Call to Action

Asian American Health Initiative of Montgomery County
Asian American Health Conference • May 20, 2009

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Why Study History?

- He who does not know how to look back at his past will not reach his destination.
  - Jose Rizal
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agree/disagree

- There is a benefit to being perceived as model minorities
- There is a cost to being perceived as model minorities
- It’s the media’s fault that we’re perceived this way
- The perception of Asian Americans as a model minority affects relations with other groups
Model Minority: Consequences

- High SES masks the diversity of the population; reflects geographic bias (e.g., housing values)
- Social problems are ignored (no resources)
- Educational opportunities are denied (e.g., fellowships)
- Bamboo ceiling (e.g., NIH)
- Loyalty questioned (e.g., 9/11)
- Forever foreigner (e.g., “American Beats Out Kwan”)

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Model Minority: Origins

NYT Magazine (1/9/66) – “Success Story: Japanese American Style”

US News (12/66) – Chinese Americans pulled itself up from hardship and discrimination

Newsweek (1982) – Asian Americans: A Model Minority

Model Minority: Origins

- Stereotype was developed to silence the dissenting voices, as it seemed to argue that institutional racism was impossible given the success of Asian Americans.

- Model minorities are silent, uncompromising, docile, and hardworking.
The damage of the model minority myth is that it tells us to regard ourselves as guests.

It tells us how to participate in society, in democracy.

It makes us forget our history of resistance.
A More Accurate Image

- We DO have a history of resistance.
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Destination

- A voice
- A vote
- A seat at the table
- A position of power
Controlling Metaphors

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Controlling Metaphors

- However, if all we do is manipulate and maneuver to make space for ourselves, how do we ever really overturn the existing order?
  - Rachel Bundang, This is Not Your Mother’s Catholic Church
Controlling Metaphors

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Controlling Metaphors

However, if all we do is manipulate and maneuver to make space for ourselves, we eventually get stuck in the status quo, and we never overturn the existing order.

- Rachel Bundang, *This is Not Your Mother's Catholic Church*
Controlling Metaphors

- However, if all we do is manipulate and maneuver to make space for ourselves, how do we ever really overturn the existing order?
  - Rachel Bundang, This is Not Your Mother’s Catholic Church
Just as we need to understand ways in which we are oppressed and need liberation, we also cannot remain trapped in that woundedness.

We must...envision and design a different reality, an alternative future in which we achieve that healing, that wholeness, and that integrity both in person and in community.

- Rachel Bundang, This is Not Your Mother’s Catholic Church
Minority Groups Protest Proposed Health Cuts

Two dozen leaders from Montgomery County's Latino, Asian and African American communities gathered at the County Council building yesterday to protest a proposed 10 percent budget cut to minority health programs. The group said the recommendation by the council's Health and Human Services Committee would affect 16,000 people who receive services for diseases such as hypertension, diabetes and HIV/AIDS, in addition to anti-gang initiatives and a program that lends breast pumps to low-income women.
Destination: Action

- Now what?