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A Yellow Uncle Tom vs. A National Hero:  
How Acting President S.I. Hayakawa Split Support in the Japanese  
Community of San Francisco during the San Francisco State Strike

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## **Abstract**

November 6, 1968 was the beginning of what was to be the longest student strike in United States' history. Through 5 months of struggle, confrontations with police, and battling an emergency-installed President who was just as unwavering as the student protesters—a resolution came on March 14, 1969 which created the first and only School of Ethnic Studies at San Francisco State College. The role of Asian Americans, and in particular, Japanese Americans in the strike and the support from the communities behind them has been greatly overlooked by most scholars writing about this strike, except for a few prominent authors. This paper will examine further the roles Asian Americans played in the Strike. It will also analyze how the Asian American and Japanese American student protesters at San Francisco State perceived emergency-installed Acting President S.I. Hayakawa. Finally, it will argue that the support by the Japanese American community in the Bay area divided due to generational variances and divergent political beliefs brought to the forefront by the conflict between the Japanese American students and Acting President Hayakawa during the Strike.

## **Introduction**

After almost two and a half years of trying to establish a Department of Black Studies at San Francisco State College, the Black Student Union combined with 3 Asian ethnic student groups, a Latin American student group, and a Mexican-American student group on campus to create the Third World Liberation Front. Together, on November 6, 1968, they started the longest student strike in United States history and the first and only School of Ethnic Studies. For weeks, students picketed, held rallies, gave speeches, and staged sit-ins inside the Administration Building. Though, not as often reported, Asian Americans played a significant role in the strike. After months of protesting, feeling frustrated with the College Board Trustees and like there was no way for him to stop them, President Robert Smith resigned abruptly leading to the emergency installation of Samuel Ichiye Hayakawa, a Canadian man of Japanese descent and English Semantics Professor at the college. It was the hope that as a racial minority faculty member, he could appease the protesting third world students as well as the faculty who, with growing frustrations, were ever closer to joining the strike. He was also chosen because he shared similar views with the College Board Trustees and conservative politicians in the state about taking a hard line approach to student protest movements on campus. He believed they represented a small faction and hindered the academic study of students in the “silent majority” who weren’t protesting and just wanted a peaceful educational experience. Hayakawa was tasked with shutting down the protests and keeping the campus open. He took a hardline approach against the militant students, often bringing in heavy police forces and placing harsh restrictions on demonstrations and protests.

To protesting students, especially Japanese American students, he appeared a wolf in sheep’s clothes-he appeared to be just like them but he acted more like a white person and took

actions counter to what they were advocating for. Though he sympathized with the Black students demands, he believed that racism wasn't the reason for the inequality in America but rather the lack of assimilation. He believed the only way to achieve equality was through assimilation into the white mainstream culture-not forming a racial/ethnic counterculture and advocating for a complete overhaul of the educational system through violent protest. To Japanese American student protesters he became a traitor. Being of Japanese descent but holding his views about assimilation and Asian Americans remaining politically silent, he perpetuated the emerging model minority stereotype and made their demands seem illegitimate. This paper will describe the significant role that Asian Americans played in the strike. It will also examine the opinions of Acting President Hayakawa by Japanese American student protesters. Finally, it will look at how support split in the Japanese American community surrounding the Strike due to generational variances and divergent political beliefs brought to the forefront by the conflict between the Japanese American students and Acting President Hayakawa.

## **Historiography**

Early scholarship about Japanese Americans was initially about their history coming to America, the traditions and customs they brought with them, and some commentary about family/generation and community dynamics. William Petersen's work Japanese Americans: Oppression and Success is a great example of this. Petersen devotes a whole chapter to just discussing the Japanese American family and the differences of opinions, behaviors, and adherence to traditional values seen among the different generations. Many writers including William Petersen, Minako K. Maykovich, and Stanford Lyman developed the same theme of the Nisei (second generation) as a homogenous group of well-behaved, quiet strivers. Petersen continued this view in a New York Times article in January of 1966 titled "Success Story,

Japanese-American Style”. This article and the scholarship that followed it, described Japanese Americans (and later almost all Asian Americans) as well-behaved, hard-working, patriotic, minorities intent on assimilation. That despite the internment experience during World War II, they were able to attain a good education and middle-level job marking them as successful in the decades following the war. What’s more, they were politically silent and didn’t seek out government assistance or change, unlike the African Americans (who during the 1950s and 1960s were engrossed in the Civil Rights Movement). According to Petersen and others that purported this view, Japanese Americans were a “model minority” that other minorities should strive to copy.

But this stereotype, though seemingly good on the surface, hid many issues within the Japanese American and general Asian Americans communities such as high poverty rates in Chinatowns and inadequate health services. Because Japanese Americans and Asian Americans were viewed as very successful, they often were denied services and welfare assistance, even when they pleaded for them. Almost as soon as this image took hold in the mainstream consciousness, Japanese Americans and other Asian Americans pushed back through scholarship to counter this image. Bok-Lim C. Kim and her 1973 article in *Social Work* journal, “Asian-Americans: no model minority” describes the conditions of some Asian American communities and how the racism and model minority view hindered help for these issues. Another example of this is with Asian Americans for Fair Media which was a group of Nisei volunteers formed by George Yuzawa in 1973. Their mission was to monitor local and national broadcasts and print media for negative Asian stereotypes and racial slurs. They produced a booklet called “The Asian Image in the United States: Stereotypes and Realities” in 1976 to inform people of the stereotypes and counter these images.

As the scholarship reflects, beginning in the late 1960's and early 1970's Japanese Americans started advocating more publically for themselves, their communities, and challenging the model minority view that they were politically silent and acquiescing. Much of the scholarship about Asian American Movement and Japanese American activism sprung from the very people that lived it. Prominent works include *The Asian American Movement* by William Wei (1993), "The Four Prisons" by Glenn Omatsu (2000), and *Asian Americans: The Movement and the Moment*, by UCLA Asian American Studies Center Press (2006). These works detail how the political movement started, the main inspirations of the movement, and the major events and advocacy efforts.

When I started researching about the model minority stereotype and Japanese American political activism, I encountered a great deal of scholarship. There is also a great deal about Japanese Americans in relation to the evacuation and internment during WWII as well as the Redress Movement in the 1980s. However there is less scholarship on Asian American political activism and specifically Japanese American activism in the period between these two momentous events. In *The Movement and the Moment* they discussed Japanese Americans creating and assisting in community programs which worked with the elderly, helped those with drug addictions at rehab centers, ran English and reading literacy classes for elderly and youth, and assisted with legal aid.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, they discussed college youth and young adults leading protests in their community including the protest against the International Hotel evictions in Japantown, San Francisco.

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<sup>1</sup> George T. Endo and Connie Kubo Della-Piana. "Japanese Americans, Pluralism, and the Model Minority Myth." *Theory Into Practice* 20, no. 1 (Winter 1981): 47.

But when I looked at the efforts that went into establishing ethnic studies programs, especially protests and controversy at San Francisco State, Asian American involvement seemed to virtually disappear among the mainstream, heavily cited sources. Typically when the Strike at San Francisco State is discussed, the African American students take the prominent focus of most research. William Orrick's June 1969 government survey and report, Shut it down! A college in crisis: San Francisco State College, October 1968-April 1969, focuses on the role that the Black Student Union (BSU) played and only mentions briefly the Third World Liberation Front despite the fact that 3 of the 6 member groups of the coalition were Asian ethnic groups.<sup>2</sup> Asian Americans also received little media attention. Through the countless hours surveying the San Francisco State Strike Archives and Video Collections, only a handful of video clips showed any Asian American, instead interviewing members from the BSU or Roger Alvaro, a Third World Liberation Front spokesman and Latin American student.

I think it is vital to understand the role that Asian Americans played in the strike and the opinions of their communities during the period. At the peak of the unrests in the fall of 1968, S.I. Hayakawa, a Canadian man of Japanese descent and English Semantics Professor at the college, was installed under emergency protocol as Acting President. He was tasked with shutting down the protests and keeping the campus open. Most research about him focuses on his confrontations with faculty, his comradery with conservative politicians in California, and his popularity with middle class Americans who were tired of seeing tax-funded universities over-

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<sup>2</sup> The other student groups in the coalition include the Mexican-American Student Conference (MASC), the Latin American Student Organization (LASO), The Asian American Political Alliance (AAPA), the Intercollegiate Chinese for Social Action (ICSA), and the Philippine-American Collegiate Endeavor (PACE)  
From: Karen Umemoto, "On Strike! San Francisco State College Strike, 1968-1969: The Role of Asian American Students." *Amerasia* 15 no. 1 (1989): 31.



run by violent and disruptive student radicals. But there is little that examines how Asian Americans, and Japanese Americans thought of him and his hardline tactics.

A few secondary works I found that did focus on Asian Americans involvement in the strike. They include, Karen Umemoto's work "On Strike! San Francisco State College Strike, 1968-1969: The Role of Asian American Students" and Angela Ryan's Ph.D dissertation "Education for the People: The Third World Student Movement at San Francisco State College and City College of New York." Only one source I came across examined the impact of the strike within the Japanese community and the split of support between the Japanese American students involved in the strike and President Hayakawa-a man of Japanese descent who held a position of power and prominent and who was in clear opposition to the student protesters. The source was "Chapter 2: "Down With Hayakawa!" Assimilation vs Third World Solidarity at San Francisco State." in *Chains of Babylon: The Rise of Asian American* by Daryl Maeda. These three works have been the backbone of my thesis and topic.

I still believe more scholarship should be written. So to add to the current scholarship, this paper will examine further the roles Asian Americans played in the Strike. It will also analyze how the Asian American and Japanese American student protesters at San Francisco State perceived emergency-installed Acting President S.I. Hayakawa. Finally, it will argue that the support by the Japanese American community in the Bay area divided due to generational variances and divergent political beliefs.

## **Background**

The 1960s were filled with a whirl-wind of political and social activity. Both at home and abroad, tensions seemed to be building up before finally exploding in the late 1960s. At the

beginning of the decade, the Civil Rights Movement was in full swing and African Americans were advocating for many rights including the removal of Jim Crow era segregation laws. These laws produced separate facilities but not so “equal” facilities for African Americans and “colored” people.<sup>3</sup> After decades of protest and struggle, success was finally achieved with the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act. Now segregation and discrimination were outlawed throughout all aspects of society.<sup>4</sup> But the struggle wasn’t over. African Americans and other minorities continued to fight against racial attitudes and practices.

The 1960s also saw the intensification of the Vietnam War following the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution in 1964 which increased the number of U.S. soldiers being deployed.<sup>5</sup> To satisfy this heightened demand, the United States expanded the draft but controversy surrounded its use. Protests emerged in cities and college campuses over the disproportionate number of people of color and poor being drafted and deployed while whites and those in the middle and upper class were able to avoid the draft by simply paying their way out of it.<sup>6</sup> With the increasing number of Americans deployed, criticism was increasingly being directed at the war regarding the effectiveness of the strategies being utilized, the controversial draft policies, and questions about the reason the U.S. was even fighting in the first place. News and media agencies were also broadcasting gruesome images depicting the realities of war right into America’s living rooms, fueling anti-war protests.

Moving toward the later part of the decade, there started emerging a shift in the organizational structures and tactics of protests, reflecting the changing political and social

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<sup>3</sup> Herlinger, Paul. *The Sixties: The Years that Shaped a Generation*. DVD. Directed by Stephen Talbot and David Davis. Los Angeles: PBS Paramount. 2005.

<sup>4</sup> Herlinger, *The Sixties*, 2005.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid..

<sup>6</sup> Ibid..

contexts. Several prominent leaders and supporters of the Civil Rights movement were assassinated in this decade, including John F. Kennedy in November of 1963, Malcolm X in February of 1965, Martin Luther King Jr. in April of 1968, and Robert F. Kennedy in June of 1968.<sup>7</sup> Their deaths, coupled with the election of the hardline conservative Richard Nixon for President in 1968 created a destabilizing and demoralizing gap in the movement and spread fears that all that was gained for civil rights and liberties could be easily lost again. These attitudes bred more radicalized ideologies which supported violent tactics and actions.

Other changes emerged too as other racial minorities came out of this time period to claim victories of their own. Pan-ethnic groups started emerging as ways to unify and coordinate advocacy efforts.<sup>8</sup> Native Americans created the American Indian Movement (AIM) and Asians established several groups including the Asian American Political Alliance (AAPA).

All of these social and political changes seemed to be coalescing onto America's youth. Across college campuses nation-wide, students, frustrated with the inequalities and injustices they saw around them, started protesting, demonstrating, staging sit-ins, forming picket lines, giving speeches, and doing any actions imaginable to speak out and make sure their opinions were heard. Some were protesting about the war in Vietnam and the draft, others wanted to change admission standards so more minorities were admitted to colleges and universities, and others were advocating for ethnic studies programs as a way to make education more relevant and culturally responsive. Nowhere was this cacophony of divergent requests more loudly demanded than in the San Francisco Bay Area of California.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid..

<sup>8</sup> Harold Brackman and Steven Erie. "3.8 Beyond 'Politics By Other Means'?: Empowerment Strategies for Los Angeles' Asian Pacific Community." In *Asian American Politics: Law, Participation, and Policy*, edited by Don T. Nakanishi and James S. Lai, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, INC, 2003) 238.

## **Events Leading Up to the Strike:**

In 1960, the State of California altered its Master Plan for Education to rework their University, College, and Junior College admission system.<sup>9</sup> This along with the ever-popular tracking system in K-12 schools discriminated along class and racial lines who was admitted into which level of higher education. Under the tracking system, students subjected to IQ and aptitude tests in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade which sorted them into two educational tracks: those that were deemed “college material” and those that were “not academically inclined.”<sup>10</sup> The states were biased toward middle class and wealthy white students and often placed poorer students and students of color in the none-college path and were given less rigorous and poorer quality education than the college path students.<sup>11</sup> Once a student was placed in a particular track it was hard for them to get out of it. Besides a sub-par education, the tracking system also worked to sort people into particular jobs in their adulthood. “By the time they get out of high school, more than three-quarters of all graduates from the working-class schools either look for a job right away, take vocational training, or go into the army.”<sup>12</sup> The rest of the students tried to go to higher education. But they continued to experience roadblocks.

When applying for admission to the colleges and universities in California, students were corralled into attending the Junior Colleges or State Colleges thanks to the Master Plan. The Master Plan outlined much more rigorous admissions standards to “improved the quality” of education. But really it resulted in the decreased number of minority and working-class students

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<sup>9</sup> Karen Umemoto, “On Strike! San Francisco State College Strike, 1968-1969: The Role of Asian American Students,” 29.

<sup>10</sup> Research Organizing Cooperative of San Francisco, “Strike at Frisco State!: the story behind it,” 4.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Research Organizing Cooperative, “Strike at Frisco State!”, 8.

at the Universities and State colleges.<sup>13</sup> . Prior to the implementation of the Master Plan in 1960. Students in the top 33% of their class could be admitted into the Universities and those in the top 70% could be admitted into the State Colleges.<sup>14</sup> Now with the harsher admissions standards and the biased College Board Examinations, only those in the top 12.5% could be admitted into the Universities and those in the top 33% could be admitted into the State Colleges.<sup>15</sup> This push for changing who went to what college came out of the increasing enrollment in colleges in the late 1950s and early 1960s, as well as the growing need for vocational, tech trained, and managerial workers for the high-tech manufacturing and defense industries booming at the time.<sup>16</sup> The Universities and Colleges started specializing education where professionals and those seeking masters and doctorate degrees attended the Universities, those going into middle-level professions like teachers and applied fields went to the State Colleges, and those needing vocational training and tech skills-with a few intending to transfer to a State College- went to the Junior 2 year Colleges.<sup>17</sup>

The realities of this system can be seen at San Francisco State. In the fall of 1960, 12% of its student population was African American and in the fall of 1968 it had dropped down to 3-5%.<sup>18</sup> The chart on the following page shows the Ethnic and Racial Diversity of San Francisco State College and the City of San Francisco in 1970.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Umemoto, 29.

<sup>14</sup> Research Organizing Cooperative, "Strike at Frisco State!", 9-10.

<sup>15</sup> Umemoto, 29.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 29.

<sup>17</sup> Umemoto, 29.

<sup>18</sup> California Newsreel, "Black Panther/San Francisco State: On Strike," Films on Demand Web site, <http://proxy.uwec.edu/login?url=http://fod.infobase.com/PortalPlaylists.aspx?wID=102709&xtid=49747>, 1969. (Accessed February 13, 2016). *Sources differ on the exact demographic amount of African Americans students at San Francisco State in 1968 as can be seen with the demographic chart from the next footnote.*

<sup>19</sup> "Table 1: Ethnic and Racial Diversity of San Francisco City and College," In Angela Ryan, "Education for the People: The Third World Student Movement at San Francisco State College and City College of New York" (Ph.D diss. Ohio State University, 2010), 20.

Ethnic/Racial Category	No. of students polled	Percent of each category	No. of people in San Francisco	Percent of population
American Indian	92	0.5%	2,900	0.4% (Indian)
Black	961	5.1%	96,078	13.4% (Negro)
Filipino	175	0.9%	24,694	3.5%
Mexican-American	425	2.2%	69,633	9.7% (Persons of Spanish origin or descent)
Oriental	1,449	7.6%	70,401	9.8% (Chinese + Japanese)
White	14,600	76.8%	511,186	71.4%
Other	1,239	6.5%	10,415	1.5%
No Response	80	0.4%	N/A	N/A
<b>Total</b>	<b>19,021</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>785,307</b>	<b>109.7%</b>

**Table 1: Ethnic and Racial Diversity of San Francisco City and College<sup>20</sup>**

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<sup>20</sup> Hekymara, 140: US Census data, <http://www.bayareacensus.ca.gov/counties/SanFranciscoCounty70.htm>.

According to the chart, every minority except American Indian was underrepresented at the College as compared to their population in the City of San Francisco. Additionally, Charles Stone, the Dean of Admissions at San Francisco State had admitted in an interview with the Research Organizing Cooperative of San Francisco in March, 1969 that,

60 percent of San Francisco State freshmen come from outside the city. He also admitted that ‘almost half of the San Francisco people we admit come from private schools.’—despite the fact that three quarters of the high school students in the city go to public schools...Last year only four percent of San Francisco public school graduates enrolled at San Francisco State.<sup>20</sup>

San Francisco State College campus was placed in an area surrounded by working class and ethnic neighborhoods, yet the students from that area didn’t make up the majority of the student

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<sup>20</sup> Research Organizing Cooperative, “Strike at Frisco State,” 11.

population and there were becoming an ever small portion of the college.<sup>21</sup>

It was from this context and the increased political tension of the 1960s that prompted the Black Student Union to advocate for the creation of a Black Studies Department at San Francisco State. They had started in the mid-1960s to reach out to the administration in the college. Over two years they experienced growing frustrations and bureaucratic stalemate. In the 1967-1968 school year, the BSU had been shuffled through committees for months before finally securing administrative acceptance in the Spring of 1968 only to see it stall again when there weren't enough funds allotted to them to get the Department started.<sup>22</sup> Agreeing that enough was enough, they felt stronger action needed to be taken.

In the Spring of 1968 the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF) was established as a coalition between six of the minority student groups on campus: the Black Student Union (BSU), the Mexican-American Student Conference (MASC), the Latin American Student Organization (LASO), the Asian American Political Alliance (AAPA), the Intercollegiate Chinese for Social Action (ICSA), and the Philippine-American Collegiate Endeavor (PACE).<sup>23</sup> In the "Third World Liberation Front Philosophy and Goals" they state:

The TWLF...has its purpose to aid in further developing politically, economically, and culturally the revolutionary Third World consciousness of racist oppressed peoples both on and off campus. As Third World students, as Third World people, as so-called minorities, we are being exploited to the fullest extent in this racist white America, and we are therefore preparing ourselves and our people for a prolonged struggle for freedom from this yoke of oppression.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> William H. Orrick, "Shut it down! A college in crisis: San Francisco State College, October 1968-April 1969." A report to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office. 1969), 3-5.

<sup>22</sup> California Newsreel, "Black Panther/San Francisco State: On Strike," 1969.

<sup>23</sup> For a fuller explanation on how the three Asian ethnic groups formed and their involvement in the community, read Karen Umemoto, "On Strike! San Francisco State College Strike, 1968-1969: The Role of Asian Americans," *Amerasia* 15 no. 1 (1989).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 39.

They saw wars against imperialism waging in Third World nations like the war in Vietnam and saw connections to the similar racial oppressions they faced at home from white elites.<sup>25</sup> One Asian American described their attitude toward the war, “Protest against the Vietnam War intensified my distrust of establishment politics. As an Asian American, I could not begin to imagine how I would allow myself to be forced into a situation of killing another Asian or another human being for any reason.”<sup>26</sup> The only way they felt they could affect change was by dismantling the racially biased institutions and practices ‘by any means necessary.’<sup>27</sup> “Instead of racial integration, anti-imperialist movements argued for national independence. Instead of non-violence, they initiated armed struggle. And instead of shared power, they called for ‘self-determination.’”<sup>28</sup> These same views and attitudes can be seen in the pamphlet created by the Asian American Political Alliance (AAPA) which explains their mission and goals.<sup>29</sup> In it they say,

We Asian Americans believe that we must develop an American Society which is just, humane, equal, and gives the people the right to control their own lives before we can begin to end the oppression and inequality that exists in this nation...We Asian Americans support all oppressed peoples and their struggles for Liberation and believe that Third World People must have complete control over the political, economic, and educational institutions within their communities. We Asian Americans oppose the imperialistic policies being pursued by the American Government.

The Asian American Political Alliance was formed in the late summer of 1968 by Peggy Nakatsu and a small group of Japanese American women. It was based on the University

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>26</sup> Der, Henry. “Roots of a Civil Rights Activist.” In *Asian Americans: The Movement and the Moment*, edited by Steve Louie and Glenn Omatsu, (Los Angeles: UCLA Asian American Studies Center Press, 2006) 164.

<sup>27</sup> Umemoto, “On Strike!” 39.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 38-39.

<sup>29</sup> Asian American Political Alliance. *Understanding aapa* In *Asian Americans: The Movement and the Moment*, edited by Steve Louie and Glenn Omatsu, (Los Angeles: UCLA Asian American Studies Center Press, 2006) 279.



of California-Berkeley group of the same name.<sup>30</sup> Though most of its members were middle class Japanese American students, they wanted to unite Asian Americans into a pan-Asian political movement.<sup>31</sup> This excerpt shows how they identify with the right of self-determination and control and over “political, economic and educational institutions” in their communities. They reference back to the view of the American Government as imperialistic not only abroad but within the country. This view of self-determination and America as an imperialist country was inspired by revolutionary groups with the Black Panther Party, and intellectuals like Mao Zedong, Malcom X, Frantz Fanon, Amilcar Cabral, and Che Guevara.<sup>32</sup>

The Third World Liberation Front (TWLF) formed at San Francisco State with the purpose to coordinate the efforts of the students and present a united front for the advocacy of an Ethnic Studies Program which would include a Black Studies Department.<sup>33</sup> They felt the structure and educational programs weren’t responsive or relevant to their cultures and ignored the oppressive experiences they’ve faced. In a pamphlet outlining their demands, they also requested:

the specific need [for third world students] to control the hiring, firing, and tenure of faculty members through the departmental HRT committees. It should be the commitment of students, faculty and administrators to begin to provide relevant education on all levels to peoples of communities they are supposed to represent and serve.<sup>34</sup>

Because this organization was a combination of six ethnic student organizations, they put in place a Central Committee composed of two representatives of each group who rotated out every

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<sup>30</sup> William Wei, *The Asian American Movement*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 19.

<sup>31</sup> Wei, *The Asian American Movement*, 19.

<sup>32</sup> Umemoto, 30.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>34</sup> Third World Liberation Front, *The List of 15 Demands* (San Francisco: Third World Liberation Front, 1968). Accessed February 29, 2016, <https://diva.sfsu.edu/collections/strike/bundles/187915>.

four months.<sup>35</sup> With this Committee, power was shared and no single person could speak for the whole coalition, call negotiation meetings, or speak to the press without the sanction of the whole group. All decisions made by this Committee would be upheld by all groups as well.<sup>36</sup>

The first protest the TWLF would take part in was with the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) to stage a sit-in inside then-President Summerskill's office in the Administration Building in late May of 1968.<sup>37</sup> Police were called in to end some violent actions. Ten were injured and twenty-six were arrested.<sup>38</sup> Though people were arrested, most of the demands were agreed to, including the granting of 412 spots for Third World students over the next two semesters in the college, the creation of at least ten positions for Third World faculty and student input on the hiring of those faculty, and the rehiring of Juan Martinez in the history department.<sup>39</sup> However, President Summerskill resigned a few months later before those promises could be fulfilled.

With President Summerskill gone, Robert Smith was named President in the beginning of the academic school year in 1968. Smith would only be President for a few short months before abruptly resigning. There were several controversial events that he felt forced his hand to leave including the contention surrounding the renewed employment of George Murray and Moshe Safdie's design for a new student union building<sup>40</sup>.

These incidents and others piled up tensions on campus and on October 31, 1968 the Black Student Union made the official announcement of their intention to strike. They presented

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<sup>35</sup> Umemoto, "On Strike!", 43.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 43.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 41.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 41..

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 41.

their 10 demands to President Smith on November 5<sup>th</sup> and began to strike on November 6<sup>th</sup>.<sup>41</sup> Two days later, the BSU would partner with the Third World Liberation Front and add their 5 demands to the BSU's 10 demands.<sup>42</sup> Their main demands included establishing a School of Ethnic Studies which included a Black Studies Department, to increase admittance of minority and third world students to the college, to include third world and black students in the hiring and firing process of third world and black faculty, and to grant amnesty to all protesting students (and later faculty).<sup>43</sup>

President Smith would do his best to calm down the protests including closing the campus when protests got violent and holding convocations in which protesters could voice the grievance and problems they wanted to be addressed. Ultimately the convocations were unsuccessful in ending the protests. Under intense pressure, President Smith would resign unexpectedly.<sup>44</sup> This necessitated the emergency assignment of S.I. Hayakawa as temporary Acting President on November 26, 1968.<sup>45</sup>

The strike would continue until April of 1969, cementing it as the longest student strike in U.S. history. During Acting President Hayakawa's time, the campus would experience constant picket lines and demonstrations, disruptions of classes, the violent crackdown of police forces, and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) Local 1352 chapter joining the strike to support the students as well as put forth their own demands. Hayakawa would take a hardline

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid..

<sup>43</sup> Third World Liberation Front, *The List of 15 Demands* (San Francisco: Third World Liberation Front, 1968). Accessed February 29, 2016, <https://diva.sfsu.edu/collections/strike/bundles/187915>.

<sup>44</sup> For a fuller description of these events, read Robert Smith's explanation for resigning in "Chapter 12: Why I Resigned" in *By Any Means Necessary: The Revolutionary Struggle at San Francisco State* by Robert Smith, Richard Axen, and DeVere Pentony.

<sup>45</sup> Orrick, "Shut it down! A college in crisis," 54-55.

approach, including the use of hundreds and later thousands of police forces, as well as putting in harsh emergency measures to hinder further protests. Hayakawa's main goal was to keep the college open. The students were determined to shut it down. These opposing desires would make resolution of this conflict difficult.

### **Acting President S.I. Hayakawa**

Samuel Ichiye Hayakawa was born in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada on July 15, 1906.<sup>46</sup> He received his undergraduate degree at University of Manitoba, got a masters degree from McGill University in Montreal.<sup>47</sup> He moved to the United States to get his doctorate in English literature from the University of Wisconsin.<sup>48</sup> He was a semantics and English professor at University of Wisconsin, Illinois Institute of Technology and University of Chicago.<sup>49</sup> In 1954 he became a naturalized U.S. citizen and in 1955 he moved to San Francisco to teach part time at San Francisco State.<sup>50</sup> He was a well-known in the field of Sematic, achieving prominence with his works including *Language in Thought and Action*.<sup>51</sup> Then in November of 1968, he was thrust into a new kind of popularity when he was appointed Acting President of San Francisco State College after the former president, Robert Smith, had abruptly resigned.

The appointment of Acting President Hayakawa put a rift in the Japanese American community over who to place their support behind. The division of support tended to divide along generational lines, however there were quite a few notable exceptions on both sides. Additionally, those in the community that still believed as Hayakawa believed that assimilation,

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<sup>46</sup> Garretson, Fred. "Dr. Hayakawa a Man Who Does Things on His Own," *Oakland Tribune*, December 8, 1968.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ryan, "Education for the People", 95.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

not violent protesting was the best policy for the good of the community tended to favor Hayakawa. Whereas those that believed that Japanese Americans had been silent long enough and that change could only come through advocacy and activism gave their support to the students. These different ideological views shed light on the divide within the whole Asian American Movement. Without the appointment of Hayakawa and the conflict of the strike, these internal divisions may not have come to the service, at least this early in the Movement history.

### **Hayakawa's Views and Beliefs**

To understand the significance of the conflict between Acting President Hayakawa and the student protesters, especially Japanese American students, we first must look at S.I. Hayakawa himself and the reasons why he was chosen as the emergency Acting President.

After Robert Smith resigned abruptly, the College Board Trustees, led by Chancellor Dumke need to appoint someone quickly. They chose S.I Hayakawa. Part of their decision was based on his outspoken views about keeping campuses open when faced with protesting students trying to close them down. He expressed these view through his involvement with the Faculty Renaissance, which was a group of faculty opposed to the student protests.<sup>52</sup> Before President Smith resigned, he and the Faculty Renaissance sent Smith a plan proposing that he deliver ultimatums, restrict due process for protesters, and suspend students and fire faculty that had disrupted classes on campus.<sup>53</sup> In By Any Means Necessary, Robert Smith et. al describe Professor Hayakawa's opinion of administrators like President Smith and their unwillingness to take a stronger stance against the student protestors.

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<sup>52</sup> Axen Smith and DeVere Pentony. *By Any Means Necessary: The Revolutionary Struggle at San Francisco State*. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc., 1970) 206.

<sup>53</sup> Smith and Pentony, *By Any Means Necessary*, 206-207.

He [Hayakawa] saw the movement as being neofascistic in the tradition of Hitler's Germany, and he viewed the radical leaders as a home-grown Mafia. For administration to bow to the arrogant demands of these "thugs" in the guise of dialogue was an act of craven cowardice that could only ensure continued academic disruption and youthful tyranny.<sup>54</sup>

These views were similar to many of the College Board trustees as well as conservative politicians like California Governor Ronald Reagan and President Richard Nixon. Reagan is famous for stating that he would keep campuses open "at the point of a bayonet" if necessary.<sup>55</sup>

Upon becoming Acting President, Hayakawa unwaveringly upheld this stance. He put all of his effort into keeping the college open and not capitulating to the "anarchists, hooligans, and yahoos" or any forms of their "gangsterism."<sup>56</sup> To implement his hardline approach, on December 2, 1968 Acting President Hayakawa imposed emergency protocols. These protocols banned guns and other deadly weapons on campus, prohibited the use of amplification equipment at the Speaker's Platform, and threatened administrative action for anyone that interfered with scheduled classes.<sup>57</sup> Despite these measures, protests continued. In January of 1969, the faculty joined the strike and tactics shifted to more violent actions. Acting President Hayakawa never hesitated to call on police forces to shut down the protests. Robert Smith, Richard Axen, and DeVere Pentony describe Hayakawa's unique use of the police and sanctions in their book By Any Means Necessary, as "The police became his army; arrests, jails, fines, and suspensions were his weapons."<sup>58</sup> The following is a description of a typical confrontation

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<sup>54</sup> Smith and Pentony, *By Any Means Necessary*, 206.

<sup>55</sup> Ryan, "Education for the People," 105.

<sup>56</sup> Orrick, "Shut it down! A college in crisis," 61.

<sup>57</sup> San Francisco State College, *Declaration of Emergency* (San Francisco: San Francisco State College, Dec 2, 1968). Accessed February 29, 2016. <https://diva.sfsu.edu/collections/strike/bundles/187927>.

<sup>58</sup> Smith and Pentony, *By Any Means Necessary*, 249.

between students and police as students attempted to storm the Business Student Services Center

Building on campus:

Quickly the bluecoats [police] placed a protective cordon in the front of the building, the mobs retreated, and then the individual and small group forays began—taunt, invective, obscenity, rock. Then a sudden police charge into the mob after a particular culprit. Hysterical screaming, scared running, thumping clubs, blood, students and police wrestling on the grass. Groans, curses, attempts to free students who were now restrained roughly with batons gouging their necks or arms pinioned behind their backs. If one platoon of police appeared endangered by the mobs, new squads swung into action. In the early days 200 police saw action. Later they numbered as many as 700.<sup>59</sup>



Hayakawa championed the inflexible, aggressive approach to student protests by

unflinchingly utilizing the Bay Area police force to help him enforce his staunch stand to keep the campus open. He became the enemy of the students whose main goal was to shut down the campus as a means to gain leverage for securing their demands.

### **A National Hero**

Though he was the enemy of the students, Hayakawa found a great deal of support for the aggressive tactics he took against the student protesters outside of the campus. He had the support of conservative politicians like California Governor Ronald Reagan, San Francisco Mayor Joseph Alioto, and President Richard Nixon. These friends in high places shared similar

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<sup>59</sup> William Petterson, "Success Story, Japanese-American Style." (*New York Times*, January 9, 1966), 223.

**Picture:** Underwood Archives, *SF State Riots Scene*, December 3, 1968, Getty Images.  
<http://www.gettyimages.com/license/586957847>.

views of taking uncompromising approaches toward stopping student protest movements. Additionally, Hayakawa resonated with the College Board of Trustees and those in the community such as the businessmen, entrepreneurs, and white middle class Americans who were sick of seeing protests and unrests on college campuses. For the College Board of Trustees, they had always put pressure on the Presidents of San Francisco State College to shut down the protests. They feared the student's radicalized actions and questioned their true intentions.

For many months key trustees had believed that black self-determination and 'power to the people' were code phrases for the indoctrination of revolutionary propaganda. Tax-payer support for a program aiming to destroy traditional economic and political beliefs, all under the guise of academic freedom, such trustees as well as the larger public vowed never to condone.<sup>60</sup>

White middle class American's felt similar sentiments. In particular, they hated to see young radicals taking over the various tax-funded institutions like college campuses which were meant to give students an education and prepare them for the workforce not give them a protest headquarters and place to complain about society.

Hayakawa was aware of the concerns of some of the members of the American public and worked them to his advantage. In a speech in front of the California State Chamber of Commerce in January of 1969, he stated:

The problems catching up with us in the college right now are going to catch up with you in industry and business and banking and government all over the state in a very short time. 'cause these kids are graduating in a few years. They'll be at your doorstep before the real estate boards and insurance companies and the banks and the industries saying "What are you going to do? We're here."<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Smith and Pentony, *By Any Means Necessary*, 272.

<sup>61</sup> KPIX Eye on the Bay News. "Hayakawa & Reagan in Sacramento." Video news report. January 11, 1969. San Francisco Bay Area Television Archive. San Francisco Bay Area Television Archive, <https://diva.sfsu.edu/collections/sfbatv/bundles/187288>.



Hayakawa sees that this issue isn't bound to just the college. It is a problem for everyone, especially those in business and industry. He is playing to their fear to garner support for his authoritative policies toward the students.

The community and American public were eager to express their support for Hayakawa and his policies. In video footage captured by KTVU news station, Mrs. William Pemberton, a supporter of Hayakawa, is seen asking community members whether they support Hayakawa and his actions toward the students and if they did, would they wear a blue ribbon to show their support.<sup>62</sup> In the video clip two community members are approached. The first is a woman and she exclaims, "I'd be glad to. I'm very much in favor of Dr. Hayakawa...I think you're doing a fine job and I'm very proud."<sup>63</sup> The other is a man and he simply states, "Pin it on. I'm in favor of anything Dr. Hayakawa does."<sup>64</sup> Hayakawa also received many letters and telegrams from people all across America. They all typically say something like, "You've got the anarchies and the commies on the run. Keep it up...and you will continue to be a national hero."<sup>65</sup>

## **A Wolf in Sheep's Clothes**

Though Hayakawa had support in the community, from politicians and the American public, he still had to fight his enemies on campus. Between Third World Liberation Front members, the growing number of students they recruited each day to join the strike, and the faculty members who joined the strike in January of 1969, Hayakawa had many enemies.

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<sup>62</sup> The blue ribbons and armbands had been Hayakawa's attempt to symbolize and draw attention to his supporters, especially the students and faculty members who were opposed to the strike and were part of the "silent majority". Not many students participated and the PR student ultimately failed.—from Ryan, "Education for the People", 102.

<sup>63</sup> KTVU. "Community Support for Hayakawa." Video news report. December, 1968. San Francisco Bay Area Television Archive. San Francisco Bay Area Television Archive, <https://diva.sfsu.edu/collections/sfbatv/bundles/209203>.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid..

<sup>65</sup> Smith and Pentony, *By Any Means Necessary*, 251.

Though there is not exact number and sources vary, it was estimated that at the height of the strike, as many as 80% and as few as 50% of students participated in the strike.<sup>66</sup>

Many of the reasons the students and faculty were opposed to Hayakawa was because in their eyes, he was a traitor, and a mere puppet of the white conservative establishment who installed him as Acting President. Though he was of Japanese descent, he wasn't a true member of the third world population by definition only. He was Canadian and was never subject to the evacuation and internment that Japanese Americans experience during World War II.<sup>67</sup> He also identified more with conservative politicians than the students and faculty of his campus regarding the third world student protesters and their message. By appointing him Acting President, it was the hope that with his hardline approach, he could establish order to an unruly campus and help to persuade the silent majority of faculty and students who hadn't participated in the strike yet to assert their dominance and numbers and help him take back the campus.<sup>68</sup>

### **General Students and Campus Reactions**

Students were perhaps the most outspoken members to work to expose the truth behind Hayakawa. In video footage captured by a local news agency, an African American student is making a comment to the crowd of protesters about Hayakawa's decision to close the campus early for Christmas break for fear of further unrest.

Your Acting Elected President SI-Scrooge, Humbug, Christmas-Hayakawa has said that he's going to close the school down for 3 weeks. I don't know when he got tired of getting up in front of the press and saying "School will open as normal-as regular." Maybe his bosses [California Governor] Ronald Reagan and

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<sup>66</sup> Ryan, 106.

<sup>67</sup> KPIX Eyewitness news report. "Hayakawa & Japanese American Internment." Video news report. May 11, 1979. San Francisco Bay Area Television Archive. San Francisco Bay Area Television Archive, <https://diva.sfsu.edu/collections/sfbatv/bundles/190411>.

<sup>68</sup> Smith and Pentony, *By Any Means Necessary*, 208.

[State Superintendent of Public Instruction] Rafferty, probably pat him on the ass and said, “Boy you can take a break.”<sup>69</sup>

Students further accentuated the point of how close Hayakawa was with conservative politicians in California and the United States with the satirical art piece on the right. It was created by students from the Fine Art Department in which Acting President Hayakawa in seen in his office typing “Bullshit” over



and over again with a poster of conservative California Governor Ronald Reagan and image bubbles of police arresting protestors including an African American student and Roger Alvaro, a prominent strike leader and one of the spokesmen of the TWLF.<sup>70</sup>

Even among the striking faculty, Hayakawa was viewed as a traitor. In 1969, the Progressive Labor Party who supported the striking faculty created a Wanted Poster for Hayakawa which expressed all of the reasons they despised him. Below is an excerpt from this poster:

ALIASES: Paper Puppet, Bootlicker, Ruling Class Lackey, Flower Child  
HAS BEEN INDICTED BY THE PEOPLE FOR:

<sup>69</sup> NCPB/KQED. “Protests & Puppets San Francisco State.” Video news report. December 13, 1968. San Francisco Bay Area Television Archive. San Francisco Bay Area Television Archive, <https://diva.sfsu.edu/collections/sfbatv/bundles/187181>.

<sup>70</sup> **Picture:** Fine Arts Department, San Francisco State University, *S.I. Hayakawa on a Typewriter* (San Francisco: San Francisco State College, 1968). Accessed February 29, 2016. <https://diva.sfsu.edu/collections/strike/bundles/210952>.

Enforcing racist corporate policies of the Board of Trustees of San Francisco State College and sending armed thugs to attack, brutalize and maim students, black and third world people fighting for their just demands.

He has answered the demands by setting 600 cops on campus who have beaten and arrested over 100 people. He has suspended all civil liberties-it is now a crime to hold public rallies, congregate on campus or not be in class. The fight of students to make the college serve in the interest of the community rather than the corporate bandits who run the State College system has been answered by Hayakawa by making it a crime for the people of the community to come to the campus to support the strike.<sup>71</sup>

As evidenced in this excerpt, many of the faculty saw the injustice behind Hayakawa's methods against the protesters. They pit themselves not only against Hayakawa but also against his supporters like the Board of Trustees.

## **A Yellow Uncle Tom**

Within the Japanese community, there was tension over whom in the strike to place their support behind. For supporters of Hayakawa, he was a national hero and they were proud that a person of Japanese descent was experiencing so much attention in the media and among white conservative politicians. For those that supported the students and their struggle against as Hayakawa and the administration, they perceived him as a "yellow uncle tom"—someone who harmed and oppressed the very people in which they share the same ethnic heritage. They also believed his actions and speeches perpetuated the destructive model minority stereotype which was just starting to plague all Asian Americans. To understand this divide further, we must consider the impact that generational differences in experience had on the opinions of those in

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<sup>71</sup> Progressive Labor Party *A wanted poster for Sam I. Hayakawa* (San Francisco: San Francisco State College, 1969). Accessed February 29, 2016. <https://diva.sfsu.edu/collections/strike/bundles/187929>.

the community as well as the concept of the model minority stereotype and the diverging views about assimilation vs political advocacy.

### **Model Minority Stereotype**

Though the Japanese Americans have had some of the highest annual incomes, and relatively few problems with mental health or crime rates compared to other Asian ethnicities in the United States, they still have faced immense discrimination and racial hatred.<sup>72</sup> The first Issei generation had the hardship of starting out in a new country.<sup>73</sup> They needed to learn to adapt to a foreign culture and tried to secure political recognition by attempting to receive U.S. citizenship.<sup>74</sup> Their children, the second generation Nisei were tasked with the need to become functional within the society, not just survive in it. The older Nisei worked to establish businesses and gain educational degrees. They also struggled to navigate between the Americanized attitudes and cultural practices they were experiencing all around them while also adhering to the traditions of their parents and home country.

Then the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 6, 1941 occurred. Racial fears ran rampant, and the U.S. government started rounding up over 120,000 Japanese Americans on the west coast and evacuating them to internment camps.<sup>75</sup> 70,000 of those evacuated were the second generation Nisei, and American citizens, while the rest were Issei and a few Sansei.<sup>76</sup> The Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) was the only national organization for Japanese

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<sup>72</sup> Endo and Della-Piana, "Japanese Americans, Pluralism, and the Model Minority Myth," 46.

<sup>73</sup> Issei: first generation Japanese who immigrated to the United States

Nisei: second generation Japanese-Americans who were the children of the Issei and born in the United States

Sansei: third generation Japanese-Americans who were the children of the Nisei and grandchildren of the Issei

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>75</sup> Cronkite, Walter, *The Nisei: The Pride and the Shame*. TV broadcast online. "Twentieth Century". Lost Angeles: CBS. 1965.

<sup>76</sup> Cronkite, *The Nisei: The Pride and the Shame*, 1965.

Americans at this time. They looked to them for guidance. Under extreme pressure to survive and uncertainty for the future, compliance was chosen as the best option.<sup>77</sup>

...most mainstream Nisei, chose the front of the bus. They cooperated in the wartime prison camps, joined the army and fought bravely, got education and jobs after the war, made places for themselves in the middle class and resolutely put the wartime humiliation behind them.<sup>78</sup>

Following the internment experience, the Japanese Americans followed the JACL's lead by slowly slipping back into the same society which had just imprisoned them. Survival was the main goal after internment and that meant re-establishing the businesses and farms that were taken away in the evacuation. The JACL advocated for Japanese Americans to work to establish positive images of themselves in the minds of white Americans by being well-behaved, hard-working, patriotic, intent on assimilation.<sup>79</sup> For decades, any sort of deviance was soon squashed and swept under the rug out of fear that it may jeopardize the status of all Japanese Americans.<sup>80</sup>

This decision to melt back into society without protesting the injustice of the internment is one aspect that contributed to the emergence of the model minority stereotype in the late 1950s and 1960s.<sup>81</sup> The model minority stereotype is the idea that Asian Americans, particularly the Chinese and Japanese Americans are superior minority populations that are models of success for other minorities like African Americans to admire.<sup>82</sup> Chinese and Japanese Americans have attained good educations and secured their place in the middle class. The same actions and qualities the JACL were advocating Japanese Americans adopt are the same that get attributed to

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<sup>77</sup> Harry H. Kitano, *Generations and Identity: The Japanese American*. (Needham Heights: Gin Press, 1993), 104.

<sup>78</sup> Paul R. Spickard, "Not Just the Quiet People: The Nisei Underclass," *Pacific Historical Review* 68, no. 1 (February 1999): 92.

<sup>79</sup> Spickard, "Not Just the Quiet People," 80.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>81</sup> Robert G. Lee, "Chapter 5: The Cold War and the Origins of the Model Minority." In *Orientalism: Asian American in Popular Culture*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999) 151-152.

<sup>82</sup> Lee, "Chapter 5," 145.

them under the stereotype. According to a news article by U.S. News & World Report, Asian Americans are “Thrifty, law-abiding and industrious people-ambitious to make progress on their own.”<sup>83</sup> The stereotype was used by white Americans to scold African Americans who are protesting during the Civil Rights Movement. The hidden message to African Americans became: “Look, both you and the Asian Americans have experienced a great deal of discrimination and oppression, but you don’t see them protesting.” This message not only discounted the previous efforts of the African American protesters but also pressured them to stop any further protests. Frank Chin summarizes this idea best by saying, “White’s love us because we’re not black.”<sup>84</sup> Additionally, it painted Asian Americans as passive without the desire for agency. Any that tried to break this model were viewed with hostility.

Asian Americans are seen as successful because they’re industrious, self-reliant, and are politically silent since they aren’t advocating for any assistance from the government. This stereotypical view of all Asian Americans, however, creates many dangerous consequences. It makes people, especially powerful whites, forget or even trivialize the racial discrimination and hardships that Asian Americans do still face. Speaking in 1973 in *Social Work* journal, Kim Bok-Lim states,

The maintenance of the convenient myth of Asian Americans as a model minority excludes them from nationwide concerns and education, health, housing, employment, and social welfare programs. However, behind the busy, prosperous shops and restaurants of the Chinatowns and Little Tokyos are thousands of unattached old people wasting away their remaining years in poverty and ill health and children of new and not-so-new immigrants left at home without adequate adult supervision while their parents work long hours to support them...The increasing incidence of drug abuse and delinquency among young

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<sup>83</sup> U.S. News and World Report. “Success Story of One Minority Group in the U.S.” *U.S. News and World Report*, December 26, 1966.

<sup>84</sup> Lee, “Chapter 5,” 145.

people has shattered the myth that Asian youths are “obedient and problem free.”<sup>85</sup>

For many decades, these social problems weren't addressed because of the model minority myth. Even when some Asian Americans were actively advocating for help with these issues they still faced unsympathetic whites who would rather believe in the model minority stereotype than believe that these problems existed.

Regardless, attempts were still made to dismantle and debunk the model minority myth in all aspects of Asian American's lives. In 1976, the Asian Americans for Fair Media was created to monitor all forms of media for racial slurs and stereotypical portrayals of Asians Americans. They helped to replace those images with realistic alternate views of Asian Americans.

### **Japanese American Student's Reactions**

During 1968 and 1969, the Japanese American students who joined the strike at San Francisco State weren't only standing up for their rights and the demands of the Third World Liberation Front. They were also fighting against the oppressive model minority stereotype which was cementing itself in mainstream consciousness, thanks in part to the role that Hayakawa was taking in the strike.

In his role, Hayakawa became the perfect model minority. He was smart, successful, hardworking and ethnically assimilated into the white culture. Prior to becoming Acting President, Hayakawa was very successful in the field of Semantics as well as an English Professor at San Francisco State. He had published many works including his book *Language in Thought and Action* in 1949.<sup>86</sup> Hayakawa used his humble beginnings as the son of immigrant

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<sup>85</sup> Bok-Lim. Kim, “Asian-Americans: no model minority.” *Social Work* 18, no. 3 (May 1973): 44.

<sup>86</sup> Smith and Pentony, *By Any Means Necessary*, 206.



parents working alongside his father as a houseboy servant and then his transformation to his very successful career in the field of Semantics to play up the model minority image.<sup>87</sup> His path to success was through hard work, dedication, and education. In the same way that the model minority stereotype was created as a way to discount and beat down the protests of African Americans during the Civil Rights movement, so Hayakawa used it, with him as the prime example, now against the minority students at San Francisco State-including Asian Americans themselves.

It was the hope by the College Trustees that the appointment of Hayakawa, a man of third world origin, would protect the administration from accusations of racism but in fact it did the opposite.<sup>88</sup> Instead, Hayakawa became an imposer, an inauthentic Asian.<sup>89</sup>

In a pamphlet titled The Oriental as the “Middleman Minority”, Alan Nishio is quoted as saying, “As Third World students push for relevant education in our schools, yellow Uncle Toms like Hayakawa are placed in positions as figureheads to be used by the Reagan and others as ‘a minority person who has an understanding of the problems facing Brown and Black people.’”<sup>90</sup> By calling him a yellow Uncle Tom, Nishio is claiming Hayakawa to be a person who is excessively subservient to authority figures (in this case the conservative establishment like California Governor Ronald Reagan and President Richard Nixon). He could even be considered to be complicit with the oppression of his own people being that he isn’t supporting the student’s

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<sup>87</sup> Daryl Maeda, “Chapter 2: “Down With Hayakawa!” Assimilation vs Third World Solidarity at San Francisco State.” In *Chains of Babylon: The Rise of Asian American*. (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2009), 67-68.

<sup>88</sup> Ryan, 94.

<sup>89</sup> Maeda, “Chapter 2: Down with Hayakawa!”, 55.

<sup>90</sup> Nishio, Alan. *The Oriental as a “Middleman Minority”* Printed in *Asian Americans: The Movement and the Moment*, edited by Steve Louie and Glenn Omatsu, (Los Angeles: UCLA Asian American Studies Center Press, 2006) 280.

protests or going out of his way to grant their demands. As a member of the third world people, he should be an ally, not an enemy to the cause. Instead in the eyes of the Japanese American students, he becomes “a mere extension on the campus of the ‘corrupt Establishment’”.<sup>91</sup> Pat Sumi vocalized this belief by stating,

I consider people like Hayakawa traitors—that they sold out to becoming white racists themselves...The stand he took at San Francisco State was obviously the same stand any white racist would have taken; it’s not even with an understanding that he himself is oppressed to the point where he hates himself and his own people.<sup>92</sup>

In an article in *Gidra*, the LA. Based Asian American movement newspaper, Hayakawa had be called a “banana”. This is someone who is yellow/Asian on the outside, but white/Caucasian on the inside.<sup>93</sup>

Often while students were protesting, he would be announcing over the loudspeaker throughout campus phrases like: “This is your acting president. This is an unlawful assembly. Please disperse,” or “There are no innocent bystanders. Go back to classes.”<sup>94</sup> He is demanding students to end their disruptive, violent, and unlawful protesting and cautioning those in the silent majority of bystanders not to participate.

In his role he discounted Asian Americans. Angela Ryan describes how Hayakawa personally alluded to his feelings that “black studies was more legitimate than other ethnic studies because while Asian Americans, for instance, had their history and culture intact, black history had been completely erased by the experience of racial slavery.”<sup>95</sup> This view alludes to the problematic notion that Asian Americans are a model minority who could assimilate more

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<sup>91</sup> Smith and Pentony, *By Any Means Necessary*, 211.

<sup>92</sup> Maeda, 61.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 224.

<sup>95</sup> Ryan, 100.

easily that African Americans. Hayakawa advocated for students to assimilate rather than protest. He, as his own success story, was an example of this method working. His hidden message was, *you should know your place as the Asians know theirs.*

But the protesting Asian American students saw through the dangers of this stereotype and understood that in order to break this cycle of manipulation and oppression, they had to be silent no longer: In an interview with Penny Nakatsu, a founding member of the Asian American Political Alliance, she describes her motives for creating the organization:

I felt a lot of need to do something about racism. Also, there was a need to do something about the lack of political involvement of Asians...[There] was also this amorous sense of wanting to build a sense of Asian American identity and...overcome what I saw as nationalistic kinds of trends. I wanted to see Asians from different ethnic backgrounds working together.<sup>96</sup>

These student activists were working to make Asians all across America aware of the role they've been placed in and how they're viewed by whites. They were calling all Asians both in their community and across America to no longer be politically silent. "A time comes when silence is betrayal."<sup>97</sup> This advocacy both on campus and in their community mixed with the actions of Acting President Hayakawa would leave sharp divisions in the Japanese American Community in the San Francisco Bay Area.

## **Japanese American Community Reactions**

The Strike at San Francisco State and the appointment of S.I. Hayakawa stirred up controversy in the Japanese American community in the Bay Area. Opinions differed wildly and the community was divided as some supported the student protesters and others supported the actions of Hayakawa against the students. It became what *Gidra*, a L.A. based Asian American

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<sup>96</sup> Umemoto, "On Strike!" 36.

<sup>97</sup> Nishio, *The Oriental as a "Middleman Minority"*, 280.

activist newspaper, described as "...a struggle for the hearts and minds of the Asian community."<sup>98</sup> Part of the explanation for how support was divided it through generational divides with most the Issei and Nisei supporting Hayakawa and wanting the younger Sansei students to stop the strike. However there was a small group of minority Nisei who publically supported the student protesters and generational differences don't solely account for the divide. The true factor was the competing political views in the community. Maeda describes it like this: "The confrontation between Asian American radicals and Hayakawa at San Francisco State represents a pivotal moment in Asian American politics, for radicals advocated multiethnic and interracial solidarity, while Hayakawa argued that Asian Americans should strive to assimilate into the mainstream." The Japanese American community choose their sides based on their views of assimilation and advocacy.

In general, Hayakawa gained more support from the Nisei than Sansei generations. A major supporter was the Community Interest Committee of Nihonmachi (CICN) which was organized and co-chaired by three former members of the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL): George Yamasaki, Dr. Clifford I. Uyeda, and Steven J. Doi.<sup>99</sup> Following protests and pressures from the community after the San Francisco Chapter of the JACL had attempted to invite Hayakawa for their annual installation dinner, the CICN decided to organize a dinner for February 21, 1969.<sup>100</sup> The dinner would feature Hayakawa as the key note speaker, but it was meant to be a neutral event, not a place to "honor" him, but the hidden intent was obvious. He received a warm welcome of 300 supporters at the Athletic Club meanwhile, Japanese American members of the Third World Liberation Front and Nisei members of the Japanese American

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<sup>98</sup> As quoted in: Maeda, 41.

<sup>99</sup> Maeda, 62.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, 40.

community-totally nearly 100-were protesting the dinner outside.<sup>101</sup> They held signs that read “Support your local puppet” and “Hayakawa—Ronnie Rat’s Houseboy” and booed and shouted phrases like “Down with Hayakawa!”<sup>102</sup>



Asian American political activists considered S. I. Hayakawa’s support of the Vietnam War and his authoritarian policies as president of San Francisco State College during the Third World strike anathema. Here Asian Americans protest the Japanese American Citizens League’s decision to invite him as a keynote speaker.  
*Connie Hwang photo*

Another group that supported Hayakawa was the Nisei Junior Chamber of Commerce. They had circulated a Pro-Hayakawa petition with the phrase “Banzai Sam” which claimed that 85% of the Japanese American community supported him and that the strikers were “a minority within a minority” and only accounted for “1/12 of Japanese American students.”<sup>103</sup> The petition had

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<sup>101</sup> Maeda, 40.

<sup>102</sup> Maeda, 40.

<sup>103</sup> Maeda, 63. Note: *I have been unable to confirm these numbers or any such numbers near these figures in any of my other research. It is likely they are from a skewed survey or potentially inflated in their favor.*

**Picture:** William Wei, *The Asian American Movement*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 163.

nearly 200 signatures including Dr. Uyeda, Steven Doi, *Hokubei Mainichi* editor Howard Imazeki, *Nichibeï Times* editor Y. W. Abiko, Masao Ashizawa of Japan Town Redevelopment Corporation, and Yone Satoda.<sup>104</sup>

Even within the JACL, there was a split of opinions. The National President Jerry Enomoto took a nuanced stance. He questioned the wisdom of honoring Hayakawa and refuted the notion that the CICN could disassociate itself from the JACL.<sup>105</sup> However, he also acknowledged that typically the JACL has been in opposition to violent tactics as a means to forcibly take over an institution but understood that the strike shouldn't immediately be associated with violence and destruction, that there are more valid tactics being used as well.<sup>106</sup> Additionally, besides the CICN, there were other offshoots of the JACL, this next group advocated for the student's side. The Women's Auxiliary group had urged the JACL rescind their invitation for Hayakawa to speak at their annual installation dinner for fear that it might "incur anger of the black community" and cause dissention within the JACL.<sup>107</sup> Finally, following the announcement of the CICN to have Hayakawa be the keynote speaker for their dinner, the Women's Auxiliary, Junior JACL, and Civil Rights Committee held their own press conference to announce their new coalition to be called "Japanese Americans United Against Hayakawa Dinner."<sup>108</sup>

Finally, a few prominent Nisei placed their support behind the students. The first being James Hirabayashi. He was a Nisei professor of Anthropology at San Francisco State who came

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<sup>104</sup> Maeda, 63.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid, 64.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

in at the same time as Hayakawa.<sup>109</sup> They were the first two Asian American professors at the college but also friends and neighbors prior to the strike.<sup>110</sup> The presence of Hirabayashi supporting the students as an Asian American faculty member on the picket line and in anti-Hayakawa meetings lent legitimacy to the student's protests and their demands.<sup>111</sup>

Another Nisei supporter was Yori Wada, the Director of the YMCA office in Japantown. In an interview explains his and the other few Nisei's reasoning for supporting the strike and the students:

It could be that we had more contact with the younger generation in the course of our work. It could also be that we were far more interested in the civil liberties, and in the question of freedom of speech, the freedom of assemblage...It could also be that we really didn't feel that restrained to rock the boat, to challenge the status quo. I think it might have been the lessons learned from the evacuation. If there is a wrong, you don't keep quiet about it...I think the evacuation was wrong, and this was one way to say so many years later.<sup>112</sup>

Many reasons were behind Yori Wada's support, but perhaps the most powerful was the realization that it was time to no longer be silent about the evacuation or any of the other oppressions and discriminations that Japanese Americans have faced.

The Japanese American students at San Francisco State worked to end that silence. Raymond Okamura recognized this effort. In a letter he wrote to *Pacific Citizen*, he wrote, "Our generation, the Nisei, has succumbed to the pressures of assimilation. The new generation, the Sansei, want to re-gain a lost ethnic identity, and are seriously challenging the blind acceptance of white middle-class values." Through their participation in the strike, they attempted to counter Hayakawa's message to assimilate rather than advocate. Furthermore the students wanted to

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<sup>109</sup> Maeda, 63.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid, 64.

<sup>112</sup> Umemoto, "On Strike!" 38.

replace the image of the “quiet Japanese” to a new one centered on self-determination and political advocacy.<sup>113</sup> In a pamphlet created by the AAPA, they explain their position on having a Japanese American Studies Program and the School of Ethnic Studies.

A Japanese American Studies department as a part of the School of Ethnic Area Studies offers Japanese American and other concerned students a real opportunity to study in depth the role of the Japanese in the historical development of the United States. The role of the Asian American in the development of the Far West is one example of a neglected field insofar as the cultural and social influences of particularly the Japanese in contributing to the heterogeneous environment that exists in the western United States today.<sup>114</sup>

The students were aware that not everyone understood the reasons why they were protesting the need for the Ethnic Studies Program. So on December 6<sup>th</sup>, 1968, students held a meeting at Christ United Presbyterian Church to give presentations and explain to the community why they were protesting and answer questions.<sup>115</sup> During the meeting an elderly woman had stood up and “expressed her joy that young people were standing up for their rights.”<sup>116</sup>

Not everyone in the Japanese American community would agree with this elderly woman. The divisions that the strike caused would continue to scar the Japanese American community in the San Francisco Bay area for many years.

## Conclusion

On March 14, 1969, a settlement was finally reached, ending the longest student strike in U.S. history. Most of the strike demands were met, including the establishment of the School of

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<sup>113</sup> Minako K. Maykovich, “Political Activation of Japanese American Youth,” *Journal of Social Issues* 29, no. 2 (1973): 167.

<sup>114</sup> Third World Liberation Front, *Asian American Political Alliance: A Position* (San Francisco: San Francisco State College, 1968). Accessed February 29, 2016. <https://diva.sfsu.edu/collections/strike/bundles/187993>.

<sup>115</sup> BSU-TWLF, *Nisei and Sansei Students! Are you Completely Uninvolved, Disinterested* (San Francisco: San Francisco State College, December, 1968). Accessed February 29, 2016. <https://diva.sfsu.edu/collections/strike/bundles/187907>.

<sup>116</sup> Umemoto, *By Any Means Necessary*, 38.



Ethnic Studies with ideas in the works for an American Indian Studies Department, an Asian American Studies Department, a La Raza Studies Department, and the much awaited Black Studies Department.<sup>117</sup> All of these departments, including the Asian American Studies Department would face struggles in the decades to come, including devastating budget cuts, arguments over creating majors and minors within the departments, or questions of their continued relevance and necessity to remain.

The Strike and protest for an Ethnic Studies Program at San Francisco State College may have caught a lot of media attention, but it wasn't the only example. The concept of demanding an ethnic studies program spread to campuses across California including the University of California-Berkeley, the University of California-Los Angeles and across the nation all the way to City College of New York.<sup>118</sup> With a new field of study came the necessity for fresh scholarship and textbooks to use in the ethnic studies program. These include the *Amerasia* Journal, Roots: An Asian American Reader, the UCLA Ethnic Studies Center Press publication Asian Americans: The Movement and the Moment.

The Strike also impacted the Asian American Movement and the activism that followed. Glenn Omatsu describes in his article "The Four Prisons":

Through their participation a generation of Asian American student activists reclaimed a heritage of struggle...Moreover, these Asian American Students and their community supporters—liberated themselves from the prisons surrounding their lives and forged a new vision for their communities, creating numerous grassroots projects and empowering previously ignored and disenfranchised sectors of society.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Maeda, 68-69.

<sup>118</sup> Wei, 132-133.

<sup>119</sup> Omatsu, "The Four Prisons," 168.

These newly empowered activists carried the lessons from the strike into their efforts beyond the campus. They informed others, set up community programs, and continued their advocacy into the following decades.

# Annotated Bibliography

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*This source was written by former San Francisco State College President Robert Smith, De Vere Pentony as former San Francisco State College Deputy President, and Richard Axen as former Dean of Admissions and Records at San Francisco State College and Chairman of the Academic Senate. It paints a view of the strike from former administrator's eyes and gives insight into how the strike strained relations between the Board of Trustees and the administration and faculty at the college. There is also a chapter from Smith in which he explains his reason for resigning. Other chapters characterize S.I. Hayakawa and his time as Acting President.*

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Endo, George T., and Connie Kubo Della-Piana. “Japanese Americans, Pluralism, and the Model Minority Myth.” *Theory Into Practice* 20, no. 1 (Winter 1981): 45-51.

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## **Primary Materials:**

### Video/Film/News Footage:\*

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*This short clip shows an interview of a Japanese American man and his opinion that President Hayakawa didn't really understand what it means to be a Japanese-American since he grew up in Canada and wasn't part of the internment during WWII.*

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*This satirical booklet modeled off of “The Sayings of Chairman Mao” is a collection of phrases and statements by President Hayakawa and includes satirical cartoon depictions of him and the police.*



BSU-TWLF, *Nisei and Sansei Students! Are you Completely Uninvolved, Disinterested* (San Francisco: San Francisco State College, December, 1968). Accessed February 29, 2016. <https://diva.sfsu.edu/collections/strike/bundles/187907>.

*This leaflet attempts to catch the attention of Japanese and Japanese American students and invited them to the meeting at United Presbyterian Church on December 6, 1968. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the strike and the demands of the Black Student Union and the Third World Liberation Front. Students and Japanese/Japanese American community members were invited to come and nearly 300 people attended.*

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*This document lists and describes further the 5 Third World Liberation Front demands and the 10 Black Students Union demands which together became the 15 Demands of the Strike.*

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