

From Nationalism to Migrancy: The Politics of Asian American Transnationalism<sup>1</sup>

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Following the Tiananmen Square massacre in China, more than a decade of anti-Chinese sentiment helped to create a post-Cold War hot-button environment. The loss of the Soviet bloc as a clear and coherent international opponent/competitor was followed by the construction of China as the United States' new most significant communist adversary. Hong Kong's return to China; Taiwan's promised return; China's one child policy; news reports of human rights abuses; and China's growing economic strength were all precursors to an environment of anti-Chineseness, the likes of which, as Ling-Chi Wang has suggested, had not existed since that surrounding the late nineteenth-and early twentieth-century Chinese Exclusion era.<sup>2</sup> These geopolitical concerns over China's threat to U.S. world dominance affected Asian Americans and Asian immigrants in the United States. Asian Americans such as John Huang and Wen Ho Lee, targeted for having engaged in allegedly traitorous activities, were, in effect, feeling the heat resulting from increasingly tense U.S./China relations. The frenzied concern over China and the potential danger Chinese Americans posed to the nation state, however, ended suddenly with 9/11. Where China figured prominently on nightly news, in headlines, and in federal intelligence, 9/11 instantaneously shifted the government, military, and media's focus of concern. First came Afghanistan, then Iraq. Since then, Indonesia, North Korea, Iran, and Libya all have been cited as possible adversaries in relation to 9/11.<sup>3</sup>

The specific goals of this paper are to return to the period prior to 9/11 to discuss the press coverage of Asian Americans during the campaign finance events of the mid-1990s, to examine the role of Asian American citizenship within this discourse, and then to examine the contradiction between the demands of transnational global capitalism and the existential realities of contemporary transnational migrants and thus to challenge many contemporary discussions of transnationalism. During and after the campaign finance scandal, in which the Democratic National Committee was charged with using illegal methods for raising campaign funds to re-elect Bill Clinton as President, media by and large avoided thoughtful and serious discussions of campaign finance reform. To engage these discussions would have meant asking very thorny and often anxiety-producing questions, such as "Is it useful to think in terms of political nation-state models in an era when, in fact, fast moving, far reaching transnational corporations and the

mobility of transnational global capitalism suggest yet another model of politics is really in operation?"<sup>4</sup>

Thinking about transnationalism and the global acceleration of capital exchange helps to contextualize the racialized anxiety about and the media coverage of Asian Americans during the event. National government leaders and media have used Asian Americans both as scapegoats and as spectacle. One result of this public discourse has been to conflate U.S. Asian Americans with Asian people, then to construct all Asian people as enemies, and therefore to question Asian American loyalty and ultimately the very right for Asian Americans to be U.S. citizens. The media have portrayed Asian Americans as more "Asian" than "American," rendering both non-citizens and citizens alike as "foreigners." In a double move, the discourse simultaneously represents the questioning of the citizenship of Asian Americans and then as a result of an implied lack of citizenship suggests they are untrustworthy for appearing to be what the discourse assumes they could not be: citizens.

Media have placed into question the very notion of whether or not Asian Americans will ever be considered rightful members of U.S. society. And they have done so by telling a mythical story that Asian people really want to take over the U.S. government by controlling its elections. Take for example the report on Sen. Fred Thompson (Republican-Tennessee), whose Senate Government Reform and Oversight Committee failed to prove his "China Conspiracy" theory even after 32 days of hearings and an expenditure of \$2.6 million, "We know that there was a plan and it involved high levels of the Chinese government to affect our electoral process."<sup>5</sup> Ostensibly, the conspiracy theory helps explain the continuing decline of the U.S. position within the world economy vis a vis the growing prosperity of some countries along the Pacific Rim. This story is so fantastic, yet so sensational, and the characters are so stereotypical, that we might expect it to be picked up by Hollywood. The skeletal plot would be that Asian Americans suddenly become a "threat to" the United States by colluding with "overseas" Red China in what William Safire calls "politico-economic espionage."<sup>6</sup> By portraying Chinese Americans as "outsiders within," the media have not so subtly questioned the loyalty of Asian Americans to the U.S. government, and therefore their right to citizenship. The media and certain governmental ideologues created the myth that "the enemies within" colluded with "the enemies outside," or as the media portrayed it, Asian "foreigners" tried to buy up "America," in order to undermine U.S. democracy.

Media Discourse

Throughout the nearly two-year spectacle, media constructed many sensational images of Asian Americans, and while the following is not an exhaustive list of ways Asian Americans were vilified, it does begin to show the degree to which the media constructed a multiplicity of images across time. The construction of Asian Americans began immediately as the media melee began to grow. On October 26, 1996, a *Wall Street Journal* article talked about the search for John Huang, who had been subpoenaed to give testimony, as "the manhunt for John Huang."<sup>7</sup> The notion of Asian Americans as "mysterious" began to develop. A *Washington Post* article, "Mysteries Arise All Along the Asian Money Trail," is only one of literally hundreds of articles dedicated to finding out precisely who the real John Huang is.<sup>8</sup> This depiction of Huang as quiet and inscrutable is part of a longstanding stereotype of Asian peoples within U.S. popular culture. Even before the end of 1996, the mass media began targeting people of Asian backgrounds exclusively. For instance, the *Economist* ran a story titled, "Yin and Huang," on November 23, 1996.<sup>9</sup> *Time* quotes Clinton spokesperson, Mike McCurry, as making another play on words when he says, "But two Huangs don't make a right."<sup>10</sup> Additionally, magazines and newspapers began using story captions that referred specifically to Asian culture, confusing Asian America with Asia. The *Washington Post* ran an article on the "Democrats' Asian Money Network" in which they list "The Players in the Democratic Money Controversy" as their caption. Every one of those listed is of Asian background, thus suggesting that non-Asians could not be major players.<sup>11</sup>

During 1997, even after a coalition of Asian American community leaders and a broad based organization challenged such media depictions at a conference and in a press release,<sup>12</sup> more and more defamatory depictions of Asian Americans appeared. For instance, rather than labeling the escapade the "campaign finance controversy," the *Christian Science Monitor* continued to single out Asian Americans in using the term, "Asiagate."<sup>13</sup> *The Far Eastern Economic Review* then printed an article titled, "The China Connection."<sup>14</sup> Several articles using "China Connection" in their title emerged after this. The list is too long to detail here. Others discuss the "bamboo network," a supposed coordinated effort by wealthy Asian entrepreneurs to gain political power through investments in the United States.<sup>15</sup> On March 16, 1997, Steven R. Weisman wrote an article using the term "China connection" to describe China's alleged influence on Clinton's 1996 campaign. In the article, Weisman writes without stating from where

his information comes: "A good chunk of money came from Asian Americans with ties to business deals in China."<sup>16</sup>

On March 24, 1997, the cover of the *National Review* depicted Bill Clinton, Hillary Clinton, and Al Gore caricatured as buck toothed and wearing, respectively, peasant clothing, clothes associated with Communist China, and a robe associated with Buddhist monks.<sup>17</sup> Asian Americans quickly responded to the publication of this image.<sup>18</sup> Articles from various sectors of the Asian American community challenged the *National Review's* cover.<sup>19</sup> But that did not deter Senator Sam Brownback from making derogatory comments about Huang and his ability to speak English when he said, "No raise money, no get bonus."<sup>20</sup> Nor did it prevent the *National Review* from discussing Huang's "shadowy past," a thinly veiled reference to what is constructed as Huang's shady character.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, in one graphic, the white words, "PHANTOM," appeared in all capital letters alongside a picture of Huang smiling.<sup>22</sup>

Finally, throughout the campaign, media articles repeatedly alluded to an essential, preexisting and fundamental "truth" about Chinese culture that was easily discoverable and graspable by readers of print media. The graphic in an article by Allan Fotheringham shows an Asian man sitting atop a pile of human skeleton heads with what looks like a pocketbook in his right hand to which he is pointing with his left.<sup>23</sup> Earlier in the year, a *Newsweek* article titled, "The 'Fu Manchu' problem," takes the stereotype of Chinese culture as mysterious and evil further by implying that China's uncontrolled desire for world-wide control is real, and that nothing will stop it. James R. Lilley writes, "Chinese society can be brutal, and their territorial ambitions are real."<sup>24</sup> The article also implies, as the title does, that U.S. racist images of Chinese people are no different from negative Chinese images of the United States, as if world politics are played outside of history and cultural context on some kind of power-free clean slate.<sup>25</sup>

While almost all mainstream discourse surrounding the campaign finance issue racialized the event by concentrated attention on Asian Americans, some of the most demeaning and degrading imagery appeared in two series of columns by William Safire and Bob Woodward, respectively, in addition to a late campaign by the *New York Times* editorial staff to reconstruct some sort of conspiracy by government officials in China to sway U.S. elections, despite the dearth of evidence brought forth to substantiate some claims. It is instructive to examine some of this discourse in order to understand better how pervasively the rhetoric of conspiracy is woven into public mediated discourse.

As early as November 4, 1996, William Safire wrote an article chastising Clinton for not admitting wrongdoing, "*Even when caught red-handed.*" He went on to suggest that "the Asian Connection is not about the need for 'campaign finance reform.' It is about old fashioned corruption--money taken for influence delivered and for trade policies changed--with laws long on the books going unenforced."<sup>26</sup> The implication of an intentional plan to break past U.S. security in order to tamper with the U.S. political system subtly undergirds this column.

Not unlike the Cold War characterizations of the then Soviet Union, on January 2, 1997, Safire stereotypes Chinese culture, insinuating that "Chinese Communist intelligence" has some kind of master plan to take over the world. Drawing on typical racist imagery of Asians, Safire describes what he characterizes as the wily communists thusly: "Chinese intelligence operations are sophisticated, patient, disciplined, and underrated by a C.I.A.-F.B.I. counterintelligence culture still transfixed by Primakov's disciples in Moscow."<sup>27</sup> The paranoid style of rhetoric, discussed by historian Richard Hofstadter,<sup>28</sup> rings through here: Denial of paranoia becomes proof of paranoia. Safire writes, "You don't have to be a conspiracy nut to recognize that China needs not only to learn trade secrets, but also to discover--perhaps even influence--U.S. Government trade policy."<sup>29</sup>

On November 14, 1997, Bob Woodward initiated yet another round of columns arguing that the Chinese government had plotted to influence U.S. electoral politics. Drawing on intelligence information buried in Fred Thompson's committee report, he suggests "information gathered as far back as 1991 . . . shows further Chinese government efforts to buy political influence in the United States."<sup>30</sup> All of the intrigue of a spy novel emerges in Woodward's column, whose speculation about what is not in the report, and what the FBI did not find, takes up a great deal of space. Woodward asserts that Maria Hsia "was 'doing the bidding' of Beijing as a Chinese agent, a senior official said."<sup>31</sup> Using metaphors like "funnel" to illustrate how money from government officials in China made its way through various "conduits" (albeit a mixed metaphor) between the United States and China, Woodward asserts intentionality when he says, "the Chinese government planned to spend more than the previously reported \$3 million to influence U.S. political campaigns, according to U.S. officials."<sup>32</sup> Safire follows suit on November 19, 1997, also questioning the FBI's role in covering over the degree to which Huang should be implicated in delivering money from China to Democratic campaigns.<sup>33</sup>

On February 10, 1998, Woodward specifically used the CIA as a source to suggest that Chinese officials had plans to influence U.S. politics.<sup>34</sup> He re-asserts Clinton's ties to Riady and

then suggests that Ted Sioeng "worked, and perhaps still works, on behalf of the Chinese government."<sup>35</sup> Woodward "traces" connections from one "link" to another, and then invokes the FBI's official language when he says that "These were the parts of the report that were deleted or watered down from the initial draft, which was *classified Top Secret/codeword*" (My emphasis).<sup>36</sup> Again, Safire follows with his own paranoid rhetoric in an article on February 16, 1998 using key terms like "spy," "PRC," "graymail," and mail "drops" as if to imply he has "expert" knowledge unavailable to the general reader, a strategy used to support and authenticate his own investigative discovery. By this point, the rhetoric is explicitly Sinophobic.<sup>37</sup>

By May 17, 1998, during a frenzy of new articles on the subject, perhaps stemming from Clinton's impending trip to China, the *New York Times* ran a set of articles implying China received space technology from Clinton in return for campaign contributions. By Johnny Chung's admission, the Editorial suggests "a large portion of the money he raised for the Democrats originated with the People's Liberation Army of China."<sup>38</sup> And, of course, Safire follows in his own argumentative style, rehashing information and ideas he calls "damning evidence," while ornamenting them with appealing language.<sup>39</sup>

While further editorials, articles, and columns talked about conspiracy before Clinton's trip to China, after the trip discourse on the subject appears to have attenuated. However, the July/August 1998 edition of the *American Enterprise* depicted a mean-looking Asian man with arched eyebrows and a shaved head on the cover, with the words, "Is This the Face of the 21st Century?" as its title. The articles in the magazine discuss China's growing power in the world economy and the role of U.S. policy with regard to China.<sup>40</sup>

### Questioning Citizenship

The preceding examples demonstrate media's role in questioning Asian American citizenship during the campaign finance scandal. Arguably, since the Tiananman Square events beginning in 1989, Chinese Americans have been an object of increased national concern. Most recently, the scapegoating and imprisonment of Wen Ho Lee illustrates the extent to which Chinese Americans have been targeted.<sup>41</sup> The particular mythical construction of people of Asian descent as untrustworthy and potentially dangerous to the U.S. nation-state in this media discourse is not new and therefore should not be understood as unique within the history of the U.S. nation-state. In fact, questioning the citizenship of Asian Americans and other racially marginalized groups is something that has happened historically and continues to happen on a regular basis. I would go so far as to say that it is a *nationalist* pastime.<sup>42</sup>

No matter what actual, *legal* claims to citizenship Asian Americans justifiably have (i.e., "formal citizenship"), no matter what kind of papers Asian Americans produce, no matter how long Asian Americans and their ancestors have lived in the United States, there continues to be a recurrent pattern historically of media, government, and others questioning Asian American *symbolic* citizenship (i.e., "informal citizenship") and the claim to residency--in short, the very right to be here. Formal citizenship refers to the rights that follow from being a legal citizen; informal citizenship refers to rights and privileges resulting from the conditions of freedom felt by some but not by others that are not explicitly indicated in U.S. law to be accorded simply by having legal citizenship. As Lisa Lowe writes, "In the last century and a half, the American *citizen* has been defined over against the Asian *immigrant*, legally, economically, and culturally. These definitions have cast Asian immigrants both as persons and populations to be integrated into the national political sphere and as the contradictory, confusing, unintelligible elements to be marginalized and returned to their alien origins."<sup>43</sup>

Moreover, there is a direct correlation between the relationship between the U.S. government and Asian people (externally) and the relationship between the United States and Asian American people (internally).<sup>44</sup> The U.S. government and media tend to treat Asian people outside similarly to the way they treat Asian Americans inside. For instance, when the United States was at war with Japan, Japanese Americans were incarcerated. When the United States competes with Middle East countries, Arab Americans are targeted. Anthropologist Suad Joseph uncovered documents suggesting that during the U.S. War Against Iraq, U.S. officials actually contemplated doing the same thing to Iraqi Americans that the government did to Japanese Americans during World War II--evacuating Iraqi Americans from major cities and placing them in "protective custody."<sup>45</sup> Additionally, as immigration law historian Bill Ong Hing has suggested, during the Iran hostage crisis, a similar response by the U.S. government to Iranian Americans was made.<sup>46</sup> No doubt, during the recent post 9/11 events, Arab Americans, Afghani and Iraqi Americans, in particular, may have been part of an evacuation and "internment" plan by some public officials, if not on paper then in mind.<sup>47</sup>

I now take this opportunity to theorize the relationship between identities, citizenship, and migrancy. Part of the explosion of Sinophobic discourse beginning with Tiananman square, continuing through to the campaign finance scandal, and more recently centering around Wen Ho Lee rests on the media's inability to come to terms with the contradiction between nationalism and a existential drive for human migrancy. This inability on the media's part to

come to terms with this contradiction leads me to want to explore the contradiction itself in more detail.

A part of this continuous scrutiny of U.S. citizenship can best be illustrated by understanding it as a kind of mathematical equation. The logic of my paper goes something like this: If A = Asian America and B = Asian, then the question becomes one of mathematical limits: As A approaches B--that is as Asian America comes closer and closer to Asian within the material, demographically changed United States where new migrant populations outnumber by far all previous generations of migrant peoples combined and within the dominant popular cultural imaginary--what happens to A (what strategies can A adopt and how is A affected)? Phrased differently, as a result of mass migrations from various Asian regions across the globe, generally since 1965, what becomes of the now comparatively small group of people who identify themselves either as part of the larger Asian American community or more contemporarily as Asian Americans? As a result of continuous public conflation between A and B, between citizens and non-citizens, how should we think of the future of Asian Americans within U.S. cultural politics?

I suggest two possible answers to this "limit question," between which there are an infinite number of possible combinations that might satisfactorily answer my question and therefore should also be considered. Both are politicized answers in the activist sense. Both are fraught with contradictions and problems, and I admit from the outset that I will not be able to solve this question fully in this essay. I can only point to particular directions that are possible, but ultimately this discussion is meant to provoke a dialogue rather than to conclude a study. Thus, I am making a theoretical argument that impinges directly upon social and material relations, but I am not advocating a particular plan of action for addressing them.

First, as A approaches B, Asian Americans could continue to embrace nationalism--that is: affirm an autonomous social, political identity--and continue to talk about the 1960s and 1970s Asian American movement as the historical beginning of present day Asian American consciousness, continue to try to persuade new immigrants to understand the history of Asian people in the continental Americas and surrounding areas, and continue to challenge governments to recognize and address specific issues related to Asian American people. This view affirms a particular notion of Asian American within a very specific historical context, one that often devolves into various practices of cultural nostalgia.

The alternative is perhaps less obvious, and I fully admit that there is no absolute opposite to nationalism. So, I recognize that my choice of an alternative here is subjective, and I suggest it as something necessary to address at the theoretical level. Here, I will suggest, that as A approaches B, as insider Asian Americans come closer and closer to becoming outsider Asian peoples within the dominant political imaginary, Asian Americans and Asian people who do not claim an Asian American identity could choose to embrace the concept of migrancy, that is: the fundamental right to change locations, to move, and hence to migrate--that is, to de-link from a nation, race, and culture-specific set of logics and to embrace a desire for migrancy, perpetual dislocation, curiosity, and persistent change--that is to see living in "the world" as an ever-changing process, not a fixed experience to be protected via nation-state immigration laws and borders.

Thus, I am constructing a polarity between Asian American nationalism and the philosophy of a fundamental right to migrancy,<sup>48</sup> and I am doing so by making the assumption that people cannot fully claim one without rejecting the other. One cannot both argue that everyone has the right to move from one geographical location to another at the same time that one argues that people living in one geographical space should be granted rights not given to those of people living in another geographical space. To argue for national rights is to argue for exceptional rights, rights that those who are not citizens do not have. One cannot be fully for the status and claims of one people in one nation without, at least philosophically, giving up, even if temporarily, a radical commitment to the right to migrate. Rights conceived of as applying to inhabitants or participants of a given nation are necessarily not rights conceived of as applying to all migrants, in all locations, moving across all spaces. Newly arriving people to a nation will be without rights for a time or may never receive them. People leaving a nation will leave never having had rights, lose the rights they had, or carry rights they had with them.

Further, I am suggesting that the core tension produced by incessantly having one's citizenship--one's very right to be here--challenged is perhaps to reconsider the very philosophy, or social theory, that assumes an inherent belief in national sovereignty, the citizenship rights that depend on national sovereignty, the right to "own" land, and the right to create and protect boundaries that we see played out in so many discriminatory immigration laws and the enforcement of them across history.

This proposal will no doubt be troubling to many people and will make many people uneasy. Some might view this as a call for borderless vigilantism. More might imagine this to

be part of a flawed, radical humanism. Most might imagine it to be unpragmatic, unable to be implemented, and perhaps idealistic. Despite all of these potential responses, I consider it necessary to reflect conceptually, no matter how frightening, on the basic need to move across space and to change one's location. Addressing this issue may, in fact, tell us a lot about the contemporary place of Asian and Asian American people in the United States and world affairs. For instance, the opposing philosophies of nationalism and migrancy might help explain why so many members of racially marginalized groups within California voted for Proposition 187 on November 4, 1994, which sought to limit health, education, and welfare benefits for undocumented peoples. It might help us explain the difference between one form of Chicana/Chicano and Native American philosophy and one form of Asian American philosophy—hence, the difference between believing the United States has no right to claim ownership of California and that placing borders between Mexico and the United States is itself an aggressive attempt to divide a people versus holding a philosophy that migrant populations from Asian regions have the right to live in California once having met the U.S. qualifications for citizenship. The very notion of nationhood produces a massive break between the way people live their lives and the virtual rules/laws put in place attempting to regulate behavior. For instance, as Gloria Anzaldúa writes, "The border fence that divides the Mexican people was born on February 2, 1848 with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo. It left 100,000 Mexican citizens on this side, annexed by conquest along with the land."<sup>49</sup> She goes on to suggest that against this border, which was put in place despite the way Mexican people had organized society, Mexican people continued to migrate in ways that defied the formal fencing off of nations. She writes, "We have a tradition of migration, a tradition of long walks. Today we are witnessing *la migración de los pueblos mexicanos*, the return odyssey to the historical/mythological Aztlán. This time, the traffic is from south to north."<sup>50</sup>

By drawing a connection between the experience of Asian Americans and Chicanas/os here, I am not attempting to elide difference. There are many reasons to think about this entire issue of migrancy and nationalism in terms of Asian Americans and Chicanas/os, and yet also to focus on the different ways migrancy and nationalism have affected each group. Without going into great detail here, Chicanas /os and Asian Americans are two groups that have been othered by the dominant black/white dialectic within race theory, with academia generally, and within mainstream dominant discourse. Second, U.S. laws restricting and controlling citizenship over more than a century have largely targeted people of Asian and Mexican and Latina/o descent.<sup>51</sup>

Both people of Latina/o and Asian descent are treated as "foreigners" in the United States, regardless of their or their family's citizenship status; both are treated as if they *must* be immigrants.<sup>52</sup> Social policies such as Proposition 187 that have mainly targeted one group—namely, Chicanas/os and Mexicanas/os—directly affect Asian Americans; indeed, the lack of public discourse focused on undocumented Asian workers in the U.S. surrounding the entire Proposition 187 issue has important, political significance for both groups.<sup>53</sup>

In order to answer the question I posed above--what happens to Asian Americans as the nationalist imaginary conflates Asian Americans and Asians--it is necessary to understand the contemporary state of Asian transnationalism. We must think seriously about how communities claiming an Asian identity are positioned and position themselves within an increasingly denationalized corporate global economy. Unlike many, my argument here is not that we revel in many of the aspects availed by the contemporary transnational environment. Rather, I believe there has to be a radical specification of what is meant by the concept of transnationalism. For Akhil Gupta, for instance, transnationalism suggests the potential for imaginary communities beyond imagined national ones. Specifically, the "non-aligned" movement which crosses many geographical spheres might be a kind of imagined community that, in fact, contests national ones.<sup>54</sup> For James Holston and Arjun Appadurai, transnationalism affords citizens with radical potentials to cross cultural and national boundaries, thus effacing the space mapped out by greater capitalist national interests.<sup>55</sup> To me, however, Gupta's essay and Holston and Appadurai's essay address two different kinds of transnationalism that are radically different, and we are seeing them played out in nefarious ways in contemporary world affairs and economics.

I would argue that it becomes necessary to distinguish between transnationalisms, such as those Gupta and Holston and Appadurai seem to evoke, afforded by privileged access to capital, and the kind of transnationalism Anzaldúa addresses, that which defies the capital interests of neo-colonial nation-states. This distinction has usefulness not only because it helps clarify various vague and often progressively optimistic, notions of "transnationalism," but also because it allows for a certain rupture in various dominant conceptualizations of citizenship and nation in contemporary critical theory and cultural studies. The distinction I forward is between two definitions of transnationalism that are in fact fundamentally opposed: transnationalism as *entrepreneurial* in nature and transnationalism as *migrancy*. The tension produced is material and therefore powerful and helps illuminate the various psychoanalytic desires, arguably obsessions, associated with particular theory productions. I suggest that it is this conflation of

entrepreneurial with migrancy transnationalism that has significantly limited the utility of theories of transnational, global capitalism thus far. Rather than conflate the two terms, I argue for a distinction.

I am suggesting that theories of transnational, global capitalism need to distinguish between people *moving* across borders who have the freedom, capital, and choice to make such a move and poor people being *moved* across borders who succumb to the transnational flow of capital and labor supply in order to survive. The entrepreneurial, investment form, generally in the corporate interest and a direct beneficiary of various capitalist modes of capital exploitation, should be contradistinguished with the migrancy form, the form generally taken to mean the historical and present practices of a people, who, by their very act of crossing imaginary nation-state boundaries necessarily undermine coherentist concepts of nationhood. For instance, I would distinguish between First World entrepreneurial capitalist transnationalism, which through policies like NAFTA are favored by U.S. immigration laws, especially post-1990, and Third and Fourth world survivalist migrancies not favored by U.S. immigration laws. As Peter Kwong suggests, this kind of distinction *within* Asian communities is key, for entrepreneurial capital, such as those mobile corporations that move to the location with the cheapest labor supply, must be contrasted to those who labor for them, those who by way of immigration laws, are exploited within those self-same corporations.<sup>56</sup> That is, one we can discuss as "entrepreneurial" and investment-oriented and the other we can discuss as "survivalist," hence as purely migratory, although all migratory migrations are an effect, not a production of capital interests.

I have been trying to search for a politics within this essay that would operate by way of a project that simultaneously recognizes the political context of Chicanas/Chicanos, for example, and that of Asian Americans, while complicating notions of globalization and transnationalism. This is a world in which NAFTA is praised by the U.S. and Mexican governments, just as restrictions and controls on the California/Mexico border on both sides become even greater and more dangerous. Additionally, this is a world in which the 1960s politics of *de*-colonization, that is the commitment to take back the land for people who suffer at the hands of colonization, has now devolved, especially perhaps within various Asian American communities, into support for abstract notions of cultural nationalism. For instance, despite the many significant problems associated with cultural nationalism, especially as practiced, namely the overriding of gender, race, class, and sexuality and the privileging of the desire for the dominant national organization as a model for a cultural one, Sau-ling Wong does not *expand* or *alter*, or even *re/sign*

nationalism. In her essay, "Denationalization Reconsidered: Asian American Cultural Criticism at a Theoretical Crossroads," she understands nationalism as it has historically been employed.<sup>57</sup> While her essay questions the class-coded nature of transnational migration,<sup>58</sup> she does not sufficiently distinguish between the "affluent Chinese American family of the professional class that can take vacationing for granted and have a comfortable home to return to even when the father has quit his job"<sup>59</sup> and "immigrant laborers on American assembly lines."<sup>60</sup> This conflation, even in scholarship attempting to highlight class interests, here, fails to distinguish between forms of migration and the economic conditions that might presuppose a more radical political program than is otherwise implied--one that embraces counter-capital development while simultaneously addresses the complexity of the U.S. racial formation, pan-"racial" political activism, decolonization, and inter-, cross-, and sometimes anti-disciplinary thinking.

The recent campaign finance scandal provides an opening, an opportunity to decry the divisiveness brought about by media and national government, to question what transnationalism means, and to respond to the particular versions of citizenship and non-citizenship articulated in the discourse. Perhaps these campaign finance issues also provide us with an opportunity to challenge transnational corporate and entrepreneurial interests--one form of transnationalism--while standing up for the inherent right to migrancy. What this means for Asian American studies and activism, I think, is crucial. Either we need to begin arguing for the relaxation of citizenship requirements through vigilant efforts to protest policies such as Proposition 187 and Welfare Reform legislation--thus standing up for the inherent right to migrate--or, once again, we need to specify our difference from the larger diaspora by advocating for our national experience, hence linking ourselves back up to this historical legacy of political activism. Though this is not a solution, perhaps an alternative to nation-state nationalism, configured in relation to transnational migrancy and cultural nationalism, one that recognizes the absolute necessity of change in the demographic make-up of communities over time, might allow (1) for political education about the racial formation intrinsic to Asian American and other marginalized groups within a U.S. context, (2) for attention to Asian people and other marginalized groups and their progeny who live there and elsewhere, and (3) for a political activism that addresses the specific political, economic, social, and medical concerns of Asian Americans while not taking a stand against migrants, migration, migratory logics, and the politics of First World denationalization and decolonization.

Notes

<sup>1</sup> Versions of this essay were presented at the Race, Class, Citizenship and Extraterritoriality: Asian Americans and Campaign Finance Reform Conference, San Francisco, Nov. 15, 1997; the National Communication Association Convention, Chicago, November 22, 1997; and the Eleventh NCA/AFA Conference on Argumentation, July 31, 1999. I would like to thank Hoa Giang, Lena Gutekunst, Vichheka Hang, Dawn Lee, and Sayako Suzuki for providing helpful and necessary research assistance. Thanks to Peter Feng, Colleen Lye, and Shoshana Magnet for helpful readings of the essay. I also want to thank Michael Chang for providing me with an audio tape copy of my talk from the Citizenship and Extraterritoriality conference.

<sup>2</sup> L. Ling-chi Wang, "Race, Class, Citizenship, and Extraterritoriality: Asian Americans and the 1996 Campaign Finance Scandal," *Amerasia Journal* 24.1 (1998), 1.

<sup>3</sup> In his state of the union address January 20, 2004, Bush named Iran and North Korea as serious threats to U.S. peace.

<sup>4</sup> For a discussion of the "tentacular" reach of transnational corporations, see Masao Miyoshi, "A Borderless World? From Colonialism to Transnationalism and the Decline of the Nation-State," *Critical Inquiry* 19 (1993): 726-751.

<sup>5</sup> Edward Walsh, "Fund-raising Hearings Are Suspended in Senate," *Washington Post*, November 1, 1997, A1.

<sup>6</sup> William Safire, "I Remember Larry," *New York Times*, January 2, 1997, A15.

<sup>7</sup> Editorial, "Trifling with the Courts, II," *Wall Street Journal*, October 25, 1996, A14.

<sup>8</sup> Kevin Merida and Serge F. Kovaleski, "Mysteries Arise All along the Asian Money Trail," *Washington Post*, November 1, 1996, A1, A8.

<sup>9</sup> Column, "Yin and Huang," *Economist*, November 23, 1996, 34.

<sup>10</sup> "Verbatim," *Time*, November 11, 1996, 23.

<sup>11</sup> Ruth Marcus, "Oval Office Meeting Set DNC Asian Funds Network in Motion," *Washington Post*, December 29, 1996, A6.

<sup>12</sup> Ann Kalayil and Robert Chang, "Protest against Attacks on APA Political Contributions," Press Release. October 22, 1996.

<sup>13</sup> Warren Richey, "Anatomy of a Fund-Raising Scandal," *Christian Science Monitor*, February 24, 1997, 4.

<sup>14</sup> Nigel Holloway, "The China Connection: New Allegation Fuels Containment Lobby in the U.S.," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, February 27, 1997, 16.

<sup>15</sup> See for example, James Ring Adams, "John Huang's Bamboo Network." *American Spectator*, December, 1996, 24-28.

<sup>16</sup> Steven R. Weisman, "The China Connection," *New York Times*, March 16, 1997, E14.

<sup>17</sup> *National Review*, March 24, 1997, cover.

<sup>18</sup> Indeed, there is a certain powerful statement being made here by the magazine akin to a taunt at Asian Americans. The arrogance the editorial staff demonstrated in publishing this cover leads me to think they were purposefully asserting their might, as if to say, "We are powerful because we can control the image of Asian Americans; at best, all *they* can do is protest our image."

<sup>19</sup> See, for instance, Daphne Kwok and Robert Sakinawa, "How's This for Gratitude?" *New York Times*, March 21, 1997, A19. Ying Chan, "Asians Blast Mag: See Stereotypes on *National Review* Cover," *New York Daily News*, March 20, 1997. L. Ling-chi Wang, "Put Focus on Reform, Not Race, Part I," *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 28, 1997.

<sup>20</sup> "Senator Apologizes for Mimicry of Asians in Reference to Huang," *Los Angeles Times*, July 11, 1997, A14.

<sup>21</sup> Michael Isikoff and Mark Hosenball, "The Man in the Middle," *Newsweek*, July 21, 1997, 40. This also seems to be an unintentional reference to Huang's position as "middle man," as theorized within Asian American studies. See Eugene F. Wong (1985). "Asian American middleman minority theory: The framework of an American myth." *Journal of Ethnic Studies*, 13, 51-88.

<sup>22</sup> *Time*, July 14, 1997, 40-41.

<sup>23</sup> Allan Fotheringham, "Why China Will Always Be in the News," *Maclean's*, November 10, 1997, 80.

<sup>24</sup> James R. Lilley, "The 'Fu Manchu' Problem: Why America and China Tend to Think of Each Other as Cartoonlike Enemies," *Newsweek*, February 24, 1997, 36.

<sup>25</sup> Discourse also tends to conflate the People's Republic of China with Taiwan, Singapore, and Hong Kong, as if each of these societies is equivalent, and as if all people in these places are the same: equally untrustworthy.

<sup>26</sup> William Safire, "Huang Huang Blues," *New York Times*, November 4, 1996, A17.

<sup>27</sup> Safire, "I Remember Larry."

<sup>28</sup> Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics, and Other Essays*. New York: Knopf, 1965.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Bob Woodward, "FBI Had Overlooked Key Files in Probe of Chinese Influence," *Washington Post*, November 14, 1997, A1

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> William Safire, "Untouchable Huang," *New York Times*, November 19, 1997, A27.

<sup>34</sup> Bob Woodward, "Findings Link Clinton Allies to Chinese Intelligence," *Washington Post*, February 10, 1998, A1.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> William Safire, "China's Spy Ring," *New York Times*, February 16, 1998, A15.

<sup>38</sup> Editorial, "The New China Connection," *New York Times*, May 17, 1998, WK16.

<sup>39</sup> William Safire, "U.S. Security for Sale," *New York Times*, May 18, 1998, A23.

<sup>40</sup> *American Enterprise*, July-August, 1998, cover.

<sup>41</sup> Kent A. Ono. "Guilt without Evidence: Informal Citizenship and the Limits of Rationality in the Case of Wen Ho Lee. In G. Thomas Goodnight (Ed.) *Proceedings of the Twelfth NCA/AFA Conference on Argumentation*, Annandale, VA: National Communication Association, 2002.

<sup>42</sup> For instance, during World War II, while Japanese Americans were being incarcerated within the interior of the United States, along with some help, the government created "the loyalty questionnaire" to determine whether or not incarcerated Japanese migrant peoples and Japanese Americans would forswear allegiance to the Japanese emperor, and whether or not they would be willing to fight on behalf of the United States by enlisting in the U.S. military. The government denied Japanese Americans their citizenship by imprisoning them, then pressured them to act like good citizens and fight for the country. One might argue that the entire reason Japanese Americans were incarcerated in the first place was because the U.S. government saw them as more Japanese than "American," an argument the U.S. government used to justify overriding Japanese American citizenship and imprisoning them.

<sup>43</sup> Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996, 4.

<sup>44</sup> Bob Blauner, "Colonized and Immigrant Minorities," *Racial Oppression in America*, New York: Harper and Row, 1972, 51-81.

<sup>45</sup> Suad Joseph, "Against the Grain of the Nation: 'The' Arab." (Im)migrant Identities Conference. Davis, CA, October 10, 1996. Joseph writes that:

The *Sacramento Bee* carried a story, reproduced in little of the national press, reporting that US Representative Norman Mineta pointed to a 1987 contingency plan the FBI and the Immigration and Naturalization Service drew up to detain Arab Americans at a camp in Oakdale, LA., in the event of war with certain Arab states. Mineta said that plan could still be initiated to round up Arab Americans (*Sacramento Bee*, January 24, 1991, A9).

See also Nadine Naber's unpublished essay (1998), "Examining Arab American Visibility/Invisibility." Naber details numerous government acts of imprisonment and public hate crimes based on race during high points in what the United States defined as Middle East crises, from 1972 through 1991.

<sup>46</sup> Bill Ong Hing, "Untitled," Race, Class, Citizenship and Extraterritoriality: Asian Americans and Campaign Finance Reform Conference, San Francisco, Nov. 15, 1997.

<sup>47</sup> Detentions in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, are a smaller, but nonetheless problematic, subset of a much larger and more widespread set of possible, imagined incarcerations.

<sup>48</sup> And, clearly I am doing so for theoretical reasons, not to suggest that all conceptions of Asian American are nationalist. Indeed, there are conceptions of Asian American that are hemispheric, not U.S. specific, and address South America and Canada as hemispherically part of the Americas, or Las Americas.

<sup>49</sup> Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, San Francisco, Aunt Lute Books, 1987, 7.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>51</sup> See Kent A. Ono and John M. Sloop, *Shifting Borders: Rhetoric, Immigration, and California's Proposition 187*, esp. pp. 161-163. See also Mai Ngai, "The Architecture of Race in American Immigration Law: A Reexamination of the Immigration Act of 1924," *Journal of American History* 86 (1999): 67-92.

<sup>52</sup> Kevin R. Johnson, "Public Benefits and Immigration: the Intersection of Immigration Status, Ethnicity, Gender, and Class," *UCLA Law Review*, p. 1543, 1995.

<sup>53</sup> See Ono and Sloop, pp. 161-162.

<sup>54</sup> Gupta, Akhil. "The Song of the Nonaligned World: Transnational Identities and the Reinscription of Space in Late Capitalism," *Cultural Anthropology* 7 (1992): 63-79.

<sup>55</sup> In James Holston and Arjun Appadurai's, "Cities and Citizenship," they argue that the influx of migrant populations into cities whose current forms do not accommodate those living within urban spaces lead to movements for social change at the local level. City-dwellers lead movements that "affirm access to housing, property, sanitation, health services, education, child care, and so forth on the basis of citizenship" (197). As a result of these local social movements, "the urban poor create unprecedented claims on and to the city, they expand citizenship to new social bases. In so doing, they create new sources of citizenship rights and corresponding forms of self-rule" (198). James Holston and Arjun Appadurai, "Cities and Citizenship," *Public Culture*, 8.2 (1996): 187-204.

<sup>56</sup> Peter Kwong, *Forbidden Workers: Illegal Chinese Immigrants and American Labor*, New York: The New Press, 1997.

<sup>57</sup> Sau-Ling C. Wong, "Denationalization Reconsidered: Asian American Cultural Criticism at a Theoretical Crossroads," *Amerasia Journal* 21.1-2 (1995): 1-27.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.