ARTICLE

Gary Mar
“Angel Island Reflections”

ANNOUNCEMENTS

BOOK REVIEWS

Erika Lee and Judy Yung: Angel Island: Immigrant Gateway to America
Reviewed by Gary Mar

Bo Mou: Chinese Philosophy A-Z
Reviewed by Alan Fox
The Immigration Debate: Viewed from an Asian American Perspective

When my students and I began experimenting in 2000 with making a documentary on the Angel Island immigration experience, we had no idea of how relevant it would be to today’s national debate. Hard economic times have historically spawned nativist reactions to the newest wave of immigrants. California’s Proposition 187 in 1994 creating a state-run citizenship screening system to prohibit illegal immigrants from using health care, public education, and other social services in California and, more recently, the Arizona law that authorizes police to stop people they suspect of being illegal immigrants and to detain those who can’t show the required federal documents, as well as the self-proclaimed Tea Party with its implicit endorsement of anti-immigrant racism, are some of the most recent instances of this historical pattern.

Our documentary “I Saw Myself: Reclaiming the History, Poetry and Oral Histories of Angel Island’s Immigration Station” was created in a newly conceived course, Philosophical Issues in Asian American History. The Angel Island immigration station, which operated from 1910-1940, is sometimes called the “Ellis Island of the West.” This designation is misleading insofar as Angel Island was not a place of welcome for European immigrants, “the tired, the poor, the huddle masses yearning to breathe free,” but rather was a place of rejection and detention for Chinese, and then more generally, Asian immigrants, as a legacy of the infamous 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, the first immigration law in U.S. history to target a specific racial/ethnic group for exclusion. When our documentary “I Saw Myself” was completed in 2000, the Angel Island immigration station had been designated by the National Historic Trust as one of “11 Most Endangered Historic Places.” The goal of our documentary was to educate hearts and minds about the issue of immigration—in the realization that this generation will further inform the current debates on immigration, letting students know what America has been and that they are the new generation of Americans who will determine the kind of America we shall become.

The philosophical issues and pedagogical power of using new media have been discussed in “New Media and New Pedagogy in Asian American Studies: Strategies for Transforming Knowledge into a Pedagogy of Empowerment” (this APA Newsletter, vol. 3, no. 1, Fall 2003, pp. 19-32). Moreover, the justification of establishing the subfield of Asian American Philosophy within the profession is given, in part, in “What Does Asian American Studies Have to Do With Philosophy?” and related articles (this Newsletter, vol. 2, no. 2, Spring 2003). As this Newsletter is going to press, the DVD Angel Island Reflections—now containing five chapters spanning over a decade’s worth of media projects—has just been distributed, with the aid of a grant from the APA, at the centenary celebration of the Angel Island Immigration Station in San Francisco Bay on July 31, 2010.

The Committee on Asian and Asian-American Philosophers and Philosophies successfully applied for an APA grant to enhance the inclusiveness of the profession in 2008. One of the goals of this proposal (“A Shorter Rethinking of Philosophy Through Asian/American Philosophy”) was to foster dialogue between the emerging area of Asian American philosophy and Asian American Studies and other inclusiveness committees. To this end, this Committee organized a panel at the 2009 Central Division meeting in Chicago on Race, Immigration and Social Justice, co-sponsored with the Committee on the Status of Blacks in Philosophy. Chaired by Eddy Souffrant, Associate Professor of Philosophy, University of North Carolina (Chair) from the Committee on Blacks, it featured Erika Lee, Fesler-Lampert Professor in the Public Humanities, Department of History and Asian American Studies, University of Minnesota, who spoke on her forthcoming book with Judy Yung, Professor emerita of American Studies, U.C. Santa Cruz.

A direct consequence of the above interdisciplinary panel was the newest project on the Angel Island Reflections DVD—“We See Ourselves: the International Immigrant Experience.” After Erika Lee presented the latest archival research on the international character of immigration through Angel Island, it was clear that the research could be powerfully and dramatically presented as first-person narratives by students. Explaining why he became a novelist, David Mura wrote: “I felt that it was absolutely necessary for me to find those missing mirrors, even if I needed to create them myself. Otherwise, I would never know where I came from, who my family was and is, or who I am.” Through work on this “hands-on” history project, students learned to critique conventional distortions of textbook history. They also learned new skills in developing news copy, crafting non-fiction stories, and constructing arguments through images. Contradicting the conservative claim that ethnic studies isolates students into intellectual ghettos, Asian and African American, Asian Indian and Latino, Black and white students worked together to script, perform, and disseminate the video. These historical narratives could furthermore inform the current debates on immigration, letting students know what America has been and that they are the new generation of Americans who will determine the kind of America we shall become.

This historic event on July 31st on Angel Island was also a book launch for Erika Lee and Judy Yung’s Angel Island: Immigrant Gateway to America (OUP, 2010) commissioned by
the Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation for its 2010 centenary celebration. (See the short announcement below.) To view a short interview with Erika Lee and Judy Yung while the DVDs were being prepared for distribution together with a short montage of the events of this historic occasion, visit http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ld7nWClm2Qw. What follows is a user’s guide to the DVD Angel Island Reflections. Instructions for obtaining a free copy of the DVD, while the supplies last, are included at the end of this article.

A Philosophy of History

"History is written by the victors," Winston Churchill observed. Despite new content available through the Internet, history continues to be written by those privileged to write standards, publish materials, and disseminate materials to those charged with teaching our children. Generation after generation, history continues to be written not just by the victors but by those with the authority to establish the dominant narrative in public education. While this is a problem for nations around the world, our focus here is on American history and how our diverse experiences as Americans are represented by those who determine what is and is not part of our American story.

This raises the question: ‘What is American history?’ or, to quote Gary Okhiro, Founding Director of Columbia University’s Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, ‘Whose history is it anyway?’ We already know that our textbooks, curricula, and courses often exclude diverse groups, or define whole populations by certain events or through specific individual contributions, leaving the learner and teacher alike with the impression that those contributions were the exception rather than the rule.

What happens when our students do not see themselves and others accurately or comprehensively reflected in the mirror of our history? What happens when an entire group is known only by a few instances instead of being known by their rich, complex contribution to American history, economy, arts, science, literature, and culture? Asians in American history are conspicuous only by their absence. Most Americans are familiar with three aspects of Asian American history. First, there is the historic photograph commemorating the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad at Promontory Point, Utah, on May 10, 1869. In less than a page, a paragraph, or perhaps a footnote, history textbooks generally indicate that Chinese people constituted 90 percent of the workforce on the Central Pacific Railroad, that more than one thousand Chinese people died while countless others were maimed and injured in the perilous construction process. In fact, the phrase “not a Chinaman’s chance” comes from the high mortality rate of the Chinese workers who were hung in gunpowder-laden baskets over cliffs, so they could blast the railway tracks through the snow-covered granite walls of the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

Despite these well-documented facts, even the 1969 centennial reenactment of this landmark event became another opportunity to write Chinese people out of American history when Secretary of Transportation John Volpe boasted, “Who else but Americans could have accomplished this?” and then blocked Philip Choy, a representative of the Chinese Historical Society of America seated with the platform party, from dedicating a commemorative plaque at the main public assembly, where it would have been appropriate to honor the lives and labor of Chinese workers.

Asians are also included in American history textbook and course accounts of the World War II era internment of over 120,000 civilians of Japanese descent, two-thirds of whom were American citizens. Solely on the basis of their ancestry, Japanese Americans were imprisoned in ten concentration camps scattered throughout deserted areas in the Western part of the United States and Arkansas. Without trial, and without evidence of any disloyalty to their country, these men, women, and children were deprived of liberty, property, and the health care that would protect their lives. The standard textbook photograph is of a Japanese-American girl, sitting forlorn on a suitcase, silently and helplessly awaiting deportation.

There are no pictures of the impassioned "No-No Boys" who protested the internment, or the all-Japanese-American 442nd Battalion, drafted from the internment camps and fighting with great distinction in France, Germany, and Italy. This Japanese-American group was the most decorated battalion for its size in U.S. military history, including 21 Medal of Honor recipients. This, despite the fact that their family and friends remained imprisoned not for what they did, but because of who they were. Under current laws, this mass incarceration might have met the standards of a hate crime.

Many of the first-generation Issei and second-generation Nisei victims of the Japanese internment exiled themselves to a silence that lasted some forty years. However, once the history of the internment was shared through courses in Asian American studies facilitated by the third-generation Sansei, there began a long struggle for reparations that resulted in some of the most significant civil rights cases of the century culminating in the 1988 Civil Liberties Act. The government’s own 1983 report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC) concluded that the Japanese internment was based on “race prejudice, war hysteria, and a lack of political leadership.”

Despite this history, in the aftermath of the shocking events of 9-11, the Bush-Ashcroft administration still cited the Japanese Internment as a positive precedent and exploited the fear that Arab-Muslim-Middle Eastern immigrants were all potentially “evil enemy terrorists within” to gain unprecedented powers. What valuable lessons for dealing with these current controversies
over the use of “military necessity” as justifications for wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and the Patriot Act for “homeland security” could have been learned from this neglected history? (Ironically, President George H. W. Bush wrote the letter of apology to Japanese Americans authorizing the reparations for surviving internees, some of whom where then over 100 years old.)

In addition to brief mentions of the Transcontinental railroad and the Japanese-American internment, Asian Americans enter American history textbooks as “model minorities”—a stereotype that emerged during the struggle for Civil Rights of the 1960s and still continues today. In one high school history book I surveyed, the phrase “model minority” is introduced on the page opposite to a photograph showing African Americans and Latinos looting stores in the aftermath of the Rodney King verdict. The myth that Asian immigrant success in school can be attributed solely to a “respect for authority” and “family values” implies that the failure of other minorities—especially those vocally agitating for Civil Rights—can be blamed not on institutional racism, but on the lack of family or cultural values. This gross and inaccurate generalization of Asian academic performance, though apparently “positive,” functions negatively as stereotype and propaganda against Asian Americans and other minorities.

The “model minority” stereotype not only serves to pit Asian Americans against other minorities, but it also continues to render invisible the real, complex needs of Asian American communities. According to the 1997 report on the educational needs of Asian Pacific American Youth, Asian American students faced a crisis of invisibility: “This crisis is largely invisible to most Americans—most significantly, even to many in the teaching professions—because most see all Asian Pacific American students as members of a ‘model minority’ destined to excel. But for many Asian Pacific American students, this image is a destructive myth.”

Although the “model minority” is purportedly a “positive” stereotype, there is no positive stereotype without negative consequences. Stereotypes, by definition, present one-dimensional views of people or ideas, and limit opportunity for the people being stereotyped, and for the people who are doing the stereotyping. It leaves Asian American students at a disadvantage, first by fueling resentment from other members of minority and majority groups by making invidious comparisons, and secondly, by a mechanism of exclusion that misrepresents all Asian Americans as “successful” and not in need of social services.

If Santayana’s often quoted dictum is true and if we do not learn from history, then we are doomed to repeat our failures and to fail to repeat our successes. We ignore history at our peril. For example, we cannot begin to understand the depth and breadth of racial discrimination in America until we stop discussing it solely in terms of slavery and civil rights for African Americans or under the new misleading rubric of “illegal immigration.” We cannot redress its continuing damage until we stop discussing it solely in terms of slavery and civil rights for all Asian Americans. This has left Asian Americans in a perpetual state of “foreignness,” leading Asian-Americans to view themselves as detached, invisible, and marginalized, and leaving their peers, teachers, and employers with inaccurate, incomplete, and often stereotypical views of their fellow citizens.

Whether we are motivated by identity politics or justice for all or setting the historical record straight, can we afford to exclude or marginalize any group? What are the consequences of marginalizing whole segments of our American family as we impart American history? I asked these and other questions as I read my own history books and those of my children. If history books are a mirror, all children should be able to open the book and see positive, accurate images of themselves and each other on those pages. History texts and courses often omit how Asian Americans have contributed to America from the formation of our nation to the present day.

To redress these omissions, my students and I have compiled Angel Island Reflections, an engaging body of new media projects completed by my students at Stony Brook University from 1999-2009. It begins with the experience of Asian immigrants detained on Angel Island, and puts those experiences in the context of my students’ lives and of the continuing living history of America.

The Making of Angel Island Reflections

On December 2, 1993, the tragic suicide pact of two Asian-American high school girls, Ellen Liu, a Chinese American, and Milli Subudhi, an Indian American, shocked the Asian-American community, especially in the prestigious Three Village School District on Long Island. These tragic deaths were the youngest suicides in the history of the Long Island Railroad. Ellen and Milli came from highly successful families, and they had first met in third grade in the Gifted and Talented Program. This tragedy deeply affected me as a parent, especially since my daughter Jessica was about to enter that very program. The tragedy was a wake-up call to the Asian-American community. I thought it could be no accident that the two girls were Asian Americans. Yet, sometimes a community blames the victims or dismisses a tragedy as an isolated incident, instead of responding with compassion, concern, and openness to the possibility that the event is a symptom of a larger problem acknowledging the pressures that impact all our children. As Paul Ricoeur noted, when news attains the “aura of the extraordinary” we lose the ability to be “instructed by it…”

Largely out of a desire to protect my own daughters, I became active in advocating for education on Asian-American history in 1995. These efforts became the catalyst for the $25
Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>1790</td>
<td>Naturalization Act restricts naturalized citizenship to “free whites” only.</td>
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<td>1854</td>
<td>People v. Hall—the California court upholds the ban on Chinese testimony against white persons on the grounds that Chinese were non-white and hence included in the law banning the testimony of Blacks and Indians and Mulattos.</td>
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<td>1865</td>
<td>Thirteenth Amendment ends slavery and this year marks the beginning of the recruitment of replacement Chinese laborers by the Central Pacific Railroad.</td>
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<td>1868</td>
<td>Fourteenth Amendment ratified with its due process and equal protection clauses to include persons of African descent but continues to exclude persons of Asian descent.</td>
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<td>1875</td>
<td>Page Law prohibited the importation of Chinese, Japanese, and Mongolian women for immoral purposes forcing them to prove they were not prostitutes.</td>
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<td>1882</td>
<td>Chinese Exclusion Act barred immigration of Chinese laborers for 10 years.</td>
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<td>1888</td>
<td>Scott Act declares the certificates that allowed Chinese workers to reenter the U.S. after visiting their families in China “null and void.”</td>
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<td>1892</td>
<td>Geary Law renewed Chinese Exclusion Act for 10 more years; Fong Yue Ting v. U.S. upholds constitutionality of Geary Law.</td>
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<td>1896</td>
<td>Plessy v. Ferguson upholds the constitutionality of “separate but equal” for Blacks and Harlan’s dissent arguing for a “color blind constitution” draws on racist comparisons with Chinese as non-citizens.</td>
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<td>1898</td>
<td>United States v. Wong Kim Ark decides that Chinese born in the U.S. cannot be stripped of their citizenship.</td>
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<td>1902</td>
<td>Chinese Exclusion Act renewed now without an expiration date.</td>
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<td>1906</td>
<td>San Francisco earthquake destroys public records and opens the possibility of circumventing legalized discrimination through the illegal practice of creating “Paper Sons and Daughters.”</td>
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<td>1907</td>
<td>Gentlemen’s Agreement reached in which Japan agreed to stop issuing passports to laborers bound for the U.S.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>Angel Island Immigration Station established.</td>
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<td>1913</td>
<td>Alien Land Act prohibited “aliens ineligible to citizenship” from buying land or leasing it for longer than three years.</td>
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<td>1917</td>
<td>“Barred Zone” Immigration Act created an Asiatic Barred Zone: all Asian immigration except Japanese and Filipinos banned by Congress; hence extending exclusion to India.</td>
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<td>1922</td>
<td>Takao Ozawa v. U.S. declare a Japanese man, who married a women brought up in the U.S., had two children, and was a Christian, was nevertheless ineligible for naturalization as a member of an “unassimilable race.”</td>
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<td>1922</td>
<td>Cable Act stripped an American female citizen of her citizenship should she marry an “alien ineligible to citizenship.”</td>
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<td>1923</td>
<td>U.S. vs. Bhagat Singh Thind declared Asian Indians, despite their categorization as Caucasians by anthropological science of the “white” and hence excluded from naturalized citizenship.</td>
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<td>1924</td>
<td>National Origins Act prohibited “aliens ineligible to citizenship” from immigrating, extending Asian exclusion to now also encompass the Japanese.</td>
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<td>1934</td>
<td>The Tydings-McDuffie Act closed loophole for Filipino Immigration as U.S. nationals and limits Filipino immigration to 50 per year.</td>
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<td>1941</td>
<td>March: Justice and War Departments agree to coordinate internment of “enemy aliens” based on lists compiled in the late 1930s.</td>
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<td>1941</td>
<td>December 8th: U.S. declares war on Japan after Japan attacks Pearl Harbor on December 7th.</td>
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<td>1942</td>
<td>February 19th: Franklin D. Roosevelt signs Executive Order 9066 calling for all persons of Japanese descent living in the Pacific Coast states to be evacuated to internment camps.</td>
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<td>1943</td>
<td>Chinese Exclusion Act “repealed” largely for propaganda purposes to counter the criticism of Japan during World War II that the U.S. had discriminatory policies against its own ally. The “repeal” was nominal since it only raised the quota of 100 to 105 Chinese per year from any country, compared with the yearly quota from Great Britain and Northern Ireland of 65,721.</td>
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<td>1945</td>
<td>August 6th, U.S. drops first atomic bomb ever used in war on Hiroshima; Nagasaki is bombed three days later.</td>
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<td>1952</td>
<td>The McCarran-Walter Act abolishes racial and ethnic limitations to naturalization while retaining a race-based National Origins Quota System and created an Asia-Pacific restrictive or barred zone to limit immigration.</td>
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<td>1965</td>
<td>The Hart-Celler Act amended the McCarran-Walter Immigration and Nationality Act and removed barriers to Asian immigration placing it on an equal footing with other nations.</td>
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In “I Saw Myself” Stony Brook University students tell the history of the Angel Island Immigration Station. Reclaiming that history as their own, the students: report on the status of the efforts to restore the Angel Island barracks; recite Chinese poems originally carved in protest on the barrack walls; and give voice to oral histories of women detainees.

The project was also shown as part of a presentation, “Dialogues of Truth and Reconciliation: Paradoxes of Apology, Philosophy of History, and the Healing of Nations,” at the Sixth Symposium of Chinese-American Philosophy and Religious Studies: Cross-Cultural Dialogue at Jinan University in Shandong, China, in 2001. An earlier version of this project was shown at the Museum of the Chinese in the Americas (MoCA) in November 2002 and distributed on March 8, 2003, by the Organization of Chinese Americans (OCA) at the Tin See Do: The Angel Island Experience exhibition sponsored by the Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation at the Ellis Island Immigration Museum in New York. The version presented here is the result of turning the video project into a multi-media presentation by Kurt Simbron, subtitling by graduate students in Chinese, under the supervision of Paul St. Denis, director of multi-media at Stony Brook University’s Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why is it misleading to call Angel Island the “Ellis Island of the West”?
2. What difference does it make that the students are actually giving voice to the poems “carved in silence” on the barrack walls and to oral histories of women instead of simply researching and reporting what happened?
3. Consider the following excerpt from Loni Ding’s essay “Strategies of an Asian American Filmmaker”:

   “Almost all my work has been for television, designed for reaching a mass audience. In doing that, I’ve made certain assumptions about the audience. I assume, for example, that they carry somewhere in their minds three common misrepresentations of Asian Americans: the common stereotypes of Asians as perpetual foreigners; as resigned, silent victims; and most recently, as successful ‘model minorities’ who ‘contribute to America.’ I have tried not to counter studying and discussing her “Strategies of an Asian American Filmmaker”—in which she argues that the camera’s gaze, if directed towards its subject with respect, can be empowering—we strove to embody her principles in our own productions. Loni first came to Stony Brook in 2000 to appear in the Provost’s Distinguished Lecture series and in 2002 received an honorary doctorate from Stony Brook.
these misrepresentations directly, but rather to address the three kinds of stereotypes in my overall project design... to 'show the opposite' rather than to 'explain, argue and oppose.' For the problem of absence, the main work is to create presence.... Authentic images of minorities do not abound. For ourselves too, we have a need for the objectifying record. We think we know what we look and sound like, until we're surprised or shocked by hearing our actual voices on a tape recorder, or seeing our physical selves in moving images.”

Describe specific instances of how the student documentary deploys these strategies. For example,

- Why do you think the timelines were included at the end of the documentary?
- Most of the poems were written by Chinese males who had the required scholarly skills. How were the testimonies of women incorporated into the documentary?
- Why do you think one of the poems was read in Chinese Mandarin, which would be more commonly used today (not Cantonese, which would have been more historically accurate) without a simultaneous English translation?


While rehearsing the poem “Child of Asian America” in the hallway at a local middle school to be presented as part of the Martin Luther King Jr. Day assembly, a group of Stony Brook university students unexpectedly encountered an upsetting racial incident. Stunned by this experience, the Stony Brook students talked about the incident long into the night. Michael Kwan, who had been filming the outreach, had the idea of producing a video, directed by Dini Diskin-Zimmerman, in which the students would record their reading of the poem “Child of Asian America” written by Marie Villanueva (from Children of America, compiled on behalf of the Asian American Coalition, Polychrome Publishing Corporation, Chicago, IL, 1995).

The video ends with Michael’s reflections on the power of words and appending the live footage of Abelin Siriban addressing the middle school assembly immediately after the incident happened. This teachable moment, inadvertently caught on film, shows how ordinary people can rise to the occasion to become heroes by speaking the truth from the heart. Abelin was named after Abraham Lincoln. At the taping of the video, the director’s daughter, Catie Zimmerman, who happened to be in the middle school assembly, apologized to the Stony Brook students on behalf of her school. This educational video won an award from the Organization of Chinese Americans, Long Island Chapter and has been used in various venues as an anti-bias educational video.

Discussion Questions:

(1) What are some of the reasons why so many ethnic minorities adopt “Americanized” names? What is the value of maintaining one’s original name?

(2) What did Shannon learn from the history of the Chinese in the Frontier West about how to handle her high school dilemma?

(3) How did Abelin’s courage to address the students immediately after the racial incident result in a “teachable moment” for both the students and staff at the middle school and for the college students from Stony Brook University?

Chapter 3. “Cinderella & the $10,000 Haircut” (2004)

This puppet show tells the story of a young Asian-American girl Shannon who tries out for the part of Cinderella in the school play but is not chosen because she “doesn’t look the part.” After learning from Grandma Loni how the Chinese during the days of Gold Rush in California pooled their resources to challenge the constitutionality of San Francisco’s Queue Ordinance (Ho Ah-kiow v. Mathew Nunan, 1879), Shannon is inspired to stand up for her rights too. In taking a stand, Shannon discovers the meaning of her Chinese name. This story teaches about how the Chinese, and other minorities struggling for their democratic rights throughout our history, have made America a freer and more democratic nation by for all.

The original story by then fourth grader Krista Michelle Mar was turned into a screen play by Lefone Alice Huyhn, who created the puppets and sound effects with Stony Brook University students.

The historical material in the script is excerpted from a transcript of Loni Ding’s Chinese in the Frontier West: An American Story, the second show in her landmark PBS series "Ancestors in the Americas." “Cinderella & the $10,000 Haircut” has shown at various venues, including a presentation for the Superintendent’s Conference Day on November 7, 2006, for the Herricks School District at Center Street School, Williston Park in which Krista Mar (then a high school student) read the narration.

Discussion Questions:

(1) What are some of the reasons why so many ethnic minorities adopt “Americanized” names? What is the value of maintaining one’s original name?

(2) What did Shannon learn from the history of the Chinese in the Frontier West about how to handle her high school dilemma?

(3) Some teachers thought that elementary children are too young to understand this puppet show. Why might it be important for children at this young age to understand some historical facts about Asian-American history?

Chapter 4. “Like a Family Reunion”: Researching My Family History at NARA (2007)

On Mother’s Day in 2006 after a gap of more than 20 years, I became reacquainted with my half first-cousin once removed, Theresa Ihara, who had been compiling extensive
research on her family history using the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in San Bruno. This national archive contains many important historical records of the Asian immigrants processed at the Angel Island Immigration Station from 1910-1943. Returning to California several months later, I found out that Erika Gee, education director for the Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation (AIISF), had just rescheduled a previously cancelled program, “NARA 101,” designed to teach people how to research family histories at the San Bruno-based NARA. Wanting to take advantage of this opportunity, I called filmmaker Loni Ding to borrow a camera. After giving detailed instructions on how to shoot documentary footage, Loni cancelled her plans for the day and came out to shoot the footage herself.

The documentary features a welcome by Felicia Lowe, director of the classic documentary on Angel Island “Carved in Silence” (1988) and a segment where Dan Nealand, Director of Archival Operations, summarizes significant historical finds at NARA. Editing the 1.5 hours of footage into a nine-minute documentary, I had the able assistance of Ha Na Lee, a MFA graduate student at Stony Brook. Ha Na created the opening screen shot from the actual documents of my family and then added the artistic touch of the ink drop timed to the original Asian/global music of composer Chiwei Julie Li. The documentary was made possible by grants from the Organization of Chinese Americans, the Allstate Foundation, and Stony Brook University.

Discussion Questions:
(1) What are some of the historic finds at NARA Archives in San Bruno mentioned by Dan Nealand?
(2) How can doing research on one’s family be “like a family reunion” for students?
(3) When the family tree is reviewed by Theresa, Loni Ding, who was filming, noticed the exceptional number of infant deaths. Why is it important not to diminish or cover up or feel ashamed about the difficulties and tragedies that our ancestors suffered?

Erika Lee, professor of History and Asian American Studies at the University of Minnesota, was invited to present her research on the international character of immigration through Angel Island on a panel at the Central Division Meeting of the American Philosophical Association in Chicago in 2009. Inspired by Erika’s stories, I asked if we could use some of this new research to make a companion documentary to our first documentary “I Saw Myself.” Footage of Erika Lee talking about her own family history and her research project was shot at the Association for Asian American Studies meeting in Hawai’i in April 2009, while Dini Diskin-Zimmerman directed students from my Asian American History course who gave first-person voice to the research. “We See Ourselves” premiered on May 7, 2009, at the Charles B. Wang Asian American Center.

Discussion Questions:
(1) The research by Erika Lee and Judy Yung revealed the international character of the immigration through Angel Island, a hub of immigration to the United States on the West Coast. Besides the most well-known group of Chinese immigrants, what were some of the diverse ethnic groups processed at the Angel Island Immigration Station?
(2) How did the plight of Esther Garlaza Lopez affect the author of the Nobel Prize winning autobiography Bario Boy and end up helping school children in San Jose?
(3) John Howard Yoder in “The Burden and the Discipline of Evangelical Revision” in Non-Violent America: History Through the Eyes of Peace, eds. Louise Hawkley and James C. Juhnke (Mennonite Press: Newton, Kansas, 1993, 22) noted: “The reason history needs to be reread is not merely that every generation must claim the right to begin writing world history from scratch…but that at certain points there is specifiable good news about the human condition, the goodness or the newness of which those who hitherto have been controlling the storytelling had not yet appropriated.” What did the original research from the State Archives in Sacramento add to the documentary by including biographical information about Katharine Maurer, the “Angel of Angel Island”?

One way to transform students is to place their identities in the mirror of history. This DVD is a sampling of projects that can transform students from consumers of the standard history told by victors to creators of knowledge who can, with that inspiration, change themselves and history for the better.

The duplication of “Angel Island Reflections,” as noted above, was made possible by an APA grant directed at enhancing the inclusiveness of the profession and the creation of the project on the DVD was made possible by grants from the Organization of Chinese Americans, the Allstate Foundation, and Stony Brook University. The scholarly content, moving personal narratives, and the creative drive behind the DVD were made possible by the collaboration of many scholars, community members, and students—especially, the director and producer Dini Diskin-Zimmerman, the artistic designer Takafumi Ide, and Roberta Richin, executive director of the Conference on Prejudice Reduction for suggestions on how to construct an educator’s guide for the DVD.

Throughout this entire project, students were inspired immeasurably by Loni Ding (1931-2010), a pioneering documentary filmmaker, public media advocate, U. C. Berkeley film teacher, and executive director of CET (www.CETEL.org). In 1984 and 1987 Loni Ding testified before the U.S. Senate subcommittee on communications to advocate for increasing minority productions in public broadcasting. Asked by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting to participate in a commission to address the lack of minority representation in the public media. Loni Ding was also one of the founders in 1981 of the National Asian American Telecommunications Association (NAATA), recently renamed the Center
for Asian American Media (CAAM). Loni Ding’s *The Color of Honor: The Japanese-American Soldiers During World War II* was screened to both Houses of Congress as well as President Ronald Reagan, and these screenings were credited with being the tipping point for the passage of the historic 1988 Civil Liberties Act, which granted reparations to surviving Japanese Americans who had been interned without a trial or evidence of wrong-doing during World War II.

A veteran independent filmmaker, television producer, and university instructor with 30 years experience creating over 250 broadcast programs which have been screened nationally and internationally, Loni Ding’s achievements have been recognized by more than 15 career awards and fellowships including the Rockefeller Foundation Film/Video Fellowship (1994); a Guggenheim Fellowship (1982); the American Film Institute Director’s Fellowship (1983); the Asian CineVision Annual Filmmaker’s Award (1988); and an honorary doctorate from Stony Brook University (2005). Loni was at Stony Brook in 2000 as the first speaker to appear for Asian American heritage month in the Provost’s Distinguished Lecture series. Loni received an honorary doctorate from Stony Brook in 2007 and this DVD contains a dedication in her memory:

“In your absence we shall create your presence in the telling of our true stories.”

For a free copy of the DVD as long as supplies last, please send a self-addressed stamped mailing envelope suitable for mailing a DVD to

Professor Gary Mar  
Department of Philosophy  
Stony Brook University  
Stony Brook, New York 11794-3750

Projects like *Angel Island Reflections* educate us all. Multiculturalism need not be limited to a “cultural tourism” which celebrates food and dance: it can also construct a critical intellectual prism through which we can examine the hidden multicultural dimensions of American history. Historian Ronald Takaki has predicted the increasing importance of such intellectual projects: “[W]e can be certain that much of our society’s future will be influenced by which ‘mirror’ we choose to see ourselves. America does not belong to one race or one group, the people in this study remind us, and Americans have been constantly redefining their national identity. ...By sharing their stories, they invite us to see ourselves in a different mirror.”

**Endnotes**

1. Many colleagues and students were involved in the realization of this decade-long project. I want to thank Dini Diskin-Zimmerman and Takafumi Ike, Erika Lee and Judy Yung, Erika Gee and Felicia Lowe, Daphne Kwok and Eddie Wong, Ed Casey and Mary Watkins, Paul St. Denis and his students at CELT and now at TLT, Roberta Richin and the members of CPR, Gene and Janis Woo and Gladys Yan and the members of OCA Long Island, Roberta Richin and Theresa Ihara as well as many generations of students and student TAs such as Ray Hu and Mitch Wu. Here I can include only a representative list of students from 2006—Min L. Fan, Melissa Fana, Michelle Gong, David Horn, Tommy Hu, Xibejia, Yerah Kim, Miao Tang, Diana Wang—and then skipping to students from 2009—Nicole Shivcharran, William Woodrow, Michael Caparo, Andy Chen, Rohan Rao, Venu Pastrica, Oditika Santiago, Manisha Chitkara, Christel Dussart, and Michelle Altunis.

2. Few Americans are aware of the historical connection between colonialism in China and the original Boston Tea Party, which is a well-known chapter in Asian-American history. According to James Loewen in *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong* (Touchstone, 1995), the Sons of Liberty dressed as Native Americans, not to disguise themselves, but to declare symbolically that the thirteen colonies could, like the diverse Indian nations, overcome their individual differences and fight for a common cause. Even today the back of the dollar bill contains a trace of this history. The American eagle is clutching thirteen arrows symbolizing the principle that even if a single arrow is easily broken, a bundle of thirteen arrows—or colonies—is not. At the original Tea Party, the tea thrown overboard to protest “taxation without representation” was British tea imported from China.

To fuel the industrial revolution Great Britain had been importing millions of pounds of tea from China to provide workers in factories a “free meal” of tea with milk. Since China did not want any British goods in return, the trade deficit was enormous and had to be resolved. The British found a solution in opium. Opium was not used in China widely until the British smuggled this illegal drug into China from India, where it was grown under British control. The Opium Wars were the result of China protecting its people by quarantining and destroying this illegal drug. Trafficking in opium was lucrative for Americans as well. As Professor Dilip Basu, from the University of California, notes in Loni Ding’s PBS in the first show “Coolies, Sailors and Settlers: Voyage to the New World” in her Emmy award-winning documentary series *Ancestors in the Americas*, prominent Americans were involved in the opium trade: “Americans were only second to the British in terms of pushing opium to China. Great family fortunes were made from opium trade, very like who’s who in America—the Cushing’s, the Cabot family, Delano, as in Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Perkins, as in the Perkins Hall at Harvard.”

The infamous Opium Wars, in turn, led to the Coolie Trade (known by the Chinese as the “buying and selling of pigs”) as a substitute for the African slave trade. Great Britain stopped formally participating in slavery after 1807 and it was officially abolished in the British Empire in 1833. Hong Kong was one of the treaty ports ceded to Great Britain in the 1842 Treaty of Nanking and to the U.S. in the 1844 Treaty of Wangsha, and so the return of Hong Kong to China in 1997 was part of this colonial history, not widely unacknowledged in the West, but regarded in China and Asia as a fitting restitution to this infamous colonial history.

3. Gary Okihiro, Senior Research Scholar, Professor in the Department of International and Public Affairs, “Whose History is it Anyway?” is the title of a talk given by Gary Okihiro at the grand opening of the Asian American Center Bridge at Stony Brook on November 6, 1996.


5. Bob H. Suzuki, “Education and the Socialization of Asian Americans: A Revisionist Analysis of the ‘Model Minority’ Thesis”, reprinted in *The Asian American Educational Experience: A Source Book for Teachers and Students*, eds. Don Nakanishi and Tina Nishida (New York, New York: Routledge, 1995), 113-32, noted that “the vast majority of Asian students are not super-bright, highly motivated over-achievers who come from well-to-do families. Large numbers of them are encountering personal and academic difficulties; many, especially those who have recently immigrated, are struggling to learn English. The ESL needs of these students, the majority of whom are foreign-born and do not speak English as their first language, have largely been ignored by most institutions.”

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Panels to be sponsored by the Committee at the APA Eastern Division meeting, December 27-30, 2010, Boston, MA - Marriott/Westin-Copley Connection.

The Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi proposed by Minh Nguyen, Associate Professor of Philosophy, Eastern Kentucky University, aims to provide fresh insights into the philosophical thought of Mahatma Gandhi. Participants include:

Chair: Gail Presbey (University of Detroit–Mercy)

Douglas Allen (University of Maine): “The Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi and Violence in the Contemporary World”

Fred Dallmayr (University of Notre Dame): “Gandhi’s Political Thought Today”

Veena Howard (University of Oregon): “Toward an Engaged Philosophy: Gandhi’s Reinterpretation of Religious Narratives and Renunciatory Practices”

Recognition: Race, Misrecognition, and Emotion proposed by Falguni A. Sheth, Associate Professor, Hampshire College, aims at addressing Hegel’s notion of recognition in the tradition of such contemporary philosophers as Jürgen Habermas, Richard Bernstein, Nancy Fraser, Axel Honneth, Seyla Benhabib, Wendy Brown, and Judith Butler, and drawing on the work of Frantz Fanon, the philosophy of race, postcolonial theory, and Asian American discourses on race. Participants include:

Chair: Gary Mar (Stony Brook University)

Alia Al-Saji (McGill University): “A Phenomenology of Cultural Racism: Misrecognition and Embodiment”

David Kim (University of San Francisco): “Emotion, Recognition, and Racial Subjection”

Darrell Moore (DePaul University): “Fanon and Project of Recognition”

Falguni A. Sheth (Hampshire College): “A Metaphysics of Misrecognition: From Acknowledgment to Superrecognition”

A subsequent edition of this Newsletter will report on the following panels:

CENTRAL DIVISION PANELS

Author Meets Critics: Falguni Sheth, Toward a Political Philosophy of Race

Two additional panels about this book with Faluni Sheth as respondent were organized by Emily Lee, CSU Fullerton—one for the Pacific Division SWIP meeting at the Pacific Division Meeting’s alternative site at USF, and a forthcoming SPEP panel in Montreal Canada with Lewis Gordon (Temple University) and Emily Lee (CSU Fullerton).

Confucius and Dewey on Experiential Education

PACIFIC DIVISION PANELS

California Dreaming: How Race Alerts and Alters the State, Now and Then

BOOK REVIEWS

Angel Island: Immigrant Gateway to America

Erika Lee and Judy Yung (Oxford University Press, August 2010).

“With this comprehensive history, Angel Island may now stand alongside Ellis Island as the other iconic gateway to America. Lee and Yung give a thorough and humane look at the immigrants from surprisingly diverse origins who encountered an America both welcoming and unwelcoming on the Pacific coast.”

— Mae Ngai, Columbia University, author of Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America

“Lee and Yung have unlocked Angel Island’s deepest secrets and the link between US immigration policy and restrictive codas of race, gender, class. Deeply relevant to present-day immigration debates, this book is people’s history at its best.”

— Helen Zia, author of Asian American Dreams: The Emergence of an American People

Drawing on extensive new research, including immigration records, oral histories, and inscriptions on the barric walls, the authors produce a sweeping yet intensely personal history of Chinese “paper sons,” Japanese picture brides, Korean students, South Asian political activists, Russian and Jewish refugees, Mexican families, Filipino repatriates, and many others from around the world. By examining the great diversity of immigrants who passed through America’s Pacific gateway,
Angel Island revises our understanding of America’s complicated relationship to immigration. Angel Island: Immigrant Gateway to America is the official publication commemorating the immigration station’s 100th anniversary. A portion of all book sales will benefit the Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation. For information about the book tour visit http://www.aiisf.org/index.php/book.

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**Chinese Philosophy A-Z**

Bo Mou (Edinburgh University Press, 2009)

Reviewed by Alan Fox

University of Delaware

Professor Bo Mou has produced a short volume of entries which is designed to support studies in Chinese Philosophy. The stated purpose of the book is “to provide a concise, alphabetical guide to the main concepts, issues, topics, figures, and important movements of thought that have shaped Chinese philosophy over the last 3,000 years.” As Bo Mou says, “This book emphasizes core terms in order to provide a basic grounding in Chinese philosophy.” The book is intended for undergraduate and post graduate students, teachers of philosophy, and the interested general reader, but would seem to be of limited value to scholars. It is self-consciously designed as a supplementary text, and would not seem to be appropriate as a substitute for more substantive and nuanced materials. I must emphasize that I tend to be somewhat wary of books which attempt to do so much in so little space. It is difficult for such works to avoid superficiality and one-sidedness.

This book is basically a dictionary. But normally dictionaries are produced as the result of surveys—the first definition listed is the meaning that most people assign to the term, the second is the one that the next largest percentage of people assign, and so on. But in this case, when the book covers areas subject to controversy, and where there are many viewpoints, only a single viewpoint seems to be consistently represented. This is a problem for me as a scholar, but also as a teacher. I want my students to be exposed to the broadest possible array of viewpoints, so that they can see the complex nature of scholarship and the mechanisms by which the body of knowledge is produced. I believe that philosophy is best taught through controversy, by demonstrating the various arguments and letting the students sort through them to reach some sense of coherence. I like them to build their own arguments.

There are several notable features of the slender volume. The entries, though brief, are cross-referenced in a way which approximates a hypertext. One can migrate or “surf” from topic to topic with some degree of ease, though the links themselves are somewhat limited and not as open-ended as one might hope. Also, a very thorough bibliography of primary and secondary materials is included for further reference.

Also, Chinese characters are included to help learn technical terminology.

But there are several drawbacks to the volume. For one thing, the entries themselves are very brief and therefore somewhat superficial and one-sided. Some of the cross references are also somewhat obscure and minimal, which limits the extent to which the materials represent the range of scholarly viewpoints on the topics. As a result, there are minimal references to controversies surrounding interpretive and historical issues.

For instance, on page 24 there is a two paragraph entry on Chinese Philosophy. This is odd in a dictionary of all things related to Chinese Philosophy, since one might assume that the nature of Chinese Philosophy is best represented by the sum total of the entries, rather than by a two paragraph entry of its own. This entry serves more to justify the use of the term “philosophy” to refer to Chinese thought than a definition of Chinese Philosophy.

The entry for Confucius is even briefer—two short paragraphs on page 32. There are, to be fair, links to a half-dozen other entries, but there is no discussion at all concerning historical or cultural controversies surrounding the person of Confucius, given the hagiographical nature of much of the biographical information, and his role in the establishment of what we now call Confucianism. The entry proposes that “Confucius’ teachings were written down by his followers over the centuries after his death.” But there are significant questions to be raised about this simple claim, which are not touched upon here.

There are strangely worded entries, such as “constructive engagement movement in modern Chinese Philosophy,” which constitutes a separate entry from “constructive engagement.” It is not clear why these entries cannot be collapsed, since they both deal with the same issues. And I must admit, after reading the definitions, I am unclear as to their meaning. Constructive engagement is described as “a kind of methodological guiding principle and reflective goal in comparative philosophy specifically speaking, and in philosophical inquiry generally speaking.” It is not clear why the distinction is made between comparative philosophy and philosophy generally.

The text goes on to say about this methodology, “It is to inquire into how, via reflective criticism and self-criticism, distinct modes of thinking, methodological approaches, visions, substantial points of view, or conceptual and explanatory resources from different styles/orientations of doing philosophy (within or without the same tradition) can learn from each other and jointly contribute to the common philosophical enterprise and a series of issues and topics of philosophical significance” (page 35).

This is an extremely obscure description of this approach, which I doubt will be of much help to an undergraduate struggling with the subject.

Also, on page 126 we find the entry entitled: “self-constitution, at the individual level.” It is hard to imagine anyone actually looking up such a topic?

The book also radically oversimplifies the controversies surrounding the many meanings of dao. For instance, on page 44, the term is glossed as “ultimate reality or the ultimate.” While the text acknowledges that there is a range of understandings of dao, and while it is true that “the notion of dao is a fundamental, across-the-board reflective category in classical Chinese Philosophy,” it is nevertheless not universally accepted that “in the Daoist classical text, Lao Zi’s *Dao-De-Jing*, ...the dao is understood primarily as the metaphysical dao that exists throughout the universe.” At least, it is not universally accepted that this metaphysical dao is “fundamental,” “original,” “universal,” singular, etc. According to the text, “As highlighted in the opening passage of the *Dao-De-Jing*...the *dao* that has been characterized in finite descriptions is not identical with, or does not exhaust, the eternal *dao*.”

Perhaps the most glaring oversimplification concerns the rendering of the you/wu distinction as “being/non-being” (p. 179). This is done without even an acknowledgement of the controversies surrounding such a translation. Aside from the historical, linguistic, and philosophical inconsistencies this represents, at least it can be said to ignore process, gestalt, and other ways of understanding this distinction, such as “presence and absence,” or “containing or lacking distinctions.” These
readings are represented in the range of scholarship and translations currently available, and are championed by some of the leading figures in modern comparative philosophy.

One last little quibble—I would suggest that the list price of $20 is a little steep for a book that would only be supplementary. As textbook prices have continued to rise, I have always tried to place the smallest burden on my students in terms of book costs. The more inexpensive the book is, the more useful it becomes as a supplementary text.

In general, the book is of limited use, and doesn't really seem to engage the deeper issues that would interest scholars. Still, it might be useful in an undergraduate course as a background source, and might be effective to stimulate questions and discussion. It would be necessary to expand dramatically in order to avoid oversimplification. Perhaps the most useful part of the book is the bibliography, which is helpful though not comprehensive.

All in all the ambitions of the book are modest, and so I can suggest that the book succeeds in those ambitions, but it is not clear that a search of the Internet might not prove just as helpful in the long run.