

Growing Up a Japanese Boy In Sacramento County

Paul Takagi

ON A SUNNY JUNE MORNING IN SAN FRANCISCO'S MISSION DISTRICT, PAUL ARRIVED with a piece of manzanita that he had crafted into a lovely object. The smooth cross-section of wood reflected reddish brown tones and was richly textured — an exterior blackened by fire, a concentric ring bleached by dry rot and tunneled through here and there by burrowing insects. In its natural state, the wood could either have been discarded or even ignored as hopelessly flawed, or allowed to reveal its innate beauty. As this interview shows, Paul chooses to do the latter, which symbolizes his persona and approach to human interaction. Paul selected an interview format over a written essay because of the linear nature of the writing process. Talking about these feelings, reflections, and experiences made it possible to move from topic to topic and to allow readers to draw their own connections, which in a written piece may have appeared unintegrated. — G.S.

Gregory Shank (G.S.): Which aspects of your intellectual and personal history do you consider to be the most formative?

Paul Takagi (P.T.): In one of his essays, written in the 1930s or 1940s, the analytical psychologist Carl Jung writes that the stuff of thinking is language and verbal concepts and the purpose of language is to communicate. Communication always takes place in a community, which can be a family or kinship groups, but it may take place between a teacher and a class or between a teacher and one of the students. Jung paid attention to the personal life and emphasized the individual's striving for integration and wholeness. I propose to show the links between this theoretical approach and certain strains of my personal biography.

I had just come out of the army in October of 1945. I knew that I would be going to the Midwest, to Chicago, because that is where my parents were. So I applied to the University of Illinois, the University of Chicago, and the University of Michigan. I was turned down by Chicago — they never responded — but I was accepted at the University of Illinois and the University of Michigan. Since Illinois was closer to Chicago than was Michigan, I decided to go there in the spring of 1946. My father, incidentally, died about a month after I came out. Like most Big Ten universities, the

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University of Illinois offered an English course called Rhetoric 1 and 2, rather than the English 1A and 1B that we have here, such as at U.C. Berkeley. It was a wonderful course, actually, because we learned to write descriptive material, narratives, argumentative and expository works, as well as book reviews and newspaper reports. This was much more functional and interesting than English 1A, which basically teaches grammar. I've always done well in English, especially in high school, and so the first semester went very nicely. I also took a chemistry course. Although I didn't get "A" grades, I received "B's" and "B plus's." I wasn't really a serious student; I just studied enough to get by. College to me was to be fun.

I was already 22, so I decided to rush my schooling. That summer I enrolled in Rhetoric 2 to get it out of the way. I also took Chemistry 1A in the spring and Chem. 2 in the summer. On the first day of class in the summer rhetoric class, the instructor asked each student to do a descriptive piece of writing. I wrote about a riot that had taken place in Manzanar, the prison camp where I had been locked up. At the time I was working as a hospital orderly, so I didn't see the riot itself. But 13 people were shot, and two subsequently died. I watched the surgical procedure for one of them, who was shot in the stomach. It was not a case of intestinal damage alone — the bullet was lodged in the kidney. The doctor pulled out the intestines with both hands, saw that it was OK, stuffed them back in, and sewed the guy back up. My responsibility was to go on duty at eleven o'clock that night and to stay up with him for about six hours. If there were any change in his condition, I was to call the nurse or the attendant or one of the emergency doctors. At that time, since we were in a prison camp, the medical facilities were quite inadequate. There was no life-support system — you were simply given an IV; neither was there an oxygen tank, or anything like that. While sitting next to him, he would utter from time to time, "I don't want to die, I don't want to die." I wrote about my feelings of being with that dying person, who was visited by no one, not by family members, or brothers and sisters. He was dying alone and I as a stranger was sitting there in attendance. The paper I wrote for the rhetoric class described this experience. Within a few days the paper was returned with two grades, one for grammar and one for content. I received a "C" for grammar and a "D plus" for content. At the bottom of the paper it said, "What about the boys in Bataan?" I was very disturbed by the comment. After class, I went up to the instructor and said, "What is the meaning of this?" He said, "Just exactly what it says."

I turned around and walked out, and sat on the steps of the lecture hall. I felt terribly lonely. This is what Carl Jung writes about, when one's thinking process, which is translated into language, is dismissed or not taken seriously. The initial emotion is anger, followed by a feeling of loneliness, of feeling alone. I found this to be quite profound and thought that Jung is certainly quite right about this. I went to my dormitory, packed my meager set of belongings, collected my books and sold them at the bookstore, and informed the dorm manager that I was leaving school. I asked that he send me a refund if I had any coming and I returned to Chicago.

What puzzled me thereafter, in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, was how I had come to be so alone. It had not simply appeared full-blown at the University of Illinois campus. All my life I had been a loner. I did not join groups. What I wish to explore here is how that came about. By “alone” I mean that I never had the sense that I was being taken seriously. My thought processes and my ideas were never taken seriously, and for that matter, my presence was never even acknowledged. I can trace this back to when I was a little boy growing up in Sacramento County. My father had a 50-acre farm, which he bought at the onset of the Great Depression, about 1930 or 1931. He was to lose this land because of nonpayment of property taxes while the family was imprisoned during the 1940s. I grew up in this setting, in a place called Sheldon, which I don’t believe is even on the map. Sheldon lies at the intersection of two roads, where a general store with a gas station was located. The high school bus stopped there to pick up students who attended the school in the little town of Elk Grove, which was some four miles away. The grammar school I attended was a half mile from Sheldon. It had two classrooms, one holding the first four grades and taught by one teacher, with the latter four grades in the other. Each class had from eight to 10 students.

When I was eight and already in school, reading became my source of entertainment. In those days, there was no television and I was growing up in a country setting. I read anything, in no systematic way other than it provided enjoyment and pleasure. I read the newspapers, even though we were too poor to subscribe, but the local general store always had newspapers left over. I asked the owner if he could save any leftover papers for me, and I would pick them up after school or on the weekends. At that time there were three major Northern California newspapers: the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the *San Francisco Examiner*, and the McClatchy newspapers (the *Sacramento Bee* and the *Fresno and Modesto Bee*). It is important to understand that these newspapers set the news environment for the period in which I grew up. At the turn of the century (1901 or 1902), the *Chronicle* carried out a one-newspaper war against the Japanese that was picked up first by the *Examiner* and then by the McClatchy papers.

When I was nine or 10, someone said they wanted to take my picture. We were so poor that there weren’t any photos of me between the time I was a little baby and my high school graduation. So I was taken aback that this fellow wanted to take my photo that day. He had probably just gotten a new camera and was looking for subjects to photograph. A week or so later, he gave me a print. In the picture, I had one hand clutched over the other on my chest, my shoulders are hunched, and I am not looking directly at the lens, but am instead sneaking a peek out of the side of my eye. When I received the print, I was terribly self-conscious and ashamed, because here was this kid, very vulnerable, fearful, and most certainly insecure. So it happened as early as that. Importantly, this forms part of my thought processes during the 1960s and 1970s, because the image in that photo was seared into my consciousness. Although I’ve not seen it for 50 or 60 years, the image was internalized, as was my puzzlement over what had happened to this kid.

Growing up in this rural environment, my father taught me that although I didn't attend a segregated school, there were segregated schools for the Japanese in Sacramento County until 1952 in Florin, Isleton, Courtland, and Walnut Grove — along the Sacramento River about 15 miles from Sheldon. Florin then and now is a district, a suburb of Sacramento, and Sheldon is similarly a district of Elk Grove. My father explained that the Japanese are discriminated against, and that I should not try to go to the swimming pool in South Sacramento because I would not be admitted. And then there were the alien land laws. My father explained to me that the land had not been purchased in his name, but in my name and my sister's name and that our guardian was a Japanese attorney in Sacramento. He also said that all aliens ineligible to be citizens could not buy property. Since the Japanese were ineligible for citizenship, they could not buy land. There was also a gentlemen's agreement that the Japanese could not buy property even in their children's names, except in certain sections of the community. This, in turn, led to de facto segregation. From Sacramento all the way down to Bakersfield, the Japanese lived on the west side of the railroad tracks — right down the center of the valley. I was recently down in that section of Fresno, and today it is mostly occupied by Mexicans and some blacks. Yet still standing there is a magnificent Buddhist church. It is surrounded by a metal fence and is still in use. It was built in 1902, burned in 1918, and was rebuilt in 1921. Although the Japanese have now scattered to other parts of Fresno, they still go to church there since that is where the church was built and it was the only section of town in which they could live. In Stockton, of course, you also see Christian and Buddhist churches located in areas where they do not hold evening services or activities because of the neighborhood, which consists mainly of Mexicans and Mexican Americans. This is the legacy of de facto segregation.

My father explained to me that in terms of personal services, such as getting a hair cut, I shouldn't go to a white barber because they will not cut your hair; don't go to certain restaurants, because they won't serve you. He also explained that we were unable to check into motels and hotels, so whenever we traveled, such as to Oakland, we stayed at the Japanese Salvation Army, which provided housing for visiting Japanese. The other churches and religious groups did not do so, so the Salvation Army was the place to go when we came to the Bay Area.

As a young boy, I was curious about people dying and funerals, so I attended two or three services. They were held either in a Buddhist temple or a Japanese Christian church. One funeral was followed by a burial ceremony. The Japanese could not be buried in Elk Grove, only in Sacramento. At that time there were only two cemeteries, one called the West Lawn and the other the East Lawn. The Japanese could only be buried in a certain section of the East Lawn cemetery. Out of curiosity, I visited that cemetery as an adult and, sure enough, once you find one Japanese name, all the rest are either Japanese or Chinese — no other ethnic or national groups are buried there. It is noteworthy that when my brother died accidentally when he was only two years old, he was cremated and his ashes were always kept in the household. I wondered

why my parents never had the ashes buried. My father even carried the remains throughout our prison camp experience and took them to Chicago after being released. Once my parents had died in Chicago, my sister became uncomfortable about having the ashes in her house, so she asked me to take them. While a student at Berkeley, I just kept them on the shelf. One day I decided to bury them along with my mother's and father's ashes.

G.S.: Paul, was this part of your father's cultural tradition?

P.T.: I wondered about that, but he simply didn't want the ashes to be buried in a segregated cemetery. It was important for me to understand that my father was an integrationist. He really believed that I was going to be a part of America whether I liked it or not. There was no future for me in Japan, so it was imperative that I do well in school and try to do the best that I could despite de facto segregation and all the abuses the Japanese were subjected to. That is why he encouraged me to go to a white church in Elk Grove, a Congregational Church. I was 12 or 13 years old at the time, and I went there and sat by myself. I sat through the youth services and then went home. I read in the program that there were meetings on different days of the week. Wednesday evening was "Singspiration," meaning they got together to sing hymns. I decided to attend, even though I can't carry a tune or keep a beat. I was singing away there, and a couple of girls were cracking up. I could sense that they were laughing at me, but I thought that at least someone is actually paying attention to me. The next time I went to church, no one welcomed me or said hello to me. So I went home and never attended that church again. This deeply affected me in terms of shaping me as a loner.

Occasionally, my parents would visit family and friends in Sacramento. They were Japanese and spoke Japanese. Friendship ties were typically provincial, that is, between people who had come from the same prefecture in Japan. I was seven or eight, perhaps younger, and I was playing with their kids and others from the neighborhood. They were speaking Japanese, which I could understand, but I was speaking English. My English was much stronger than my Japanese by then. One of the boys said to me: "Why are you speaking English? Do you think you are too good for us?" I was stunned by this. I said, "No, it has nothing to do with that. My English is just stronger." He replied, "here we are speaking Japanese and you should speak Japanese." This kind of petty nationalism really bothered me even back then. Not only that, like all oppressed groups, they pick up their own forms of prejudices and apply them to their own groups. In other words, people from some prefectures were preferred over people from other prefectures. In Japan, too, there is an untouchable class (the *burakumin*), such as people whose occupations involve the killing of animals, handling meat (red meat especially), tanning leather, cobbling, or repairing shoes. These people were put down and were supposed to reflect a lower social background. My father refused to tolerate this. Soon thereafter, we ceased going to Sacramento to be with this group of people. When my mother wanted to visit, I refused to go. So there I was, alone, truly alone: not accepted by the white community, especially at the church level, and even

when I started high school we were definitely segregated. Though we all went to school together, we were socially segregated; there was no interaction between the Japanese and the whites.

Most of the information I received on feelings toward the Japanese I got through reading. A brief list of headlines printed in the *Chronicle, Examiner*, and some of the McClatchy papers at the turn of the century includes: “Crime and Poverty Go Hand-in-Hand with Asiatic Labor”; “Brown Men Are Evil in the Public Schools” (this justified segregation); “Japanese a Menace to American Women” (a replay of the time-tested black versus white tension, especially where white women were raped); another one read “Every One of These Immigrants Is a Japanese Spy.” There was a political group at that time called the Native Sons of the Golden West. One had to be a member of this group to be elected to political office. A major platform of the Native Sons of the Golden West was to get rid of the Japanese. Any politician who aspired to political office therefore supported that idea. They were very similar to the Ku Klux Klan in the South, the major difference being that the Native Sons didn’t need to wear robes because they held political power, whereas the KKK aspired to such power and could only operate in the shadows. The best-known member of the Native Sons was Earl Warren. When he was the attorney general, he supported the removal of the Japanese from the West Coast. He subsequently became the governor of California and then a liberal Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. Some of us — not I, but some of the *nisei* — during the 1960s would get close enough to Warren to ask him: “Isn’t it time for you to apologize for your stand on the Japanese?” He simply ignored the question and walked away. He could not apologize, of course, for to do so would have been to also condemn some of the biggest names in California politics and society. The major powers behind the California economy were all members of this organization, and they were racist from the very beginning. The Native Sons were the original argonauts who came to California; they abused and rid the state of its original native population and abused every immigrant group that came through California thereafter, starting with the Chinese and then the Japanese.

Part of that abuse takes the form of limiting life chances. Though I had already encountered it in high school, I later revisited the development of the Stanford-Binet IQ test, the Stanford-Binet achievement test, and the Strong vocational test (which is similar to the Kuder Vocational Interest Test). The Strong vocational test was designed for school counselors to advise students on what occupations or vocations they should enter. Edward Strong was a professor of business administration at Stanford University and he published three books in the early 1930s. I had taken Strong’s test and was curious as to why the counselor had advised me to go into certain occupations. As I later learned, in one of his books Strong stated that there were too many Japanese at Stanford University — in college generally — and they wanted to enter medicine, or become architects, opticians, and engineers. Strong’s view, based on an awareness of the prejudice toward the Japanese, was that any Japanese who attended college, graduated, and became a professional would only have the Japanese

community as a source of income. Given his narrow perspective, he concluded that Japanese students would not be able to find work. As such, they needed to be advised as early as possible in high school that the field is crowded, and their counselors should tell them that they should not go into architecture, medicine, etc. I read Strong's study. He constructed the vocational interest test by interviewing men who had been successful in certain occupations. He asked them a set of value, activity, and preference questions, etc., and the responses would be the criteria for becoming doctors, engineers, and so forth. But the same attributes also correlate highly with other occupations. For example, being a doctor correlates very highly with being a farmer. So Strong's advice for Japanese with ambitions of entering medicine was that they should instead go into agriculture. That was the purpose of the Strong vocational interest test.

Stanford University Professor Lewis Terman, who pioneered intelligence testing in the United States, was a longtime racist. As chairman of the Human Betterment Society in California, he advised prison authorities and recommended that all sex offenders and women who were in mental institutions and prisons should be sterilized. Indeed, in the 1920s and 1930s, something on the order of 29,000 to 30,000 women were surgically sterilized. Under the leadership of the Stanford group, there were 65 to 100 studies done on the Japanese — and this is amazing because at that time there were only 29,000 Japanese who were born in this country.

G.S.: What led to all these studies of the Japanese during this 10-year period?

P.T.: I have read most of these studies. In a Vancouver study, Peter Sandiford and Ruby Kerr (1926) administered the Pintner-Paterson Performance Test. When it came to the manipulation of the hands, or anything that has to do with performance, Japanese students outperformed everyone they compared them to. They had established a median for whites. The scores for the Japanese were up around 85 — 35 points higher than the average for whites. This really disturbed Sandiford, who was a psychologist, and Kerr, who was the superintendent of schools. They described how the test was administered and then the findings. The discussion part is very interesting: rather than saying it is delightful to have a group of bright students, they frame it as a threat to “our” society and call for a political solution (by which they mean get rid of the Japanese). This is what is being reported in the academic literature.

G.S.: It sounds like a rationale for ethnic cleansing. Was there also a mass component?

P.T.: One of the most intriguing studies I read was a study of 90 high school seniors and college freshmen in Santa Clara Valley in 1927. This attitude survey was done by a Stanford doctoral student (see Reynolds, 1927), who asked questions about the Japanese in certain areas. This study is self-fulfilling in a way, since here are these white kids, whose parents have read reports in the *Chronicle*, *Examiner*, and the McClatchy papers on how the Japanese were a menace to American women, spys, and so forth. I'll read an extract from what this researcher came up with. “The Japanese take unfair advantage of whites because the Japanese are dishonest, tricky,

treacherous, ruinous, unfair competitors, greedy, avaricious, and selfish. The Japanese have a low standard of living, so therefore they work for low wages, long hours, make their women work, make their children work, they are unsanitary and low class. They send money back to Japan, they don't assimilate [silly, huh?], they have high birth rates, low morals, low intelligence, they're dirty, repulsive, and dangerous."

These are the things I am feeling as a kid growing up. The study was conducted in 1930. The newspapers then reported on the study's findings to the effect that this is how white America, white college students, feel about the Japanese. So the newspapers set it up: the findings of this study, which are based on biased reports in the mass media, are released and the newspapers pick it up. You can see how these attitudes are based on yellow journalism in all three of these newspapers. That is, they report some of the facts, don't go beyond the facts, distort them, and even fail to analyze the source of the attitudes.

Not surprisingly, such attitudes subtly and later grossly manifested themselves in my community. During high school, I wasn't a serious student, though I did OK. I recall reading Shakespeare in an English literature class, which was taught by the drama teacher. The white and Japanese students who made up the class were asked to go before the class to read and act out passages from Shakespeare. I was teamed with this Japanese guy, and I really hammed it up. He was supposed to respond in kind, but was flustered by my highly theatrical demeanor. The teacher was impressed, however, and said to the other fellow: "You're supposed to be more dramatic in your reading of the passage." I felt very good about that, my kidding around, but did she offer me a part in the drama, or ask me to join the drama club? No. Since I enjoyed English composition, I took another English class as a junior or senior. While riding the bus along the four miles between Elk Grove and Sheldon, I was seated near two students I had known from grammar school days. We never really talked, though; we just knew each other. As it was the last day of the term, we were carrying our report cards. They asked, "Paul, what did you get in English?" I just handed them my card. "Paul, you got an 'A'!" And I thought, "Why should getting an 'A' be such a surprise?" Those small incidents shaped my attitudes and feelings.

Later, government notices were posted stating that all Japanese must report (in my case to the railway station). We were to be taken away to some unknown destination. The ethnic newspapers had been shut down and the *Chronicle* and other mainstream papers were silent on where we were being sent. We had no idea what our future held. A few nights before we were to report to the railway station, one of our neighbors, a white family — a mother and daughter I had attended high school with (though we never really talked) — came over to say good-bye. They were the only white people to do so. They had a turkey farm three miles away, close to the foothills of the Sierras, and were members of the Communist Party. As we stood talking, she asked me if I had ever seen Charlie Chaplin's film, *Modern Times*, in which he is a factory worker. I said that I hadn't. She described it as a wonderful film and recommended that I see it. Then she wished us the best and asked us to write to her and her daughter. She

promised to reply. That had an impact on me. Later on, though I never joined the Communist Party, people who were members befriended me and they became very critical to my social and political development. In the 1940s, they urged me to listen to W.E.B. DuBois at a jammed Civic Auditorium in Oakland and then to Paul Robeson when he came to Berkeley High School. This was before Robeson's period of exile, before his was called before HUAC. I have never had an anti-Red sentiment in my personal experiences as a result, though many Japanese did.

We all gathered at the train station. Coming to say good-bye to those assembled was the minister of the church whose congregation had ignored me. He was probably there out of a sense of duty since I am not even certain that he knew anyone. A fellow named Harold, whom I knew from gym class, though we never socialized, also came to see us off. The train headed south upon departing, but I still had no idea of where we were going. We ended up in Manzanar. We were given just a few days to pack up our belongings, and we could only take what we could carry. There was no place for us to store things, so we left most of our possessions in the house. We did not know that the land was going to be taken — sold off for property taxes while we were in Manzanar — and thus we lost all our worldly goods, including family photographs, etc. The taxes couldn't have been delinquent for very long, but we lost the house. My father crumbled. He never went to the mess hall and asked my mother to bring back food; he never left the barracks where we were housed. When he had to shower, he would do so in the middle of the night. He avoided everyone.

I have puzzled over what happened to my father, too. This is part of his story. When I was a little boy, he told me that he left Japan to avoid military conscription. I became interested in this topic when I was a student at Stanford University. I read a book by Ichihashi (1933), who was a professor of history at Stanford, entitled *Japanese Immigration*. According to Ichihashi, the Japanese came to the U.S. for two reasons. One was economic, but the main reason was to avoid military conscription. I have read many sources on this since then, including an interview study of first-generation Japanese in the U.S. Indeed, most of them did come here to avoid military conscription, but there are no systematic reports on the subject. Whenever I would get together with the Japanese, I asked them whether their fathers or their family friends had come to this country to avoid conscription. Many simply did not know. They had heard that Mr. So-and-so had jumped ship and was in this country illegally. I heard other stories of Japanese who had crossed the U.S. border from Canada or Mexico — they were the original wetbacks. I therefore think that a substantial number came here for that reason. It also explains why my father never thought of returning to Japan — he could not see himself doing that, for whatever reason. So he really tried to make a go of it here. He never did anything personally to justify his being placed in a prison camp, and yet he was nonetheless imprisoned, a fact that caused him to lose the land he had worked 40 years to acquire. All he had worked for and all of his dreams were gone. So I can understand why he crumbled.

G.S.: And your mother?

P.T.: Unlike my father, who cut all ties with Japan, my mother kept in touch with her sister. She had married a man who went to Peru. My mother also kept in touch with her brother in Japan, though not during the war years.

How, then, do we reconcile this feeling of being alone, with no ties, except for a few close friends and a loving and caring relationship with my wife Mary Anne, with not joining any organizations or groups? How do you account for my feeling so insecure, so frightened, and so fearful, and yet going on to graduate school? This was true not only of me, but also of others, who have done very well. I want to read from an often-cited study that is written by sociologist William Petersen. It was originally published in 1966. He starts out by saying:

Asked which of the country's ethnic minorities have been subjected to the most discrimination and the worst injustices, very few persons would even think of answering: "the Japanese Americans." Yet, if the question refers to persons alive today, that may well be the correct reply. Like the Negroes, the Japanese have been the object of color prejudice. Like the Jews, they have been feared and hated as hyperefficient competitors. And, more than any other group, they have been seen as the agents of an overseas enemy. Conservatives, liberals and radicals, local sheriffs, the federal government, and the Supreme Court have cooperated in denying them their elementary rights — most notoriously in their World War II evacuation to internment camps. Generally this kind of treatment, as we all know these days, creates what might be termed "problem minorities." Each of a number of interrelated factors — poor health, poor education, low income, high crime rate, unstable family patterns, and so on and on — reinforces all of the others, and together they make up the reality of slum life. And by the "principle of cumulation," as Gunnar Myrdal termed it in "An American Dilemma," this social reality reinforces our prejudices and is reinforced by them. When whites define Negroes as inherently less intelligent, for example, and therefore furnished them with inferior schools, the product of these schools often validated the original stereotype. Once the cumulative degradation has gone far enough, it is notoriously difficult to reverse the trend (Petersen, 1966: 169).

Petersen then explores how the Japanese survived this. He makes a cultural argument to the effect that some of the traditional values in Japan are very similar to the values of middle-class America: the postponement of gratification, taking education seriously, etc. Yet having done that, how did they transcend it? The reality was that even if you attended college, there was no job at the end of the line. When I left the University of Illinois and came to Berkeley in 1947, I again just floated through school. My Japanese friends and I agreed that there were not going to be any jobs for us. We kidded each other that if we earned a Bachelor's degree, we might be able to get a job in a vegetable stand, and a Master's degree might land us a position in a fruit

stand sorting pineapples, pears, and oranges. Even though this was true, many went to school despite it. They graduated and did whatever they did: worked as clerks, typists, etc. Or they got jobs as gardeners, clerks in grocery stores or in fruit stands. Yet suddenly, in the 1960 census, we see that the Japanese have the highest average income of all ethnic categories, the highest level of education along with the Chinese, and the highest percentage in the professions.

What happened? Was it truly due to our culture or our efforts? I believed that argument for a while. In the 1970s, though, I decided that it could not be true, because the Chinese, along with the Japanese, did well. Although their values may not be identical, one set of values the Japanese and Chinese do share is the Confucian ethic — duty, obligation, being responsible, supporting the community, etc. But what about my case? I had no loyalty to this country in the sense that the Germans didn't do anything to me, the Japanese didn't do anything to me. The government that hurt me was that of the United States. I wouldn't do anything to hurt the government, but by the same token, I wouldn't do anything to support it. So I don't have these values; I lack a sense of responsibility. I think we have to thank not traditional values, but events in China 1949 — a subject, however, that requires an analysis beyond the scope of this article.

G.S.: You and Tony Platt published an article in the journal entitled “Behind the Gilded Ghetto,” which extensively analyzes how the Red Scare and anti-Chinese sentiments promoted by the State Department explain some of the dynamics in Chinatown. How did this changing political climate affect you at the personal level?

P.T.: I graduated from college in 1949. In 1950, miracle of miracles: there is a sudden celebration of Japanese movies, Japanese art and architecture, Japanese ceramics, and so forth. I can almost see the State Department telling the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the *Examiner*, and the McClatchy newspapers to knock it off — that there is a more serious dilemma than the local Japanese problem. Suddenly, there are 138 military bases established in Japan. And the wall just comes down. In 1951, George Yoshida, someone I knew, becomes the first Japanese school teacher in the Berkeley school system. In 1952, I got a position as a deputy probation officer in Alameda County due to my long-term interest in criminology. I only got that job temporarily to replace Walter Gordon, an African American, who was called up for the Korean War. The rest is history. The university expanded immensely, as did the prison system, and many racial barriers slowly and gradually began to break down. In 1952, the Anti-Miscegenation Act was ruled unconstitutional, making possible intermarriage between people of color. In 1964, the voters in California passed a proposition that permitted discrimination against people that property owners didn't want to sell to. The California Supreme Court ruled the proposition to be illegal and unconstitutional. That brought down the barriers to housing, making red-lining unacceptable. The 1949 revolution in China affected not only me, but also most people in this country. With the exception of the lowest stratum of the working class, Americans — especially the working class — benefitted from the postwar

economic expansion and development. For the first time, they bought a tract home with a two-car garage and a power boat that sat in the driveway. Yet this economic expansion was accompanied by a growth in military expenditures and political repression. Criminologists witnessed the simultaneous growth and expansion of higher education and the criminal justice system — especially prisons.

The city of Berkeley came as close as anyplace in terms of accepting me, although even there I experienced various indignities. As late as 1964 there was still discrimination in housing. Consequently, I was unable to live in the place of my choosing. I was refused service at a place called Jack La Strange at the foot of University Avenue. And a garage on Alcatraz Avenue claimed to fix a car I had taken in for engine trouble, but hadn't. When I took it back, he said, "Look, I just finished fighting a war with you people." But as cities go, Oakland and Berkeley were pretty nice. I never lived in San Francisco, but I imagine it would have been the same. That is one reason I gave to the *Oakland Tribune* reporter who asked me why I had stayed at Berkeley — this was during the lean Brown years — given that the pay was the lowest in the country. Nevertheless, the *Tribune* headline read, "Paul Takagi Stays at U.C. Berkeley Because of the Chinese Food."

G.S.: How did these elements of your personal biography carry over into your work at the Berkeley School of Criminology and the struggles for prison reform and against the Vietnam War that were so prominent at the time?

P.T.: I finished my work at Stanford in 1964. A faculty member from the School of Criminology called to ask whether I would come to work there. Since I was working on my dissertation and I wasn't sure that I wanted to teach, I declined. But I knew Leslie Wilkins, a faculty member there who was well known in England for his work on post-release prison populations. He was working with actuarial data on groups of prisoners and was using group statistics to focus on individual prisoners (even though he didn't recommend it). The State of California bought his actuarial methods and it was being applied by the Parole Board. Certain categories of people were predicted to have a certain probability for success. They would zero in on an individual given these group statistics. Of course, you can't go from the general to the specific. Nevertheless, Wilkins may have suggested that I be hired.

Hans Toch was a visiting professor at Berkeley. I was doing studies of convicted violent offenders, murderers. I looked at their prison record and specifically at their FBI file on their arrest and educational records. That information served as a guide to interviewing. This was the first time some of these murders — who had committed serious offenses, like killing their wives — had been asked about their personal lives. The public defender and the prosecutor are only interested in the specifics of the offense. No one had asked them: Who are you? One fellow said he loved to talk to me, and we would talk for six or seven hours, not even stopping for lunch. I couldn't tape the conversations, but I took extensive notes. I wrote up about 25 or 30 of those interviews and gave them to Hans Toch. He was amazed at the quality of and details contained in the interviews. He subsequently used those interviews, with my

permission, in one of his reports. He was impressed with my work, including its rich statistical contribution, and may have recommended me for a position at the School of Criminology.

Statistical methodology was increasingly being employed in criminology at the time. They asked me again the following year to join them. Imagine my situation: for the first time someone was saying twice, “Come, we want you.” That had a tremendous impact on me and I agreed to go. Dean Lohman was very kind to me, and for the first time in my life I felt confident, even though I was competent in the areas of corrections, the prison system, and theory construction. I was well prepared at Stanford to do research and to teach. But this is just about the time that the Free Cuba Movement and the Free Speech Movement began, and I was very disturbed by what had happened in Soledad Prison, the Soledad Brothers. I had worked in the prison system and believed it to be the most progressive and innovative in the country. Yet all of these dark things were going on inside the walls and I wasn’t even aware of them. Now I had a different forum to criticize the California prison system and that fit very nicely. I made tenure very quickly — I started in 1965 and received tenure in 1968.

Then the Third World strike began. The Asian component asked me if I would be their sponsor. I had been waiting for this all my life. Suddenly it was acceptable to speak out on these matters. All of the uncertainties fell away. But as you know, I was hurt by this. Ultimately, the School of Criminology was closed. I was reflecting on this: you, Suzie Dod, and I were isolated up there in Tolman Hall in the School of Education after the school’s closure. They left me slowly twisting in the wind, hoping I would go away, and nothing was being done for me. But that’s OK, it’s nothing new, but it did hurt me. I had been hurt before, and it wasn’t as if my life depended on it. As a consequence, though, I began to withdraw from students and the activities of the School of Education. My isolation was in a sense my own fault since I didn’t make an effort to extend myself. It was a fairly conservative environment and I just wanted to serve out my time there. Along the way, though, there had been some great moments: Hi Schwendinger came along, Tony Platt came along, an exciting group of students came, and the journal was launched. After the Criminology School closed, the journal continued to be emotionally satisfying. Tony and I continued to put issues together for quite a few years.

G.S.: In the first issue of the journal, your seminal study on the police use of deadly force, entitled “A Garrison State in a ‘Democratic’ Society” (1974), was published. Has anything transpired in the intervening years that would persuade you to change your evaluation of this serious problem?

P.T.: Certainly not. It is still a problem. I didn’t do the statistics for that study. It was based upon public health data, which the government collects on how many police were killed and how many civilians were killed by the police. In a subsequent article published in *Crime and Social Justice* on that topic, I continued to stress the need to focus on horrendous cases, such as that of Eulia Love, which is comparable to the Abner Louima case or the Amadou Diallo case in New York. These are the cases that

reflect police culture. Although most police officers are not like this, the fact that they keep quiet and fail to bring those responsible for such abuses up on charges is very serious. I believe I said even in the 1970s that this was going to be a persistent problem, short of disarming the police — but even that would not get at the root of police misconduct. It is only now that we are beginning to see the prosecution of police for such acts. This is long overdue; if prosecutions aren't forthcoming, the legitimacy of the police and law enforcement will be called into question. This change is perhaps related to the Rodney King case, and without that man's video, even that would not have been exposed. We still have far to go. It is interesting that a proponent of community policing, Lee Brown, dropped out of law enforcement after a short stay. He said it was for personal reasons, but perhaps he became aware that intractable problems in the police institution were about to surface. The deadly force study was valuable. Hi Schwendinger continues to refer to it and as recently as the reunion of the School of Criminology in Berkeley, he said that the title remains very appropriate. I originally sent the paper to the Sunday *New York Times* for publication, but they turned me down despite its relevance for New York. After that, I sent it to a mainstream criminology journal, and Donald Cressey trashed it. That was before *Crime and Social Justice* had come into being.

G.S.: I didn't know that. So it finally saw the light of day only with the creation of an alternate publishing vehicle?

P.T.: That's right, and it appeared in the inaugural issue of the journal. Hi Schwendinger jumped at the opportunity to publish it. I can understand why the *New York Times* would hesitate to publish a statistical study, despite the presence of many examples pertinent to New York, but I was surprised at Cressey's response. He mocked the paper. I think that was another example of the failure to give people's language serious consideration. Jung described it in terms of sympathetic participation within the community — listening and interacting sympathetically with human understanding. When that is not there, is dismissed, or not taken seriously, you can see the impact on the writer who uttered the words. One can generalize from this to what happens to minorities, frustrated black students in this country whose school work is not taken seriously, and the anger that ensues. What a difference it would make if some of these African American and poor working-class kids had their voices taken seriously from kindergarten on, if they were listened to and interacted with at their language level. In discussing racism, I don't think it is too helpful or informative to pile on horror stories. It is more fruitful to take some theoretical application that makes sense, such as I have done here with the Jungian conception of language and thinking, or to get at the dynamics of what it does to people and how it operates on each individual in terms of rejection and repudiation. It is not rejection or repudiation of you as a person, because no one directly repudiated me during all those days. Yet I received that message from the environment; I read it in the newspaper, was ignored or not recognized in church, or, more generally, my presence was not acknowledged. It is an accumulation of such things that wears down one's confidence and pressures one

to withdraw. So when the journal came along, accompanied by an exciting group of students at the School of Criminology, I began to develop self-confidence. During graduate school I had already begun to socially and politically understand what had happened to me and to the Japanese in terms of the transformation facilitated by the Chinese Revolution. That linkage, which had various interpretations, did make sense to me, but it didn't resonate entirely. My understanding became sharpened considerably in the political struggles and community of that period. Regrettably, that community was not allowed to survive.

G.S.: Thank you, Paul.

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