

# The CAAV VOICE

Newsletter  
of the  
Committee  
Against  
Anti-Asian  
Violence

FALL 1988

## JERSEY CITY INDIANS PROTEST RACIST ATTACKS



Rally in Jersey City on October 1, 1988.

(Photo by J. Ugoretz)

"There is not a soul so dead, who never hath said to himself-Navroze is my own son, my own brother, my own friend."

Jamshid Mody, Navroze's father, spoke the above words at a rally on December 4, 1987. Navroze was bludgeoned with bricks, punched, and kicked into a coma outside of the Gold Coast Cafe in Hoboken, NJ on September 27, 1987, while his white companion was unhurt. Navroze died on October 1.

Two weeks earlier, police had refused to file a report when two of Navroze's assailants

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### Editorial

#### CAA AV CALLS FOR UNITY AMONG ASIAN AND AFRICAN AMERICANS

As Asian Americans active in the anti-racist movement in New York City, we are alarmed by the mounting tensions between Korean merchants and some African American communities. These conflicts have serious implications for the direction of the anti-racist movement and the welfare of all communities of color in this city.

We support the call for economic empowerment in African American communities. Unfortunately, these communities' legitimate frustrations and anger are being misdirected at Korean merchants, who are also struggling to survive in a racist society.

African Americans must see beyond the "model minority" stereotypes of Korean merchants, and Asians in general,

that are so heavily promoted in the mainstream media. For Korean green grocers, the flip side of those rosy "model minority" success stories is 16- to 20-hour days, 6- to 7-day weeks, and intense competition, often from other Korean merchants. Survival is partly dependent on having a large family to exploit, because relatives are rarely paid regular wages.

Given these hardships, why

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do so many Koreans go into small businesses? Faced with a racist labor market where opportunities are limited for new

immigrants, Koreans have instead chosen to be self-employed, often starting in green groceries because of low start-up costs. In contrast to the persistent rumors of mysterious funding sources, Korean merchants do not receive money from the Moonies, the U.S. or South Korean governments. Over 95% of Korean businesses are financed without banks, but get seller-financed mortgages. For down

payments, most use personal savings and "keh," a rotating pool of money among friends,

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**JERSEY INDIANS cont..**

attacked Indian students at the Stevens Institute of Technology. There have been many procedural irregularities in the Mody case, including the destruction of vital evidence when Navroze's clothes were prematurely returned to his parents, and the convening of a second grand jury without notice to the defense. As a result, the case may be dismissed.

Navroze Mody's death is part of a surge of racial violence against Indians in New Jersey. In early September, 1987, the Jersey Journal published a letter in which a newly-formed vigilante group proclaimed that its sole aim was to terrorize Indians into leaving the Jersey City area. The group's name, Dotbusters, is a racist reference to the "bindi" dot, a sacred symbol of fidelity worn on the forehead of married women.

Since the letter, numerous incidents have been reported, including vandalism to homes and cars, and assaults with baseball bats, steel pipes and acid which have resulted in injuries, disfigurement, coma

and death. Arrests have been made for only two of the incidents. According to Chief Prosecutor DePascale, the Dotbusters, whom he calls "racial terrorists," are responsible for unrelenting attacks against Indians in the area.

The Indian community has organized to challenge the racist attacks that must not become a rite of passage for immigrants in this country. In the last year, Indian Youth Against Racism (IYAR), the International Mahatma Gandhi Association, and the National Organization for the Defense of Indian-Americans have each mobilized hundreds of Indians in protests and marches, lobbied city and state officials for more aggressive action, and spoken out at a variety of forums on racial violence. Educational work has begun with the police and in the community. IYAR has also been documenting attacks against Indians in the area and developing a series of anti-racism workshops for the Jersey City schools.

On October 1, 1988, the anniversary of Navroze Mody's death, a rally was held at the

Old Courthouse in Jersey City. Coordinated by IYAR, the rally was cosponsored by the National Coalition of Indian American Associations and a broad coalition of unions, Asian, Black, Latino and civil rights organizations, and student groups. A strong contingent from CAAAV joined the diverse crowd of protestors to demand justice for Navroze Mody and the Indian community and to support proposed state legislation calling for increased penalties in bias-motivated crimes.

The organizing, protests, lobbying, educational work and coalition-building must continue until justice is won. As the Dean of CUNY Law School, Haywood Burns, said at the rally, "The only thing necessary for the triumph of racial terror is for people of good will to remain silent."

IYAR can be contacted at (212) 678-0397.

--Rita Sethi &  
John Hayakawa Torok

## YOUTH REACH OUT TO COMBAT RACISM

Project Reach is a youth counseling and advocacy center that counsels young men and women from different ethnic backgrounds: Blacks, Asians, Latinos and whites from ages 12-21.

Our youth center has much more than counseling to offer. We also have activities such as basketball, photography, video, ping pong and music. However, most importantly, we have a summer program that teaches peer counseling and different social issues such as racism, homophobia, sexism, rape, child abuse, disabili-

ty, teen suicide, teen pregnancy and runaways.

Racism is one of the most talked about issues in our program. Last year, four of our participants from Project Reach designed a workshop on racism.

The first workshop we did was at Francis Lewis High School in Queens, where racial tension between some of the Asian and white students had turned violent. We were asked to do a workshop there that was taped by Channel 13. Later that year, we did two more workshops at Seward Park High

School in the Lower East Side where we dealt with both racism and homophobia. Another workshop we did was in Philadelphia at Central High School.

In the workshops, we talk about the definition of racism, stereotypes, and how people are treated because of prejudices. Our workshops might not completely change people's attitudes overnight. Nevertheless, we believe that our workshops add to their awareness of the issues. They can start to see and think about the problems that surround their lives, and how to

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**GAY ASIAN KILLED**

Early Monday morning, at 5 am, August 22, Paul Him Chow, a gay 26-year-old Chinese American visitor from San Francisco, was found bludgeoned to death at Pier 45, near West and Christopher Streets. His face and head had been beaten beyond recognition. Police determined he was assaulted by at least four individuals.

Through efforts and pressure from CAAAV and the NYC Gay and Lesbian Anti-Violence Project, detectives from the 6th Precinct pushed to make an arrest.

Hector Negron, 18, was taken into custody on September 20.

Although Detective Kenny Bowen, assigned to the case, claims the homicide was "robbery-related," Paul's personal property was left intact. None of his jewelry or cash was taken.

Friends of Paul remember him saying that the previous night he was harassed in the same area for being Asian and gay. Police claim that this harassment is unrelated.

**RACE HATRED IGNORED BY U.CONN. ADMIN.**

On December 3, 1987, Asian American students from the University of Connecticut were harassed by football players while riding on a campus bus. Assaulted with racial slurs and a shower of spit, the terrorized Asian students received little support from the other riders.

Their outcries against this harassment went ignored by authorities, the police and later by the UConn administration. None of the football players were reprimanded or suspended by the administration, which has repeatedly refused to recognize the incident as racist.

The students organized  
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**DANGEROUS UPSURGE IN IMMIGRANT SCAPEGOATING**

*"They fired me when they learned I had no papers. Now I work in different restaurants at temporary, part-time jobs. I have to sleep in dormitories because the restaurants are so far away from home." Cho, a restaurant worker, is also facing sexual harassment on the job.*

Approximately 77% of all Chinese in New York City are foreign-born, as are 79% of Asian Indians, 79% of Filipinos, 86% of Koreans, 71% of Japanese, and 91% of Vietnamese (figures from NYC Planning Dept 1980 Census). National figures are comparable, although slightly lower.

What do these figures mean for our efforts to stop anti-Asian violence? Immigrants, clearly the large majority of our communities, are especially vulnerable to violence because of language barriers and unfamiliarity with legal and political recourse against verbal and physical abuse. The undocumented, stripped of their most basic rights and fearful of deportation, are even less likely to fight for higher wages, challenge police mistreatment, or protest landlord abuses. Anti-Asian hostility and violence is continually stirred up by anti-immigrant propaganda. Since the 1965 lifting of barriers to Asian, Latin American and Caribbean migration, alarm has been mounting that the "complexion" of America is changing. With the economic recessions of the 1970's, a multi-faceted, anti-immigrant legislative initiative was launched. Racist measures have been concealed in the language of "controlling U.S. borders" and "protecting American jobs from

'foreigners.'"

The initiatives have been on many fronts:

1. Efforts to drive out and/or push further underground undocumented immigrants by penalizing employers who hire them (passed into law);

2. Substantial increases in funding for Immigration and Naturalization Service enforcement (passed into law);

3. Declaration of English as the "Official Language" of the U.S. (passed into law in 17 states, introduced in 15 states in 1988, pending in Congress); and

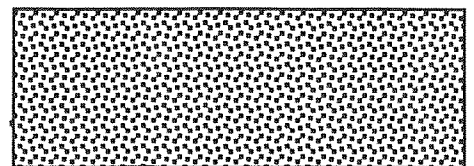
4. Restrictions on legal immigration into the U.S. by:

--Restricting applications for "green cards" based on marriage to a U.S. citizen (passed into law),

--Significantly cutting the immigrant categories used by Asians and Latin Americans (introduced in Congress in '88),

--Reimplementing the McCarran-Walter Act as means for deporting foreign-born U.S. political activists (temporarily blocked, future unclear).

We are living in an era comparable to the turn of the century when immigration measures--the Chinese Exclusion Act, anti-Japanese restrictions, anti-Filipino measures, and the racist 1924 Immigration Act--both reflected and helped fuel anti-Asian racism and violence. All of us, U.S.-born and immigrant alike, must join forces to challenge this dangerous trend.



**EDITORIAL cont.**

similar to the "susu" in the Caribbean American community.

Is there a conspiracy by Korean merchants to drive out African American businesses and take over these communities? No, there is no grand plan, only individual strategies for survival. Korean merchants often seek out areas where there are few local merchants. By filling a marketing vacuum, it is easier for them to make a living.

Conspiracy is an allegation often leveled at Asians, as well as other ethnic groups. In the 19th century, so-called "inscrutable Chinese" were treated as a threat to this country, a "yellow peril." During WWII, 120,000 Japanese Americans were herded off to concentration camps because of unfounded fears of collaboration with Japan. There was not a single conviction for sedition. Last year, in south Brooklyn, 700,000 fliers were distributed accusing the Chinese and Koreans of plotting "a complete takeover within 5 years." Asians represent a mere 5% of the population in that neighborhood.

This kind of scapegoating of Asian Americans has led to racist attacks throughout our history. Scapegoating of the Chinese for the depression of 1873 resulted in the anti-Chinese movement, with its lynchings, arson, and racist, repressive legislation. In this decade we have seen a rise in anti-Asian violence nationwide, as immigrants and people of color are blamed for the faltering economy.

In 1982 Vincent Chin, a Chinese American, was murdered by Detroit autoworkers who blamed him for Japanese automakers' competition. In New York City, scapegoating of Korean merchants often spills over as hostility against other Asian Americans.

Clearly, in this society it is not Koreans, or Asians, who hold the power to prevent the empowerment and development of African American communities. The power lies with the banks that redline communities, withholding financing from African Americans. The power lies with the landlords, who charge exorbitant rents and impose their own agenda for community development, not struggling Korean merchants.

Meanwhile, communities of color are being devastated by police who murder our people while allowing drugs to rule the streets, a medical system that does not care for the health of the poor and working class, and schools that do not give youth the skills to survive.

aware of the long history of racism in this country, and the profound effect this has had on people of color and society as a whole. As Asian Americans in the anti-racist movement, our task is to educate the diverse Asian American communities, challenge racist attitudes and behaviour, and always link our work toward racial justice for Asians with the broader struggle against racism and racist violence.

African and Asian Americans all stand to gain by working together. We must deal with the the same landlords, the same inadequate schools, police brutality, racist attacks, drugs and crime in our streets. Korean merchants should share their skills and resources with the

***"Just as African Americans need to cease the scapegoating of Korean merchants, we Asian Americans must further commit ourselves to combatting prejudice in the Asian community."***

Empowerment will come by uniting and challenging the racist institutions that control our communities. The economic situation in African American communities will not improve by agitating against the presence of Korean merchants. If the Koreans were to leave tomorrow, African American businesses would not appear in their place. Organizing should focus on building the community institutions necessary for economic and political development.

Just as African Americans need to cease the scapegoating of Korean merchants, we Asian Americans must further commit ourselves to combatting prejudice in the Asian community. The large majority of Asians in New York City are recent immigrants. Many are un-

communities in which they work. They should join forces with community residents to combat the problems that face them all. Sincere negotiations between Korean merchants and African American community members will certainly lead to the constructive resolution of longstanding tensions and the development of mutually beneficial cooperative efforts.

--Mini Liu

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## FROM COALITION TO COMMITTEE -- CAAAV'S NEW STRUCTURE

It has been two years since the Coalition Against Anti-Asian Violence sponsored the first New York City area forum on violence against Asians. Since then we have expanded our work to include victim advocacy, several community mobilizations, other forums and workshops, numerous speaking engagements before diverse audiences, lobbying, and coalition work within the anti-racist movements. Last June, at our annual evaluation and long-range planning meeting, we realized that we had matured from a network of 18 groups into an ongoing organization.

We have now reorganized into the **Committee** Against Anti-Asian Violence and have divided into work committees.

The Newsletter Committee will be producing the CAA AV Voice three times a year. The Documentation Committee is exploring ways to get information on the innumerable incidents of anti-Asian violence that never get reported. We are focusing our initial efforts on a survey of high school students.

We are continuing our victim advocacy work and are expanding our referral list. We will be doing community outreach and mobilization as the

need and opportunity arise. As our membership increases, we hope to develop more of a program of community outreach.

**How can you be part of the exciting work of CAAAV?** The structure has been expanded so that you can be involved at different levels, depending on your time and resources. Members are those who are actively involved. If you can't participate, you can keep abreast of the problem of anti-Asian violence by subscribing to our newsletter.

## JAPANESE SCULPTOR ASSAULTED IN TOMPKINS SQ. POLICE RIOT

"I don't like art for rich people in galleries...I am an artist for the people," says Ken Hiratsuka, the Japanese artist from the Rivington School on the Lower East Side, who started the Gaseteria Art Space on Ave B and 2nd Street.

After 12 am on Sunday, August 7, 1988, Ken Hiratsuka was walking near Tompkins Sq. Park with his wife Gloria McKean when riot squads of NYC police, there to enforce a park curfew, went on a rampage and brutalized hundreds of innocent people. Ken and his wife were two of the many that suffered injuries. Ken was told by the police "You f--king Jap, go back to where you came from." Then Ken was thrown to the ground and beaten up.

The police inflicted multiple injuries to the fingers of his working hand, resulting in the loss of the tip of one and the fracture of another finger. His head wounds required several stitches. For the first time in 10 years, Ken was unable to create his art, which entails using a



Hiratsuka's sidewalk sculpture on St. Mark's Place.

(Photo by To Yo)

hammer and chisel. The frustration he suffered as a result of being unable to work was almost intolerable, he said.

His one-line stone "drawings" resemble modern petroglyphs and can be seen on sidewalks throughout the Lower East Side and also throughout the world.

CAA AV was notified of the

brutality while Ken was still in the hospital and since then has provided him with emotional support, information regarding racist police brutality and other similar cases. CAAAV is currently cooperating with Ken and Gloria's lawyer who is filing a lawsuit for \$38 million on their behalf.