

The AACCP Newsletter

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An Interview

With California State Assemblyman Paul Fong On the Passage of an Apology Resolution For Past Wrongs Done to Chinese Americans

Interviewed by Emily Lin

Edited by Philip Chin

On July 17, 2009, the California State legislature passed Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 42 (ACR 42), formally apologizing for the past actions of the State in California in encouraging and passing discriminatory laws against Chinese Americans. These discriminatory legal policies were later adopted by many of the western states following the legal language and example set by California. Pressure from these states was a main factor in the adoption of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 into federal law and subsequent discriminatory federal laws that eliminated all but a trickle of Chinese immigration to the United States. These restrictions on Chinese immigration only ended with the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 that eliminated all national immigration quotas.

The resolution was introduced in the California State Assembly by Assemblyman Paul Fong of Mountain View. Our intern, Emily Lin, a student at Mills High School in Millbrae, California, had the chance to ask Assemblyman Fong some questions about ACR 42.

Emily Lin (EL): What is contained in the legislation?

Paul Fong (PF): ACR 42 acknowledges the history of Chinese in California and apologizes for past discriminatory laws that resulted in the persecution of Chinese living in California.

EL: Why - what inspired it?

PF: California is an academic, economic, and cultural powerhouse known around the world. It is the diversity of our state that has played a key role in California's success. However, behind the many accomplishments, California has a shadow of shame, a history of racism and discrimination, which many have attempted to forget. Acknowledging our past wrongs will allow us to avoid repeating them in the future.

Before I became a State Assemblymember, I was a Political Science Professor for 30 years and specialized in Asian American Studies. I know the history of Asian Americans in the United States well. Now that I am in Sacramento, I have the ability to educate future generations about the importance of history and add another chapter to the history books about California.

EL: Why does the bill only address Chinese Americans and not address the related injustices that were done to other Asian American communities?

PF: There has never been an effort to apologize to the Chinese community. ACR 42 will be the first formal recognition of the state's cruel and discriminatory laws. These laws enacted by California's legislature led to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882- the first (federal) law that targeted a specific group of people. So it is time to apologize to Chinese Americans for singling out their ancestors with unjust laws - including my ancestors.

EL: What's the significance of this legislation?

PF: With the election of President Barack Obama, there may be a temptation to believe that discrimination is no longer a problem in 2009. However, the pain of discrimination is still felt in America by many, including Chinese Americans, who are still subjected to racism and negative stereotyping. ACR 42 acknowledges the past discriminatory practices against Chinese Americans as an important step to address the current forms of discrimination against not only Chinese Americans, but all Americans.

Furthermore, beyond an apology, ACR 42 provides education and awareness to all Californians about the anti-immigrant sentiments that existed not only in the past, but still persist to this day.

By expressing regret for and acknowledging the discriminatory actions taken in the past, the Legislature reaffirms its commitment to preserving the rights of all people.

As the text of ACR 42 states, "ours is a state with an imperfect history where intolerance spurred the enactment of unjust discriminatory laws that have too often denied minority groups access to the promise of America, that all men are created equal. Today that struggle continues, and learning from our past will help enable us to travel further down the path toward building a more perfect Union."

EL: Going forward, what's next?

PF: I will be seeking introduction of a Resolution at the Federal level to apologize to Chinese Americans for the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. I was waiting for ACR 42 to be chaptered into law first, and now that it has, I will begin seeking support from the federal government.

(Continued on Page 2)

Give Us Your Feedback

Please feel free to send us your reviews, comments, and book suggestions. You can contact us at -
aacpinc@asianamericanbooks.com

Up Coming Events

Here are some events that AACCP will soon be attending. Invite us to your events.

Date/Time	Event	Location
Sept. 26	Spirit of Japantown Festival	San Jose, CA
Oct. 10 9-4pm	9th Annual Teachers for Social Justice Conference	San Francisco, CA
Other Event of Interest that AACCP May Not Attend		
July 25- Sept 20	California in Relief A History in Wood and Linocut Prints Includes works by George Matsusaburo Hibi, Chiura Obata, and others	Saint Mary's College of CA Hearst Art Gallery Moraga, CA
Sept. 12	Midori Kai Arts & Craft Boutique	MV Buddhist Temple Mountain View, CA
Sept. 19-20 11am-6pm	Chinatown Autumn Moon Festival	Chinatown San Francisco, CA
Sept. 24-26	California Council For History Education	Hilton Orange County Costa Mesa, CA
Sept. 26 6pm	San Mateo OCA's 22nd Anniversary Asian American Achievement Awards	S. SF Conv. Center S. SF, CA
Sept. 26-27	Kaiser Permanente San Francisco International Dragon Boat Festival	Treasure Island San Francisco, CA
Sept. 27 11am-4pm	Chinatown Mall Culture Fair	Historic Chinatown Mall Sacramento, CA
Nov. 14 8-3pm	National Pacific Islander Educator Network (NPIEN) 8th Annual Education Conference	Paramount High School 14429 S. Downey Ave. Paramount, CA

Paul Fong Interview

(Continued from page 1)

EL: What events inspired you to create and pass this legislation? Is there any personal experience or family background that encouraged you to do this?

During the 19th and 20th Centuries, California enacted some of the most discriminatory laws and Constitutional provisions, directly persecuting Chinese living in California and the incoming Chinese immigrants.

Our Legislature denied Chinese the right to own property, work, testify in court, and marry persons of their choosing. It was our

Editor's Message

Hello Everyone,

was great seeing those of you that were able to attend the OCA convention in San Francisco.

Not a lot to say, so I'll go straight to the thanks. Thank you Paul Fong and his staff for agree to do the interview. Thank you to our intern Emily Lin - we wish you much luck and learning back at school. Thank you Philip for helping with the editing and the suggestion of the Paul Fong article.

Write to you all next month. Have a nice end to summer.

Bye.

Leonard Chan
Executive Editor

California government that pushed Congress to adopt the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the first federal law ever passed barring a group of immigrants solely on the basis of race or nationality - a law that directly impacted my family.

During this time, my grandfather was held at Angel Island for two months before being allowed access into California. Trying to establish his life in the state, my grandfather was forced to lease land to begin his floral business. He was denied the ability to own property.

However, despite the many barriers placed on Chinese Americans by our government, Chinese in California have made vast

contributions to the state. They constructed most of the western leg of the Transcontinental Railroad, helped build our Delta levees, and assisted in the success of our fishing and agricultural industries, making California the great state it is today.

EL: What is your opinion of the status of the Chinese American Community today? How do these past injustices hold us back and why did we need this legislation?

PF: The Chinese American Community today is thriving and successful. However, discrimination is still a problem.

Like any wound that goes unattended, the pain, though perhaps diminished, still exists. ACR 42 seeks to right the wrongs of our past by acknowledging, not only the discriminatory laws that were in effect, but also the many contributions Chinese Americans have made to the state.

EL: What is the affect of this legislation for Chinese Americans?

PF: ACR 42 is a formal apology to Chinese Americans for past discrimination. This is an important first step in healing old wounds. In addition, ACR 42 will serve as an educational tool to ensure that our children are aware that the contributions the Chinese American community made encouraged the development of California and enriched its history.

EL: What practical good does this legislation (apology) do?

PF: I hope to accomplish several things with this formal apology. The apology is symbolic of California's, and hopefully the nation's acknowledgement of a long history of wrongdoing against Chinese-Americans. In the 19th century and 20th Century (until WWII), many discriminatory laws were passed against Chinese Americans. For example, Chinese couldn't own land, own weapons, and were blocked from public school and employment. Chinese were declared as dangerous, and by law, could be exiled from communities. Not until we apologize and recognize these wrongs can we move forward as a state and a nation. The objective of ACR 42 is not to seek financial compensation, but rather to open up a dialogue about an era of our history that has been suppressed, and to educate Californians about this history.

EL: What are some of the steps and actions we have to take to achieve higher status? What do we lack that keeps the Chinese Community from stepping forward? How do you foresee the future of the Chinese community?

PF: As a student I fought to keep ethnic studies courses in the curriculum. As a professor, I taught the next generation of students about Chinese American history and culture. As an Assemblymember, I'm paving the way for future Asian American legislators. I encourage the Chinese and other Asian communities to speak up for representation and fight to keep history alive. By using our voices, Chinese Americans can have strong representation and respect.

EL: What are some of the further actions you are considering? I read an article that said you are considering the funding of a monument. Why not spend that money and time on getting our schoolbooks and curriculum changed to include more Asian American history?

PF: I am currently pushing for federal legislation that would offer an apology for the passage of the Chinese Exclusionary Act of 1882. In addition, I strongly advocate for getting our school's history curriculum to include the injustices against Chinese Americans. In the same way the injustices against Native Americans, African Americans, and Japanese Americans are included, the past Chinese American experience must be taught as well.

EL: You're interested in getting federal legislation passed that apologizes for the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act. What do you hope to accomplish with this action?

PF: The Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, the Emancipation Proclamation, and the other great documents which set forth the core values of America are inspirations, aspirations that can only be given meaning with exercise and effort. ACR 42 opens a dialogue to discuss racism and discrimination. My hope is that the nation will join the conversation and applaud the passage of ACR 42.

EL: Thank you very much Assemblymember Fong.

Article Links

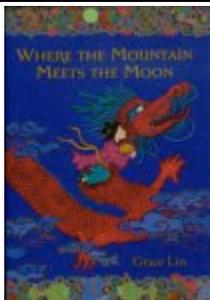
Text for ACR 42 - <http://www.docstoc.com/docs/7131127/Assembly-Concurrent-Resolution-42>

Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Immigration_and_Nationality_Act_of_1965

Assemblyman Paul Fong's website - <http://democrats.assembly.ca.gov/members/a22/>

ADDITIONS TO OUR WEBSITE

The following books are discounted for subscribers to our newsletter. The discounts on these books end September 19, 2009.



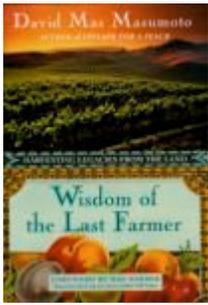
Where the Mountain Meets the Moon

By Grace Lin
2009, 278 pages, Hardback.

Minli, the daughter of a poor subsistence farm couple in a barren dry community in China, listens to her father's folktales and dreams of someday meeting the Old Man of the Moon and asking for his assistance. A magical talking fish tells her how to find the Old Man, which starts her on a wonderful adventure.

This is author and illustrator Grace Lin's third young adult novel, but her first venture into writing imaginative modern folktales.

Item #3569, Normally \$16.99 ... for newsletter subscribers **\$13.59**

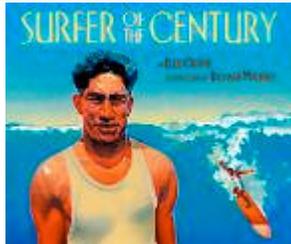


Wisdom of the Last Farmer Harvesting Legacies from the Land

By David Mas Masumoto
2009, 237 pages, Hardback.

Award winning author and farmer David Mas Masumoto continues his lyrical writings on his life as a farmer and writer. As in his other books, *Wisdom of the Last Farmer* covers the complexities and wisdom of farming, farm life, and family. In this memoir he has the added issues of the failing health of his father, the struggles of the farm, and the hope of the next generation coming back to the farm.

Item #3572, Normally \$25.00 ... for newsletter subscribers **\$20.00**

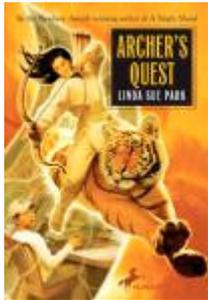


Surfer of the Century The Life of Duke Kahanamoku

By Ellie Crowe
Illustrated by Richard Waldrep
2007, 46 pages, Hardback.

Surfer of the Century is the story book biography of famed Hawaiian swimmer and surfer Duke Kahanamoku. The book follows his early start in swimming, his twenty-year medal winning Olympic career, his life as a promoter of surfing and Hawaii to people around the world, his life saving feat, his career as sheriff of Honolulu, and his position as Hawaii's Ambassador of Aloha. Author Ellie Crowe is thorough in her account of one of Hawaii's modern heroes.

Item #3568, Normally \$18.95 ... for newsletter subscribers **\$15.16**

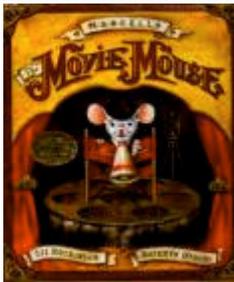


Archer's Quest

By Linda Sue Park
2006, 167 pages, Hardback.

Kevin's after school boredom is broken when a stranger pops into his room. It's not a criminal, but a legendary Korean archer king named Chu-mong (Dongmyeong of Goguryeo) from over 2000 years ago. How did he get there? Follow their often enlightening and humorous quest to find a way home for Chu-mong.

Item #3570, Normally \$16.00 ... for newsletter subscribers **\$12.80**



Marcello the Movie Mouse

By Liz Hockinson
Illustrated by Kathryn Otoshi
2006, 33 pages, Hardback.

This is the delightful story of a mouse named Marcello who loves movies so much that it compels him to make a movie of his own. Although this book has no Asian theme, its message is universal that you should follow your dreams and with some hard work and a lot of perseverance you can win over even your worst adversaries.

Item #3571, Normally \$16.95 ... for newsletter subscribers **\$13.56**