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**THE “QUIET MINORITY” SPEAKS UP!**  
**MILESTONE STUDY ON ASIAN AMERICANS SHEDS LIGHT ON**  
**THE 2000 ELECTION AND SOCIO-POLITICAL CONCERNS**

--A Pilot Study of the National Asian American Political Survey about social, political and current issues finds that language barrier is one of the greatest problems facing the ethnic community.

Los Angeles, CA – In an effort to understand the assimilation process and social issues facing the Asian American community, Dr. Pei-Te Lien, political science and ethnic studies professor at the University of Utah has conducted the first survey of its kind. The Pilot Study of the National Asian American Political Survey (PNAAPS) is a multi-city, multi-ethnic, and multi-lingual survey of Asians in the U.S., sponsored by the National Science Foundation and KSCI-TV, a leading Asian-language station in Los Angeles.

The PNAAPS examines the social and political attitudes and activities of Chinese, Filipinos, Japanese, Koreans, South Asians and Vietnamese from Chicago, Honolulu, Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco. Respondents are interviewed in English or in Mandarin Chinese, Cantonese, Korean, and Vietnamese, according to their preferences. Providing respondents of certain ethnicities a choice of responding in English or in their native languages is believed to have yielded a more accurate picture of Asian American psyche given the majority of this population are more fluent in their native languages.

Key findings include:

**POLITICAL**

- ***Asian Americans are increasingly becoming incorporated into the U.S. political system.*** Asian Americans remain predominantly foreign-born (three out of four respondents in our sample), but two out of three are citizens, and three out of four non-citizens expect to be citizens in the future. Fully four out of five citizens who were registered to vote turned out to vote in the 2000 election.
- ***Asian Americans are increasingly becoming supporters of the Democrat party and its candidates.*** While many Asian Americans are ambivalent about identifying themselves with a political party, 57 percent of respondents who do affiliate with a party identify as Democrats, 22 percent as Republicans, and 21 percent as Independents. Respondents who reported their vote for president preferred Al Gore to George Bush by more than a two-to-one margin. Support for Gore is highest among Japanese and Chinese Americans, and relatively higher number of Vietnamese, Korean, South Asian and Filipino Americans voted for Bush.
- ***Outreach by parties, candidates and political groups remains relatively low at 41 percent in the past 4 years.*** While more outreach efforts come from the Democratic than Republican party, the levels vary according to ethnic group.
- ***Asian Americans have high interest in politics and greater trust in U.S. than homeland governmental officials.*** Six out of ten respondents indicated that they were either very interested or somewhat interested in what goes on in government. Over half of the immigrant respondents also believe that they can trust U.S. officials more than those in their home country.
- ***Feelings of “political helplessness” and the lack of effective political voice as a community are pervasive*** among Asian Americans as demonstrated through questions on government responsiveness and influence on government decisions.

## SOCIAL ISSUES

- ***Asian Americans point out the inability to speak English well enough as the most important problem facing their ethnic community today.*** Asian Americans report both a high reliance on the English language to conduct business—71% use English although only 26% speak English at home—and a high need for bilingual service from the U.S. government. A large majority of Asians (73%) supported government provision of social services and public information to immigrant communities in English as well as in the immigrants’ native language.
- ***Communities differ in their ranking of the most important problem.*** The Vietnamese, for instance, are far more likely than other groups to mention gangs and drugs and access to employment and housing opportunities as the top problems facing their ethnic community. In comparison, Chinese and Korean respondents are more concerned about language barriers and race relations.
- ***Asian Americans express both a strong ethnic and panethnic group identity.*** When our respondents are asked to choose between ethnic, pan-ethnic, and non-ethnic group identities, two out of three chose to identify either as ethnic American (e.g., as Japanese American) or by ethnic origin alone (e.g., as Japanese), rather than “American,” “Asian American,” or “Asian.” However, a panethnic consciousness is also evident in a sense of shared destiny among Asians in America.
- ***This ethnic and panethnic consciousness is increasingly politicized in nature.*** Asian Americans who are politically active beyond voting participate on issues affecting Asian Americans or involving Asian American candidates for office roughly 40 percent of the time. Moreover, 60 percent of respondents in our sample indicated a preference to vote for an Asian candidate over a non-Asian candidate, all else being equal between the two candidates.

“This is a study long overdue. I have been seeking support to conduct a study like this for over seven years. I hope the findings will help our government and the society understand better about the potentials and issues facing the Asian American communities,” said Dr. Pei-te Lien, author of the survey.

Conducted November 16, 2000 through January 28, 2001, 1,220 adults of Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, South Asian, Korean and Vietnamese decent were contacted by an independent interviewing service, Interviewing Service of America. Telephone households in the five cities were sampled using a dual-frame approach consisting of random-digit dialing at targeted Asian zipcode density and listed surname frames. The study was made possible through the generous support of the National Science Foundation and KSCI-TV, Channel 18 in Los Angeles.

**National Science Foundation** is an independent U.S. government agency responsible for promoting science and engineering through programs that invest over \$3.3 billion per year in almost 20,000 research and education projects in science and engineering.

**KSCI-TV** is the premier multi-lingual television station in Southern California reaching out to the nation’s largest Asian American community of over two million persons. Founded in 1976, KSCI-TV was the first television station in the country to provide round-the-clock programming in 14 languages and remains America’s leading multilingual station. KSCI-TV reaches over 5 million homes on Channel 18 (Channel 48 in San Diego County) and is carried on 91 cable systems.

**Interviewing Service of America, Inc.**, founded in 1982, is one of the largest and most diverse research data collection and information providers in the U.S., serving such clients as the Los Angeles Times Poll, A.C. Nielsen Co., AT&T, NBC and the California State Lottery. The company is a leader in multi-lingual interviewing and headquartered in Van Nuys, CA with regional offices in New York and Washington D.C.

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## **A Summary Report of the Pilot Study of the National Asian American Political Survey by Pei-te Lien, M. Margaret Conway, Taeku Lee, and Janelle Wong**

### **Background Summary:**

- This is the first-ever multi-city, multi-ethnic, and multi-lingual survey of Asians in the United States. It examines the social and political attitudes and activities of Chinese, Filipinos, Japanese, Koreans, South Asians, and Vietnamese from Chicago, Honolulu, Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco. Respondents are interviewed in English or in Mandarin Chinese, Cantonese, Korean, and Vietnamese, according to their preferences.

### **Summary of Findings:**

- Asian Americans<sup>1</sup> are increasingly becoming incorporated into the U.S. political system. Asian Americans remain predominantly foreign-born (three out of four respondents in our sample), but two out of three are citizens, and three out of four non-citizens expect to be citizens in the future. Fully four out of five citizens who were registered to vote turned out to vote in the 2000 election.
- Asian Americans are increasingly becoming supporters of the Democrat party and its candidates. While many Asian Americans are ambivalent about identifying themselves with a political party, 57 percent of respondents who do affiliate with a party identify as Democrats, 22 percent as Republicans, and 21 percent as Independents. Respondents who reported their vote for president preferred Al Gore to George Bush by more than a two-to-one margin. Support for Gore is highest among Japanese and Chinese Americans, who favor Gore to Bush by more than a three-to-one margin. Asian Americans who are familiar with the presidential selection process strongly support a change in the system to award the presidency to the winner of the popular vote.
- Asian Americans are decidedly supportive of affirmative action policies, campaign contributions by legal permanent residents, and bilingual provision of government services and public information to immigrant communities. Seventy percent who report an opinion on affirmative action are in favor of it; 73 percent favor bilingual services and public information; respondents approved rather than disapproved of political contributions by legal immigrants by more than a two-to-one margin. By contrast, Asian Americans favor rather than oppose a quota on legal immigration to the United States by almost a two-to-one margin.
- On current affairs, more than half of our respondents were familiar with the case of Wen Ho Lee. Of those familiar with the case, respondents disapproved rather than approved of the government's handling of the case by almost a three to one margin.
- In contrast to the highly publicized Wen Ho Lee case, only about one in five respondents were familiar with the 80-20 Initiative to organize an Asian American voting bloc in the 2000 election. Those who were knowledgeable strongly favored such a campaign.
- Asian Americans continue to experience substantial levels of discrimination and other community problems. More than one out of three in our survey report personally experiencing racial discrimination in the United States. The levels of discrimination reported is remarkably similar across all ethnic groups except for Vietnamese, who are far less likely to report experiencing discrimination. The Vietnamese, however, are far more likely than other groups to report concern about problems of

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<sup>1</sup> The term "Asian Americans" is used interchangeably with "Asians" throughout the report. Except where noted, we also use "Chinese," "Japanese," "Vietnamese," "Koreans," "Filipinos," and "South Asians" to stand for "Chinese Americans," "Japanese Americans," "Vietnamese Americans," "Korean Americans," "Filipino Americans," and "Asian Indian/Pakistani Americans," respectively. We use<sup>2</sup> "immigrants" to refer to those respondents born in Asia.

gangs and drugs and in employment and housing opportunities in their community. In contrast, Chinese and Korean respondents are more concerned about language barriers and race relations.

- Asian-born immigrants maintain strong social ties with their countries of origin. One quarter of our Asian-born respondents reported visiting their country of origin in the last year; two-thirds report such a visit in the last four years. One out of four also report weekly contact with someone in their home country. More than half our respondents reported following news stories on Asia closely.
- Asian Americans also report substantial levels of interracial contact. More respondents live in racially mixed neighborhoods than any other kind of neighborhood. One in four Asian Americans live in mostly white neighborhoods and one in five in mostly Asian neighborhoods. Very few Asian Americans, however, live in neighborhoods that are primarily Latino or African American. These patterns are similar in the close interracial friendships that Asian Americans hold. Only a small minority of Asian Americans disapprove of having a family member marry a person of a different ethnic background.
- Asian Americans express both a strong ethnic and panethnic group identity. When our respondents are asked to choose between ethnic, pan-ethnic, and non-ethnic group identities, two out of three chose to identify either as ethnic American (e.g., as Japanese American) or by ethnic origin alone (e.g., as Japanese). Although only one in six volunteer to identify in pan-ethnic terms as “Asian American,” half of those who identify themselves in other terms indicate that they would think of themselves as “Asian American,” too. A panethnic consciousness is also evident in a sense of shared destiny among Asians in America. Roughly half of our respondents agree that their own lives are affected by what happens with other Asian ethnic groups in the U.S.
- This ethnic and panethnic consciousness is increasingly politicized in nature. Asian Americans who are politically active beyond voting do so on issues affecting Asian Americans or involving Asian American candidates for office roughly 40 percent of the time. Moreover, 60 percent of respondents in our sample indicated a preference to vote for an Asian candidate over a non-Asian candidate, all else being equal between the two candidates.

### ***Adjustment to American Life: Political Adaptation***

**Citizenship.** The PNAAPS asked several questions related to the adaptation of Asian Americans<sup>2</sup> to the American political system. For example, respondents were asked about their citizenship status. While a third of our respondents are not citizens (32%), most of these non-citizens plan to become citizens in the future (72%). Respondents of Japanese descent differed significantly from other Asians in this orientation. Just 31 percent of Japanese immigrants who were not citizens at the time of the survey planned to become U.S. citizens compared to, say, 83 percent of Filipino and 91 percent of Vietnamese non-citizens. Non-citizens of Japanese descent were also more ambivalent about their future citizenship plans: 23 percent were unsure, compared to an average of 7 percent among other ethnic groups in the survey. It should be noted, however, that a higher percentage of Japanese respondents are currently citizens than any other Asian American group.

**Voting and nonvoting.** Only 44 percent of the respondents reported voting in the November 2000 presidential election. Japanese respondents voted at the highest proportions (63%), compared to, say, Filipinos (47%), the next highest group in voting turnout. Koreans had the lowest turnout rate at 34 percent. Non-citizenship was the most commonly-cited reason for nonvoting. This was mentioned by nearly six out of ten respondents who failed to cast a vote in the presidential election. Not having registered to vote was the second most commonly-cited reason, mentioned by a quarter of the non-voters. Other reasons for nonvoting mentioned included: being too busy working or attending schools

(3%), lack of interest in politics or elections (3%), and not receiving an absentee ballot (1%). Again, there were significant inter-ethnic group differences. For example, 80 percent among South Asians cited non-citizenship, 39 percent of Vietnamese citizens failed to register, and 14 percent of Japanese attributed their nonvoting to a disinterest in politics. When the voting rate is calculated only among eligible voters (citizens who are registered), 82 percent of Asians reported voting. The turnout rate was highest among South Asians (93%), followed by the Vietnamese (91.5%). The turnout rates for Koreans and Filipinos were the lowest at 71 percent and 76 percent respectively.

**Participation beyond voting.** In addition to voting and registration, a small segment of Asians also participated in other political activities. The most common form is working with others in the community to solve a problem (21%), followed by signing a petition for a political cause (16%), and attending a public meeting, political rally, or fundraiser (14%). A higher percentage of South Asians than other Asians reported having written or phoned a government official (17%), contacted media (14%), or worked with others to solve a community problem (36%). A higher percentage of Japanese than other Asians had donated money to political campaigns (20%), attended political gatherings (22%), and signed a petition (24%). About a quarter of Koreans also reported having signed a petition in the previous four years. And a higher percentage of Vietnamese participated in political protest and demonstration (14%) than other Asian groups.

**Presidential Vote.** In the 2000 election, 55 percent of Asian American voters reported casting a vote for Al Gore, 26 percent for George Bush, and 1 percent for Ralph Nader. Eighteen percent of respondents either refused to report their vote choice or were not sure. The percentage of voters favoring Gore ranged from as high as 64 percent among the Chinese to as low as 44 percent among Koreans. Nevertheless, Gore received a higher proportion of the presidential vote than Bush in every ethnic group. Vietnamese voters gave the highest percentage of support for Bush (35%), which was almost 20 percentage points below the group's support for Gore (54%). The unusual situation in Florida following the election may account for the 18% of respondents who either refused to report or were uncertain about the vote they cast for. Among respondents who reported their vote for president, two-thirds preferred Al Gore to George Bush. Support for Gore was highest among Japanese and Chinese Americans, who favored Gore to Bush by more than a three-to-one margin. When queried about their familiarity with the process of electing the U.S. president, an overwhelming majority (79%) reported being either very or somewhat familiar with the process. South Asians scored the highest at 93 percent and the Vietnamese scored the lowest at 65 percent. Of these respondents, a large majority (65%) favored seeing a change in the system to award the presidency only to the candidate who received the highest number of votes.

## **Political Orientations**

**Party Identification.** Asian American voters' choice of a presidential candidate reflected to a limited extent the underlying alignment of political party identification among the respondents. When asked about their party affiliations, 36 percent of our respondent identified as a Democrat, 14 percent as a Republican, and 13 percent as an Independent. Overall 20 percent did not think of themselves in partisan terms and 18 percent were either uncertain about their party identification or refused to give a response. Group differences exist in patterns of party affiliation. Between the two major parties in the United States, Japanese (40 percent to 9 percent), Chinese (32 percent to 8 percent) and South Asians (44 percent to 13 percent) are most likely to affiliate with the Democratic Party over the Republican Party. Filipinos and Koreans favor the Democratic Party over the Republican Party by a two-to-one margin. Only Vietnamese identify with as Republicans more frequently than as Democrats (15 percent to 12 percent). The proportion of respondents identifying as Independents ranges from a high of 23 percent for South Asians and 20 percent for Japanese to a low of 3 percent for Chinese. More than half of our Vietnamese and Chinese respondents either did not think in terms of a party affiliation or were not sure with which party they would identify.

**Political Ideology.** Do Asian Americans consider themselves to be liberal, middle of the road, or conservative? Overall, 8 percent classified themselves as very liberal, 28 percent as somewhat liberal, 32 percent as middle of the road, 18 percent as somewhat conservative, and 4 percent as very conservative. Ten percent were not sure where to place themselves. Chinese (42%), Vietnamese (47%), and Japanese (37%) were more likely to classify themselves as middle of the road. Filipinos (40%) and South Asians (61%) were more likely to identify themselves as very liberal or somewhat liberal than were the Chinese (30%), Koreans (33%), Vietnamese (22%), and Japanese (34%). Thirty-four percent of Filipinos placed themselves in one of the conservative categories, as did 31 percent of the Koreans and 24 percent of the Japanese. Only 17 percent of South Asians, 13 percent of the Chinese, and 9 percent of the Vietnamese considered themselves to be conservative.

**Political Interest.** Participants in the PNAAPS were asked how interested they were in what goes on in government. The proportion reporting that they were very interested or somewhat interested ranged from 52 percent among Vietnamese respondents to 72 percent among South Asians. Overall 61 percent of those interviewed indicated they were either very interested or somewhat interested in what goes on in government.

**Political Trust.** Since the mid-1960s, national surveys have found low levels of trust in government generally and in public officials among U.S. residents. The PNAAPS permits us to assess patterns of political trust among Asian Americans. When queried about the extent to which they trusted local government officials, 7 percent indicated that local government officials can be trusted just about always, 30 percent most of the time, 44 percent some of the time, and 8 percent indicated they cannot be trusted at all. Levels of trust varied among Asian American groups, with Korean Americans (43%), Filipino Americans (41%) and South Asian Americans (41%) indicating local officials could be trusted just about always or most of the time and the members of other groups reporting lower levels of trust.

An interesting comparison is the extent to which Asian Americans born in Asia feel they can generally trust U.S. government officials compared to government officials in their country of origin. Asked if they could trust the U. S. government officials more, about the same, or less than in the home country, 55 percent said more, 26 percent indicated about the same, and only 6 percent indicated less than in the home country. Response patterns varied greatly by country of origin. The proportion of each group reporting they could trust U.S. officials more than officials in the home country ranged from 72 percent for Koreans and 67 percent for Vietnamese to 39 percent among Chinese and 29 percent among Japanese. Japanese immigrants were more likely than any other group to report that U.S. officials could either be trusted about the same as those in the home country (46%) or less than in the home country (15%).

**Government Responsiveness.** The study also measured perceptions of government officials' responsiveness to citizen complaints. Survey participants were asked if they took a complaint to a local public official, whether the local official would pay a lot of attention, some attention, very little attention, or no attention to that complaint. Nine percent thought the local officials would pay a lot of attention and 33 percent thought they would pay some attention. Perceptions of government responsiveness (paying a lot of attention or some attention) were highest among South Asian Americans (55%), Filipino Americans (54%), and Japanese Americans (43%). Less than one-third of Chinese Americans and Korean Americans expected that local government officials would pay either a lot or some attention to their complaint.

**Influence on Government Decisions.** When asked how much influence someone like themselves can have over local government decisions—a lot, some, very little, or none at all—only 6 percent responded “a lot” and 20 percent believed they can have some influence. Sixty-eight percent of respondents believed they had very little or no influence over local government decisions. Chinese

Americans were least likely to believe they can have a lot or some influence (11 %), with at least one-quarter of the other groups believing they can have a lot or some influence over government decisions.

Asian Americans born in Asia were also asked if they felt they could generally influence decisions made by U.S. government officials more, about the same, or less than those made by government officials in their home country. Overall 39 percent believed they have more influence over decisions made by U.S. government officials, 24 percent about the same as they could influence government officials in their home country, and 17 percent less. Nineteen percent were not sure in which country they could have more influence over government officials' decisions. Again, the responses varied greatly by country of origin, with 59 percent of the Koreans, 56 percent of the Vietnamese, 44 percent of the Filipinos, 38 percent of the South Asians, 32 percent of the Japanese, but only 19 percent of the Chinese saying they would have more influence over decisions made by U.S. officials. A majority of Asian-born Chinese either believed they would have less influence over decisions made in the United States or were not sure in which country they would have more influence.

### **Political Mobilization / Outreach**

The PNAAPS contained several questions about how respondents learn about or are mobilized to participate in politics. For example, respondents were asked about whether they had been contacted by letter, e-mail, or telephone by a political party, candidate organization, or political group about a political campaign during the past four years. Overall, 41 percent of those surveyed had been contacted in one of these ways. Outreach varied according to ethnic group. Sixty-two percent of Japanese respondents had been contacted by parties, candidates, and political groups, while just 15 percent of Vietnamese respondents had been contacted. Levels of political mobilization for Chinese, Koreans, South Asians, and Filipinos were about 40 percent. In addition, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Filipino, and South Asian respondents were most likely to be contacted by the Democratic rather than the Republican Party. Vietnamese respondents, on the other hand, were more likely to be contacted by the Republican Party than the Democratic Party.

Respondents in the PNAAPS were also asked about whether someone they knew personally had ever requested that they vote, contribute money to a political cause, or engage in some other type of political activity. Among all respondents about 20 percent had been mobilized towards a political activity by someone they knew. Again, Japanese respondents (28%) were the most likely to be mobilized, while Vietnamese (6%) were the least likely to be mobilized. Furthermore, the source of mobilization varied across ethnic groups. Korean respondents were likely to be asked to participate by a church leader (19%) or director of a program (23%). In contrast, the members of other ethnic groups—especially Japanese and Chinese—were most likely to be asked to participate in political activities by a friend or relative.

### ***Adjustment to American Life: Ethnic and Panethnic Group Identities***

One of the thorniest questions about Asians in America is whether such a thing as a pan-ethnic identity (as “Asian American”) actually exists. The PNAAPS gives us some striking new insights into this question. The first vantage into this issue is self-identification. Given a choice between identifying oneself as American, Asian American, Asian, ethnic American (e.g., as Chinese American), or simply in terms of one's ethnic origin (e.g., as Chinese), respondents were most apt to indicate an ethnic-specific identity. Among all respondents, 34 percent chose to identify as ethnic American and 30 percent by ethnic origin alone. The prevalence of ethnic American identification is fairly consistent across all groups, with Filipino American (40%) the most common and Japanese American (26%) the least common. Ethnic-only identification varies considerably more, with Chinese (42%), Vietnamese (42%), Korean (41%) respondents much likelier to identify ethnically than Filipino

(21%), Indian (21%), and Japanese (12%) respondents. Only three percent of all the respondents were not sure of how to answer this question.

Among the other categories, there is a fairly consistent minority of respondents in all groups – ranging from 12 percent of Chinese respondents to 23 percent of South Asians – who identified as Asian American. The degree of identification simply as “American” is astonishingly varied across groups. On the high end, more than 40 percent of Japanese respondents identify as American, with roughly one in seven Filipinos and Indians in the middle, and almost no Korean, Chinese, or Vietnamese identifying as American (3%, 1%, and 1%, respectively). The relative absence of identification as Asian Americans, importantly, results from asking respondents to choose just one out of multiple possible identities. When respondents who did not choose “Asian American” are asked to indicate if they think of themselves as Asian American, more than half of respondents report such a panethnic consciousness. This panethnic consciousness was most strongly felt among South Asians and least strongly among Koreans and Japanese.

We also examine panethnicity or pan-Asian group identity as a sense of shared culture. In the full sample, only about one out of every ten respondents agreed that different Asian groups in America are “very similar” culturally. Four out of ten respondents (41%), however, believed that different Asian groups in America are somewhat similar culturally. There is a remarkable uniformity across all ethnic groups on this question. Nevertheless, over half of Koreans (59%) and South Asians (53%) believed that groups of Asians differed somewhat or very much in cultural outlook. Between 11 percent (Japanese respondents) and 1 percent (South Asians) were not sure of their views on this question.

A third window into panethnic identity is a sense of a common destiny. Cumulatively, about half of respondents (49%) believed that “what happens generally to other groups of Asians in this country will affect what happens in your life.” But there is a great deal of variation across groups. Although Koreans were least likely to believe that Asian Americans share a common culture, they were most likely to perceive a general linked fate (61%). Filipinos (54%) and South Asians (53%) also exhibited high levels of linked fate. Less than half of Chinese and Japanese and only 36% of Vietnamese viewed Asians as sharing a common destiny. Again, the Japanese were more likely to be uncertain about this question (12%) than an average Asian (9%). Groups also differ in how strongly this sense of shared panethnic destiny was felt. For example, a third of Vietnamese, but only 4 percent of Koreans, who believed that they shared the same fate with other Asians thought that they were not very much affected by issues and events happening to other Asians.

Individuals felt somewhat more strongly about *ethnic shared fate* (55%) than about *panethnic shared fate*. Again, there is a significant variance across ethnic groups. Koreans again were most likely to perceive ethnic identity (76%) and Vietnamese again were the least likely to do so (38%). With Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos, and South Asians alike, roughly three out of every five respondents believed an ethnic shared fate. Groups differ widely, once again, in how strongly this shared ethnic fate was felt across groups. For example, more than four out of ten South Asians (42%) but only less than three out of 10 Chinese and Japanese (27%) who believed that they shared the same fate with their co-ethnics thought that they were very much affected by issues and events happening to other individuals in their own ethnic groups.

### **Public Policy Concerns**

One of the central concerns about Asian Americans as a political community is whether or not Asians in America speak with one voice or with multiple, cross-cutting, perhaps even contradictory tongues on political and policy issues. The PNAAPS includes several questions on current political affairs and salient public policy debates that allow us to examine this matter.

**Community Problems.** When asked about the most important problem facing the respective ethnic community, the overall top issues identified are language barriers (22%), race/ethnic relations (12%), inadequate job opportunities (11%), losing culture (7%), and government insensitivity/lack of political representation (6%). However, respondents in each group appeared to have a different list of priorities in mind. For Chinese, the top community issues include language barriers, racial and ethnic relations, and unemployment or inadequate job opportunities. For Koreans, many also shared the concern over language, but they were also concerned about the lack of cohesion inside the community and problems dealing with teenagers. Vietnamese respondents prioritized, gangs, drugs, employment, and housing opportunities. At least four out of ten Japanese (49%), South Asians (47%), and Filipinos (41%) did not see any problem facing their respective ethnic community. Furthermore, at least one out of five respondents in these ethnic groups were unsure if there was a problem. When a problem was reported, the most frequent mention among the Japanese was discrimination; for Filipinos, language barrier and breaking down of family structure; for South Asians, unemployment or job opportunities.

Although our English-speaking respondents of Japanese, Filipino, and South Asian descent were much less likely to identify community problems, they were not less likely to report being a victim of hate crimes. Between 15 to 19 percent of respondents in these three communities had been verbally or physically abused or had properties damaged due to racial- and ethnic-based discrimination. By contrast, only 9 percent of Vietnamese reported being a victim of a hate crime. Neither were the three ethnic groups less likely to report ever being personally discriminated in the U.S. An average of 4 out of 10 respondents in every ethnic community had experienced discrimination; the figure for the Vietnamese is significantly lower at 13 percent.

When asked to identify the source of their experience with discrimination 92 percent of respondents singled out their ethnic background. Close to half (48%) mentioned their accent or perceived accent, ranging from 60 percent of Chinese and only 20 percent Japanese respondents. Roughly one out of five respondents also identified gender as a basis for discrimination; that percentage is higher among South Asian, Filipino, and Vietnamese respondents. When inquired about the context in which the discrimination took place, the most frequently mentioned context for all Asians is when dealing with strangers in a public place, followed by dealing with a business or retail establishment, and by getting jobs or promotion. However, there is some variation across ethnic groups. For example, more Vietnamese mentioned being discriminated while getting jobs or promotion and in dealing with neighbors than in other categories. About the same number of Filipinos mentioned being discriminated in business transactions as by strangers in a public place.

**Current Affairs.** On current affairs, respondents were asked about the Wen Ho Lee case and about the 80-20 Initiative. Roughly three out of five respondents were familiar with the Wen Ho Lee case, with Chinese (84%), Koreans (73%), and Japanese (63%) most familiar and Indians (43%), Vietnamese (34%), and Filipinos (33%) least familiar. More than half (53%) of respondents who were familiar with the case disapprove of the government's handling of the case, while 19 percent approve and 21 percent report no opinion on the matter. Not surprisingly, Chinese respondents were conspicuously more negative about the government's handling of the case (67% disapproved and only 8% approved). Eighteen percent of the Chinese who had heard of the case did not give an opinion on this matter.

In striking contrast to the highly publicized Wen Ho Lee case, only about one in five respondents reported having heard of the 80-20 Initiative to organize an Asian American voting bloc in the 2000 presidential election. There is a great deal of variance across groups in their familiarity with this campaign, with Chinese (39%) and Koreans (28%) most familiar, and Vietnamese (13%), Indians (9%), Filipinos (6%), and Japanese (2%) considerably less informed on the issue. There is strong support among those who were knowledgeable about the 80-20 Initiative: 64 percent approved,

15 percent disapproved, and 17 percent held no opinion on the matter.

**Public Policy Debates.** On public policy debates, the PNAAPS surveys Asian American opinion on language policy, immigration, affirmative action, and campaign contributions. On language policy, an overwhelming proportion (73%) of Asians in America supported government provision of social services and public information to immigrant communities in English as well as in the immigrants' native language. Fifty-four percent believed this strongly. Japanese and South Asians were least likely to support bi-lingual materials, but even here, more than two-thirds were supportive. Close to 90 percent of Vietnamese supported such bi-lingual materials, with Koreans (78%), Filipinos (78%), and Chinese (71%) in between. An average of 6 percent Asians did not have an opinion on this, but Japanese had the highest rate of no opinion at 11 percent.

On immigration, a plurality of Asian Americans (45%) supported a quota on legal immigration to the United States, with a strong minority who either opposed such limits (25%) or held no preference on the matter (18%) and another 12 percent who did not have an opinion on this issue. There is a great deal of overlap across ethnic groups on this question, with the exception of Korean Americans: a plurality of Koreans (37%) opposed limits on immigration, with only one in four favoring it.

In the realm of electoral politics and campaign finance reform, respondents were asked whether or not legal permanent residents (non-U.S. citizens) should be allowed to make monetary contributions to political campaigns. About half of the all respondents (49%) supported and only one out of five respondents (21%) opposed such a participatory role for permanent residents. This support is fairly consistent across ethnic groups, with 62 percent of Indians at the high end and 41 percent of Vietnamese at the low end of support. Twenty-six percent of Vietnamese, however, did not express an opinion on this issue—a higher figure than the Asian average of 17 percent.

Finally, respondents were asked three questions about affirmative action policy: one's general views on affirmative action, support for targeted job training and educational assistance programs, and support for race-based hiring and promotion. In the most general formulation, Asian Americans were overwhelmingly supportive of affirmative action. Of respondents who held an opinion on affirmative action, 72 percent believe it is a "good thing" while only 7 percent believe it is a "bad thing" and 22 percent who believe that affirmative action does not affect Asian Americans. Comparing across groups, Vietnamese (95%), Koreans (81%), and Chinese (79%) were most supportive of affirmative action, with Filipinos (68%), Indians (60%), and Japanese (52%) less supportive.

One of the most consistent findings in public opinion on affirmative action is that support levels vary wildly depending on how the question is framed. Asian Americans are not different in this regard. Support for special programs in job training and educational assistance mirrors general support for affirmative action: 62 percent of all respondents favored it, 14 percent opposed it, and 18 percent neither favored nor opposed it. Vietnamese (86%) were considerably more favorable toward such programs than other groups (where levels ranged from 40% to 68%). Support for race-based preferences in employment decision, however, is drastically lower: only 37 percent of all respondents supported such "special preferences," while 32 percent opposed them and 22 percent neither favored nor opposed. Here again, Vietnamese (74% supported) preferences are starkly distinct from other Asian groups. Japanese (19%) and Chinese (27%) are least supportive of such targeted affirmative action, while Koreans (44%), Filipinos (38%), and Indians (36%) are more moderate on this question.

### ***Adjustment to American Life: Social and Cultural Adaptation***

**Language Usage.** A measure of Asian American acculturation in the United States is language use. Among all respondents, 26 percent used English, 48 percent used a language other than

English, and 24 percent used a mix of English and another language in the household among their family members. Outside of the home, English use was much higher. Among all Asian American respondents, almost two-thirds (71%), used English to conduct personal business and financial transactions, for example. English language use also varied greatly across different Asian American ethnic groups. English language use in the home was lowest among Vietnamese (2%), Chinese (4%), and Korean (10%) samples. When given the choice of interview language almost all of these groups of respondents also chose to be interviewed in their native languages, indicating that they are more comfortable communicating in their native languages rather than in English. However, when it comes to conducting personal business and financial transactions, a much higher percentage of Koreans (71%), Vietnamese (59%), and Chinese (33%) relied on the English language.

**Social Network.** Most respondents in the survey were part of an interracial social network. In the sample as a whole, about one-third reported that they had a close personal friend who was white. This proportion was consistent across ethnic groups, with the exception of the Vietnamese sample, among whom only 6 percent claimed to have a white friend. At least one-third of Filipino (33%), South Asian (42%), and Japanese (44%) respondents reported that they had a close personal friend who was African American, compared to 20 percent of Korean, 17 percent of Chinese and 6 percent of Vietnamese respondents. Many of those interviewed also had Latino friends. In addition, almost half of those from every ethnic group claimed that one of their close personal friends was another Asian American.

### **Attachments to Country of Origin**

**Maintaining Contact.** Most of the Asian Americans who took part in the survey maintained strong social ties with people in their countries of origin. For example, a quarter of the Asian-born sample had contact with people in their country of origin by mail, phone, or in person, at least once a week. For example, 44% of South Asians were in contact with someone in their country of origin at least once a week. Among the other ethnic groups, a slightly lower proportion were in frequent contact with people in their countries of origin. For instance, 20 percent of Filipino immigrants and 22 percent of Chinese and Korean immigrants maintained contact with people in their countries of origin at least once a week. A large majority of those in every ethnic group category were in contact with individuals in their country of origin at least once a month.

**Following News.** Another indicator of Asian Americans' ties to their countries of origin is whether they follow news stories about current events in Asia. Korean (80%), Chinese (68%), and South Asian (55%) respondents were the most likely to follow very or fairly closely to news related to events in their countries of origin. Japanese (38%) were the least likely to follow news and current events related to their country of origin. It is interesting to note that, except for the Vietnamese and Filipinos, respondents were just as likely or even more likely to follow current events about Asian Americans in the United States as they were to keep up on stories about events in their countries of origin.

**U.S. is the home.** Despite strong ties to their countries of origin, most of the Asian-born respondents (78%) expected that they and their children would end of living in the U.S. for the next 15 to 20 years. For instance, 79 percent of Chinese, 94 percent of Korean, 64 percent of Vietnamese, 61 percent of Japanese, 82 percent of Filipino and 74 percent of South Asian immigrants expected that they and their children would continue to reside in the U.S. in the coming years.

### **Who Participated in the Survey?: A Profile of Respondents**

The survey respondents are of multiple Asian ethnic origins and from five major cities of the Asian American population around the nation. One-third reside in Los Angeles, the rest are equally

distributed in San Francisco, Chicago, New York, and Honolulu. About one-fourth of the respondents are of Chinese descent; of them, about seven out of ten can trace their ancestral homes in mainland China, about two out of ten originated from Taiwan, and about one-tenth were from Hong Kong. Over one-fifth of the respondents are of Filipino descent; one-sixth are of Japanese descent, and the rest are of Korean, South Asian, and Vietnamese descents. Most of Korean, Vietnamese, and Filipino respondents reside in the Los Angeles area. About six out of ten Chinese respondents reside in either Los Angeles or San Francisco. Close to half of all Japanese respondents reside in Honolulu and 39 percent of South Asians reside in the Chicago area.

**Nativity and Immigration Generation.** The majority of the respondents were born in Asia (76%), 14 percent of all respondents are U.S.-born but with Asian-born parents, another 10 percent have both themselves and their parents born in the U.S. However, less than one-fourth (22%) of the Japanese respondents were born in Japan and over four out of ten among them are of the third or more generation. Filipinos is the only other group that has 10% or more of the respondents reported being a third or more generation.

**Length of Local Residence.** The respondents lived an average of 12.8 years in their present city or town. The average length for the Japanese is significantly higher at 26.7 years and significantly lower for South Asians at 7.9 years and for Koreans at 8.8 years. Besides the Japanese (47%), both Filipinos (16%) and Chinese (12%) also have a significant proportion of the respondents who have lived in the local area for 21 or more years.

**Age and Sex.** The average age of a respondent is 44, but a typical South Asian respondent is significantly younger at age 36 and a person of Japanese descent is older at age 49. The sample is equally divided between male and female respondents, but more males than females are represented in the Vietnamese and South Asian subsamples.

**Education.** About half of the sample has a college or more advanced degree. The educational achievement among South Asian respondents are especially astonishing with over one-fourth holding a post-graduate degree. Even the lowest achievement group, the Vietnamese, has one-third of the respondents reporting having a college degree or more. However, except for the Japanese, the majority respondents in each ethnic group received education mainly outside of the United States. An even percentage of Filipinos received education in and outside of the United States.

**Income.** Many respondents were reluctant to report income. However, among those who reported, the results defy an image of overall affluence. Respondents in each ethnic group have a somewhat different “most common” categories of family income. For example, the most common category for the Chinese is “between \$10,000 and \$19,999”. That for Japanese and Filipinos is “between \$40,000 and \$59,999”. The two most common categories for Koreans and South Asians are “between \$40,000 and \$59,999” and “over \$80,000”. However, for the Vietnamese, the two most common categories are “between \$10,000 and \$19,999” and “between \$30,000 and \$39,000”.

**Religion.** The respondents also differ greatly in religious belief. Close to seven out of ten (68%) Filipinos are Catholic and a similar proportion of Koreans are Christians. Close to half (49%) of Vietnamese respondents are Buddhist and 46 percent of South Asians are Hindu. However, over one-fourth of Japanese (26%) and close to 40 percent of Chinese respondents do not have a religious preference.

## **A Pilot Study of the National Asian American Political Survey (PNAAPS)**

**Sponsors:** National Science Foundation (NSF) and KSCI-TV Los Angeles

**Grant Type:** NSF Professional Opportunities for Women in Research and Education (POWRE)  
KSCI-TV Community Outreach Research Grant

**Receiving Institution:** The University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah

**Subcontractor:** The Interviewing Service of America, Van Nuys, CA

**Principal Investigator:** Pei-te Lien, Assistant Professor of Political Science and Ethnic Studies,  
University of Utah

### **Research Collaborators:**

M. Margaret Conway, Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Political Science, University of Florida,  
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Taeku Lee, Assistant Professor of Public Policy, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University

Janelle Wong, ABD of Political Science, Yale University; Assistant Professor of Political Science and  
Program in American Studies and Ethnicity, University of Southern California (in fall 2001)

### **Survey Methodology**

This multi-city, multi-ethnic, and multi-lingual survey is a preliminary attempt to gauge the political attitudes and behavior of Asian Americans on a national scale. A total of 1,218 adults of Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Japanese, Filipino, and Asian Indian or Pakistani descent who resided in Los Angeles, New York, Honolulu, San Francisco, and Chicago metropolitan areas were randomly selected to be interviewed by phone between November 16, 2000 and January 28, 2001. Telephone households in these five metropolitan areas--chosen for their Asian population size, geographic location, and Asian ethnic group makeup--were sampled using a dual-frame approach consisting of random-digit dialing at targeted Asian zipcode densities and listed-surname frames. Only telephone households with surnames associated with the top six Asian ethnic groups were included in this study. For samples in New York and Chicago, the listed-surname approach was the only method used. Within each sampling area, the probability of selection for each ethnic sample was to approximate the size of the ethnic population among Asian Americans according to the 1990 Census. However, the Vietnamese and Asian Indians were oversampled to generate a sufficiently large number of respondents for analysis. Within each contacted household, the interviewer would ask to speak with an adult 18 years of age or older who most recently had a birthday. To increase the response rate, multiple call attempts made at staggered time and day of week and to re-contact breakoffs and refusals were used.

The resulting sample has 308 Chinese, 168 Korean, 137 Vietnamese, 198 Japanese, 266 Filipino, and 141 Asian Indian or Pakistani Americans or an average of 200 completed interviews from each MSA and an additional 217 interviews from the Los Angeles Metropolitan Area. Based on the English proficiency rate of each Asian subgroup and practical cost concerns, English was used to interview respondents of Japanese, Filipino, and Asian Indian descent; respondents of Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese descent were interviewed in their language of preference. Among the Chinese, 78% chose to be interviewed in Mandarin Chinese, 19% in Cantonese, and 3% in English. Close to 9 out of 10 Koreans (87%) chose to be interviewed in Korean. Nearly all Vietnamese respondents (98.5%) chose to be interviewed in Vietnamese.

The average interview length is 27 minutes for interviews conducted in the respondent's non-English language and 20 minutes for interviews conducted in English. The average incidence rate for interviews drawn from the listed surname sample is 41%, with a range from 14.5% for the Filipino sample to 81% for the Chinese sample. The incidence rate for RDD interviews is 15%, which ranges from 4.6% for Korean to 24% for Japanese sample. The average refusal rate is 25%, with 34% in the listed sample and 3.5% in the RDD sample.

This survey is sponsored by a research grant from the National Science Foundation (SES-9973435). The KSCI-TV of Los Angeles donated money to augment the Los Angeles portion of the project. Samples were developed by Survey Sampling Inc., of Fairfield, Connecticut. Interviews were conducted by the Interviewing Services of America, Inc, of Van Nuys, California. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the principal investigator and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation or the KSCI-TV.

Readers are reminded that, since survey research normally questions only a small proportion of the population, one must allow a certain margin of error. The margin of sampling error for this survey is plus or minus 3 percentage points. The error margin is higher for certain subgroups. In addition to sampling error, samples generated with the listed surname frame may omit households with unlisted telephone numbers or persons who do not bear identifiable surnames in the targeted study areas. Samples generated with the RDD frame may not allow coverage of households in areas falling below a density of 10% Asian in each zip code.

Surveys of this kind are sometimes subject to different kinds of inaccuracies for which precise estimates cannot be calculated and which may, in some cases, be even larger than the effects associated with sampling procedures. For example, respondents' attitude toward the presidential election process may be influenced by events happened in Florida during the course of the interviewing period. Undetected flaws in the translation of survey questionnaire and the way the sampling and interviewing procedure were carried out could have a significant effect on the findings. Changing the wording of questions and the sequence in which they are asked can produce different results. Sometimes questions are inadvertently biased or misleading and people who responded to the survey may not necessarily replicate the views of those who refused to be interviewed or who could not be found at home during the time the survey was conducted. Moreover, while every effort has been made to generate as accurate a finding as possible, other errors may have resulted from the various practical difficulties associated with taking any survey of public opinion.

Pei-te Lien, who teaches Political Science and Asian American Studies at the University of Utah, is the principal investigator of the survey. Distinguished Professor Emeritus M. Margaret Conway of Political Science at the University of Florida, Assistant Professor Taeku Lee of Public Policy at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, Janelle Wong of Political Science at Yale University and University of Southern California, and Alice Lee, Director of Research at KSCI-TV Los Angeles, contributed to the development of survey questionnaire and other aspects of the survey.

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A native of Taiwan, Pei-te Lien received a B.A. degree in English from the National Taiwan University. She held a M.A. degree in Mass Communications and Journalism and a Ph.D. degree in Political Science from the University of Florida. She came to the University of Utah in Autumn 1995 as an Assistant Professor of Political Science who holds a joint appointment with the Ethnic Studies Program.

As a political scientist of Chinese origin, Pei-te has been interested in learning and analyzing the political behaviors of Asians in America since her graduate school years. She is the author of a book *The Political Participation of Asian Americans: Voting Behavior in Southern California* (Garland Publishing, 1997). Her second and a more ambitious book, *The Making of Asian America Through Political Participation* examines the historical formation and contemporary development of the multiethnic political community and its relationship to other American racial and ethnic groups. It is to be released by the Temple University Press in summer 2001. In addition to a number of book chapters published by university presses, her articles has appeared in such professional journals as *Political Research Quarterly*, *Political Behavior*, and *Asian American Policy Review*. She also participates as a secondary author in a book on race and politics in the Americas which is under contract with the New York University Press. Occasionally, she picks up her journalist's pen and writes for a Chinese language newspaper (*World Journal*) which circulates widely in North America.

Pei-te regularly teaches courses on American Racial and Ethnic Politics (PS/ES3190), Asian American Experiences (ES 2580), Quantitative Analysis in Political Science (PS 5001/6001), Asian American Politics (PS/ES 5430), and Contemporary Asian American Issues (ES 3520). For the year 2000-2001, she is responsible for four courses PS/ES3190, ES3520, PS5001/6001, and ES2580.

She served as a post-doc fellow for the International Migration Program of the Social Science Research Council, 1999-2000 and received a Superior Research Award from the College of Behavior and Social Sciences, University of Utah in 2000. She is the Principal Investigator of the pilot National Asian American Political Survey, a multi-city, multi-ethnic, and multi-lingual telephone survey project sponsored by the National Science Foundation Professional Opportunities for Women in Research and Education (POWRE) program. Recently, she is appointed as a University Faculty Fellow for 2001-2002.

Beginning in September 1999, Pei-te serves as the founding co-chair of the Asian Pacific American Caucus, a related group of the American Political Science Association. Please visit the APAC website <[http://www.augsburg.edu/political\\_science/apac/apac.html](http://www.augsburg.edu/political_science/apac/apac.html)> for more information.

## Suggested Media Contacts for Interview

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Quote from:

**Jon Yasuda**  
**President**  
**KSCI-TV**

"As a leading Asian media organization whose audience is primarily first generation, we feel a responsibility to not only inform our audience about their community and issues that affect them but to also help represent them in an accurate and effective manner. Our hope is that this study will assist community based organizations in creating a stronger voice and influence policy makers in decisions affecting the Asian American community."