the women’s liberation movement—will join together and march as a united women’s contingent. Last August 26th, the 50th anniversary of women’s suffrage, tens of thousands of women gathered into the streets to demonstrate for our right to control our lives. On April 24th, we will take the strength of women, which we showed in the world last August, and link up with all other people who say this war must end now.

There are many reasons why it is essential that we relate to the April 24 demonstrations as women. First, women have played a leading role in the antiwar movement since the first teach-ins and demonstrations. Yet the press and media imply that the antiwar movement is led entirely by men. This is a misconception that must be corrected. We have participated in and been key organizers of every antiwar march, just as we have been perhaps the most effective force in every movement for social change, in the history of the world. . . .

Women in this country are challenging the right of the U.S. government to wage a war of slaughter and destruction in Indochina while it denies the needs of women at home. One million children are left uncared for, while their mothers work, because there are no child care facilities. Seven thousand women die every year of illegal abortions. Millions of dollars of profit is made every year by paying women less than men in the exact same job. Thousands of women are shut out of higher education because there’s not enough money to provide scholarships and loans. We are told that there is no money for child-care centers or for abortion services; that the economy cannot meet the demands of women for equal and decent jobs; that high schools and universities cannot provide equal education for women. All this while Nixon spends billions of dollars on bombs, B-52s and “Vietnamization.”

. . . Recent polls show that 78% of the women in this country want an end to the war. We must galvanize that antiwar sentiment into mass participation of women to activate them into the planning and participation in these demonstrations. The action of our sisters around demands for the control of our own lives, combined with our outrage at the latest action of the U.S. government in Southeast Asia, indicate the potential for the largest participation of women ever, in the April 24th demonstrations.

PARTIAL LIST OF N.Y. ENDORSERS OF THE UNITED WOMEN’S CONTINGENT (Organizations listed for identification purposes only): MYRNA LAMB playwright; BARBARA LOVE Gay Liberation Front; MAE MASHIE Civil Rights Director for HUE; SUSAN MILLER Episcopal Peace Fellowship; WOMEN’S STRIKE COALITION; KATE MILLETT feminist writer; LONG ISLAND UNIVERSITY WOMEN’S LIBERATION FRONT; PAULINE ROSEN Women Strike for Peace; BARBARA DANE folk singer; GLORIA STERN feminist writer; BETTY FRIEDAN feminist writer; QUEENS COLLEGE WOMEN’S LIBERATION; COLUMBIA WOMEN’S LIBERATION; N.Y.U. WOMEN’S LIBERATION; HOFSTRA WOMEN’S LIBERATION; RENEE BLAKKAN Guardian; MYRNA BURKHOLDER Women In City Gov’t; RUTH GAGE-COLBY Women’s Int’l League for Peace & Freedom; ELIZABETH FISHER; APHA Women’s Caucus; DORIS L. SASSOWER Professional Women’s Caucus; DOROTHY ELDRIDGE N.J. SANE; SARAH DOELY Church Women United; LUCILLE IVYSON Radical Feminists; CLARA DE MIHA Jeannette Rankin Brigade Rank and File—and others.

The Asian American Movement

—DAVIS J. MASON

The Asian American movement emerged from the political ferment of the late 1960s and was formed when Asians of various ethnicities in the United States banded together to fight for racial justice. Although Asians had been in the United States in large numbers since the mid-1800s, they had not previously formed strong interethnic coalitions; instead, various Asian nationalisms had divided Asians in the United States, and the few multiracial alliances they did form were fleeting. Because of numerous bans on Asian immigration enacted from 1875 through 1954, by the mid-1960s the majority of Asian Americans were native-born citizens and most Asian American movements were drawn into the social movements of the 1960s—including the civil rights, Black Power, and anti-Vietnam War movements—and many others Asians and other people in the United States and abroad.

The Asian American movement was a loosely organized coalition of groups and individuals spanning the nation, with epiphanies in major cities on the coasts and in rights, culture, and the war. These events also distinguished the movement from previous modes of politics among Asian Americans: first, it pulled together Asians of various ethnicities by arguing that Asians, regardless of ethnicity or national origin, shared common experiences of racism in the United States; second, it sought to build alliances between Asian Americans and other people of color in the United States; and third, it conceptualized the linkage between Asians in the United States to those in Asia as one of a shared relationship to U.S. imperialism rather than common biology or culture.
As the anti-Marcos movement demonstrates, the Asian American movement was not motivated by uncritical Asian pride. Rather, its participants drew inspiration from Asian leaders such as Miao and Ho Chi Minh whom they believed exemplified the ideals of self-determination and equality. Furthermore, they understood that while there were differences among Asian nationalities and ethnicities, Asians in the United States and in Asia were bound together by a relation of subjugation to American racism and imperialism.

Participants from across the spectrum of the Asian American movement objected strenuously to the depictions of Asian Americans as a "model minority" who had escaped from prejudice through hard work and education. Instead, they emphasized that Asian Americans continued to suffer from discrimination, poverty, and exploitation. The International Hotel, the last vestige of San Francisco's Mission District, was the site of a bitter battle from 1968 to 1977 in which Asian Americans and their allies fought developers who wished to raze the building. The hotel provided affordable housing and a sense of community to elderly Filipinos and Chinese retirees, former migrant workers who were the source of the cheap labor indispensable to the agricultural industry and became disposable once their labor was extracted. Students trekked to the hotel to renovate its deteriorating edifice and organizations including Asian Community Center and Chinese Progressive Association established offices there. Despite their best efforts, however, the tenants were evicted and the hotel was destroyed.

A wide array of cultural workers explored Asian American identity in music, visual arts, literature, poetry, and drama. Joanose ("Nishikawa") Miyamoto, Chris Iijima, and Charlie Chiu performed as the folk trio A Grain of Sand at rallies, protests, and conferences across the nation and in 1973 recorded the self-titled album, A Grain of Sand, which expressed their opposition racism, capitalism, and imperialism, along with their solidarity with blacks, Latinos, and American Indians. Organizations such as Basement Workshop in New York City and Kearny Street Workshop in San Francisco provided resources and opportunities for artists and encouraged community participation in the arts. Theater companies in Seattle, San Francisco, and Los Angeles developed and staged Asian American plays and fostered Asian American talent. Frank Chin emerged as a prominent, but controversial writer and critic. Although numerous Asian American organizations produced newsletters, newspapers, and magazines, the most influential and widely read movement periodical was Gidro, a newspaper published monthly in Los Angeles from 1969 to 1974. Its exuberant graphic design expressed the humorous and joyful spirit of the 1970s, but Gidro also reported seriously on Asian American perspectives on issues such as the war, Asian American studies, fair housing and wages, and drug abuse within the Asian American community; furthermore, it highlighted the activities of other "Third World" activists, such as the American Indian takeover of Alcatraz Island.

Asian American women played pivotal roles in the movement. Pat Sumi was a well-known anti-war activist who toured with Eldridge Cleaver across China, North Korea, and North Vietnam; upon her return, she spoke to Asian American groups across the United States and helped to organize a conference between Indochinese and North American women in Vancouver, Canada, in 1971.
Similarly, Evelyn Yoshinura also traveled through China and published reports with Globo in 1972 and 1973. Carman Chow was a driving force of 1 Wor Ken, after the merger with the Red Guard Party. Despite the visibility of a few individuals, many Asian American women felt that they were relegated to performing menial tasks, that their issues were not considered important, and that Asian American men viewed them as sexual property. Asian American women addressed sexism within the movement by pursuing projects that addressed their particular needs, including drug abuse among young women and domestic abuse, educating men about sexism, and building sisterhood with each other. The Asian American women’s movement viewed itself as integrally connected with the larger movement and argued that Asian American liberation could not take place without women’s liberation.

The Asian American movement drew much of its strength from its diversity and flexibility. It encompassed groups and individuals with a wide array of ideologies and political commitments ranging from liberalism to avowed communism. All participants agreed, to varying degrees, that Asians of all ethnicities suffered from common racism and that coalescing together provided an effective means for combating that racism. However, tensions between and within groups detracted from the movement’s effectiveness, especially as the 1970s progressed. Like much of the new communist movement, Asian American radicals turned increasingly toward party-building and political consolidation with other like-minded groups, including those composed of felons from other racial minorities. 1 Wor Ken allied with Chicanoos of the August Twentyninth Movement in 1978 to form the League of Revolutionary Struggle (LRS), while Wei Min She entered the Revolutionary Union. Excessive devotion toward achieving ideological correctness embroiled these organizations in bitter intraorganizational conflict, and disproportionate efforts at party-building inhibited their ability to build grassroots connections to communities. On the left, Asian American radicals sometimes overly romanticized communist Asian nations such as the People’s Republic of China and North Vietnam and leaders including Mao and Ho Chi Minh and underestimated the degree of internal conflict and political repression within these nations. Adopting democratic centralism (which was more central than democracy) as an organizing principle led some groups into undue rigidity.

But rather than disappearing with a trace, the Asian American movement left lasting legacies that continue to impact American ideas about race and ethnicity and improve the lives of people of Asian ancestry in the United States. To begin with, the very idea of Asian Americans as a racial bloc encompassing multiple ethnicities, which is now recognized by the federal government and has become part of commonplace understandings of race among Americans, was pioneered in the 1960s and 1970s by the movement. Furthermore, cultural, educational, and social service institutions began by the movement—including theatrical companies, arts organizations, historical societies and museums, Asian American studies programs, immigrant service providers, and legal aid advocates—continued to serve the needs of the community throughout the twentieth century and are still flourishing in the twenty-first century. Finally, the Asian American movement brought attention to ongoing problems of racial inequality and showed the importance of building coalitions and alliances across lines of ethnicity, race, and gender.

KILLER FAWN, In the Movement Office (1971)

This 1971 skit by Killer Fawn (Linda Iwataki) illustrates women’s frustration with sexism within the Asian American movement.

SISTER: (walking in) What do you think of women’s liberation?

BROTHER 2: Well, Chairman Mao says “Unite and take part in production and political activity to improve the economic and political status of women.”

BROTHER 1: Far out. Hey man, we better start getting the conference together. (all sit)

BROTHER 2: Yeah, I been thinking about that. Hey, did you dig on the article brother Alan put out? It runs down some heavy shit!

BROTHER 1: Right on! Let’s put it on a stencil and run it off for the conference. Here, sister, can you type it up (hands it to her without waiting for her to answer) … and do this one on illegal search and seizure, too.

SISTER: Here’s an article that Yuki wrote on women. It’s really heavy …

BROTHER 1: Yeah, that illegal search and seizure is important because the students need to get their shit together as far as legal matters are concerned. Hey, before you start typing, can you get me some coffee?

BROTHER 2: Me too. I take two sugars. (she gets up without saying anything, goes to get the coffee. Brothers look her up and down.)

BROTHER 2: When do you think we should have it? During Christmas vacation?

BROTHER 1: Yeah, right on. Let’s try the first weekend. Maybe we can get the Center. Hey sister, can you call the Center right now and get a confirmation?

SISTER: (brining back the coffee) We can’t use the Center anymore. Remember what happened last …

BROTHER 2: Oh shit! We can’t use the Center. Last year someone left cigarette burns in the furniture and those s.o.b.’s aren’t letting anyone use it on weekends.

SISTER: The first weekend of Christmas vacation might be rough for the students because papers and …

BROTHER 1: Fuck that shit! If they place their priorities on a bullshit paper, fuck ‘em.

BROTHER 2: Right on! Hey, I got a meeting now. Can you get some press releases out and start contacting people for a general meeting? Thanks baby, you’re a righteous sister.

Source: Printed in Globo, January 1971.
BROTHER: Yeah, I got to split now, too. I have to go out in the field and do some people’s work. I’ll try to help you if I get back in time. But I know you can take care of business, baby. (both split)

SISTER: (alone and pissed off) What’s going on? I got a goddamn meeting, too! The people’s work . . . What the hell do they think this is?

ASIAN AMERICAN POLITICAL ALLIANCE, AAPA Perspectives (1969)

The Asian American Political Alliance was the first organization to use the term “Asian American.” Its first chapter was formed out of the larger New Left in Berkeley and subsequent chapters arose spontaneously in other locales. This statement demonstrates AAPA’s understanding of the deep linkages between racism in the United States and imperialism abroad.

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 realize that America was always and still is a White Racist Society. Asian Americans have been continuously exploited and oppressed by the racist majority and have survived only through hard work and resourcefulness, but their souls have not survived.

We Asian Americans refuse to cooperate with the White Racist in this society which exploits us as well as other Third World people, and affirm the right of Self-Determination.

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 imperialist policies being pursued by the American government.

PAT SUMI, Third World People: Shoulder to Shoulder (1974)

Pat Sumi was a prominent Asian American anti-war activist who traveled to North Korea and North Vietnam. She delivered this speech at the University of Michigan on February 21, 1974. Sumi appeared alongside the black radical Angela Davis, Clyde Bellecourt of the American Indian
And most of all, the unity of Asian Americans with Third World people in America is the only door through which we can enter the future. The history of the past 130 years, 130 years of blood and sweat, teaches us that only through the unity of the poor and disfranchised, only through the unity of the racially oppressed, only through the unity of the exploited, only through the unity of the people, can we be victorious. 130 years ago, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels said that capitalism and imperialism would be overthrown by the might of the world’s peoples. Today, all the world’s people are learning that it is possible, that it is necessary, and that a glorious future awaits us at the end. We Asian American people are determined to be a part of that future.

We Asian, Black, Brown and Native American people are determined to end exploitation and become masters of our society. We who are exploited and oppressed will build a future for our children such that our parents and grandparents hardly dared to dream of. The future is ours. Through unity we shall win!

Rodan, U.S. Savages (1971)

Rodan was an Asian American movement newspaper published out of San Francisco. This article argues that Asian Americans should identify with indigenous people as fellow Asians and oppose the war on the basis of Asian solidarity.

Brothers and sisters, are we not also Asians? Do we not relate to those people who are being tortured and murdered? We are also "gooks" by birth. You and I are no different from those subhuman creatures called Vietnamese. Take a look in the mirror, you have dark hair and dark eyes. You are part of the Third World people. They are part of the Third World people. You mirror, you have dark hair and dark eyes. You are part of the Third World people.

Try and remember what happened to the quiet Japanese Americans in World War II. They were like the enemy. They had slain eyes, black hair, brown eyes, and dark skin. All the necessary features that made them the enemy. Today, the United States is continuing its destruction of the Asian people. They are widening the war by their incursions into Laos and Cambodia. . . . And if war breaks out with China, then it will be possible that the Chinese Americans will suffer the same fate as did the Japanese Americans in World War II. The repression may even be worse, and include all people of Asian descent. Since all Asians have been identifying with one another, regardless of nationality, then we will all become the enemy to the US.

Therefore, the US will be forced to repress all Asian Americans, because we will not be separated. We are all in the same bag, so we must become truly united and begin to raise our voice as one. . . . See this country for what it really is. It is destroying the people of Vietnam by torture and murder. It will do the same to us.

RED GUARD PARTY, Our Political Program (1969)

In this program, which was modeled after the Black Panther Party’s 10-point plan, the Red Guards place Asian Americans (referred to as “Yellow people”) within a racial paradigm that aligns them with other people of color as exploited and suffering from discrimination.

1. We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our people, the Yellow Community.

We believe that Yellow people will not be free until we are able to determine our destiny.

2. We want decent housing, fit for shelter of human beings.

We believe that if the white landlord will not give decent housing to our Yellow community, then the housing and the land should be made into cooperatives so that our community, with government aid, can build and make decent housing for its people.

3. We want education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society. We want education that teaches us our true history and our role in the present-day society.

We believe in an educational system that will give to our people a knowledge of self. If a man does not have knowledge of himself and his position in society and the world, then he has little chance to relate to anything else.

4. We want all Yellow men to be exempt from military service.

We believe that Yellow people should not be forced to fight in the military service to defend a racist government that does not protect us. We will not fight and kill other people of color in the world who, like Yellow people, are being victimized by the white racist governments of America. We will protect ourselves from the force and violence of the racist military, by whatever means necessary.

5. We want an immediate end to POLICE BRUTALITY AND MURDER of Yellow People.

We believe we can end police brutality in our Yellow community by organizing Yellow self-defense groups that are dedicated to defending our Yellow community from racist police oppression and brutality. The Second Amendment

to the Constitution of the United States gives a right to bear arms. We, therefore, believe that all Yellow people should arm themselves for self defense.

6. We want freedom for all Yellow men held in federal, state, county and city prisons and jails.

We believe that all Yellow people should be released from the many jails and prisons because they have not received a fair and impartial trial.

7. We want all Yellow People when brought to trial to be tried in court by a jury of their peer group or people from their Yellow communities, as defined by the Constitution of the United States.

We believe that the courts should follow the United States Constitution so that Yellow people will receive fair trials. The 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution gives a man a right to be tried by his peer group. A peer is a person from a similar economic, social, religious, geographical, environmental, historical and racial background. To do this the court will be forced to select a jury from the Yellow community from which the Yellow defendant came. We have been, and are being tried by all-white juries that have no understanding of the "average reasoning man of the Yellow community."

8. We want adequate and free medical facilities available for the people in the Yellow community.

We know that Chinatown has the highest density area next to Manhattan. It also has the highest TB and sickness rate in the nation.

9. We want full employment for our people.

We believe that the federal government is responsible and obligated to give every one employment or a guaranteed income. We believe that if the white American businessmen will not give full employment, then, the means of production should be taken from the businessmen and placed in the community so that the people of the community can organize and employ its people and give a high standard of living. There are thousands of immigrants coming into Chinatown every year and it is impossible for them to find gainful employment.

10. We demand that the United States government recognize the People's Republic of China.

We believe that MAO TSE-TUNG is the true leader of the Chinese people, not CHIANG KAI SHEK. The government of the United States is now preparing for war against the Chinese People's Republic and against the Chinese people. The racist government of the United States has proven that it will put only peoples of color in concentration camps. Japanese were placed in concentration camps; therefore, it is logical that the next people that will be going are the Chinese people; because the United States is gearing its war time industrial complex for war against China.

Mexican Americans participated in the "civil rights movements" of the 1960s and 1970s in a way that transformed popular notions of social justice to include issues of land and labor rights in addition to the familiar concerns of equality in education and access to government. The Black Power movement also shaped the consciousness of young Mexican Americans who began to embrace a more militant, politicized identity known as "Chicano." After years of employing gradual and cooperative pressure on local, state and federal officials, Chicanoos began to experiment with more direct action and protest, challenging the intentions and interests of the government to remedy the problems facing their communities. Whereas previous groups such as the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) and the GI Forum sought to work within the system to end discrimination and segregation during the 1940s and 1950s, new groups such as the United Farmworkers Union, La Alianza Federal de las Mercedes (New Mexico), El Centro de Acción Social y Autónomo (CASA), the Brown Berets, United Mexican American Students (UMAS), and La Raza Unida Party became much more assertive and considered a wider range of strategies to achieve their goals in the 1960s and 1970s. In addition to more strident political expression, this generation of activists also employed and inspired artistic expression that articulated a new, nonconformist, nonwhite identity that sought equality and racial justice for Mexicanos living in the United States. The Chicano movement, therefore, was a multifaceted social movement that articulated a new politics and a new place for Mexicanos within the U.S. national culture.

The Chicano movement has largely been described as having four primary components: the struggle for homeland formerly held in common by Mexican people in the rural Southwest; the farm workers movement and the debate over Mexican immigrant rights; the urban youth movement in the Southwest, including protests against the Vietnam War and advocacy for educational reform; and finally, the articulation of radical political thought and the formation of a Mexican American political party, La Raza Unida Party. Within each of these movements, Mexican American...