

INTERCOLLEGIATE CHINESE FOR SOCIAL ACTION

POSITION PAPER

San Francisco State, a community college, exists in a moral vacuum, oblivious to the community it purports to serve. It does not reflect the pluralistic society that is San Francisco; it does not begin to serve the 300,000 people who live in this urban community in poverty, in ignorance, in despair. The Chinese ghetto, Chinatown, is a case in point.

1. SF State has a Chinese language department that isolates the "Chinese Experience" as a cultural phenomenon in a language that 83% of the Chinese in the United States do not speak. Realistically, we can expect that a Chinese woman, living in the ghetto, who speaks Cantonese, cannot explain to the scholar that she is dying to tuberculosis because she speaks a "street language" while the scholar mutters classical poetry in Mandarin. San Francisco State College does not teach Cantonese.

2. Chinatown is a ghetto. In San Francisco there are approximately 50,000 Chinese of whom the vast majority live in Chinatown. It is an area of old buildings, narrow streets and alleys, and the effluvia of a great number of people packed into a very small space. At present, more than 5000 new Chinese immigrants stream into this overpopulated ghetto every year, an area already blessed with a birth rate that is rising, and will rise more. Chinatown is basically a tenement. Tuberculosis is endemic, rents are high and constantly rising, city services are inadequate to provide reasonable sanitation, and space is at such a premium as to resemble the Malthusian ratio at its most extreme conclusion.

There are no adequate courses in any department or school at SF State that even begin to deal specifically with the problems of the Chinese people in this exclusionary and racist environment.

WE, THEREFORE, SUPPORT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SCHOOL OF ETHNIC AREA STUDIES and further submit (under separate cover) our proposal for the establishment of a Chinese Ethnic Studies Department within that school that will begin to attack the problems that exist in the Chinese Community and address itself to the problems that exist in the Chinese Community at large - to the problems of acculturation and identity for Chinese people in these United States.