in *Weatherman* (Ramparts Press, Inc., 1970), 227–74.

What would my father think of me?  
He, whose death weighed so heavily on all of us?  
He, who tried to fight for tragic Japan?  
(Japan, whose only way to save herself from  
the greedy, presumptuous, brutal, devilish,  
smelly hakujin was to become  
devilish and imperialistic herself)  
what would he think of me,  
like this?

I don't know.  
It doesn't really matter, really.  
As long as I keep on feeling the Japanese  
and the Vietnamese inside me.

Inside us. With all my brothers and sisters  
out there.  
Our history.  
Our biography  
Keep on  
feeling the sadness of that.  
The *power* of that.<sup>254</sup>

### Visual Texts

*Gidra's* visual style – its layout, quality and quantity of illustrations and photographs – matured with the newspaper. With a volunteer, inexperienced and rotating staff, everyone who worked at *Gidra* necessarily wore many hats including providing art direction, photos and illustrations. Therefore the look of the publication relied heavily on who could do what at the time. At the beginning, the fledgling newspaper tended to use already existing images. In the anti-capitalist, anti-establishment ether of the era, copyright was basically ignored if considered

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<sup>254</sup> Shin'ya Ono, "Stormy Weather," *Gidra* II, no. 10 (November 1970): 7.

at all and in the socialistic, non-individualistic attitude that accompanied it, original images also often went unsigned and unattributed.

# YELLOW POWER!

By Larry Kubota

"Power concedes nothing without demand. It never did and it never will. Find out just what any people will quietly submit to and you have found out the exact measure of injustice and wrong which will be imposed upon them, and these will continue till they are resisted with either words or blow, or with both. The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress."

Frederick Douglas

In Los Angeles in 1871, a mob of a thousand persons marched into the Chinese section, seized victims, overpowered the officers of the law and hanged at least 22 Chinese men, women, and children. No attempt was made to bring these people to justice.

Asian American history is filled with innumerable racist incidents. Some are overt, such as the one given above. Others are covert—psychological oppression, educational deprivation, and economic exploitation—and are equally destructive.

Looking back into the past, it is incredible that we have taken so long to confront this problem of racism. We are relegated to second-class citizenship, and adding insult upon injury, we are told to be thankful for our blessings.

We tried only the tactic of adaptation. We responded to our treatment with an "Oriental" smile and a polite "thank you."

**Asian Pride**

Today, however, is the dawn of a new era. We have finally reached the limits of our tolerance and have begun to explore a new alternative. Asian Americans have rediscovered their spirit and pride and are becoming a force to be reckoned with. In San Francisco, San Mateo, Los Angeles, and elsewhere, yellow people are fighting side by side with other Third World people for reform in society, and in particular, the educational system.

This is a new role for the Asian American. It is a rejection of the passive Oriental stereotype and symbolizes the birth of a new Asian—one who will recognize and deal with injustices. The shout of Yellow Power, symbolic of our new direction, is reverberating in the quiet corridors of the Asian community.

"Asian parents push their children to 'make it,' not realizing that when the process is complete, children may reject their parents."

Yellow Power is symbolic of the type of rapid social change occurring today which no group or individual can ignore. It is apparent, however, that many of us do not understand the meaning of Yellow Power and its relationship to the changes currently taking place in American Society.

Yellow Power means that we as Asian Americans are seeking greater control over the direction of our lives. It also expresses a determination to effect constructive changes in the larger society. It is not a call for Asians to move out of the mainstream of American life, but instead it says that we should be able to dictate some of the terms of entry into that mainstream.

"Yellow Power is a call for Asian Americans to end the silence that has condemned us to suffer in this racist society."

- U.S.A., 1942: 110,000 Japanese-Americans are imprisoned in concentration camps without trial.
- U. S. Congress, 1945: Oklahoma Congressman Jed Johnson proposes mass sterilization of the Japanese in the concentration camps.
- Los Angeles, 1969: The Council of Oriental Organizations is ousted from a meeting of the Concerned Citizens for Community Colleges—the Los Angeles version of the White Citizen's Council. The reason given for the ouster is that the Oriental community is "politically irrelevant."

The foregoing clearly illustrate the outrageous and frequently violent acts perpetrated against Asian-Americans by this so-called democratic society. It should be remembered that in America, all people of color have suffered as much or more. The condition of people of color in America is one of helplessness and powerlessness.

Yellow Power is a call to reject our past and present condition of powerlessness. When we attain a position of power in this society, we can have more control over our lives and begin to determine our own destiny. This is the second reason for Yellow Power.

**White-washed Asians**

Traditionally, yellow people have spent a great deal of time observing the behavior and mannerisms of white people. We have tried to act like them, speak like them, look like them, and be like them in every way. We have even been willing to sacrifice family relationships to emulate whites. For example, Asian parents push their children to "make it," not realizing that when the process is complete, children may reject their parents. The children feel ashamed of their parents because their parents do not measure up to the white standards that they have been told to hold supreme.

It is time we understood that white people cannot be taken as models. More than anyone else, it is they who are in dire need of reevaluating their standards and values. It is they who have been guilty of bigotry and hypocrisy. It is they who have created a country where racism is rampant.

The white youth of today are learning that George Washington, the father of our country, was a slave owner. They are ashamed as they watch the heroes of their fathers on television killing Indians, enslaving Black men, colonializing Brown men, and demeaning Yellow men, all in an effort to sustain the myth of White supremacy.

We must recognize, as Eldridge Cleaver suggests, that it is among the White youth of the world that the greatest change is taking place. It is they who feel the pain of finding their inherited heroes turned into villains. In the world revolution now under way, the heroes are no longer people who are white. Today the heroes are Eldridge Cleaver, Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, Mao Tse Tung, Che Guevara.

(Continued on page 4)

GIDRA - April, 1969 - 3

Fig. 5: "Yellow Power," by Larry Kubota. *Gidra*, Vol. I, no. 1 (April 1969): 3

Larry Kubota's article, "Yellow Power!" in the inaugural issue of *Gidra* was illustrated with a drawing of the Japanese actor Toshiro Mifune in one of his characteristic samurai stances in what were called "chambara" (meaning "sword fighting") period movies. With its blatant machismo and aggressive demeanor, it was apparently the closest image available at the time to envision the concept of "Yellow Power."

In general, alternative presses adopted the visual style of the Sixties with its lettering, graphic design, political cartoons and abundant use of the raised fist. First used by communists in the Spanish civil war as a counterpoint to the open-palmed Roman salute adopted by the fascists, the clenched fist symbolizes the strength and unity of individually fragile fingers coming together in powerful gesture.<sup>255</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> Stephen Moss, "What's in a Clenched Fist?," *The Guardian*, May 30, 2006, <http://www.theguardian.com/film/2006/may/30/cannes2006.cannesfilmfestival>.



singularly substantive as some of its written articles. The following is an overview of the graphic and photographic genres that *Gidra* skillfully deployed in the areas of political cartoons, graphic illustrations, cover art, and picture stories.

### Political Cartoons

One of the deadliest weapons in the arsenal of the arts of activism is the political cartoon. With the capacity to spar swiftly and deftly with serious issues, they can strike at the heart of social issues with exaggerated caricature, stinging reversals and droll but profound impropriety. In the political cartoon, irony is a source of knowledge and way of understanding.

When the humor entrenched in political cartoons is self-deprecating, it is all the more powerful. Mike Murase who spearheaded *Gidra*, created the following political cartoons that appeared consecutively in *Gidra*'s first four issues. Their stark, simple imagery belies their conceptual complexity rendered in few words. They embody some of the basic elements of what is considered effective political cartoons according to Charles Press (1981) who, in his book *The Political Cartoon*, indicated that political cartoons must have, to some extent, good artistry but not get in the way of the message. Press further contended that a political cartoon "is really an exaggeration to get at an underlying truth,"<sup>256</sup> a visual metaphor driven by "a desire to oppose what they believe is wrong."<sup>257</sup>

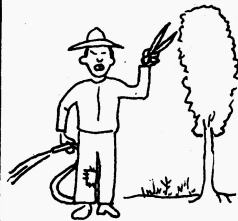
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<sup>256</sup> Charles Press, *The Political Cartoon* (Rutherford [N.J.] London: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press ; Associated University Presses, 1981).

<sup>257</sup> Lucy Shelton Caswell, "Drawing Swords: War in American Editorial Cartoon," *American Journalism* 21, no. 2 (Spring 2004): 13–45.



# Stereotypes....



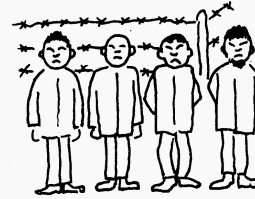
ONE JAPANESE  
IS A  
GARDENER



TWO JAPANESE  
IS A  
KARATE MATCH



THREE JAPANESE  
IS A  
SNEAK ATTACK



FOUR JAPANESE  
IS A  
RELOCATION CAMP

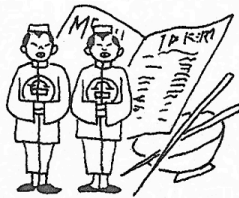
MAX

2-GIDRA • April, 1969

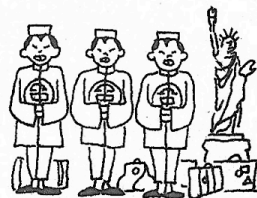
# Stereotypes....



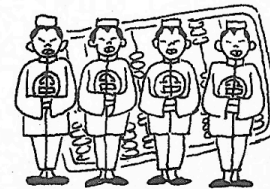
ONE CHINESE  
IS A  
LAUNDRY



TWO CHINESE  
IS A  
RESTAURANT



THREE CHINESE  
IS AN  
IMMIGRATION QUOTA



FOUR CHINESE  
IS A  
POPULATION EXPLOSION

from mad

Shark

2-GIDRA • MAY, 1969

# Stereotypes....



ONE KOREAN  
IS AN  
ORPHAN



TWO KOREANS  
IS A  
BORDER STRUGGLE



THREE KOREANS  
IS A  
KIM CHEE FACTORY

?

FOUR KOREANS  
IS  
UNHEARD OF

2-GIDRA • JUNE 1969



Fig. 7: Series of four political cartoons by Mike Murase appeared in the first four issues of *Gidra*, April to July 1969.

Political cartoons must get their message across with uncomplicated imagery.

Disarmingly naïve and guileless, Murase’s simple figures in a series of four political cartoons he titled, “Stereotypes...” look forward, directly and unabashedly at the viewer. Contextual embellishments are sparse and quickly read. Historian Roger Fischer (1996) in writing about American political cartoons maintained that effective cartoons tend not to confront nor challenge but rather “reinforce and build on a priori beliefs, values, and prejudices.”<sup>258</sup> By utilizing pre-existing stereotypes, Murase relied on public familiarity with Orientalized depictions by which to drive home the point that the societal values that made them so ubiquitous were bigoted and xenophobic. Instead of raging against ethnic stereotypes, each cartoon exaggerated them, reversed their meaning, and messed with the viewers’ sense of propriety. By reaching in and pulling out embedded kernels of truths, Murase undermined the stereotypes and simply but definitively threw them back as subversive representations of the racializations they resisted.

<sup>258</sup> Roger A Fischer, *Them Damned Pictures : Explorations in American Political Cartoon Art* (North Haven, Conn.: Archon Books, 1996).



While *Gidra* provided an outlet for the work of many talented people, *Gidra*'s signature style was due primarily to Alan Takemoto who joined *Gidra* in April 1972 and David Monkawa who came in February 1973. Both (as did *Gidra* illustrators Glen Iwasaki and Dean Toji) had attended the critically acclaimed Tutor/Art program for disadvantaged youth.<sup>259</sup> Founded by graphic artist Bill Tara after the Watts uprising to nurture talented but underprivileged high school students, it was bolstered by ground-breaking Black artists such as Bill Pajaud and Charles White. At one point, Tutor/Art students won fifteen out of sixteen art scholarships out of a competition of almost a thousand.<sup>260</sup>

Periodically, Takemoto would try to bolster the program by putting news blurbs in *Gidra* recruiting students for the Tutor/Art program. In the January 1974 issue, Monkawa wrote about the death of its founder that would eventually disable the program from continuing. "The man hung around dishing out the best that money couldn't buy. He was a disciplinarian, and nag, a friend and a hustler, gathering supplies and competent professional instructors for the class. What made this dude tick?... It couldn't be guilt; that only lasts long enough to write up a check or perform an obligation once in a while." Given the high cost of art school, Monkawa wrote, "If you happen to be a Third World kid with some kind of talent living in the inner city, the chances of you receiving any kind of training to develop yourself (without this class) is next to

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<sup>259</sup> ADLA, the newsletter of the Art Directors Club of Los Angeles, nd. Tutor/Art brochure, nd. Both courtesy of Alan Takemoto. Information on the program also came from an interview with Glen Iwasaki, another *Gidra* illustrator who was a participant in the program.

<sup>260</sup> Marvin Rubin, "On the Prevention of Cruelty to Art Students," *Communication Arts* 14, no. 2 (1972): 68–83.

nothing.”<sup>261</sup> Monkawa’s article about the Tutor/Art program is one of the few written documents on this little-known program.

## Discovering the American Dream (or being Asian in America) means:



Fig. 8: “Discovering the American Dream (or being Asian in America) means:” *Gidra*, Vol. V, no. 4 (April 1973): 9.

<sup>261</sup> David Monkawa, “Some Depressing Info for Third World Artists:,” *Gidra* VI, no. 1 (January 1974): 24.

This cartoon in the April 1973 issue was drawn by Alan Takemoto and, like Murase's, also tackled the subject of stereotypes and racism, which was a theme throughout the Asian American movement. It is an example of the amalgam of sophisticated creativity, analysis, satire and commentary that often appeared in *Gidra*. Within the over-arching theme of race and with biting humor and a dose of playfulness, it illustrates stereotypes in male-female relationships, assumption of foreignness, behavior as meek and mild, and conflation with Asians from Asia. The scenarios depicted were common experiences: Asian American women who often "reminded" White veterans of their sexual exploits during the war. The constant Asian American experience of being asked where they were from and/or what good English they spoke. How polite and unthreatening Asian Americans were. How Asian Americans were somehow responsible for the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Of his work at *Gidra*, Takemoto commented, "I wasn't interested in the commie stuff, I was there to fight racism."<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>262</sup> From interview with Alan Takemoto, October 16, 2011

Illustrations

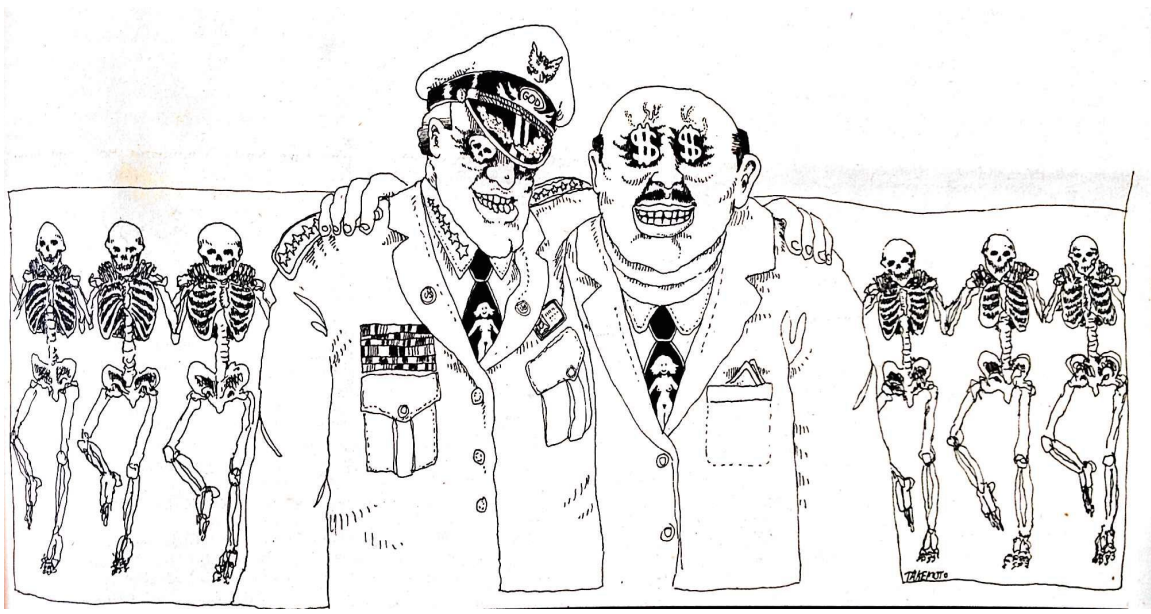


Fig. 9: Illustration by Alan Takemoto accompanying “The Man’s Technology,” *Gidra* Vol. IV, no. 5 (May 1972): 17.

The illustration above is one of two graphic drawings that Alan Takemoto created to illustrate the article, “The Man’s Technology” by Bruce Iwasaki, about the escalation of air technology in the Southeast Asian war in the May 1973 issue. The article indicated that the U.S. was dropping over six million pounds of bombs per day, which resulted in a lucrative partnership between private corporations and the federal government in the making of aerial technology, ending with a partial list of corporations that had government defense contracts valued in excess of \$10 million.<sup>263</sup>

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<sup>263</sup> “Man’s Technology,” *Gidra* IV, no. 5 (May 1972): 16–17.

# There's a Tunnel at the End of the Tunnel

## The War Drags On

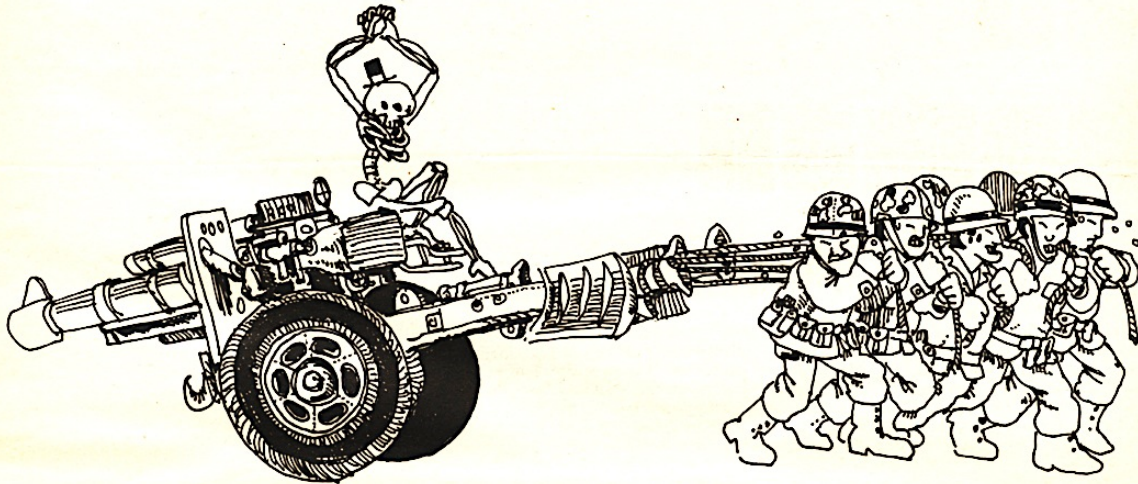


Fig. 10: Illustration by Alan Takemoto of reprint of “There’s a Tunnel at the End of the Tunnel: The War Drags On,” by Tom Hayden. *Gidra*, Vol. VI, no 4 (April 1974): 29.

This illustration is one of two Takemoto provided to embellish the article “There’s a Tunnel at the End of the Tunnel: The War Drags On,” by Tom Hayden. (The introduction that preceded the article indicated that it was “lifted from *Rolling Stone*, 28 February 1974.”)<sup>264</sup> Although the war was officially over in March 1973 when the last U.S. combat soldiers left Vietnam, military advisors remained and fighting between the North and the South continued. Takemoto’s drawings, like those of Emory Douglas for the *Black Panther*, helped distinguish *Gidra* visually while underscoring its content.

<sup>264</sup> Tom Hayden, “There’s a Tunnel at the End of the Tunnel: The War Drags On,” *Gidra* VI, no. 4 (April 1974).



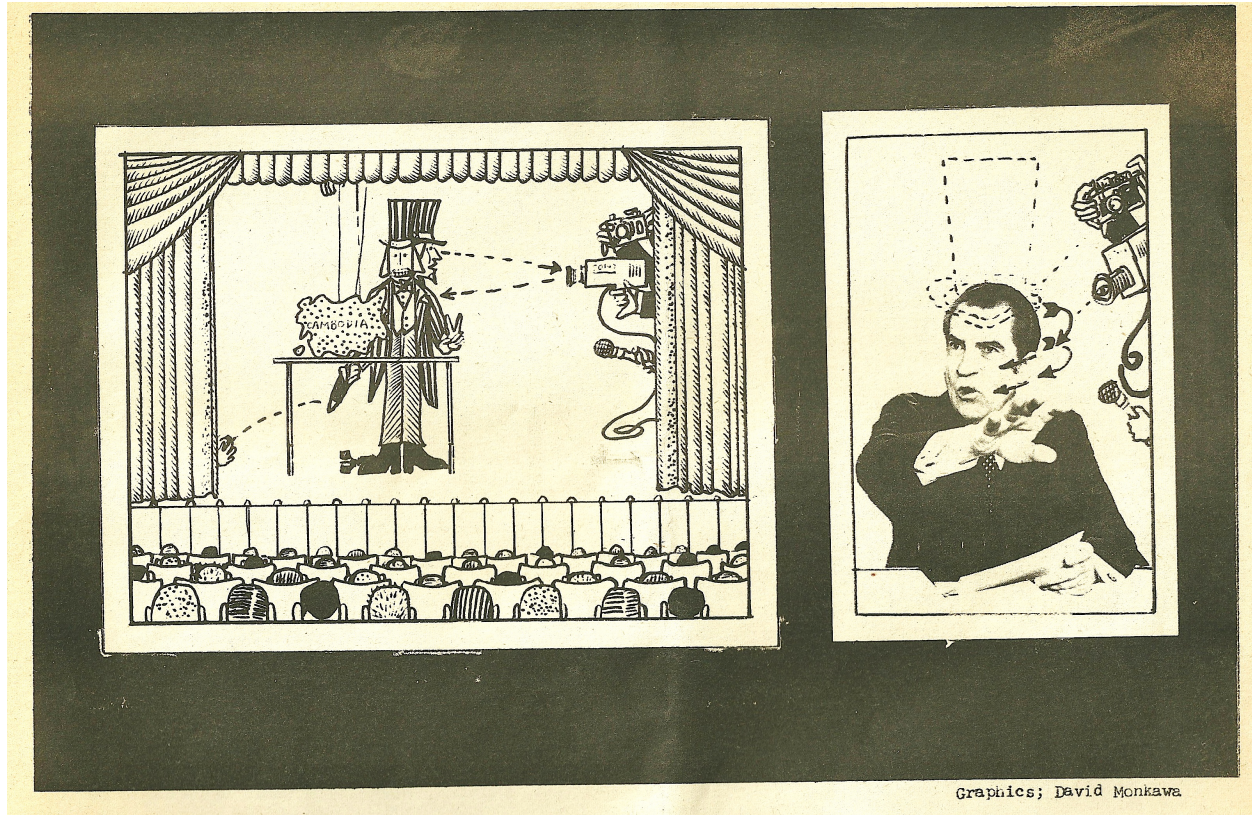


Fig. 11: Illustration for “A Separate Peace” by David Monkawa, *Gidra*, Vol. V, no. 5. (May 1973).

Another article that brought attention to the continued war in Southeast Asia was “A Separate Peace: War” by Bruce Iwasaki in the May 1973 issue. Although the Peace Agreement signed in January 1973 indicated that all military activities in Cambodia and Laos would end, Iwasaki pointed out that a full-scale war in Cambodia continued, adding “The American news blackout in Cambodia has been total.” Accompanying Iwasaki’s article was David Monkawa’s illustration of Uncle Sam, Nixon and the media. Monkawa’s depiction of Nixon and the media demonstrated co-founder of FAIR (Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting) Martin A. Lee’s assessment, “Whereas corporate journalists were apt to credulously transmit whatever government representatives uttered, the underground press lampooned the official sources that

were venerated by America's most influential media outlets."<sup>265</sup> In addition, Monkawa's penetrating depiction of Nixon conjures up cartoonist Doug Marlette's assessment that "Nixon was to cartooning what Marilyn Monroe was to sex. Nixon looks like his policies. His nose told you he was going to invade Cambodia."<sup>266</sup>

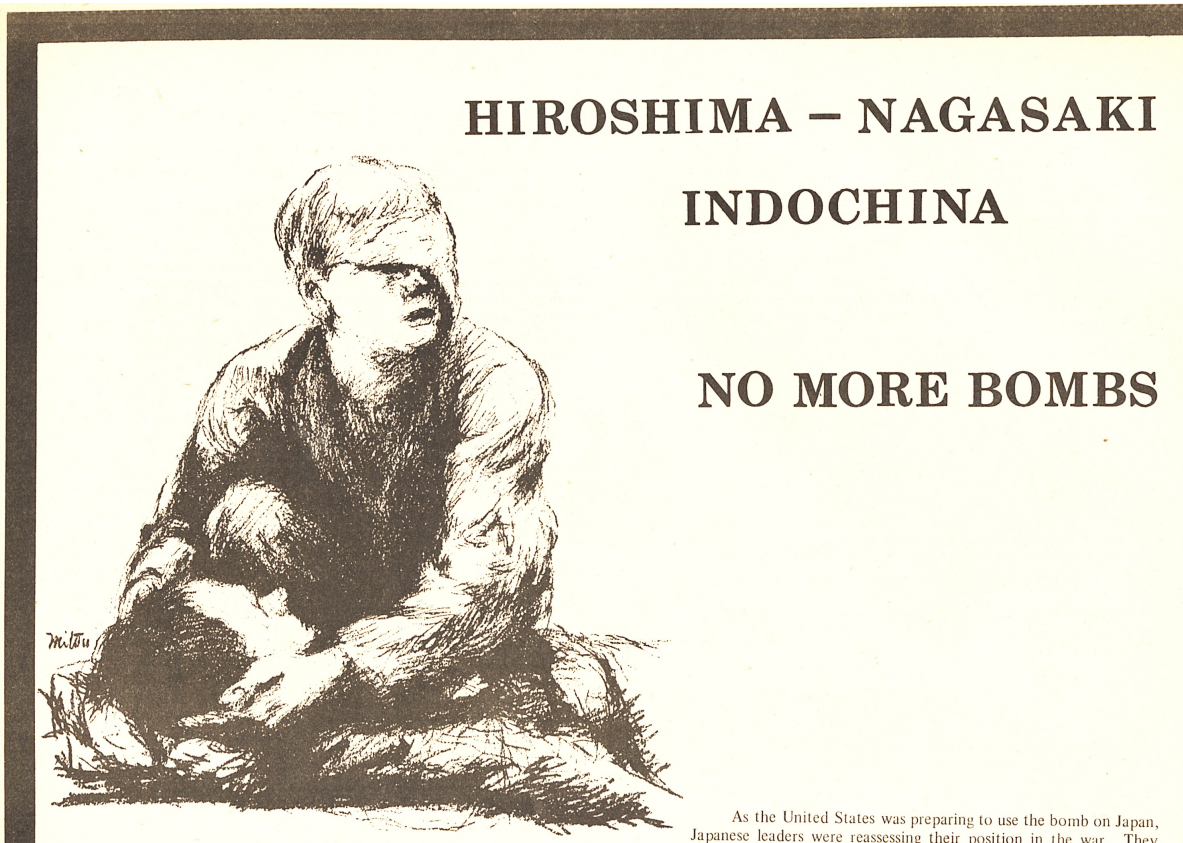


Fig. 12: Illustration by Mitsu Yashima. *Gidra*, Vol. III, No. 8 (August 1971): 16

<sup>265</sup> Martin A. Lee, "Introduction to the Citadel Underground Edition," in *Uncovering the Sixties: The Life and Times of the Underground Press*, First Citadel Underground Edition, April 1991 (New York: Citadel Press, 1991), iii – v.

<sup>266</sup> Victor S. Navasky, *The Art of Controversy: Political Cartoons and Their Enduring Power* (New York: Knopf, 2013), 34.

Not all the illustrations were comic drawings. This drawing by Mitsu Yashima illustrated the article “Hiroshima-Nagasaki Indochina: No More Bombs” in the August 1971 issue of *Gidra*. Yashima and her husband Taro Yashima were both celebrated artists and illustrators best known for their award winning children’s books. Before they came to the U.S. in 1939 they were activists against the rise of militarization in Japan and imprisoned for their protests. In her later years, Yashima taught art in Japantown in San Francisco and became an active participant in community affairs.



Cover Art

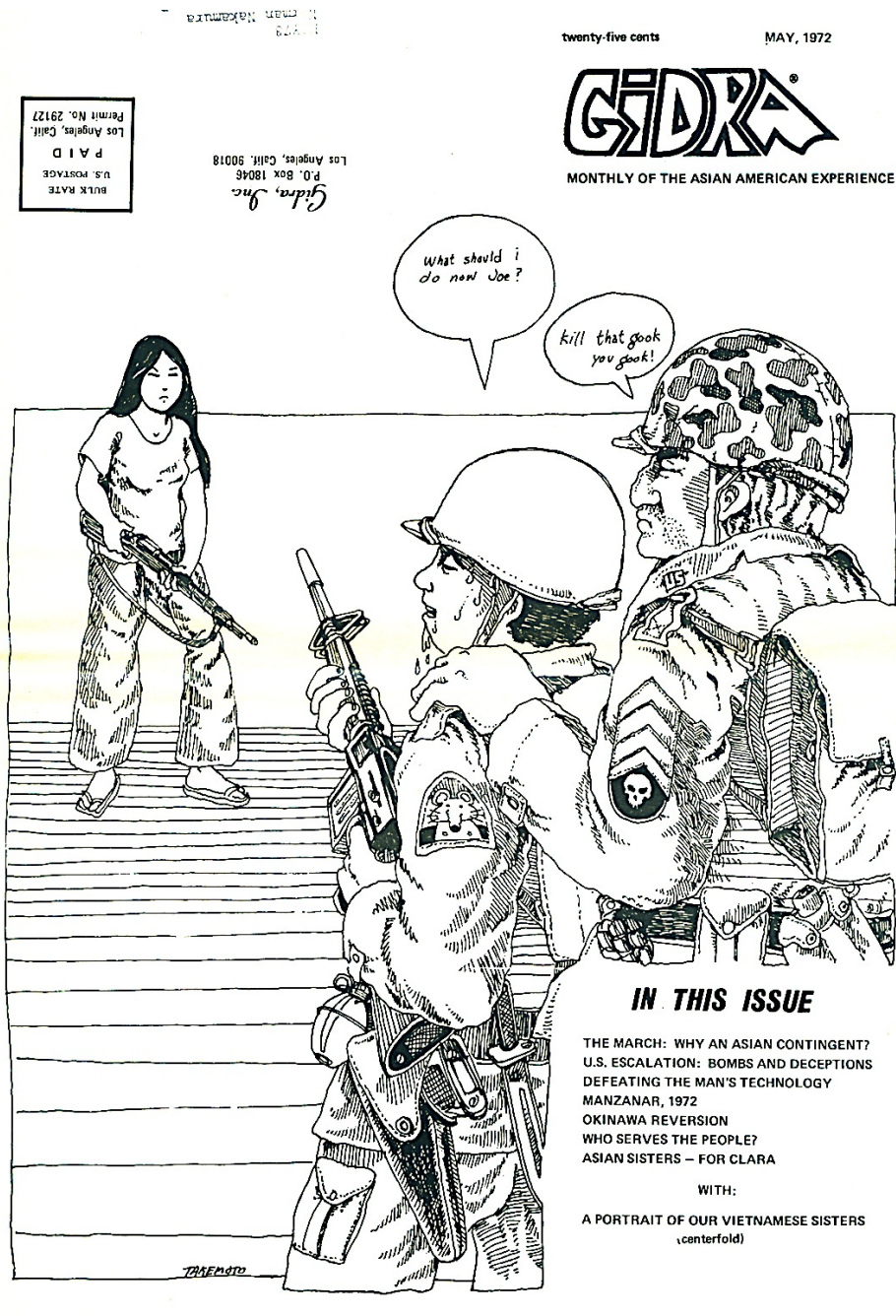


Fig. 13: Cover illustration by Alan Takemoto. Gidra, Vol. IV, no. 5 (May 1972).

Alan Takemoto's brilliant cover for the May 1972 issue was worth a thousand words of anti-war treatises and dealt a double blow to the war's inherent racism in addition to the dilemma of looking like the enemy, all in a single line drawing.



Fig. 14: Cover photo by Alan Ohashi, Visual Communications.  
*Gidra* Vol. 4, no. 9. (September 1972)

*Gidra* had close working relationships with other movement organizations across the country and especially in the Los Angeles area. One was Visual Communications (VC), now the oldest

Asian American media group in the country, who regularly documented community events. This photo of burning the militarist flag of Japan illustrated the issue's feature story on the unprecedented anti-war action that was staged during that year's annual Nisei Week celebration. As the lead article explained, the Japanese militarist flag was set on fire "in a symbolic gesture to show its opposition to the remilitarization of Japan as a part of Nixon's Asianization program."<sup>267</sup> Regarding this aspect, *Gidra* writer Bruce Iwasaki recently commented, "At the time we had perhaps unrealistic and quite negative views about Japan— certainly its imperial past — but not a clear sense of how all that played out with racist anti-Japanese protectionism, much less how it tied in with opposition to U.S. imperialism. Why burn an obsolete Japanese flag if we wanted the U.S. out of Vietnam? Logic was not our long suit."<sup>268</sup>

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<sup>267</sup> Murase, "Nisei Week."

<sup>268</sup> Email correspondence from Bruce Iwasaki, February 28, 2011.



since the 1920s. Japanese Americans from throughout the Southern California area came to Little Tokyo to buy food items, go to restaurants and attend temples and churches. Vacated during the World War II when Japanese Americans were expelled and incarcerated, the area of Little Tokyo became known as Bronzeville when African Americans coming to Los Angeles from the South moved in. After the war, Little Tokyo was resurrected and, with economic and cultural boosters like the Nisei Week Parade and carnival, prospered until it was “redeveloped” in the 1970s. A particular target of criticism was the big corporate interests from Japan that were supplanting Japanese American mom and pop enterprises.

The August 1973 cover “Little Tokyo 1984” by David Monkawa was as astute a statement of capitalism-gone-wild as the best political discourse. Depicting what Little Tokyo might be like after redevelopment, the nod to Orwell’s novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was an obvious reference to a dystopian future. Yet Monkawa’s inclusion of two separate elements takes the parallel even further while making it eerily prophetic. The Tokyo-esque skyscrapes and crowded conditions as well as ultramodern monorails with spaceship-like vehicles gives it the futuristic feel of the film “Blade Runner” that would be made eleven years later. The depictions of two planes crashing into the high rises is, of course, a searing one connected to 9/11, 2001. Combining the dystopias of three distinct eras - Orwell’s 1949 hallucination of the not too distant future, the dark phantasma of the 1982 film *Bladerunner* and, most ominously, the real-life nightmare of 9/11 twenty-eight years later, the image was as highly nuanced politically as it was a work of art. When I asked him how he came to draw with such prognostic detail, he answered, “I have no idea, I was loaded.”<sup>269</sup>

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<sup>269</sup> Interview with David Monkawa, April 29, 2012.

## Picture Stories

Pictures and stories have always had a symbiotic relationship as the saying, “a picture is worth a thousand words” indicates. Photojournalism is the sub-discipline of journalism that tells a news story with photos and little text. A comic book or graphic novel also tells a story through an interplay of pictures and words. A child’s storybook does the same. *Gidra* was adept at creating a variety of picture stories.

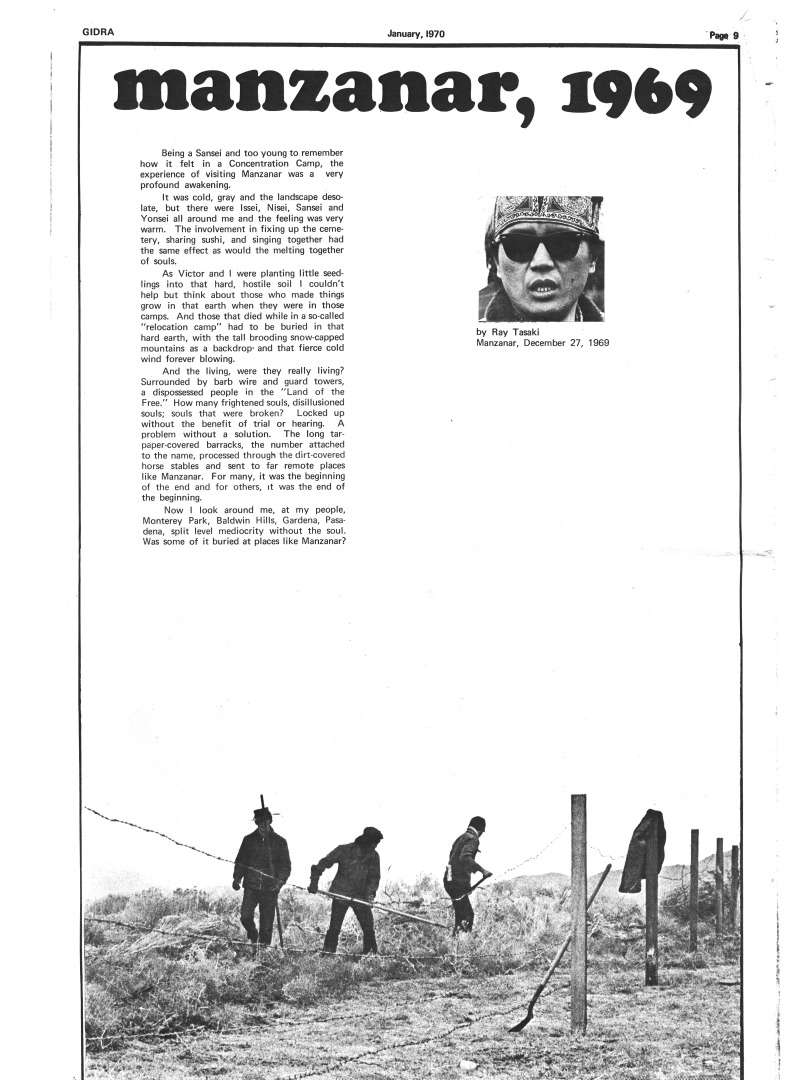


Fig. 16: Manzanar, 1969. Text by Ray Tasaki, photos by Robert A. Nakamura. *Gidra*, Vol. II, no.1 (January 1970): 9.



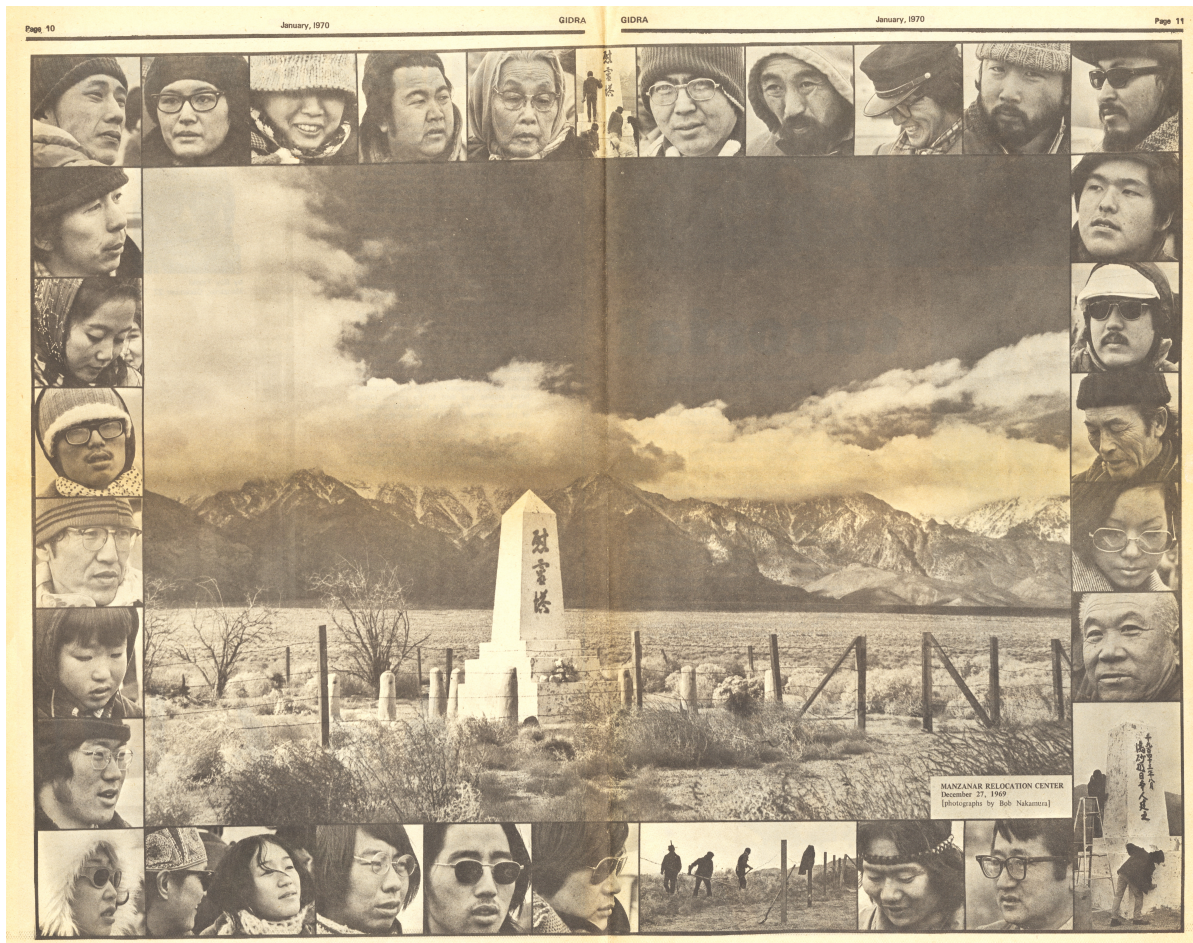


Fig. 17: Photo collage of First Manzanar, Pilgrimage 1969. Photos by Robert A. Nakamura. *Gidra*, Vol. II, no.1 (January 1970): 10-11.

Although there had been some academic and historical books on the subject, the first public event to call attention to this disreputable moment in U.S. history was December 1969 when Asian American activists discovered the abandoned camp called Manzanar in California and organized the first of what is now an annual pilgrimage. The stalwart *Gidra* staff was not able to travel to Manzanar, which is located 220 miles north of Los Angeles, because they were going to press with that month's issue. After the event they called upon two people who did - Ray Tasaki, who would soon organize Asian American Hardcore and Asian Joint

Communications, to write something on the event and photographer Robert A. Nakamura who would soon organize Visual Communications for photographs.

The result was the above picture story that appeared in the January 1970 issue – a personal introduction by Tasaki, who had been incarcerated as a boy, was accompanied by close up photograph of him and a photo of cleaning up the site. This was followed by a two-page centerfold of a now iconic photograph of the memorial tower surrounded by close ups of the faces of some of the hundreds of “pilgrims” that attended taken by Nakamura, who had also been in camp as a child. Tasaki and Nakamura were the same age and incarcerated in two of the ten camps - Tasaki in Heart Mountain and Nakamura in Manzanar. Tasaki wrote that, having been a boy in camp too young to remember, visiting the site “was a very profound awakening.” He thought about those who had died and those who had endured the ordeal. “And the living, were they really living? Surrounded by barb wire (sic) and guard towers, a dispossessed people in the ‘Land of the Free?’ ... Locked up without the benefit of trial or hearing? ... Now I look around me, at my people, Monterey Park, Baldwin Hills, Gardena, Pasadena, split level mediocrity without the soul. Was some of it buried at places like Manzanar?”<sup>270</sup> Nakamura, for whom the pilgrimage to Manzanar was his first visit since being incarcerated there for two years with his family, said that what struck him the most was the feeling of the pilgrimage as registered on the faces of the variety of people who attended. Therefore he laid out the picture story with the stark photo of the monument to represent those who had died there surrounded by the close ups of those who came back to pay their respects a quarter of a century later.<sup>271</sup>

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<sup>270</sup> Ray Tasaki, “Manzanar, 1969,” *Gidra* II, no. 1 (January 1970): 9–11.

<sup>271</sup> From interview with Robert A. Nakamura, July 5, 2013.



**SISTER, BROTHER, THERE'S FAR TOO MANY OF YOU DYING. U.S. IMPERIALISM**

In Southeast Asia, the facts of life are the facts of death.

For us here, we don't even know the facts.

"WHAT'S GOIN' ON?"

1.2 million Vietnamese military personnel killed on both sides, over 10 million Asian civilians killed, wounded or made refugees since 1964; some 14 million tons of munitions detonated in Southeast Asia; the land scarred by twenty million craters; 45,000 American deaths; \$120 billion of our tax money spent!

Headlines on the war inform us of the death and destruction...

Despite politicians who try to win votes by playing the war issue, the death and destruction in Vietnam continues.

But they can also numb and deceive us to the realities behind the scenes.

Why?

If the U.S. were not at war, or not producing for a war economy, the American economic system would face a depression. This isn't to say that war is good—it means our economy runs on an economy of death.

It is a militarized economy. People complain about the cost of welfare or education, but for 25 years, 61% of our tax money has gone directly to the war machine. The economy is addicted to military subsidy.

There stand all the bright weapons in a row. They have to be sold. And they're easier to sell (it's easier for Lockheed and McDonnell-Douglas to make a profit) when there's a use for them. When there's a war.

But there's a more important reason. The economy of death is an expansionist economy. The huge corporate structures that make up the system of monopoly capital must expand to invest, trade, extract raw materials, and reap profits from the Third World.

How the American economic system functions:  
The more profit for the corporations, the more the system produces.  
The more it produces, the greater the surplus.  
The greater its surplus, the greater its need for foreign markets.  
The greater its foreign markets, the more profit for the corporations.  
Some circle, huh?

So what of it Jack!

If the U.S. lost control over the foreign resources, open markets, and labor supply, the monopoly corporations, which depend on them, would crumble.

To insure against losing control, they exert economic, political and military pressure. Which is why complete the circle: the government spends 61% of our tax money on military muscle.

ings, defoliation, and gun-point roundups, people pour into the cities and become a cheap labor supply.

To the specific: The Vietnam case. Southeast Asia is rich in raw materials such as oil, tin and tungsten.

The conflict in Vietnam maintains and justifies the militarized economy. For American capitalism, if it were not for the tanks, the planes, the missiles—where would the economy be?

Finally, the war is fought to prevent an independent Asian economy. According to American planners, Vietnam's projected role is as a market for U.S. goods and a source of raw materials for imperialist Japan.

For these reasons, Vietnam has been a focal point of U.S. aggression since 1954, when America already was covering 80 percent of the costs of the war for the French.

All for the profit of the rulers of this country—the power elite—the large corporations like Standard Oil, Shell, TRW, and Bank of America. For the Mellons, the Rockefellers, the Kennedys.

These powers have presided, yesterday and now, over the most barbaric war in history. U.S. imperialism meant death and destruction to people, countries, and cultures.

We shouldn't be surprised though. In Hiroshima and Nagasaki, 400,000 innocent people were slaughtered so the U.S. could show its strength to the Soviet Union.

Today, Vietnamization means Asians killing Asians. As one U.S. official said, it means "changing the color of the corpses."

With this racist policy, the U.S. unleashes the most intensive bombing in the history of aerial warfare. 130,000 tons a month—two Hiroshimas a week.

The worst bombing ever in the history of the war came August 11, 130 B-52 strikes dropping 3000 tons of bombs. In addition, smaller jets flew 200 strikes against the North and 280 over the South.

Nixon has bombed more "winding down" the war than Johnson when he was escalating.

Other sinister new weapons: Anti-personnel bombs that defy x-rays for treatment. Napalm that cannot be extinguished. Defoliants with a both defect potency six times worse than the nuclear effects of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Yet, despite Nixon's deceptive political maneuvers and the U.S. military's vast technology, imperialist capital is being defeated by the People's Liberation Armed Forces. By the people of Vietnam.

14 September 1972

Fig. 18: "Sister, Brother: There's Far Too Many of You Dying: U.S. Imperialism." First of three illustrated stories illustrated by Alan Takemoto and written by Bruce Iwasaki with Greg Fukuda and Nick Nagatani. *Gidra* IV, no. 9 (August 1972).

Before the term “graphic novel” was popularized in the late 1970s, Alan Takemoto illustrated a sixteen page booklet written by Bruce Iwasaki with Greg Fukuda and Nick Nagatani in speech bubbles and text boxes that broke down the complexities of U.S. imperialism, Japanese militarism and the PRG Seven Point Peace Plan in plain and simple terms. Produced for distribution at the anti-war “take-over” of Nisei Week in August 1972, it was reproduced in its entirety on four full-size pages in *Gidra* the following month. Sections were subsequently reproduced in other Asian American newsletters across the country. Of how it came to be created, Iwasaki said that he, Fukuda and Nagatani talked about having something in animation format and what the main points would be. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Iwasaki did most of the writing since the illustrated stories can be traced back to his previous essays. He commented, “The pamphlet’s strength is Alan Takemoto’s drawings. I think it owes a lot to Rius’ Cuba for Beginners – the forerunner of all the “For Beginners” series in that there is humor, data and a strong point of view. It is the whimsy that marked it as a *Gidra*-related publication, as opposed to the usual boring, self-important, insulting stuff that the movement too often produced.”<sup>272</sup>

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<sup>272</sup> From email from Bruce Iwasaki, February 28, 2011.

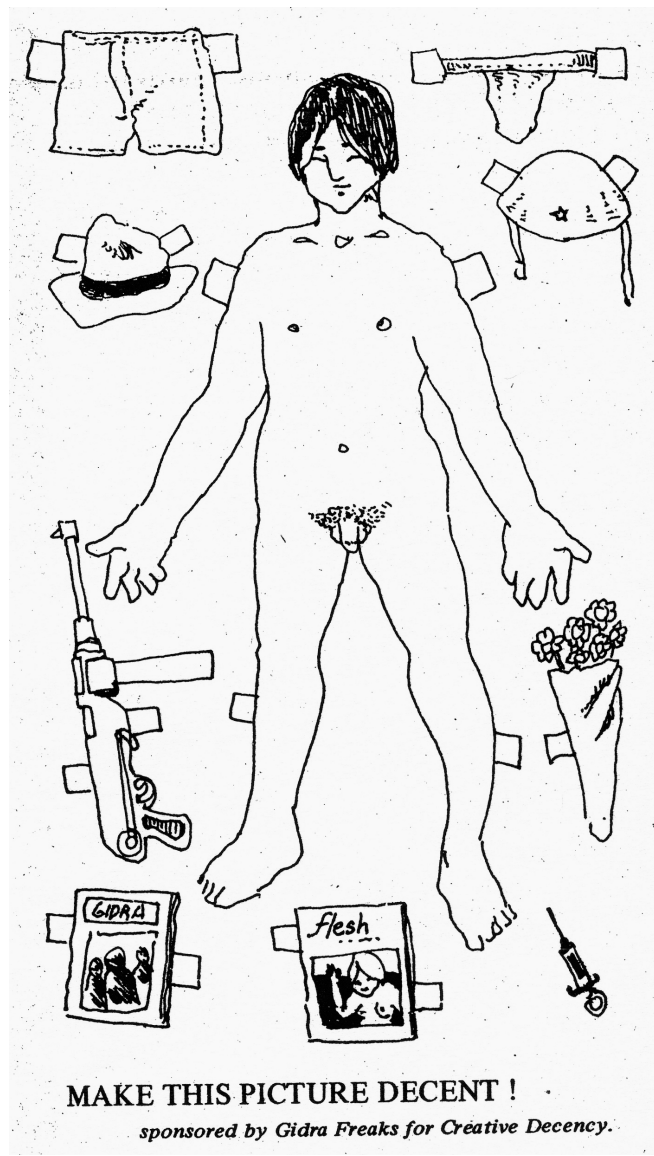


Fig. 19: “Make This Picture Decent” by Alan Takemoto.  
*Gidra*, Vol. V., no. 11 (November 1973): 2.

Placed within the front matter of the November 1973 issue of *Gidra* - between the staff listing and Volume/Number designation at a mere 4 inches high by 2 inches wide – Alan Takemoto’s simple yet evocative drawing might have easily been missed. Typical of *Gidra*’s – and Takemoto’s - shrewd commentary, it illustrated the dilemmas and decisions facing the newly developed Asian American. Problematizing the theme of identity, it reminded viewers that

agency and choice were involved. By providing a variety of possible accoutrements, the cartoon prompted the viewer that they had options and alternatives. Making the figure a paper doll placed the decision-making responsibility squarely on the viewer.

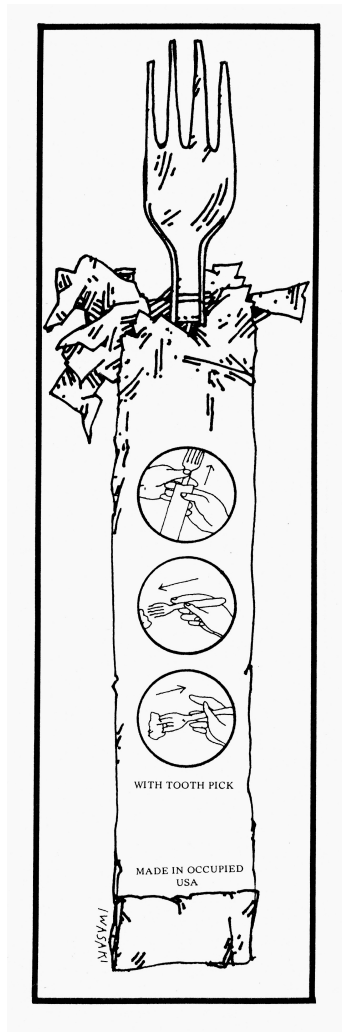


Fig. 20: Illustration by Glen Iwasaki. *Gidra*, Vol. V, no. 12 (December 1973).

Glen Iwasaki was another of *Gidra*'s graphic guerrillas and product of Bill Tara's Tutor/Art program. In destabilizing the ubiquitous American image of disposable chopsticks complete with instructions, Iwasaki confronted the question: what is foreign and to whom?

Preferring the velocity of drawings to the bulk of rhetoric, in the last issue of *Gidra* in an article called “What *Gidra* Means to Me,” Iwasaki wrote, “I like pictures w/ words. *Gidra* has words. I have pictures.”<sup>273</sup>

## Conclusion

This chapter on Form is the last of three chapters presenting findings of my research on *Gidra*. Chapter 2 presented the historical, social and political context in which *Gidra* was produced and consumed. As a cultural production, *Gidra* was informed by the social milieu of the iconic Sixties and specifically within the context of visions of an alternative society as projected by both the larger movement for social change and specifically the Asian American movement for which it was a vehicle. Chapter 3 presented the subject matter and messages that *Gidra* communicated. Through a thorough text analysis, it was determined that *Gidra* did indeed communicate the broader goals and objectives of the Asian American movement. In particular, *Gidra* reflected four major themes of vetting Asian American identity and consciousness, articulating the Asian American perspective on the Vietnam War, building a sense of Asian American community and culture and lastly, reinforcing the value of Third World solidarity both at home and abroad.

This chapter analyzed the mediums *Gidra* deployed to communicate its contents. In written units, *Gidra* made use of editorials, letters to the editor, and poetry as modes of expressing *Gidra*'s and its constituency's concerns, frustrations and desires in addition to news reports and opinion essays. *Gidra* also made optimum use of visual texts, which distinguished it among other dissident newspapers of the time and no doubt contributed to its appeal. Not only did *Gidra* use visuals to illustrate articles with drawings and photographs to amplify their

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<sup>273</sup> “What *Gidra* Means to Me.” *Gidra*, April 1974.

messages, *Gidra* sported witty political cartoons, attention grabbing covers and pictures that told stories with and without words.

Traditional journalistic editorials are short-form essays written on behalf of the editorial staff of a newspaper that represent the newspaper's opinion on a topical issue. While *Gidra* used editorials to comment on current events or more specifically the contents of that issue, they were also used to take the reader behind the scenes and out-picture both the pragmatic tasks as well as personal thoughts and feelings of the staff in producing that month's edition. While William Wei concluded that these editorials were "pessimistic maunderings about life in general and *Gidra* in particular," serving as "a catharsis for the writer,"<sup>274</sup> I saw them as actualizing the ideal of transparency and accountability to their constituency as well as putting into practice the movement value of self-criticism, expressing self-evaluations of their policies and practices as well as reflexive commentary and criticisms on the state of the Asian American movement as a whole.

Letters to the Editor have also been a standard feature of newspapers and periodicals. Ostensibly a channel of communication from the reading public, journalists have tended to view letter writers as cranks or eccentrics thus dubbing them as "idioms of insanity" (Williams et. al. 2011, Ogan et. al. 2005). In *Gidra*, there was significantly more evidence that letters to the editor did indeed constitute a forum for public debate and discussion rather than manifest an "idiom of insanity." While some could be considered the rantings of cranks and eccentrics, even those reflected the racism that no doubted existed. Letters became a forum for wider discussion as readers would often write in with responses to letters that had been previously published. In

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<sup>274</sup> Wei, *The Asian American Movement*. 105.

these dialogues on paper, different points of view were aired that reflected the heterogeneous and often conflicting views of the Asian American community.

Poetry was a popular means of expression in alternative newspapers of the Sixties. Poet, editor, artist Russell C. Leong wrote that “poetry, like a hammer, can nail down the times.”<sup>275</sup> Poet Audre Lorde maintained, “Poetry is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought,” therefore “poetry is not a luxury.”<sup>276</sup> As *Gidra* demonstrated, even the most intellectual among them like Bruce Iwasaki who was, as Mike Murase noted, “*Gidra*’s in house expert on Vietnam” wrote poetry as did former gang members, inmates serving time and a member of the Weather Underground.

Editorial cartoons are rhetorical devices analogous to print editorials intended to influence readers. They are personal perspectives yet must not alienate either the newspaper management or the readers as good cartoonists understand their community and respect and reflect their values (Caswell 2004). Political cartoons in *Gidra* ranged in style from the simplistic images in the “Stereotypes ...” series drawn by Mike Murase to the finely crafted drawings of Alan Takemoto and David Monkawa. In a 1973 article on the cartoon as a historical source, Thomas Kemnitz (1973) observed that editorial cartoons are visual ways to sum up situations and provide insight into the depth of emotion surrounding attitudes. Murase’s and Takemoto’s cartoons depicting stereotypes and their racialized assumptions are, in effect, primary documents that underlie the political mood and attitudes regarding racism that marked the time.

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<sup>275</sup> Russell C. Leong, “Poetry within Earshot: Notes on an Asian American Generation 1968 - 1978,” *Amerasia Journal* 15, no. 1 (1989): 165–93.

<sup>276</sup> Audre Lorde, “Poetry Is Not a Luxury,” in *Sister Outsider* (Trumansburg, NY: Crossing Press, 1984).

Cover art drew attention to the content contained within the pages of each issue. Alan Takemoto's editorial cartoon of the white officer ordering an Asian American soldier to "Kill that gook, you gook!" hit at the heart of two burning issues of the Asian American movement. With humor and irony, it pointed out U.S. racism against Asians while using the jeopardy of looking like the enemy to do so. A startling photo of Asian American youths setting fire to a Japanese war flag in the middle of downtown Little Tokyo dramatically highlighted the accompanying news article on the anti-war demonstration. The full impact of David Monkawa's prophetic cover, "Little Tokyo 1984?" was impossible to detect at the time. Intended to draw attention to the redevelopment of Little Tokyo that one *Gidra* article referred to as the "Rape of Little Tokyo,"<sup>277</sup> its visual depictions of the future of Little Tokyo signaled the dystopian imagery of both the film *Blade Runner* that would be made nine years later and the iconic vision of two planes crashing into two high rises complete with people falling out that will forever mark 9/11 twenty-eight years later.

Pictures stories – images plus words – told of issues, events and themes in an interplay of entertainment, wit, information and artistry. Robert A. Nakamura's lay-out of his photographs of the first pilgrimage to Manzanar enhanced by words by Ray Tasaki made use of his photojournalistic background. Bruce Iwasaki's dense essays on imperialism, Japan's militarism and the PRG Seven Point Peace Plan were deconstructed in graphic novel form, with drawings by Alan Takemoto. Two single images showed how editorial cartoonists had both opinion-molding and opinion-reflecting roles within the community served by their publication.<sup>278</sup>

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<sup>277</sup> Evelyn Yoshimura, "Redevelopment, or the Rape of Little Tokyo," *Gidra* V, no. 2 (February 1973).

<sup>278</sup> Lucy Shelton Caswell, "Drawing Swords: War in American Editorial Cartoon," *American Journalism* 21, no. 2 (Spring 2004): 14.



Takemoto's naked paper doll surrounded by contrasting accessories such as a rifle and bouquet of flowers, *Gidra* and *Flesh Magazine* wordlessly challenged the viewer to stop and think why they were there and what they would choose. Glen Iwasaki's subversive drawing of a fork instead of chopsticks peeking out from a torn paper wrapping complete with instructions on how to use it undermines assumptions of foreignness with wit and humor.

Adept use of these various forms of expression, both written and visual, demonstrate what Larry Isaac meant when he said, "that not only the event but the *form* (his italics) of movement cultural production about the event ... can matter in when and how movements move."<sup>279</sup>

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<sup>279</sup> Isaac, "Movement of Movements: Culture Moves in the Long Civil Rights Struggle."

## Chapter 5: Function

Out of the ashes of the Cold War, the elongated decade that Marwick dubbed “the cultural revolution of the long sixties” began in the late 1950s with the civil rights movement and continued into the mid 1970s with the end of the Vietnam War (Jameson 1984, Marwick 2005). Symbolized primarily by the anti war, student and Black liberation movements, there were other progressive social movements in the U.S. – Women’s, gay and lesbian, Chicano/a, American Indian, Puerto Rican, and Asian American – that made the Sixties the iconic era of unprecedented social and cultural upheaval for which it is known. The Asian American movement was part of this massive global effort for social change that broadened the American identity; and one of the major conduits for this new awareness was the social movement newspaper *Gidra*.

Based on the contention that analysis of the content and form of an alternative newspaper is best understood within the historical context in which it was produced (Sandoval and Fuchs 2010, Vogel 2001) I employed a tripartite framework of context, content and form to analyze *Gidra*. Chapter 2 on Context situated *Gidra* in the concentric social and political milieus in which it was produced and consumed, namely the exuberant Sixties, the “Movement” of progressive thought and action that marked the Sixties as a cultural revolution, and specifically the Asian American movement that brought together heretofore separate Asian ethnic communities into a pan-Asian political identity. Chapter 3 on Content determined that *Gidra* reflected the goals and objectives of the Asian American movement as described in Chapter 2 as well as manifested four overall themes of: 1) Vetting Asian American identity and consciousness, 2) Interpreting Asian American perspectives on the war in Southeast Asia, 3)

Building Asian American community and culture and 4) Fortifying Third World Solidarity at home and abroad. Chapter 4 on Form analyzed the written mediums of editorials, letters to the editor and poems as well as visual mediums of political cartoons, illustrations, cover art and picture stories that *Gidra* deployed to communicate its contents. As Edward Bruner (1986) maintained, the only way to understand another's experience, as well as share our own, is through the medium of expressions.

Chapter 5 concludes this study with a discussion of the agency of social movement newspapers through a deliberation of *Gidra's* short and long-term significance. It is in this chapter that the research question of what cultural and political work *Gidra* did is examined and by extension what functions dissident newspapers might play in the life and legacy of social movements.

### **What Work Did *Gidra* Do?**

Through this ethnography of *Gidra*, the most obvious finding was that *Gidra* did more than simply serve as an alternative newspaper providing news and information not available in the mainstream media. Indeed, its primary founder Mike Murase stated as much in his summation of *Gidra* in 1974. "As we continue to struggle, what needs remembering now is the richness and vitality of this total experience called *Gidra*, which is much more than just a newspaper." The following are types of work *Gidra* implemented. As can be noted, many are manifestations of revolutionary cultural productions as outlined in Chapter 1.

#### Created Outlet for Expression

The Sixties was a time when the masses were finding their voice. The civil rights movement had proven that the U.S. was not the democratic state it was supposed to be and *Gidra*, grounded in these historical and material conditions, strove to enact a practice of

participatory democracy, at least within its own domain of journalistic practice. In its first editorial *Gidra* stated that it was created because “too often it is position and power that determine who is heard.”<sup>280</sup> Manifesting the saying, “Power to the People,” *Gidra* opened up media representation to a broad public and gave a platform to those who had little access to mainstream media. It dedicated itself, the editorial professed, to “the honest expression of feeling or opinion, be it profound or profane, innocuous or insulting, from wretched or well-off.”<sup>281</sup>

Not having any formal (or informal) journalistic training or experience themselves, the founders of *Gidra* sought to put into practice a policy of egalitarianism wherein all staff were invited to participate directly in any aspect of writing and producing the paper and the public was encouraged to submit articles that reflected their own or their ethnic community’s concerns and issues, dismantling what political economist Nick Couldry called “the entrenched division of labor (between) producers of stories vs. consumers of stories.”<sup>282</sup> In this way *Gidra* exemplified community media at its best, media that, among other things, allows non-professionals to actively engage in media production, organization and management (Sandoval and Fuchs 2010).

At *Gidra*’s first year anniversary, the paper made some policy changes regarding their initial idea “to print everything submitted regardless of language, attitude or viewpoint.”<sup>283</sup> Because some readers complained about the excessive use of profanity and gratuitous political rhetoric, the *Gidra* staff realized that such words acted as linguistic barriers that prevented

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<sup>280</sup> “Gidra (editorial),” *Gidra* I, no. 1 (April 1969): 2.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid.

<sup>282</sup> Nick Couldry, “Beyond the Hall of Mirrors,” in *Contesting Media Power: Alternative Media in a Networked World* (London: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2003), 39–54.

<sup>283</sup> Hayashi, “The *Gidra* Story.”

readers from being able to get to the content. Based on this feedback, *Gidra* decided to eliminate profanity if the message was unaltered, explain political words and phrases to clarify their meaning, and purge inflammatory words if they threatened to obstruct rather than further understanding.<sup>284</sup>

#### Offered a Diversity of Perspectives

Closely related to the role of providing an outlet for expression, *Gidra* aired a diversity of perspectives, reflecting the heterogeneous constitution of the Asian American movement. Examples of disparate viewpoints were keenly evident in conflicting opinions and interpretations regarding the construction of an Asian American consciousness.

On one hand articles like “Yellow Power!,” “The Emergence of Yellow Power and “The Oriental as Middleman Minority” promoted an oppositional standpoint that rejected white standards, encouraged speaking back and out against injustice, and aligning with other people of color. On the other hand, there were articles like “Reflections in a Slanted Eye” that reproduced a letter that professed, “for all practical purposes I am a ‘white man.’”<sup>285</sup> And “White Male Qualities,” that declared the writer was going to marry a White man because White men were “tall, handsome, manly confident, etc.” rather than “the short, ugly, unconfident, clumsy arrogant Oriental man we are all plagued with.”<sup>286</sup>

This diversity of perspectives resulted in some readers criticizing *Gidra* for being too radical while other readers criticized *Gidra* for not being radical enough. Partly in response to this reader feedback, *Gidra* instituted a structural change of rotating monthly coordinators that

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<sup>284</sup> Ibid.

<sup>285</sup> Long, “Reflections in a Slanted Eye.”

<sup>286</sup> “White Male Qualities.”

would break down the existing leadership and allow different people editorial control. In addition to progressive political perspectives, *Gidra* also included “a hodge-podge of do-it-yourself ideas that included recipes for ethnic foods, directions for a vegetable garden, tips on how to buy a used car, and instructions for sewing your own pants, shirts, and hats.”<sup>287</sup> Murase summed up this predicament by saying, “The paper's diversity of perspectives stems from our varied attempts at defining ourselves. We tried to extend the role *Gidra* plays in the ongoing revolution both through collective policy decisions and our personal interactions. Therefore there is much more freedom than consistency in our pages.”<sup>288</sup>

#### Acted as a Public Forum for Discussion and Debate

In the process of providing an outlet for expression and offering a diversity of opinions, *Gidra* acted as a public forum for discussion and debate. Serving as a public forum was one of *Gidra*'s expressed goals. An editorial during *Gidra*'s first year read, “*Gidra* is intended to provide an open forum for the discussion of issues affecting the Asian American community. As such we avow no allegiance to any organization, but we solicit the support of all.”<sup>289</sup> Dedicated to free speech – notwithstanding *Gidra*'s limitation of unwarranted profanity – *Gidra* served as a medium for airing issues, concerns and opinions from the public in the form of articles, poems, letters, graphics and photos.

A representative example of the different ways *Gidra* acted as a public forum, providing opportunities for layers of discussion, was found in the November 1969 issue. The first layer was publishing two radically opposing articles regarding the same subject– Asian American

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<sup>287</sup> Murase, “Toward Barefoot Journalism.”

<sup>288</sup> Ibid.

<sup>289</sup> “Editorial,” *Gidra* I, no. 8 (October 1969): 2.

identity - side by side: “We Are Americans” by David Ota from Culver City, California and “Yellow and Proud Necessary But Not Sufficient” by Danny Li from Berkeley, California. As detailed in Chapter 3 on Content, Ota argued that Asian American identity began and ended with the conception and demonstration of “our Americanism.” On the other hand, Li challenged that Asian American identity was superficial and ephemeral if deeper structural change from the American capitalistic and materialistic way of life was not enacted. It was standard journalistic practice to include a contributor’s city of origin and it is no surprise that the more radical view emanated from Berkeley, known for its progressive political history, while the more conservative view was from Culver City, which could be considered “sleepy” in comparison.

On another level of public exchange emanating from the Ota article were letters to the editors that the article provoked. Letters to the editor provided a wide array of unsolicited opinions and *Gidra* published as many as they could to give voice to their readership. (In order to be considered for publication, submitted articles were required to include the author’s name so that the editors’ might contact the writer for any clarification. Writers who wanted to remain anonymous would be identified in print as “Name withheld.”) It was in such letters that much of the dialogic discussion and debate transpired as letters often rebutted or agreed with a previously published article or even the content of other letters to the editor. As described in Chapter 3 the Ota article sparked a heated exchange between the author and respondents that spanned over four months.

#### Worked as a Petri dish for Growing Political Identities

For many of the volunteer staff, working at *Gidra* was their first experience of working in a collective environment. Since most of them were college students, they had been well trained to function within a hierarchical meritocracy. When faced with the self-governing milieu of

*Gidra*, in which no one was paid and everyone was there to work for the greater good, young people received a taste of a new way of doing things. Call it participatory democracy, democratic socialism, or simply an egalitarian workplace, whatever the term or ideology, from the ten *Gidra* staff and contributors I interviewed and by commentary in writing that appeared in *Gidra*, the experience of working collectively on a project they believed in contributed to their political growth.

A specific element in the political education of the staff was a six-week study session in 1972 that was motivated in part by their understanding that *Gidra* had a role in the Asian American movement and wanting to clarify and strengthen what that role was. Mike Murase's summary of the sessions utilized key words of the Sixties movements that reflected its overall goals, as well as activities that reflected the AAM in particular. For example, for the session on "racism, sexism, capitalism, imperialism, alienation, inequality and irrationality" – key issues of most progressive movements of the Sixties – the group studied Asian American and Third World histories as well as the Vietnam War and social institutions. For the session on the broader Movement's goals of achieving "humanism, socialism, revolution," Murase stipulated learning about the examples of the Vietnamese and People's Republic of China. The third session was on "how to get from one to the other step by step."<sup>290</sup>

Studies on the personal and biographical consequences of social movements have shown that activism has a strong effect both on the political and personal lives of the subjects then and in the future (e.g.: McAdam 1988, 1989, 1999; Giugni 2004). Regarding the personal affect of working at *Gidra* at the time, Mike Murase wrote that it resulted in, "genuinely feeling the

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<sup>290</sup> Murase, "Toward Barefoot Journalism."



strength that can only come out of collective experience.”<sup>291</sup> Bruce Iwasaki wrote, “Writing and politics—things that mean a lot to me— have been shaped by this experience; *Gidra* has refashioned my words and world.”<sup>292</sup> Evelyn Yoshimura wrote, “It (*Gidra*) means a warm, but tough link between the world I see and the world that could be.”<sup>293</sup>

Studies of former social movement participants show that despite the demise of organizations, individuals continue to be involved in variety of related social changes over several decades making personal and political decisions in light of their identity as activists (Meyer and Whittier 1994). Over time, the majority of former activists have been found to continue to: 1) espouse leftist attitudes; 2) define themselves as liberal or radical in political orientation; and 3) remain active in contemporary movements or other forms of political activity.<sup>294</sup> Interviews of *Gidra* staff and contributors showed that their experiences working on the paper led to lifelong commitments in political and community activism. Of the ten *Gidra* staff and contributors I interviewed, all continued to espouse leftist or progressive attitudes and define themselves as liberal or radical in political orientation. Ninety percent remained active in Asian American community activity, working in, volunteering for and serving on boards of Asian American non-profit community organizations and organizing and participating in Asian American campaigns such as Redress/Reparations for the World War II mass incarceration of Japanese Americans. Thirty percent also assumed active roles in extra-Asian American local,

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<sup>291</sup> Ibid.

<sup>292</sup> “What *Gidra* Means to Me,” *Gidra* VI, no. 4 (April 1969): 47.

<sup>293</sup> Ibid.

<sup>294</sup> Marco C. Giugni, “Personal and Biographical Consequences,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, ed. David Snow, Sarah A Soule, and Hanspeter Kriesi (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 489–507.

statewide and political issues such as working in electoral politics and volunteering for Jesse Jackson and Barack Obama's presidential campaigns.

From my limited on-line survey meant to capture what readers thought about *Gidra*, one question sought to identify how *Gidra* impacted them personally. Given a multiple choice of checking one or more: 75 percent indicated that *Gidra* voiced opinions and questions that they were thinking or feeling at the time, 65 percent indicated *Gidra* made them feel good or better about being Asian American and 45 percent indicated that *Gidra* helped politicize them. As previously indicated, because of incompatible software and insufficient time and financial restraints I ended up with an n of 20, which I don't believe was statistically significant enough to provide an accurate reflection of *Gidra* readers.

However, while there is substantial evidence that direct participation in social movements increases one's political awareness, involvement and commitment, it has also been found that a movement creates a habitus or culture that impacts those within its reach regardless of direct engagement (Isaac 2008, Brodtkin 2007). At least some of the many hundreds of people who were marginally committed, given a copy, curious enough, or attracted by *Gidra* to pick up and enter its pages may have been influenced in ways large and small that is impossible to measure.

#### Combined the Intellectual and the Artistic

Chris Atton (2002) wrote that according to *Alternatives in Print*, a major bibliographic reference, that one of the three criteria of alternative publications was having a subject area that focused on "social responsibility or creative expression, or a combination of both." To this melding of form and content, Atton declared that in his studies, the mixture of creative expression and social responsibility in one publication was rarely encountered. "In my survey of

British and American alternative presses, I was able to identify many examples of these two categories as separate, but none that combined them.”<sup>295</sup>

However, as shown in Chapters 3 on Content and Chapter 4 on Form, *Gidra* firmly demonstrated its ability to combine both social responsibility and creative expression. For example, along side intellectual treatises on the Vietnam War by Bruce Iwasaki, were artistic texts such as Alan Takemoto’s cover illustration of the white officer telling the Asian American soldier to “Kill that gook, you gook” that made visual irony a mode of understanding. In addition to *Gidra*’s Special Supplement on the redevelopment in Little Tokyo was David Monkawa’s cover illustration of “Little Tokyo 1984” that deliberately evoked the Orwellian dystopia to make a statement about pandemic urban development while unexplainably prognosticating the futuristic bedlam of the movie *Blade Runner* made nine years later and the real-life pandemonium of 9/11 in 2001.

Another example of how *Gidra* combined the cerebral with the imaginative is how written and visual units in *Gidra* touched the heart as well as appealed to the intellect. While emotions were almost entirely absent from social movement studies twenty years ago, they have now been recognized as being part of every phase and every aspect of protest (Jasper 2011, Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta 2001). Examples of *Gidra*’s joint presentation of information and emotions were dramatically illustrated in the combination of fact based articles and heartfelt poems on, for example, the commemoration of Hiroshima/Nagasaki, the Vietnam War, the WWII incarceration of Japanese Americans, and the drug epidemic.

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<sup>295</sup> Atton, *Alternative Media*.

## Embedded Lessons for Present Day/Future Activists

In addition to the historical value of learning from the past, embedded in *Gidra* are pragmatic lessons that could be of use to present day and future activists. In practicing openness and self-criticism, *Gidra* often evaluated itself and the Asian American movement, which was the *raison d'être* for *Gidra's* existence. One example are lessons within the article "The *Gidra* Story" by Seigo Hayashi, written on the occasion of *Gidra's* first anniversary.

One problem that Hayashi identified as plaguing not only *Gidra* but also the entire Asian American movement was the shortage of people power. While the blame, he said, was usually placed on the laziness or apathy of outside people who did not get involved, Hayashi cautioned that in addition there were organizational policies that inhibited the growth and development of people that were already engaged. Calling them ploys that prevented the development of new leadership, Hayashi said that one was the projection of an air of competence. "A novice, sensing this 'I know everything' attitude, finds himself doubting that he can ever become so knowledgeable." Another was in talking about hardships that have been endured such as all night press runs and days without sleep, "the newcomer may feel compelled to prove himself by enduring the same hardship. Then again he may say to himself, "I could never be so dedicated," and turn around and walk out the door."

Hayashi contextualized these criticisms within the reality of the volume of work that had to be accomplished in a volunteer non-profit organization. "Those who had the knowledge and experience to do the additional work, the hierarchy, felt compelled to do it. In *Gidra* this work is so demanding that upon completion, the people are wiped out. There is no energy left to devote to the training and development of new people, etc. It is a vicious cycle that consumes the

energies of a few while others, who may desperately want to help, stand by helplessly because of lack of training and guidance.”

Another lesson specifically addressed the workings of a dissident press. In its trademark self-reflexivity, the editorial of *Gidra*'s last issue questioned, “What is involved in the politics of movement journalism?” By substituting different areas of activism, this is a question every organization and individual engaged in movement activity should ponder every so often. The editorial continued: “For example, should *Gidra* have tried to be more critical of different trends, organizations, or people in our young Asian movement? Could we have been? ... Would that have helped communications, dialogue and growth – or only hinder with subjectivity, acrimony and suspicion?”<sup>296</sup>

#### Evaluated the Asian American Movement As It Was Happening

“Criticism/self-criticism” was a Marxist-Leninist practice promoted by Mao Zedong that was a standard and regular policy and practice in many movement organizations. As Mao Zedong wrote, “dust will accumulate if a room is not cleaned regularly, our faces will get dirty if they are not washed regularly,” activists were encouraged to practice criticism and self-criticism in order “to check up regularly on our work and in the process develop a democratic style of work.”<sup>297</sup> From a social movement studies perspective, critiquing movement ideology was a function revolutionary cultural productions should play (Reed 2005).

One of the first criticisms of the AAM that was manifested in *Gidra* was embedded in one of the first polemical statements regarding the AAM, “The Emergence of Yellow Power in

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<sup>296</sup> “Editorial,” *Gidra* VI, no. 4 (April 1974): 2.

<sup>297</sup> Mao Zedong, “27. Criticism and Self-Criticism,” in *Quotations from Mao Tse Tung* (<https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/works/red-book/ch27.htm>, n.d.), accessed April 11, 2015.

America,” by Amy Uyematsu in the October 1969 issue. Uyematsu evoked the socio-political context of the time to remind readers, “What yellow power leaders must bear in mind is that the majority of Asian Americans are not yet ready for revolutionary ideology. They have just begun to realize the problems confronting them as yellow people – they cannot be expected to change into revolutionaries overnight!”<sup>298</sup> That Uyematsu was able to perceive and articulate this criticism so early in the life of the Asian American movement reflects a maturity and self-reflexivity that was not apparent in other political pieces written in the passion of the moment.

The next movement-wide criticism was directed at Asian American men in the article, “Movement Contradiction” by Wilma Chen. Chen identified three types of Asian American male chauvinists in the movement, those who: 1) “feel that they have been so ‘emasculated’ by white racism that they cannot stand to see women in roles of equality or leadership in the movement,” 2) “feel that women should be subordinate in the political movement because they are both mentally and physically weaker than men,” and 3) “treat women according to stereotypes or fantasies, rather again as intelligent people.” Chen ended by indicating men that must understand that “the liberation of women is an integral part of every liberation struggle.”<sup>299</sup>

Although it was perhaps suspected but not known at the time, the last issue of *Gidra* coincided with the decline of the Asian American movement as it manifested in the cultural revolution of the long sixties. In the last issue were three essays that, in their own way, evaluated the state of the Asian American movement. Bruce Iwasaki declared his exasperation with three movement proclivities: 1) the exudation of “antique certitudes of pre-1917 Lenin or truistic

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<sup>298</sup> Amy Uyematsu, “The Emergence of Yellow Power in America,” *Gidra* I, no. 7 (October 1969): 8–11.

<sup>299</sup> Wilma Chen, “Movement Contradiction,” *Gidra* III, no. 1 (January 1971): 8.

Mao, 2) the imposition of pre-industrial theories of revolution on our own vastly different situation, and 3) the conceptualization of social class - and revolution itself - as 'things' rather than processes." Iwasaki criticized, "This parroting of theory looks neither far nor deep, and arises from an absence of a *historical* sense and *literary* consciousness." (his emphases.) He argued, "Without a historical sense we wax ultra-left, fail to read historical circumstances, get discouraged when the action lulls, lose patience and perspective, and drop out." "Worse," he continued, "absence of literary consciousness hinders dialogue with people not yet in motion. How can we raise awareness when we can't even talk to those who don't share our assumptions?"<sup>300</sup>

*Gidra* staffer Doug Aihara called for the need for people in the movement to be more patient and understanding of each other. "We get so caught up in our self righteousness that the path by which we seek unity and friendship becomes very narrow and shallow." Referencing the country's broad diversity of cultural backgrounds, experiences and beliefs and "the most sophisticated, intelligent and dangerous forces ever to confront the working class," Aihara cautioned, "To bring together such a wide spectrum of people to overthrow such a ruling class will take much more than academic knowledge of the "isms" (i.e.: capitalism, collectivism, socialism.) Much more."<sup>301</sup>

Long time activist and frequent *Gidra* contributor Mo Nishida wrote not so much a criticism of the Asian American movement as a summary of what he specified as the Japanese American section of the Asian American movement in Los Angeles in the effort to ponder

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<sup>300</sup> Bruce Iwasaki, "The Final Venemous Jabberwocky: Feverish Grunts on the Movement and The Word," *Gidra* VI, no. 4 (1974).

<sup>301</sup> "People: We're All Human: A Look at Movement Standards," *Gidra* VI, no. 4 (April 1974): 28.

“Where Do We Go From Here?,” the title of his essay. He took into consideration international and national trends as well as a summation of various trends in different periods of the Asian American movement: identity and serve the people in 1968-1969, development of programs and organizations, a more sophisticated political understanding of capitalism and imperialism and how our lives were affected by them in 1970 – 1972, and community-nation building and workers’ orientation in 1973-74. In addition to these macro trends, he felt that it was a time when personal questions had to be answered, such as how to carry on movement work while having a regular job, and how do marriage and children fit into the movement? Nishida concluded his essay with “The general call of Identity through Serve the People has run its course. A furious development of institution building has taken place with a deeper understanding of the political nature of the work ahead. ... can we continue without another general call that will politically unite us in a manner that makes sense to our lives?”<sup>302</sup>

### **What Distinguishing Functions Do Dissident Newspapers Play?**

Dissident newspapers each have their own styles, goals and capabilities. Yet each has the capacity to do more than just report alternative news. Many of the tasks that *Gidra* accomplished - such as providing an outlet for expression, acting as an open forum, and serving as a Petri dish for growing political identities – are, no doubt, also functions that many other dissident newspapers performed. Indeed, other social movement organizations act in similar capacity. Notwithstanding the idiosyncrasies and unique personalities of different newspapers, extrapolating from empirical findings from this ethnography of *Gidra*, the following are larger

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<sup>302</sup> Mo Nishida, “Where Do We Go From Here?,” *Gidra* VI, no. 4 (April 1974): 20–21.



scale functions that few other entities than dissident newspapers might play in a social movement.

#### Provide an In-Situ Account of the Struggle or Movement

One function of revolutionary cultural productions that T.V. Reed (2005) identified was to historicize, tell the history of, the movement. Produced in the moment, dissident newspapers are able to document and interpret issues, events and attitudes as they happen, without the gloss of retrospection. Rather than being calculated expositions or methodically organized grand narratives that are built on hindsight and deliberation, short-term accounts like daily or monthly newspapers and journals record the phenomena of a social movement as they unfold in all their prevailing chaos and excitement. Similar to a diary that is written one day at a time without knowing what the next will bring, newspapers have the unique capability to capture the vitality of the moment without hindsight after the fact. Over the lifetime of a newspaper, its contents provide an in-situ account of the movement or struggle of which they are a part, providing a running narrative of its existence as it unfolded.

In the realm of interpretive anthropology, which endeavors to interpret a culture by understanding how the people within that culture interpret themselves and their own experiences, in situ accounts provide actual documentation of events written by the very people under consideration as it was happening. Reading first person news reports, essays, editorials and letters to the editor in dissident newspapers provides unique insight into how people conceptualized and understood their worlds. Access to such - either in a single issue or issues within a particular year or era, depending on the temporal focus of examination - provides a collectivized picture of that date, time period or era.

Such access is especially critical to enact the Geertzian concepts of “the actor’s point of view” and “thick description” both of which are preceded upon teasing out meaning in a culture. Sherry Ortner described meaning plainly as “what defines life and gives it its purpose” and ethnographically as “a set of culturally constructed and historically specific guides, frames, or models of and for human feeling, intention, and action.”<sup>303</sup> In *Gidra* we see evidence, to borrow from Ortner, of “ways in which (actors) pursue their lives with great consciousness and awareness” “which must be understood as very specific, culturally grounded forms of agency and intentionality.”<sup>304</sup> No doubt, this worldview can be seen as a function of dissident newspapers as a whole.

#### Help Movements Circulate Movement Culture

As discussed in Chapter 2 social movement studies have undergone a number of paradigm shifts. After a substantial period of being more concerned with infrastructure and political opportunity, cultural content has been widely recognized as a central dynamic in shaping motivation and meaning, strategies and tactics, as well as forms and expressions (e.g.: Darnovsky, Epstein and Flacks 1995, Johnston and Klandermans, 1995). In particular, regarding the legacy of social movements of the long sixties, James Miller (1994) concluded that its most enduring contributions were cultural (quoted in Snow, Soule, and Kriesi 2004).

Social movement scholar Francesca Polletta summarized this cultural turn in social movement studies when she wrote in a review of the anthology, *Cultural Politics and Social*

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<sup>303</sup> Sherry B Ortner, “Thick Resistance: Death and the Cultural Construction of Agency in Himalayan Mountaineering,” in *The Fate of “Culture”: Geertz and Beyond* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 137.

<sup>304</sup> Sherry B. Ortner, “Introduction,” in *The Fate of “Culture”: Geertz and Beyond* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 5 & 6.

*Movements* that the contributors believed "social-movement success should be judged not only by the number of officials elected, legislature passed & policies changed, but also by the transformations wrought in culture and consciousness, in collective self-definitions and in the meanings that shape everyday life."<sup>305</sup> Sociologist Larry Isaac (2008) addressed such cultural transformations by asking what and how social movements move and concluded that movements gain their dynamism through their production, use of and change in culture. "At root, movements are cultural production agents. Regardless of whatever else they accomplish, they produce new cultural forms in the course of the struggle."<sup>306</sup>

Referring to this dynamism as the "movement of movements," Isaac stated that the cultural fabric of a movement constitutes an oppositional habitus, "an ensemble of oppositional knowledge, dispositions and schemas that organize perceptual, conceptual, identity and action terrains."<sup>307</sup> He argued that as multivocal and fluid as social movements are, all participants of a given social movement share in its common habitus. He emphasized, "This oppositional habitus does not happen by accident. It must be made and circulated..." One of the primary vehicles that exist to do just that are social movement newspapers. Isaac lists underground newspapers as well as political cartoons, pamphlets, music and other cultural productions as important "cultural modalit(ies) of movement." They circulate information vision, strategy, tactics and inspiration, i.e.: movement culture. Isaac noted that during the civil rights movement, relatively few African Americans were directly active yet it was the movement itself, and not just direct activity in the

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<sup>305</sup> Francesca Polletta, "Review of Cultural Politics and Social Movements (1995) and Social Movements and Culture (1995)," *Contemporary Sociology* 25, no. 4 (1996): 483–85.

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid*, p. 36.

<sup>307</sup> Isaac, "Movement of Movements: Culture Moves in the Long Civil Rights Struggle."

classic heyday of the period, that “spawned a militant culture that included a sense of collective efficacy and a critical stance on power and authority that moved into mainstream institutions...” Social movement newspapers played a critical role in relaying a movement’s oppositional habitus and allowing hundreds of individuals with no direct contact to share a collective identity.

### Capture the Emotional Energy of a Movement

Larry Isaac also noted the importance of emotions to social movements, stating “The contentious politics of social movements are among the most passionate of affairs, exuding all sorts of emotion.”<sup>308</sup> Initially championed by James Jasper, Jeff Goodwin and Francesca Polletta together and separately, they have been joined by a host of other social scientists that have shown that, as James Jasper indicated, “emotions are present in every phase and every aspect of protest.”<sup>309</sup>

Karen Brodtkin best described the emotional energy of social movements. “This explosive energy,” she wrote, “was personal, a sense of liberation, of infinite possibility that gave individuals the courage to do things they’d never dared or thought themselves capable of, to connect to others in ways they’d not dreamed possible, and to dream of changing the world so everyone could live their lives in equally meaningful ways.”<sup>310</sup> This emotional energy can be found within the pages of dissident newspapers, written as they are, in the passion of the moment.

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<sup>308</sup> Ibid, p. 44.

<sup>309</sup> James M Jasper, “Emotions and Social Movements: Twenty Years of Theory and Research,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 37 (2011): 14.1–14.19.

<sup>310</sup> Karen Brodtkin, *Making Democracy Matter: Identity and Activism in Los Angeles* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2007).7

*Gidra* showed that dissident newspapers have the capacity to capture the emotional energy of a movement. *Gidra*'s first editorial announced exuberance, "GIDRA is TRUTH!"<sup>311</sup> A poem commemorating the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki expressed anguish, "HIROSHIMA IS HAPPENING EVERYDAY EVERYDAY HIROSHIMA BOBBY SEALE HIROSHIMA ..."<sup>312</sup> An inmate at the California Rehabilitation Center (CRC) revealed new feelings of hope and connectedness in a letter to the editor, "...I'm not down with spelling or writing letters, but ... your letter really got to me. ... I'm full blooded Japanese ...but I had always thought like a Chicano ... now ...I would like to know more about my people ...I hate like hell to ask people for help, but if you can help me a little, all appreciation will be sincere."<sup>313</sup> A report on yet another anti-war march disclosed end-of-the-rope frustration, "I just don't know anymore ... I just don't know... We know we must end the war. Just as we know we must fight against racism, sexism, poverty, and the whole list of American injustices. The question is HOW?"<sup>314</sup> As Jasper (1998, 2011), Eyerman (2005) and others have found, even shared negative emotions can strengthen positive reciprocal emotions.

James Jasper ended his review of twenty years of research and theory on emotions and social movements with, "Just as the interpretive turn in social science has allowed us to re-envision the causal mechanisms behind earlier concepts, so an emotional vision is helping us find hidden mechanisms beneath many of the concepts we have taken for granted for so

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<sup>311</sup> "Gidra (editorial)." *Gidra* I, no.1 (April 1969): 2.

<sup>312</sup> Joanne (Nobuko) Miyamoto, "Hiroshima-Nagasaki," *Gidra* II, no. 7 (August 1970): 8.

<sup>313</sup> Jerry de Venice "13," "A Letter from Without," *Gidra* III, no. 3 (March 1971): 9.

<sup>314</sup> Steve Tatsukawa, "April March," *Gidra* IV, no. 5 (May 1972): 12.

long.”<sup>315</sup> Beneath rhetorical expressions embedded in dissident newspapers are clues to the hidden mechanisms of which Jasper refers. “Amerika” spelled with a “k” instead of a “c,” overuse of such loaded words as “oppression” and “exploitation,” and other key movement words such as “imperialism” and “liberation” reflected an emotional resonance that transcended their dictionary definitions. After all, the political was indeed personal and the emotional energy of the movement was various and far reaching. By the late sixties there were an estimated 450-500 dissident publications whose disregard for objective distance and the status quo emotionalized the need for more relevant news coverage (Glessing 1970, Peck 1985). In addition, as part of a domino effect, the proliferation of dissident newspapers sparked the most widespread movement for media reform in US history, which occurred between 1967 and 1974 (Gonzalez and Torres, 2011), roughly during the same timeframe as *Gidra*.

#### Serve as a Source of New Knowledge

As a form of revolutionary cultural production, dissident newspapers challenge and disrupt fixed boundaries and barriers and seek to build new knowledges and meaning. Social movement studies indicate that social movements have been critical to the history and development of this country and their newspapers in particular have “played a critical role in the constant process of reinventing American society.”<sup>316</sup> Beyond their political work, social movements are “knowledge producers, as social forces opening spaces for the production of new forms of knowledge.”<sup>317</sup> Anthropologist Maureen Mahon infers the epistemological impact of

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<sup>315</sup> Jasper, “Emotions and Social Movements: Twenty Years of Theory and Research.” p. 14.14.

<sup>316</sup> Bob Ostertag, *People’s Movements, People’s Press: The Journalism of Social Justice Movements* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 2006): 2.

<sup>317</sup> Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison, “Social Movements and Cultural Transformation: Popular Music in the 1960s,” *Media, Culture & Society* 17, no. 3 (July 1995): 450.

cultural production when she defines the social practice of cultural production as constructing, articulating and disseminating “ideologies about identity, community, difference, nation, and politics, and their impact on social relations, social formation, and social meanings.”<sup>318</sup> In other words, cultural productions have the capacity to transmit the ethos of a movement and thereby perform a crucial consciousness changing and educative role, especially to those not directly involved as well as for generations to come.

Movement newspapers not only reported and expressed movement goals, they have been instrumental in vetting and creating new knowledge, constructing new concepts and articulating new ways of envisioning and conceptualizing the world. In writing about the journalism of social justice movements, Bob Osterberg (2006) indicated that the AIDS epidemic was first reported by a volunteer writer in a gay community newspaper that was less than a year old at the time and that gay newspapers consistently predated the mainstream press in covering the epidemic for years afterward. Likewise, journalism professor Roger Streitmatter (2001) noted that ideas in dissident papers that were deemed too radical at the time eventually filtered into the mainstream of American thought. He pointed out, for example, that perhaps the most remarkable impact of the dissident anti-Vietnam war press was the degree to which accusations and revelations that originally appeared in its pages were adopted by conventional American media.

Dissident newspapers were therefore not just the *means* of representation they were also the *makers* of meaning. In probing and problematizing the status quo and conventional wisdom, they engendered an alternative epistemology. Dissident newspapers from minoritized communities whose voices in particular were not reflected in mainstream media, generated new

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<sup>318</sup> Maureen Mahon, “The Visible Evidence of Cultural Producers,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 29 (2000): 467–92.

languages, new ideas, new theories, new knowledges about themselves and the society at large that had not previously existed or had not been accepted by the Western canon of dominant thought. *Gidra* - as well as *The Black Panther*, *Palante*, *Akwesasne Notes*, *El Grito del Norte* and other progressive publications from communities of color - helped define the rich diversity as well as the unresolved problems and promises of the United States. For example, as *Gidra* documented, the evolution from “Oriental” to “Asian American” was more than the adoption of a new appellation or an amendment of taxonomy. Rather, the label and classification of “Asian American” manifested a deeper change - a transformation of consciousness. This core awareness then resulted in new ways of analysis, interpretation and being – in essence, new knowledge that provided an alternative epistemology by which to navigate the world.

The epistemological implications of minoritized views was eloquently expressed by the legendary theorist C.L.R. James: “Those people who are in western civilization, who have grown up in it, but made to feel and themselves feeling that they are outside, have a unique insights into their society.”<sup>319</sup> Artist and writer Coco Fusco whose work explores questions of race and culture, similarly said that in order to transform America, we need to look back to histories that have circulated mainly in marginalized communities (Chang 2014). A prime example of James’ and Fusco’s contention that a society’s minority populations can contribute unique societal insights is *Gidra*’s Asian American analyses of the Vietnam War.

Having come of age during the escalation of the Vietnam War, Bruce Iwasaki insightfully noted that when Asian Americans looked into the causes and consequences of the war, “we discovered more than the Pentagon Papers and governmental deceit. We also discovered the

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<sup>319</sup> C. L. R. James, “Africans and Afro-Caribbeans: A Personal View,” *Ten* 8, no. 16 (1984).



Empire, its rulers, their methods – all at once.”<sup>320</sup> More than just moral outrage, this staggering revelation amounted to what James Jasper (2011) called “moral shock,” the unsettling feeling from realizing that the world is not what one had been led to expect. Iwasaki connected this moral shock regarding not only what was happening in Vietnam, but the accompanying deceptive and nefarious workings of “the Empire, its rulers, their methods - all at once,” to the emergent Asian American political identity. “This hard look at the U.S. no doubt developed our national consciousness of being Asians, Third World People, in America ... which began to explain the psychological effects of being a colony-community.”<sup>321</sup>

Reports from the 1971 Anti-Imperialist Women’s Conference in Vancouver and 1972 Third World People’s Anti-War Conference in Gary, Indiana provided insights that were certainly not covered by the mainstream press and scantily covered by other dissident presses. Articles like “The Nature of G.I. Racism,” “Why an Asian Contingent?” and “In the Belly of the Monster” as well as visual statements such as the political cartoon of the white US officer telling the Asian American soldier to “Kill that Gook, you Gook!” articulated the critical element of racism that was missing from the mainstream anti-war movement. Bruce Iwasaki: “The war heightened our national consciousness which in turn confirmed our intuitions that Vietnam was and is a racist war. This perception of racism is still not prevalent enough among much of the white antiwar movement. We must push it.”<sup>322</sup> Again linking racism abroad with racism at home, Iwasaki added intellectual understanding while employing the feminist reminder that the political is personal: “Nationally, Asians in

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<sup>320</sup> Iwasaki, “You May Be a Lover but You Ain’t No Dancer: Helter Skelter.”

<sup>321</sup> Ibid.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid.

America are victims of racism. Internationally, Asians and Asia are victimized by US imperialism. Communities of Third World people in America mirror the global picture.”<sup>323</sup>

#### Provide a History and Legacy of a Movement

Regarding the intersection of anthropology and history, in which this dissertation squarely stands, Mac Marshall indicated in 1994, “The new history in anthropology emphasizes that any history is culturally constructed,” adding, “This kind of anthropological history also endeavors to give voice and weight to indigenous histories.”<sup>324</sup> As *Gidra* chronicled the history of the Asian American movement as it unfolded, giving voice and weight to this indigenous history that would otherwise not be recorded, so other dissident newspapers, positioned as they are within the movement of which they are a part, have the unique capacity to do the same.

The importance of historical perspective and the fact that history is culturally constructed was present throughout the pages of *Gidra*. Mike Murase said, “we need to understand the present, not as a static and isolated instant, but as a flowing moment in history.”<sup>325</sup> Likewise Bruce Iwasaki was also concerned about communication over time.

Many people who come into the movement now don't think of themselves as stepping into any historical train of events. ... But with our expanding sense of numbers, consciousness, and possibilities, comes an enlarged responsibility too. That is, the responsibility for preserving the movement's past, its sequence of ideas, its different experiences, its changing spirit.<sup>326</sup>

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<sup>323</sup> Ibid.

<sup>324</sup> Mac Marshall, “Engaging History: Historical Ethnography and Ethnology,” *American Anthropologist* 96, no. 4 (December 1994): 972–74.

<sup>325</sup> Murase, “Toward Barefoot Journalism.”

<sup>326</sup> Iwasaki, “The Final Venemous Jabberwocky: Feverish Grunts on the Movement and The Word.”

Twenty years after I was a twenty-one year old politicized in part by *Gidra*, I used my archival issues to teach college courses on Asian American history and culture at the University of Southern California and Santa Monica City College. I had a multitude of twenty-one year olds in my classes. When I talked about “the war,” I meant the Vietnam War. Yet for my students the Vietnam War, which was still so resonant for my generation, was just a blip in U.S. history, as historically distant as WWII - or the Civil War for that matter. For them Asian American Studies was just another listing in the course catalogue. They had no understanding that it was once a radical idea for which students were beaten up and arrested. So I deployed my archival copies of *Gidra* as primary historical materials to transport them back in time to show that so much of what they took for granted was a result of a deliberate and protracted struggle. To my surprise, when they came to the poem “I hate my wife for her flat yellow face” it was as resonant for them as it had been for me.

Two decades after the rise and fall of the progressive movements of the Sixties, some things had changed and some things hadn't. Although more sophisticated in some areas, young people were still faced with never-ending realities of race, class and gender. While issues of identity seemed passé to my generation, young people were still grappling with questions of who we be.<sup>327</sup> However, whereas in the Long Sixties we had an extant social movement and cultural productions such as *Gidra* to out picture our angst and help us understand society's unresolved issues, our contemporary counterparts have neither. When I brought in my worn out issues of *Gidra*, rather than treating them as outdated artifacts of a bygone era, they devoured articles like

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<sup>327</sup> As Jeff Chang laid out in *Who We Be: The Colorization of America* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2014).

“Yellow Power,” “The Oriental as Middleman Minority” and “Reflections in a Slanted Eye” as hungrily as I had twenty years earlier. Today copies of *Gidra* are likewise used in Asian American studies classes across the country in an attempt to forestall what professor Diane Fujino calls “intergenerational discontinuity,” the disruption of information between generations.<sup>328</sup> UCLA history professor Valerie Matsumoto has regularly required students to peruse original copies of *Gidra* in the stacks of the university’s research library and write papers based on selected articles. When all of the issues of *Gidra* are soon available on line through Densho Digital Archive, access will be greatly facilitated.

Writer Milan Kundera famously said, “The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting.”<sup>329</sup> In the dialectical tug of war between memory and forgetting, material cultural productions like dissident newspapers, having chronicled the life of a social movement as it happened, can be a rock in what might be a maelstrom of contention. While collective memory is critical in assessing the meaning of the past, having actual printed documentation of what transpired in the past provides unsurpassed primary data. Dissident newspapers thereby act as a link between the past and the future, providing both histories and legacies of social movements in the ongoing struggle of man against power.

### **Conclusion**

Except for a few attempts at resurrection by a younger generation of activists, *Gidra* essentially ended with the April 1974 issue. Regarding *Gidra*’s demise, it can be said that it

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<sup>328</sup>Fujino, “Who Studies the Asian American Movement?: A Historiographical Analysis.”

<sup>329</sup> Milan Kundera, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* (New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 1999): 4.

sensed when its time was up. In Mike Murase's last article, he mused, "It is time for self-appraisal and evaluation ... There is shared feeling, a premonition if you will, that now is somehow a good time to sum up our experiences."<sup>330</sup> Bob Ostertag (2006) noted that the few papers that survived the waning of the era did so by relying on sex ads in the personals. He further noted that there was an inverse relationship between quality of content and profitability pointing out that the *Rolling Stone* secured an advertising base by purging radical politics. To this point, from interviews with *Gidra* staffers, they made the conscious decision not to go the commercial route of the *L.A. Free Press*, which had a \$2 million-a-year, 150-employee business by 1970. Against this backdrop, Ostertag's comment that "Journals that closed when they sensed their time was up appear in a comparatively appealing light,"<sup>331</sup> aptly applies to *Gidra*. Besides, as former state senator Alfredo Gutierrez, who helped found the national Chicano student organization MEChA contemplated, "Perhaps no mass movement can possibly span a decade without losing its energy."<sup>332</sup> But that is another story.

In many ways, *Gidra* was an experiment in what its co-founder Mike Murase called "barefoot journalism." The term, "barefoot journalism" has been described in a recent ethnographic study in Nepal as "a platform for local leaders and villagers to express what is important to them rather than being a channel for the government or political elite to push their

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<sup>330</sup> Murase, "Toward Barefoot Journalism."

<sup>331</sup> Bob Ostertag, *People's Movements, People's Press: The Journalism of Social Justice Movements* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 2006), p. 120.

<sup>332</sup> Alfredo Gutierrez, *To Sin Against Hope: How America Has Failed Its Immigrants: A Personal History* (New York & London: Verso Books, 2013): 100.

agenda.”<sup>333</sup> However, during the Asian American movement, Murase - then an advocate of Mao Zedong Thought (which many activists studied during the Asian American movement) – came up with the label after the “barefoot doctors” in the People’s Republic of China when thousands of young peasants were given minimal basic medical training to work in rural villages. In Murase’s thinking, healthcare for the masses by young doctors with little training and much fortitude became journalism for the masses by young activists with no training which perhaps required even more fortitude.

He therefore titled his evaluative essay in the last issue of *Gidra*, “Toward Barefoot Journalism.” Regarding this phraseology, Murase wrote, “I chose this metaphor because we had "minimal basic [journalism] training" and our "rural villages" were the communities in which we lived and worked among the people we were organizing, and communicating with. The "barefoot" image appealed to me because it suggested being grassroots and anti-materialistic. I also included the word "Toward" because I felt that we had not even achieved the modest standards of what barefoot doctors were doing.”<sup>334</sup>

Bob Ostertag called such grassroots journalists “accidental” journalists “who, out of a sense of social justice, volunteered to do whatever was needed for a particular cause and ended up as journalists.”<sup>335</sup> In Western countries, as in Third World countries such as Nepal, people in positions of institutional power exercise a degree of social power. “For everyone else,” Ostertag contended, “if we seek to have a voice in shaping our society... we have to step outside our daily

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<sup>333</sup> Arun Banjade, “Gaunle Deurali: Barefoot Community Journalism in Western Nepal,” *Global Media Journal* 5, no. 8 (2006).

<sup>334</sup> Email to author, May 10, 2015.

<sup>335</sup> Ostertag, *People’s Movements, People’s Press : The Journalism of Social Justice Movements*, p. 10.

existence into roles to which we are not accustomed and for which we have little or no institutional support.” Ostertag added, “We have to band together to maximize our very limited time and resources. Before we can do any of that, we have to find each other... We have to see who’s good at what, who might rise to the occasion if given half a chance.”<sup>336</sup> This pretty much describes what the hundreds of *Gidra* volunteers did.

What I strove to accomplish in this study of *Gidra*, beyond intellectual contributions to the fields of social movement studies, Asian American studies and alternative media studies that I designated in the Chapter 1, was to assign value and meaning to one of the major but undervalued entities that powered the Asian American movement. As Mike Murase indicated, “as we continue to struggle, what needs remembering now is the richness and vitality of this total experience called *Gidra*.” Not that *Gidra* has been ignored. Issues of *Gidra* have been used as source material in most of the books on the Asian American movement. *Gidra* has even been foregrounded in several articles and books that have drawn attention to various aspects of its attributes. While appreciated at these diverse levels – as source material and as subject matter - they fall short of fully recognizing *Gidra*’s significance as one of the principal movers of the nascent Asian American movement.

By calling out and examining details of the context, content and form of *Gidra*, I hope to have given credit to the significance and magnitude of the many roles *Gidra* played. Not that *Gidra* was always discerning and was exempt from manifesting the demographic liabilities of being young and stupid in the heyday of drugs, sex and rock and roll. Among the gems of clarity and insight in *Gidra* were a fair share of folly and, no doubt, space fillers that were downright vacuous. Mistakes were made and public apologies printed. For example, an apology was

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<sup>336</sup> Ibid.

printed from a staff member who signed a short story he had written set in Vietnam with a pseudonym that could have been mistaken as a Vietnamese name. He was criticized by other staff for misleading readers, especially because, as it was pointed out to him, “the name was so phony that its use was a racist, insensitive act.”<sup>337</sup> The author said he had no ill intentions however, upon reflection, concluded that it was wrong for someone other than a Vietnamese or a reporter in Vietnam to write from the perspective he had assumed, and issued a public apology. Another editorial apology appeared in the May 1971 issue for “the blaring and inexcusable error made in the April 1971 issue.” According to *Gidra* staff members, a last minute article came in after the issue was completed with the insistence that it be included. With just one lone bleary-eyed staff member in the office after midnight, he accommodated the late request but misheard the punch line and printed, “We stand in support of those fighting *the ‘Free Election Proxy’*” instead of “We stand in support of those fighting *against the re-election of Pak Jung Hi.*”<sup>338</sup> That faux pas has been a source of many good-humored jabs and reminiscences by staff members over the years.

Both in the moment, as well as now as we look back to contemplate how Asian America came to be, *Gidra* helped make sense of the psychological, social and political urgency of the times. Political scientist Joseph Kling argued that social movements are constituted by the stories people tell to themselves to each other. “They reflect the deepest ways in which people understand who they are and to whom they are connected.”<sup>339</sup> *Gidra* was five-year series of

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<sup>337</sup> Tracy Okida, “About Part One,” *Gidra* V, no. 4 (April 1973): 9.

<sup>338</sup> Pat Sumi, “Pak Jung Hi: Colonial Lord,” *Gidra* III, no. 5 (May 1971): 22.

<sup>339</sup> Kling, “Narratives of Possibility: Social Movements, Collective Stories, and the Dilemmas of Practice.”



textual and visual stories Asian Americans told to themselves about who they were and with whom they identified. *Gidra* helped make sense of everyday life. It was where Asian Americans came to contemplate themselves, who they were, what gave their lives value, why they did what they did. This, from an anthropological perspective, is indigenous meaning, native epistemology - the elucidation of which is the point of the discipline.

What work *Gidra* has done for anthropologists therefore is to allow us to approximate how real people (natives, if you will) actually experienced their culture, a hybrid Asian American culture of their own making. Conventional monographic ethnographies, as Bruner pointed out, run the risk of being synthetic to the point that (using Renato Rosaldo's terms,) "lived experience is robbed of its vitality."<sup>340</sup> *Gidra*, on the other hand, was experience as it was lived, in situ, as it unfolded, its vitality intact. In Victor Turner's words the various textual and visual units in *Gidra* were, "crystallized secretions of once living human experience."<sup>341</sup>

Of course, as crystallized as they maybe, they are still subject to interpretation. Even as the articles, letters, editorials, poems, cover art, illustrations and political cartoons were encapsulations of lived experience and as primary archival material present an objective reality, in themselves they don't fully delineate their subject. This primary archival material must be subject to considered attention of what they mean and what their significance is or otherwise, like a tree that falls in the forest that no one hears, they don't make a sound. Rather, for an ethnographic understanding, to release their inherent value, the archive of *Gidras* required what

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<sup>340</sup> Edward M Bruner, "Experience and Its Expression," in *The Anthropology of Experience*, ed. Victor W Turner and Edward M Bruner (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 8.

<sup>341</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

anthropologist Paul Falzone (2008) called *a posteori* rather than *a priori* ethnography, ethnography that lives in the write-up rather than in the forest, in order to be heard.

Bruner (1986) indicated that the interpretive process operates on two related but distinct levels. The first level is that “the people we study interpret their own experiences in expressive forms,” - in this case, *Gidra*. The second level is that “we, in turn ... interpret these expressions for a home audience of other anthropologists,” – in this case, this dissertation. According to Bruner, “Our anthropological productions are our stories about their stories; we are interpreting the people as they are interpreting themselves.”<sup>342</sup> As such, Norman Denzin (2003) might call it a practice of performance ethnography, with performance as “an act of intervention, a method of resistance, a form of criticism, a way of revealing agency.”<sup>343</sup>

If, as contemporary social theorist Jeff Chang says, “Culture is the realm of images, ideas, sounds and stories. It is our shared space. It is the narrative we are immersed in everyday. It is where people find community, and express their deepest held values,”<sup>344</sup> then *Gidra* not only helped create culture, it was culture in the raw.

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<sup>342</sup> Ibid, p. 10.

<sup>343</sup> Norman K Denzin, *Performance Ethnography : Critical Pedagogy and the Politics of Culture* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2003): 9.

<sup>344</sup> Jeff Chang, *Who We Be: The Colorization of America* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2014): 5.

## APPENDIX 1: GIDRA LIFE STORY INTERVIEW GUIDE

### Fill out prior to/after interview:

Name:  
Address:  
Phone :  
Email:  
Place of Interview:  
Birthdate:  
Birth Place:  
Ethnicity & Generation:  
Education:  
Present Occupation:  
If retired, previous occupations:  
Tenure at Gidra:  
Jobs/Articles/Art @ Gidra:

### Four main parts of life story interview:

- I. Before AAM/Gidra
  - Family Bkground
  - Childhood
  - Teen, Young adulthood
- II. AAM/Gidra
  - How/when/why found, get involved
  - What did you do
  - Meaning/Evaluation/Impact
- III. After AAM/Gidra
  - Occupation
  - Political/Community Activity
  - Political Ideology/Identity
- IV. Life Review
  - Critical events, people
  - Personal Values, Themes
  - Vision of Future

### I. BEFORE GIDRA

- A. Family Background: Tell me about your grandparents/parents/sibs
  1. Immigration history: Where parents/grandparents came from, when, why, how?
  2. Grandparents, Parents, Siblings: occupation, community? political?
- B. Childhood: Where grow up? What kind of kid were you?
  1. Elementary School
    - What ethnicity were most of your friends?
    - What kinds of things did you like to do
  2. Family Context
    - Extended family – grow up with aunts, uncles, cousins?
    - Church/temple, organizations JACL, YMCA?

- Family discuss/concern local, community or world events or politics?
  - Can you describe any family celebrations, traditions, or rituals?
3. Self & Society
    - Recall any current/historical events?
    - What do you remember most about your childhood?
    - Self-perception: shy? Gregarious? Inquisitive?
- C. Teen Years: By this age, you had a sense of who you are. How would you describe yourself as a teenager?
1. High School
    - What HS, where; Friends, Activities in school and after
  2. Family Context
    - Outings/vacations? Sibling closeness Extended family Church/temple?
    - Discuss personal or political with parents? Siblings?
  3. Self & Society
    - Hobbies/Leisure time; Dating? Likes/Dislikes?
    - What Current/historical events do you remember?
    - What do you remember most about your teen years?
    - Self-perception: restless? Anxious? Satisfied?
- D. Young Adulthood: What did you do after HS?
1. College?
    - Which college? Why selected, What major in? What yrs, Live home, dorm?
    - Extra curricular activities
    - What were major issues of the day?
    - Friends – what were they into?
    - What do you remember most about your college/early adult years?
  2. Military?
    - What branch? Years? Where stationed? What did you do?
    - Vietnam? Can you tell me about your time there?
    - What do you remember most about your time in the military?

## II. GIDRA/AAM

### A. AAM

- How would you define the early AAM?
  - What would you say its goals were?
  - What did it fight against? Eg: imperialism, racism, Vietnam War
  - What did it fight for? Eg: empowerment, Th Wrld Solidarity, Community Building, Identity?
- How and why did you first get involved?
  - Who was influential in getting you involved?
  - Were there a specific organization you joined?
  - How did you feel?
- Can you tell me any specific memories? During mtngs, rallies, study groups?
  - Who was there?
- Did you participate in other non AAM social/political movements? Anti-war, womens?

- If so, what did you do and how did you feel?
- Was the AAM connected to other movements? If so, how?

#### B. Socio/Historical/Political Context

- What historical/social/political events (intl, natl, local) do you remember & why
  - How learn about: friends, newspaper/tv, fam
  - How feel
  - Egs: JFK, RFK. King assassinations
- Do you recall/were you there/on campus when Carter/Huggins were killed?
- Were you involved in the AASC at UCLA – or other campus
- Did you read any alternative newspapers?
  - Eg: LA Free Press, Ramparts, Village Voice
- College: major? Graduate?
- Any memorable books, films?

#### B. Gidra

- How did you first learn about/get involved with Gidra?
  - Who told you?
- Why did you choose to found/work on/write for/read Gidra?
  - What did you do?
- What articles/art stick out in your mind?
- What was your relationship to other members/staff/readers?
  - Did you hang out/socialize with other Gidra folks?
  - Did you live in /visit the Gidra house?
- What was the organizational structure of Gidra?
  - What were staff mtngs like?
- What was the best thing about Gidra?
- What was worst thing about Gidra?
- What did you think about Gidra at the time?
  - its goals
  - methods
  - people

#### C. Discuss specific article/piece:

- What was the story of how you came to write/create it?
- What was the process? Who/what staff did you work with?
- Feedback/repercussions/reflection at the time? Later? Now?

#### D. Evaluation/ Look back at AAM and Gidra

- How would you characterize and summarize Gidra?
- What typified it? Distinguished it?
- What made it meaningful?
- In what ways did it succeed and not succeed?
- Why do you think it ended?
- Why do you think some people burned out and others didn't?
- Would you have done anything differently?

### III. AFTER GIDRA

- #### A. What were the factors that led to your leaving?

- Pushes:
  - Pulls?
  - What did you do when you left? School? Work?
- B. Occupation(s)
- What types of work have you done? jobs have you had?
  - Do you work or interact with young people, older people?
- C. Family:
- Married? What does spouse do?
  - Children? Occupations/interests
  - Grandchildren/Parents – still around? see often? Take care of?
- D. Social life
- Most friends from work? Church/temple? Neighborhood? AAM?
  - Still keep in touch with Gidra vets?
- E. Historical/Socio-Political Context
- What historical/social/political events (intl, natl, local) do you remember & why
- F. Political/Community Activity
- Are you more or less involved now in political or community affairs than you were in the 60s/70s?
  - Has the type of involvement changed since the AAM?
  - Are you currently involved in any community organizations?
    - i. If not, why not?
    - ii. If so, which ones and why?
  - Is it intergenerational?
    - i. Work with older people? younger people?
- G. Political Ideology
- Do you keep up with local politics? State? National? International?
  - Do you vote regularly? Democratic?
  - Have you been active in any campaigns or issues?
  - How do you feel about the current state of affairs? Pessimistic? Optimistic?
  - In comparison with the past, are things better, the same or worse?
  - When you think about the future of this country or the world, what makes you the most uneasy?
  - What gives you the most hope?

#### IV. LIFE REVIEW

- A. Critical Events: in looking back over your life,
- What was a peak experience for you? High point
  - What was a low point?
  - What has been the most important turning point in your life?
  - What were the crucial decisions in your life?

B. Historical Events

- What were some of the most important historical events in your lifetime?
- Can you recall what you were doing and how you felt on these historical days?
- 

C. Influences

- Who has shaped and influenced your life?
- Has there been a special person that has changed your life?
- Who are the heroes and heroines, guides and helpers in your life?
- What are your most important cultural, ethnic, or religious influences?
- What did you learn from your parents or grandparents that still has meaning for you today?

C. Personal Values

- How would you describe your philosophy of life, worldview?
- What traditions, values, wisdom, or life lessons have guided your life and its direction?
- What matters most to you now?
- What are some things you hope you never forget?

D. Life Themes

- Looking back, what are the themes that have constant throughout your life?
- If you could go back, what time or chapter of your life would you like to repeat?
  - What would you do differently?
- What gives your life its unity, meaning or purpose?
- How do you see yourself? How would you characterize yourself?
- What is one thing that no one knows about you?

E. Visions for the Future

- Are you satisfied or pleased with your life and what you have done?
- Are you satisfied with the state of the country or the world?
  - What would you like to see different?
- What do you think we learned from our elders that's impt to pass on?
- What do you think our generation's legacy is to the next?
- What is your advice for the younger generation?

V. CLOSING/FINAL THOUGHTS


- Is there anything else we haven't covered you'd like to add?

## APPENDIX 2: *GIDRA* ON-LINE SURVEY

As discussed in Chapter 1, the following on-line survey was developed in order to cast a nationwide net to provide input from people who read, volunteered or contributed to *Gidra* beyond those who were interviewed for this study. Initially intended to be an interactive element on-site at the exhibition, *Drawing the Line: Japanese American Art, Design and Activism in Post-War Los Angeles* at the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles in 2011-12 as well as on the exhibition website. When technical difficulties and software incapacities prevented its successful execution, the survey was placed online on a specially created Facebook page. However limited time and resources required to promote the site as well expertise needed to aggregate responses allowed a n=20, which was not statistically significant given the universe it was intended to sample.

**GIDRA: THE MONTHLY OF THE ASIAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE**

**Did you *Gidra*?**



*Gidra: The Monthly of the Asian American Experience* was born in L.A. but ran around the country from April 1969 to April 1974, reporting on, while incubating, the new notion of Asian America.

The purpose of this survey is to document the experience that was *Gidra*. If you read, worked on, wrote for, or provided art for *Gidra*, please take a few minutes to respond to the following survey.

This survey is spearheaded by Karen Ishizuka with assistance from Mike Murase, Tracy Okida, Jeff Furumura, Evelyn Yoshimura, Doug Aihara, and Bruce Iwasaki and is part of Karen's dissertation on *Gidra*. For more information contact Karen at [MyGIDRA@gmail.com](mailto:MyGIDRA@gmail.com).

SUBMIT ALL      ◀ PREV      NEXT ▶



## GIDRA: THE MONTHLY OF THE ASIAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

Question 1 of 22

Which of the following describes your involvement with *Gidra* (check one or more):

- I read *Gidra* occasionally
- I subscribed to *Gidra*
- I helped produce *Gidra* e.g., typeset, layout, distribution
- I contributed to *Gidra* e.g., articles, poetry, illustrations, photos
- I often hung out at the *Gidra* office
- I once lived at the *Gidra* house - aka 2412, Ping Pong Hotel, *Gidra* Collective



SUBMIT ALL

◀ PREV

NEXT ▶

## GIDRA: THE MONTHLY OF THE ASIAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

Question 2 of 22

If you read *Gidra*, what type of articles did you particularly like (check one or more):

- Articles on national issues like the Vietnam War, Watergate
- Articles on community events like Asian American conferences
- Articles on arts and culture like theatre/book/music reviews
- Articles on local issues like redevelopment
- Articles on Asian American identity
- Articles on history like WWII incarceration
- How-to articles like recipes and fixing a toilet
- None of the above



SUBMIT ALL

◀ PREV

NEXT ▶

## GIDRA: THE MONTHLY OF THE ASIAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

Question 3 of 22

Did you usually read (check one or more):

- Gidra* editorials
- Letters to the Editor
- Poems and other creative writing
- Mellow Yellow* column by Robert Wu
- The Warren Report* by Warren Furutani
- None of the above



SUBMIT ALL

◀ PREV

NEXT ▶

## GIDRA: THE MONTHLY OF THE ASIAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

Question 4 of 22

Overall, I believe that *Gidra* (check one or more):

- Provided a forum for new ideas
- Reflected the Asian American Movement
- Helped shape Asian American identity/consciousness
- None of the above



Excerpt from Tad Nakamura's film, "[A Song for Ourselves](#)."

SUBMIT ALL

◀ PREV

NEXT ▶

GIDRA: THE MONTHLY OF THE ASIAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

Question 5 of 22

Politically, I think *Gidra* was (check one):

- Too political
- Not political enough
- It was fine by me

EMERGENCE OF YELLOW POWER IN AME



SUBMIT ALL

PREV

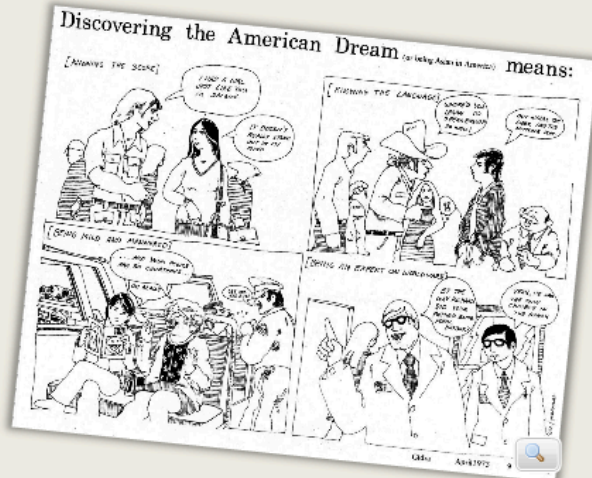
NEXT

GIDRA: THE MONTHLY OF THE ASIAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

Question 6 of 22

On a personal level, I think *Gidra* (check one or more):

- Voiced opinions and questions that I was thinking or feeling at the time
- Made me feel good or better about being Asian American
- Helped to politicize me
- None of the above



SUBMIT ALL

PREV

NEXT

## GIDRA: THE MONTHLY OF THE ASIAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

Question 7 of 22



The best thing about *Gidra* was the (check one or more):

- Content: subject matter, topics
- Images: graphics, illustrations, photos
- Eclectic nature of its contents
- Quality of the writing
- Collective experience of working together
- It didn't take things too seriously
- None of the above

SUBMIT ALL

◀ PREV

NEXT ▶

## GIDRA: THE MONTHLY OF THE ASIAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

Question 8 of 22



The worst thing about *Gidra* was (check one or more):

- Focus was not well defined or was inconsistent
- There was not enough organization or structure
- The quality of the writing
- It was too radical
- It was too eclectic
- It did not take things seriously enough
- None of the above

SUBMIT ALL

◀ PREV

NEXT ▶

## GIDRA: THE MONTHLY OF THE ASIAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

Question 9 of 22

Which of the following best describes the impact **Gidra** had on you politically, socially or otherwise (check only one):

- Gidra** had a big impact on me
- Gidra** had medium impact on me
- Gidra** had little impact on me
- Gidra** had no impact on me



SUBMIT ALL

◀ PREV

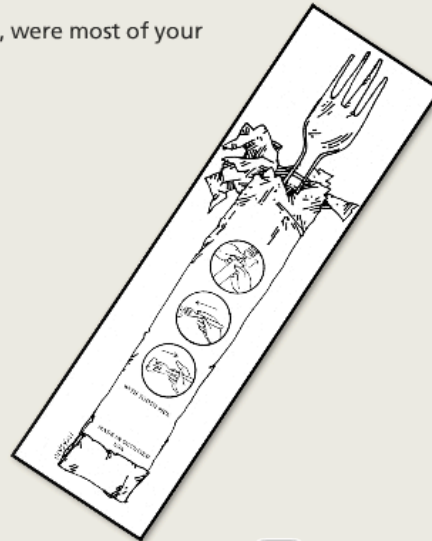
NEXT ▶

## GIDRA: THE MONTHLY OF THE ASIAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

Question 10 of 22

When you were in Jr. and Sr. high school, were most of your friends: (check only one)

- Asian American
- Caucasian
- Black
- Latino
- A variety of the above



SUBMIT ALL

◀ PREV

NEXT ▶



## GIDRA: THE MONTHLY OF THE ASIAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

Question 11 of 22

Did you read other alternative newspapers like the *L.A. Free Press*, *The Berkeley Barb*, *The Black Panther*?

(check one)

- Occasionally
- Often
- Never



SUBMIT ALL

◀ PREV

NEXT ▶

## GIDRA: THE MONTHLY OF THE ASIAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

Question 12 of 22

Did you read other Asian American newspapers like *Rodan*, *New Dawn*, *Kalaayaan*? (check one)

- Occasionally
- Often
- Never



SUBMIT ALL

◀ PREV

NEXT ▶

**GIDRA: THE MONTHLY OF THE ASIAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE**

Question 13 of 22

Were you part of a progressive or radical Asian American political organization like AAPA, IWK, WVO? (check one)

- Yes
- No



SUBMIT ALL

◀ PREV

NEXT ▶

**GIDRA: THE MONTHLY OF THE ASIAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE**

Question 14 of 22

I have the following to loan or donate (check one or more):

- Photos/home movies of the 60's and 70's
- Copies of *Gidra*
- Posters and/or buttons
- More stories, comments



SUBMIT ALL

◀ PREV

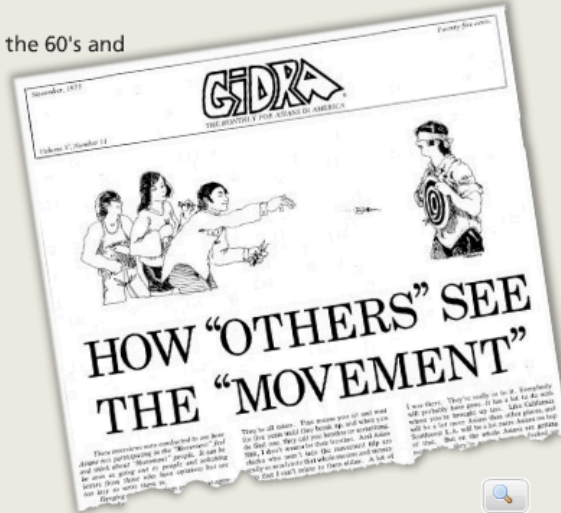
NEXT ▶

## GIDRA: THE MONTHLY OF THE ASIAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

Question 15 of 22

In terms of your interest in Asian American issues, would you say you are presently (check one):

- Less interested than you were in the 60's and 70's
- As interested
- More interested
- Was never interested



SUBMIT ALL

◀ PREV

NEXT ▶

## GIDRA: THE MONTHLY OF THE ASIAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

Question 16 of 22

If you worked as a volunteer *Gidra* staffer, what did you do and when?



SUBMIT ALL

◀ PREV

NEXT ▶



**GIDRA: THE MONTHLY OF THE ASIAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE**

Question 17 of 22

If you wrote for *Gidra*, what did you write?  
Please provide the type, title, and approximate dates.



SUBMIT ALL

◀ PREV

NEXT ▶

**GIDRA: THE MONTHLY OF THE ASIAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE**

Question 18 of 22

If you provided illustrations, art, or photographs for *Gidra*, please indicate what and when.



SUBMIT ALL

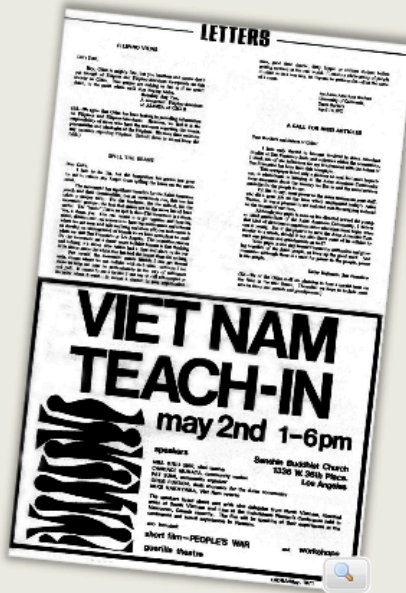
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NEXT ▶

GIDRA: THE MONTHLY OF THE ASIAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

Question 19 of 22

If you ever wrote a letter to *Gidra*, what was it about, how often, and when?



SUBMIT ALL

◀ PREV

NEXT ▶

GIDRA: THE MONTHLY OF THE ASIAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

Question 20 of 22

If you hung out at the *Gidra* office, what did you do and why?



SUBMIT ALL

◀ PREV

NEXT ▶

## GIDRA: THE MONTHLY OF THE ASIAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

Question 21 of 22

Thank you for participating in the *Gidra* survey!  
We'd appreciate knowing who you are.

Note: Your name and e-mail information  
will not be shared.

In the space below,  
please provide your:

- Name
- E-mail address
- City and State where you reside


SUBMIT ALL

◀ PREV

NEXT ▶

## GIDRA: THE MONTHLY OF THE ASIAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

Question 22 of 22

I am (check one or more):

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Japanese American | <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese American | <input type="checkbox"/> Korean American  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pilipino American | <input type="checkbox"/> South/East Asian | <input type="checkbox"/> Pacific Islander |
| <input type="checkbox"/> African American  | <input type="checkbox"/> Caucasian        | <input type="checkbox"/> Latino           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Native American   |   |   |



SUBMIT ALL

◀ PREV

NEXT ▶

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