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Eastern Wind: The Asian-American Community Newsletter of Washington, D.C. Vol. 4, No. 1

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THIS ARTICLE WAS WRITTEN BY A STUDENT WHO ATTENDS PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL IN THE D.C. AREA.

Public Schools Neglect Asians

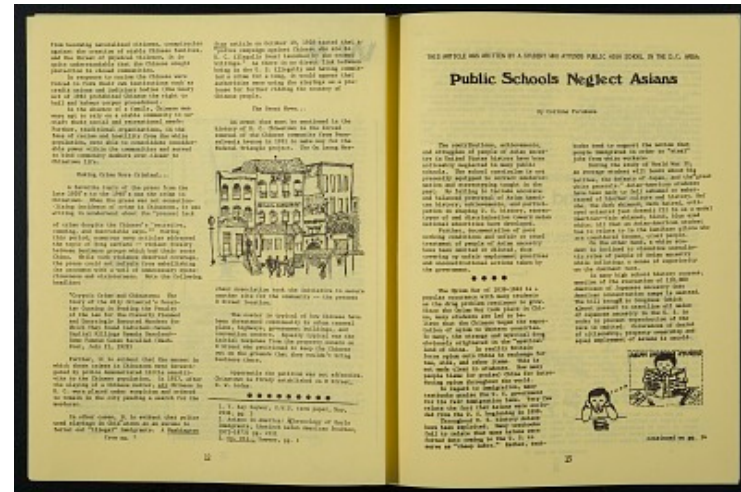
By Corinne Furukawa

The contributions, achievements, and struggles of people of Asian ancestry in United States history have been noticeably neglected in many public schools. The school curriculum is not presently equipped to correct misinformation and stereotyping taught in the past. By failing to include accurate and balanced portrayal of Asian American history, achievements, and participation in shaping U. S. history, stereotypes of and discrimination toward Asian national minorities have developed. Further, documentation of poor working conditions and unfair or cruel treatment of people of Asian ancestry have been omitted or diluted, thus covering up unfair employment practices and unconstitutional actions taken by the government.

The Opium War of 1839-1842 is a popular occurrence with many students as the drug problem continues to grow. Since the Opium War took place in China, many students are led to believe that the Chinese began the exportation of opium to Western countries. To many, the strange and mystical drug obviously originated in the "mystical" land of China. In reality Britain force opium onto China in exchange for tea, silk, and other items. This is not made clear to students. Now many people blame (or praise) China for introducing opium throughout the world. In regard to immigration, many textbooks praise the U. S. government for its fair immigration laws. Very few relate the fact that Asians were excluded from the U. S. beginning in 1898. Throughout U. S. history Asians have been exploited. Many textbooks fail to relate that many Asians were forced into coming to the U. S. to serve as "cheap labor." Rather, textbooks tend to support the notion that people immigrated in order to "steal" jobs from white workers. During the study of World War II, an average student will learn about big battles, the defeats of Japan, and the "great white generals." Asian-American students have been made to feel ashamed or embarrassed of his/her culture and history. He/she, the dark skinned, dark haired, evil-eyed oriental just doesn't fit in as a model American--fair skinned, blond, blue eyed white. All that an Asian-American student has to relate to is the kamikaze pilots who are considered insane, cruel people. On the other hand, a white student is inclined to visualize unrealistic roles of people of Asian ancestry while inflating a sense of superiority as the dominant race.

In many high school history courses, mention of the evacuation of 110,000 Americans of Japanese ancestry into American concentration camps is omitted. The bill brought to Congress (which almost passed) to sterilize all males of Japanese ancestry in the U. S. in order to prevent reproduction of the race is omitted. Occurrences of denial of citizenship, property ownership and equal employment of Asians is untold.

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