

Gregory Yee Mark:
Good morning.

Audience:
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Gregory:
You're going to hear from me twice. First I'm going to give kind of a historical background to ethnic studies and then my colleagues will go and I will also present later on about some of the things Katie raised. The first image. So I'd like to tell you a little bit about myself. I'm a fifth generation Chinese American. On my grandfather's side of the family, his grandparents were here during the Gold Rush period and they had a Chinese dry goods and tobacco store in San Francisco Chinatown. I found information about them in 1857 and then my great grandfather, Jim Sing, or Wong Sous Yew [sp?] immigrated from China we estimate about 1863-64 and he worked on the Transcontinental Railroad. And later on he was a China boss man in the timber industry in Red Bluff, California.

So I kind of grew up on multiple levels. One level was a long time American born family and on the other side my father had immigrated from China in 1928 and my says Gregory Albert Mark on my birth certificate and Gregory because my mom, being an American born Chinese loved Gregory Peck [laughter]. Albert because my grandfather's name was Albert. And Mark, or Mawk [sp?], because that's the name that my father bought in China. So my real last name is Yee which my name's now Gregory Yee Mark, actually. And so I grew up with kind of a dual identities. On one level, within the Chinese American community, we were Yee's and that's all we knew. Outside, I was a Mark. And so I grew up this way without thinking it was any big deal. It's just the way it was. Yet it kind of left a hunger in me to really learn more about myself and as I grew older, why this is so.

And then also growing up in California, in fact Berkley, California, I wondered why there was only one sentence I remember in high school about the Chinese Americans and that we helped build the Transcontinental Railroad and that was it, one sentence. So by the time I went to college, I was really kind of caught up in different things and so right over here is an image in 1968 when I was a student at U.C. Berkley and so this here, this image is of August 17, 1968. The first demonstration in a contemporary Chinatown and this is San Francisco Chinatown on the corner of Clay and Grant Avenue. Some of you may recognize the corner. The first person there is [indistinguishable] and [indistinguishable] is the one who coined the term

Asian American. The second person is George Wu, who at that time was a spokesperson for the first Chinese immigrant youth game [indistinguishable].

[counting: One, two three, four.] The fifth person has a poster there that says "Look around you. Chinatown's a ghetto" and that's me. And I learned quickly when if you're demonstrating you shouldn't smile. So after that one I'm smiling in this one.

[audience laughter]

Gregory:

And shortly after that was the student strikes at San Francisco State College, it's labeled now as San Francisco State University, in November 1968 and then U.C. Berkley January 1969 both strikes ended in March 1969 and the San Francisco State strike was the longest strike on a student campus. When I teach ethnic studies and if you include when the very first Asian American class arrives, like an assistant TA, so I've been doing this for 50 years but it just didn't come about by computer science or recent history or math, we to fight for it. So at Berkley we had to deal with five levels of law enforcement. This one is level four the blue meanies as we called, the Alameda County sheriffs and this is one striker Stan [indistinguishable] there's Stan there. That's in front of Sprawl [sp?] Hall, for any of the U.C. Berkley former students. This is a sweep of, this level would be a California highway patrol. Do some of you remember this?

This is Jeff Realm [sp?] who is a poet. He wrote a book on Angel Island, a translation of the poetry on the walls. And he is reading off a list of commands for the creation of the third world college, and then it became ethnic studies. But originally demands at both San Francisco and at Berkeley were for third world college. Over here, there's Stan on the left again and one of the youngest leaders of the Asian American contingent, and that's Floyd Ewing [sp?].

And preceding this as Katie mentioned, was the first Asian American conference. There had been conferences on China, on Japan, some on Japanese Americans, some on Chinese Americans, but never a Pan-Asian American and so this was the very first one and you can see the date, let's see, January 11, 1969. It was in Polly [sp?] Ballroom on Berkley campus and so I was the organizer for this conference. And I just wanted to give you a quick snapshot and I think it tells you about one of the issues that helped prompt the creation of this conference. So I was talking to a bunch of men, Asian American men on the Berkley campus of November of '68, beginning of

November on a Friday afternoon about three in the afternoon. The topic evolved into talking about beautiful Asian American women on campus. Guys do do that right? And this is kind of like Spike Lee's Jungle Fever scene there. And so one of the fellows, his name was Gary, talked about that he had asked this one woman out and she said no and Gary made the mistake of asking her "well why not?" I don't think the guy should really ask why not, but they did, he did. And she said "Because I only date white men" and from there that prompted a discussion which led to this January 11th conference two months later. But that's kind of what sparked it. And during that conference, at lunch my friend Maurice Williams who was a BSU, Black Student Union representative talked to me at lunch and said "we met last night. We're going out. Are you with us? We met last night at the Black Student Union event. We're going out, we've voted to go out on strike because the Berkley administration refused to add black studies courses. Are you with us? Are the Asian American students with the Black students?" The term African American wasn't used until 20 years later.

And so this is a little bit of information. This is about a fire in [indistinguishable]. For those of you who may have taken an early Asian American study classes, this is the catalog for Sacramento State. There it started in 1970 so ethnic studies and specifically Asian American studies started around the nation but because we were really at stage one, we had to make up our own flyers and brochures and pass it out to students as they were registering in order to get students enrolled in the very first Asian American classes. This is the way it was. So that's the brief backdrop, historical backdrop to ethnic studies and specifically Asian American Studies.

[applause]