"Learned from Black Friends": The Asian-American Struggle for Housing and Equal Employment in New York City, 1969 – 1974

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Shouyue Zhang

Advisors: Carl Bon Tempo, Ph.D., and Christopher L. Pastore, Ph.D.

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Abstract

The size of New York's Chinese community surged after 1968, in turn leading to shortages in affordable housing and insufficient employment opportunities. The urban crisis of New York City exacerbated these problems. This thesis will explore New York's Asian-American collective struggles against landlords' eviction and employment discrimination.

The housing story began in 1969. The New York Telephone Company bought buildings in Chinatown and evicted all tenants. Tenants used various strategies to resist. Finally, their efforts secured a long-term lease. The employment story mainly occurred in 1974. The developer of Confucius Plaza in Chinatown hired two Asian construction workers to accommodate the requirements of the affirmative action. Asian Americans protested massively and finally got thirty-nine positions for Asian Americans.

This thesis's primary source base will draw on publications of racial minority organizations such as I Wor Kuen and Asian Americans for Equal Employment, newspapers, oral histories, and government statistics. This thesis asks: How did "model minorities" become political activists? What was the role of interracial coalitions in two struggles? How did protesters succeed? And what was the legacy of two struggles?

This thesis argues that interracial coalitions emerged from colleges. Student group activities prepared Asian college students to participate in social movements. Asian American activists identified and successfully avoided eviction and work discrimination by using wise strategies. The younger generation's commitment and interracial coalitions were keys to their success. Two struggles added racial minorities' housing and employment problems to the city's political agenda, establishing paradigms for subsequent resistances. Two struggles trained future Chinese-American leaders, sowing the seeds of the self-determination of Asian-American communities in the background of Asian American movements.

Keywords: Interracial coalition; Asian American Movement; Chinatown

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Introduction

In September 1970, a group of unusual squatters occupied fifty apartments along the border of Manhattan's Chinatown. These twenty-four Chinese families did not break the door locks as squatters usually did for a simple reason: these apartments were their previous homes. The Telephone Company soon evicted the tenants, most of whom were Chinese and Italian immigrants that spoke no English. The Telephone Company hired wreckers to break windows and to remove the plumbing. However, the demolition did not prevent the tenants from returning. When patrols came and attempted to remove one squatter who had been evicted with his family and lived for a time in inadequate temporary housing before returning to the apartment building, he protested, "I do not care if they jail me. … I refuse to live 13 people in 3 rooms any longer."[1] This story suggests that their situations had become desperate, and they were determined to fight.

When the former tenants began squatting in September 1970, they received assistance from I Wor Kuen (IWK), a Chinese-American New Left organization, which spoke for these immigrants. IWK was established in 1969 by a group of college and high school students, mainly second-generation Asian Americans. IWK means "Righteous Harmonious Fists" in Chinese, which was named in honor of a group of Chinese fighters that fought against the British imperialists in 1900. The name of IWK demonstrated their bellicose style of anti-imperialism. IWK members generally self-identified as Marxist and Maoist, pursuing revolutionary solutions to societal problems.

Racism in employment was another problem for Chinese immigrants in New York City. A few years later, another community organization, Asian Americans For Equal Employment

[1] I Wor Kuen, "But We Will Move In," Getting Together 1, no. 5 (September-October 1970), accessed March 28, 2019, https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/ncm-1a/iwk-move-in.htm.

(AAFEE), began advocating on behalf of Chinese immigrants who faced discrimination in the job market. In December 1973, some activists, job seekers, and groups established AAFEE to fight against employment discrimination and open new ways of finding jobs.[2] AAFEE published its bulletins, organized a workers' congress, demonstrations, and negotiated with the city council. Both IWK and AAFEE made tremendous contributions to Asian Americans' struggles for housing in 1970 and their jobs in 1974.

Asian American activism grew out of both the anti-Vietnam War movements and the Black Power Movement.[3] As the Vietnam War progressed, Asian Americans correlated the overseas wars and anti-communism with the oppressive conditions in their communities.[4] Inspired by the success of the Civil Rights Movement, they took actions to express their discontent against the Vietnam War and racial discrimination at home. The IWK and AAFEE as start-up organizations overshadowed more established Chinese immigrant groups, such as the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA), which had been vital to Chinatown politics since the nineteenth century. Leaders of CCBA were Chinese businessmen who had been in the United States and at the heart of New York City's Chinatown for a much longer time. These two radical organizations found inspiration and allies in surprising places. The Black Panthers, an African American revolutionary organization, and the Young Lords, a Puerto Rican American radical organization, collaborated with IWK and AAFEE in protesting, announcing platforms and being arrested together. These African-American, Puerto Rican, and Chinese-American political organizations built interracial coalitions temporarily to deal with certain

[2] Asian Americans For Equal Employment (AAFEE), "Stop Racial Discrimination Immediately!" *Special Bulletin on Asian Americans For Equal Employment*, June 1974, 2, Museum of Chinese in America.

[3] Daryl Maeda, "The Asian American Movement," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of American History*, article published June 2016, DOI: 10.1093/acrefore/9780199329175.013.21.

[4] Maeda, the Asian American Movement.

crisis. Chinese-American organizations almost always considered themselves students of the other two more experienced organizations. This thesis asks: How did "model minorities" become political activists? What was the role of interracial coalitions in two struggles? How did the protesters succeed? And what was the legacy of two struggles?

Specifically, this thesis focuses on the tenant protests in Manhattan's Chinatown in 1970 and the construction worker protests in Confucius Plaza in 1974. It shows how Asian-American advocacy groups joined the American political mainstream. Based on a Chinatown Study Group's survey of the political participation of Chinatown residents from 1968 to 1969, more than 90 percent of residents never participated in "political clubs."[5] Asian Americans and Asian immigrants had been an apolitical community. The trigger of their collective struggles in the turbulent 1970s was worth exploring. Although scholars have mentioned these two protests in other monographs, most dedicate no more than a page to this topic.[6] These scholars also fail to consider connections between demonstrations and other events and overlook the extent to which the protests had lasting impacts on New York's racial minority community.

This thesis will draw primary sources from English and Chinese language publications like I Wor Kuen's *Getting Together* and AAFEE's *Special Bulletin*, New York popular newspapers, Columbia University archives, AAFEE's oral history videos, and statistics from student groups and governments.

I argue that activists identified and successfully avoided eviction and work discrimination by building interracial coalitions and using wise strategies. They avoided mentioning de facto financial elements, i.e., the rising housing prices (gentrification) and employment cost, which

[5] The Chinatown Study Group, *The Chinatown Report 1969*, preface, 23, Henry Birnbaum Library, Pace University.

[6] Daryl Maeda, *Rethinking the Asian American Movement* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 81; Peter Kwong, *The New Chinatown* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1987), 163.

were one of the reasons for Asian Americans' eviction and unemployment. Asian Americans' conflicts with white landlords and developers were the result of racial and class contradictions. Moreover, they succeeded because of the interracial coalition in which young Asian Americans advocated and participated. The interracial coalition provided enlightenment, guidance, and support for Asian American organizations. Two struggles added racial minorities' housing and employment problems to the city's political agenda, mobilizing the Asian-American community to integrate into the American political process.

Asian Americans' struggles in New York City between 1969 and 1974 took place against the more extensive background of a growing Asian American movement across the United States. According to the definition of the historian Daryl Maeda, the Asian American movement was a social movement for racial justice during the late 1960s through the mid-1970s that united various Asian ethnic groups and demanded equal treatment for Asians in institutions and social service.[7] This developing scholarship makes two main assertions.[8] First, it shows that the Asian American movement had grassroots origins. Second, it emphasizes that this movement advocated "self-determination both for Asians in the United States and in Asia" rather than civil rights.[9] This thesis supported those two assertions. However, it also examines the extent to which Asian Americans followed other racial groups to magnify Chinese community problems on the city's political stage. Some scholars have examined the coalition between the African-American and Puerto Rican activists but have overlooked the role of Asian American activists in this

[7] Maeda, the Asian American Movement.

[8] For the early-stage studies about the Asian American movement, see Paul Wong, "The Emergence of the Asian-American Movement," *Bridge* 2, no. 1, (September/October 1972), 33-39; Amy Uyematsu, "The Emergence of Yellow Power in America," in *Roots: An Asian American Reader*, Amy Tachiki, et al., ed. (Los Angeles, CA: Asian American Studies Center, University of California), 1971, 9-13; William Wei, *The Asian American Movement* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press), 1993; Diane Fujino, "Who Studies the Asian American Movement?: A Historiographical Analysis," *Journal of Asian American Studies* 11, no. 2 (June 1, 2008): 136-7.

[9] Maeda, *Rethinking,* III; Maeda, the Asian American Movement.

multiracial alignment.[10] This thesis demonstrates that their coalitions played a vital role in the growth of Asian start-up organizations and fighting against urban renewal in Chinatown.

This thesis will challenge the popular categorization of Manhattan's Chinatown tenants' protest of 1970. Regarding the housing problem, Daryl Maeda categorized this protest as urban activism in New York City, attributing the victory of this struggle to the organizer, I Wor Kuen.[11] In my argument, these tenant struggles of 1969 - 1971 have a more significant legacy for the Chinese community than IWK. Additionally, my thesis supports Charlotte Brooks' argument that the housing issue was as combustible as other concerns like immigration restriction.[12]

The study of the landlord-tenant relationship in New York City has an integrated scholarship. It makes two main assertions.[13] First, the tenant movement in New York City in the twentieth century gave tenants considerable bargaining powers. Second, women, immigrants, and minorities built an intersectional coalition that shaped the city's political agenda. This thesis reviews a housing crime mock trial, arguing that interracial coalitions conveyed minorities' rejection of bad living conditions on a city-wide stage.

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[10] Brian Behnken, *Civil Rights and Beyond: African American and Latino/a Activism in the Twentieth-Century United States* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 2016); Lillian Jiménez, "Interview with Juan Gonzalez: His road to the Young Lords," accessed November 25, 2019, https://centropr.hunter.cuny.edu/centrovoices/chronicles/interview-juan-gonzalez-his-road-young-lords; Diane Fujino, Samurai among Panthers: Richard Aoki On Race, Resistance, and a Paradoxical Life (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

[11] Maeda did not focus on the Manhattan housing problem itself and underrated the influence of paradigms of resistance established in this event on the subsequent housing resistances. This eviction, however, threatened the core interest of Asian Americans living in Manhattan. See Maeda, *Rethinking*, 74.

[12] Charlotte Brooks, *Alien Neighbors, Foreign Friends Asian Americans, Housing, and the Transformation of Urban California* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 2.

[13] This early-stage coalition made a foundation for the 1970s interracial coalition. Roberta Gold affirms that the liberal and active social environment in New York City encouraged local tenants to struggle for their housing rights. Gold mentions the mock trial held by the Black Panthers, Young Lords, and IWK in 1970, but ignores the motivation of Asian activists' participation. Linking this mock trial to other protests in the same year, my thesis identifies that Asian activists' involvement was a response to the previous Manhattan Chinatown evictions. See Ronald Lawson, *The Tenant Movement in New York City, 1904-1984* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1986), 7; Roberta Gold, *When Tenants Claimed the City: The Struggle for Citizenship in New York City Housing* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2014), 192.

The issue of Chinese-American equal employment problem has not been studied sufficiently.[14] Scholars have a widespread assumption that after World War II Asian Americans fared well in the job market. Chinese immigrants were deemed a "model Minority" that were assumed to face relatively less employment discrimination. Sociologist Min Zhou defines "model minority" as a stereotype – family-oriented, self-reliant, hardworking, resilient, and problem-free – for well-educated and professionally trained Asian Americans.[15] However, scholars too often overlook the difficulties of Asian newcomers who could not speak English and had fewer networking opportunities. [16] This thesis challenges the aforementioned assumption and demonstrates how Asian-American broke the stereotype of "model minority."

This thesis's historiographical contribution is illustrating the importance of African and Puerto Rican organizations' guidance for start-up Asian American political organizations. Meanwhile, I will reveal the internal difference of the Chinese community: younger and elder generations' opposing attitudes towards interracial collaboration. I argue the young generation's commitment and interracial coalitions were reasons for the successes of the first collective housing and employment struggles in the history of New York's Chinese community.

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[14] Takashi Yanagida, "The AAFEE Story: Asian Americans for Equal Employment," in Emma Gee, eds, *Counterpoint: Perspectives on Asian America* (Los Angeles, CA: Asian American Studies Center, University of California, 1976); David Golland, *Constructing Affirmative Action: The Struggle for Equal Employment Opportunity* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2011); Nancy MacLean, *Freedom Is Not Enough: The Opening of the American Workplace* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008); Moon-Kie Jung, *Reworking Race: The Making of Hawaii's Interracial Labor Movement* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2006); Jenny Nguyen, Scott Carter, Shannon Carter, "From Yellow Peril to Model Minority: Perceived Threat by Asian Americans in Employment," *Social Science Quarterly* 100, no.3 (2019): 565-577, DOI:10.1111/ssqu.12612.

[15] Min Zhou, and Carl Bankston, "The Model Minority Stereotype and the National Identity Question: The Challenges Facing Asian Immigrants and Their Children." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 43, no. 1 (January 2, 2020): 233-253. http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01419870.2019.1667511.

[16] Chinese Americans benefited from their elder generation's excellent performance and reputation among employers. Although Chinese immigrants had qualified professional skills and experiences in China, white employers queried them because American employers could not guarantee Chinese immigrants' skills and work experience on the other shore. This sort of employment discrimination appeared since the Asian immigration wave swept the whole continent in the 1960s. See Ellen Wu, *The Color of Success: Asian Americans and the Origins of the Model Minority* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013).

The Emergence of the Interracial Coalition

In the early 1960s, many Asian American university students participated collectively in the anti-Vietnam War movements. Those students grew into followers of other activist groups, forging friendships across racial lines and adopting new progressive ideas. Asian American student groups invited many off-campus activists to their forums and teach-ins, preparing students' skills to join in social movements. Some founders of IWK were from Columbia University. Campus was one of the origins of Asian American movements.

In the spring of 1968, students at Columbia University launched a series of protests, student strikes, and building occupations. The origin of the student protests was probably racial segregation.[17] Enraged students became "a hub of political activity: teach-ins, Sundial rallies against the Vietnam War, demonstrations against class rank reporting, and confrontations with military recruiters."[18] These political activities trained racial minority students, increasing their political participation. During this process, students from different racial groups established their political organizations and collaborated.

Asian student groups trained young Asian community activists. Asian students at Columbia established many student groups during the late 1960s and the 1970s, such as the Asian-American Political Alliance and Asian-Americans. They cooperated with the Columbia Anti Imperialist Movement and the Latin American Student Organization. These student groups built a coalition to protest the School of International Affairs' pro-South Vietnam courses, which, in their eyes, supported a authoritarian.[19] These groups also fought for the victims of the Kent State

[17] "Biographical note," in "University Protest and Activism Collection, 1958-1999," Columbia University Libraries, accessed February 27, 2020, http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/archival/collections/ldpd_4080180/.

[18] "Biographical note."

[19] Asian-American Political Alliance, Columbia Anti Imperialist Movement and Latin American Student Organization, etc., "The War and Asia," "Transcend the Bullshit," series VIII box 9 folder 52, University Protest and Activism Collection, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Libraries.

University shootings as well as twenty-one imprisoned Black Panthers and proponents of Puerto Rican independence.[20] Although they had different concentrations, they found their directions of struggles and built an early-stage interracial coalition on campus for the city-wide struggles in the 1970s. For example, the Asian-American Political Alliance sponsored several forums and invited speakers from the Black Workers Congress and Young Lords.[21] Younger generations' college life gave them a more textured understandings of racial equality and the place of the immigrants in society. As a Chinese social worker recollected, "I have seen other students doing that [civil rights activism] but also other communities are doing that. I felt like this is the right time to ask something for our community."[22] What they learned from student group activities prepared their skills to join in social movements.

Meanwhile, Asian American students learned revolutionary ideologies and methods at colleges. A student group named the Revolutionary Marxist Caucus invited speakers from the National Spartacist League, a radical communist organization, to their forums and appealed to build a "revolutionary youth movement."[23] They taught students not only theories but actions for social movements. The Third Work Coalition instructed students to picket and provided them with picket signs and lines.[24] Two years later, student set picket lines to fight for equal

[20] Asian-American Political Alliance, "Our People Are Dying Now," series VIII box 9 folder 52, University Protest and Activism Collection, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Libraries.

[21] Columbia Anti Imperialist Movement, Dien Bien Phu Family and Asian-American Political Alliance, "Labor and The War," May 4, [1971?], series VIII box 9 folder 52, University Protest and Activism Collection, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Libraries; Asian-American Political Alliance, Third World Coalition, etc., "Nation-wide Anti-war Action," April 5, 1970, series VIII box 14 folder 16, University Protest and Activism Collection, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Libraries.

[22] Lydia Tom, in Asian Americans For Equality, "Beyond Activism: Four Decades of Social Justice (HD)," produced by Peter Hutchison, accessed March 7, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fQ1Nu7fu30U&feature=youtu.be.

[23] Revolutionary Marxist Caucus, "2 forums," April 20, 1971, series VIII box 11 folder 32, University Protest and Activism Collection, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Libraries.

[24] Third World Coalition, "Picket Instruction," [1972?], series VIII box 14 folder 16, University Protest and Activism Collection, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Libraries.

employment in New York's Chinatown. Although no direct evidence showed protesters received picket instruction at Columbia, many young protesters learned practical skills of social movements at colleges.

Columbia students, workers, and the working-class youth established IWK in late 1969. They founded it like the model of similar organizations from the oppressed nationalities such as the Black Panther Party and the Young Lords Party. They "drew great inspiration from the Chinese revolution, including the Cultural Revolution, and the national liberation struggles around the world."[25] The establishment of IWK already had features in inter-racial collaboration and internationalism. IWK offered community services as donating food, clothing, and healthcare. [26] Additionally, they screened pro-Chinese films to spread socialism.[27]

Asian American students linked oversea wars in Asian countries to the repression of Asian Americans at home. The Young Lords Party supported the connection built by IWK, "I Wor Kuen started out of an increasing desire to resist the genocidal and racist war against people in southeast Asia and the oppressive manner in which Asian people have been treated in this country."[28] Not all African students agreed on Asian students' combination of oversea and domestic problems. Asian-American Political Alliance seceded from the Third World Coalition in 1970. African and Latino students remained in the Third World Coalition. Asian-American Political Alliance criticized the non-Asian Third World Coalition for placing "too much emphasis … on racism at home while only token appreciation was given to the international

[25] I Wor Kuen, "History of I Wor Kuen," in *Statements on the Founding of the League of Revolutionary Struggle (Marxist-Leninist)*, 1978, accessed May 5, 2020, https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/ncm-1a/iwk-history.htm.

[26] May Fu, "'Serve the People and You Help Yourself': Japanese-American Anti-Drug Organizing in Los Angeles, 1969 to 1972," *Social Justice* 35, no. 2 (2008): 80–99.

[27] Maeda, "Self-Determination for Communities" in "The Asian American Movement."

[28] Huey Jung, "I Wor Kuen: Asian (USA) Allies," *Palante* 2, no.4, June 5, 1970, 15. Center for Puerto Rican Studies, Hunter College, New York.

aspects of the struggle of all Third World people."[29] They furiously asked, "when will the death of over 400,000 Vietnamese equal, only equal, the anger over the death of four white Americans [at Kent State University]?"[30] Asian students regarded the apathy towards the death of Asians as racist.[31] Nevertheless, they agreed on the principle of "defensive violence" with the non-Asian Third World Coalition.[32] The inter-racial coalitions at Columbia had slight divergence that would also appear on different party platforms of the Black Panther and IWK.

The connection between international affairs and racism at home infused new-left ideas into inter-racial coalitions. The United States were in the wars with socialist countries, the North Vietnam and Cambodia. American leftist in the 1930s spread socialism that advocated racial equality. The socialism ideas revived in the name of new-left since the 1950s, attracting college students who were disappointed by racial discrimination at home and imperialism abroad. They regarded new-left ideas and inter-racial coalitions as solutions. For example, Puerto Rico, as an unincorporated territory of the United States, appealed for independence or statehood in the second half of the twentieth century. IWK cooperated with the Young Lords based on a consensus between the two organizations in choosing to support the socialist People's Republic of China and the independence of Puerto Rico. On May 4, 1971, the Asian-American Political Alliance and Columbia Anti Imperialist Movement sponsored a forum at Columbia and invited a Young Lord and a Vietnam War veteran. At the end of this forum, they screened a film about black students' support for Detroit workers' strike. This forum was typical of Asian, Latino, and African students' concerns about other racial groups' issues. Another example was African, Asian, and Latino student groups issuing a joint declaration to support twenty-one imprisoned

[29] Asian-American Political Alliance, "Our People Are Dying Now."
[30] Asian-American Political Alliance, "Our People Are Dying Now."
[31] Asian-American Political Alliance, "Our People Are Dying Now."
[32] Asian-American Political Alliance, "Our People Are Dying Now."

black panthers.[33] Their concerns for each other's issues motivated them to attend each other's protests and to imagine themselves in international terms.

In sum, Asian students cooperated with African-American and Latino students in the antiwar movements. The connection between repressions abroad and at home infused new-left ideas into student inter-racial coalitions. Asian students' political training prepared them for the social movements off-campus.

African-American, Puerto Rican, and Chinese political organizations had many shared ideologies. Drawing on the party platforms of the Black Panther Party (released in 1966), IWK (1969) and Young Lords (1970), I will illustrate their concerned social problems and appeals, as well as their divergence.[34] Three beliefs appeared on all three party platforms. Others appeared on two party platforms. First, all three parties demanded self-determination of their minority communities, true education of world and U.S. history, and exemption from military service. Second, they criticized the "racist" U.S. governments and asked them to free minority prisoners. Third, they opposed capitalism, which was a foundational consensus among them. They argued that minority residents, students, and prisoners had not received fair or impartial treatments.

Both the black panther and IWK demanded decent housing. They censured landlords. IWK additionally demanded health and children care. IWK and Young Lords had more common platforms because they released platforms within two years. The Young Lords might be encouraged by IWK's platform and communicate with them. They demanded the liberation for not only Asian Americans or Puerto Ricans but also all people living in Asia and Latin America.

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[33] Student Afro American Society, "Nation-Wide Anti-War Action," series VIII box 14 folder 16, University Protest and Activism Collection, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Libraries.

[34] Black Panther Party, "October 1966 Black Panther Party Platform and Program," *The Black Panther*, December 5, 1970, 13; I Wor Kuen, "12 Points Platform and Program," In Fred Ho et al., ed., *Legacy to Liberation: Politics and Culture of Revolutionary Asian Pacific America* (San Francisco: AK Press, 2000), 405-6; Young Lords Party, "13 Points Program and Platform," *Palante* 15, vol 2, November 20, 1970.

They cared about the overseas compatriots because they linked their domestic suffering to overseas wars. They revised Martin Luther King's saying, "no Puerto Rican is free until all people are free."[35] IWK and the Young Lord then demanded the liberation of all third world peoples. This platform was based on their brotherhood as socialist allies and American civil rights thoughts on solidarity. Both also opposed male chauvinism

Some beliefs evolved from Black Panther's early edition to IWK's and Young Lords' later editions. First, the Black Panthers only demanded to determine their own destinies; they did not demand the creation of autonomous governments. The latter two clarified community control of their institutions and land. Second, the Black Panthers did not demand the U.S. military to do anything. IWK was more radical in the military problem than the Young Lords. Young Lords just demanded the withdrawal of the U.S. military from Puerto Rico and overseas wars. IWK demanded to dismiss all U.S. military. Third, the Black Panthers did not oppose capitalism, while IWK and the Young Lords demanded a socialist society.

Theoretically, these three parties' platforms had multiple intellectual contexts. Moderate and radical thoughts from the Civil Rights Movements inspired them to incorporate both Martin Luther King's and Malcolm X's words. Besides, socialism influenced them to different degrees. Anti-imperialism and pacifism were also adopted as consensus positions. All of them cared for living conditions in urban minority communities and dreamed of changing them by a socialist revolution.

[35] Young Lords Party, "13 Points."

Struggles for Affordable Housing

East Asian immigrants had a dream to "live peacefully (安居)." In their heritage, the meaning of "home" was more than a house. Laozi, a Chinese philosopher who lived in the sixth century B.C. and was reputed author of *Tao Te Ching*, imaged a Chinese Utopia "[people] should think their [coarse] food sweet; their [plain] clothes beautiful; their [poor] dwellings places of rest; and their common [simple] ways sources of enjoyment."[36] This sentence is the source of a Chinese idiom "living and working in peace (安居乐业)." Another Chinese idiom is "hating to leave a place where one has lived long (安土重迁)." These idioms reflect the emotional attachment to a stable home in Chinese culture. However, in bustling New York City, white landlords did not understand this cultural tradition of Chinese Americans. According to New York City property laws in the 1970s, landlords could choose to repurpose their building and force tenants to move. White landlords insisted that their property right was inviolable, considering the exclusion of tenants as justifiable. By contrast, Chinese Americans attempted to maintain their living place peacefully in the face of eviction. This cultural conflict intensified the misunderstanding between landlords and tenants in Chinatown. Although Chinese immigrants moved to the United States, their rooted expectation of housing and determination to protect it did not weaken.

The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 abolished the hemispheric quota of relatives of American citizens and legal permanent residents to immigrate to the United States, which was a watershed moment in immigration history.[37] Thousands of immigrants came to seek shelters at

[36] Laozi, *The Tao-te Ching*, trans. by James Legge, the Internet Classics Archive, accessed September 24, 2019, http://classics.mit.edu//Lao/taote.html.

[37] Xiaojian Zhao, *The New Chinese America: Class, Economy, and Social Hierarchy* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press), 2010.

the end of the 1960s from their relatives who legally lived in the United States at that time. Newcomers' first footholds were generally their relatives' communities, mostly Chinatowns. For Chinese immigrants, one of the most common choices was New York. From 1961 to 1970, mainland Chinese and Hong Kong immigrants coming to the United States respectively increased 359 percent to 34.8 thousand and 484 percent to 75 thousand, a sharp rise in the numbers from 1951 to 1960.[38] From 1960 to 1970, the Chinese population in New York State doubled from 37,573 to 81,378.[39] Most of Chinese Americans in New York State lived in New York City. Therefore, one can assume a sharply rising Chinese population happened in New York City during the 1960s. With the arrival of family relatives, Asian Americans' desperate need for affordable and sizable housing could not be satisfied by New York City that was suffering from what historians call the urban crisis.

Chinese immigrants had a popular illusion of the United States. "America," in Mandarin, means "a beautiful country." The early-period immigrants described America as a goldfield in their letters from America to China. Immigrants' illusion about the United States was a land of milk and honey. However, "when the many immigrants arrive in this country, the only housing the find is in the squalid Chinatown buildings. The immediate racist and alienating atmosphere of this country strikes first."[40] Chinese immigrants in the 1970s who lived in horrid conditions in New York City experienced rapid disillusionment.

The shortage of affordable housing was central to the urban crisis in New York City. Estimated by a spokesman from a New York City's landlord association, "there were around 300

[38] U.S. Census Bureau, "No. 134. Immigrants, By Country of Last Permanent Residence: 1820 to 1978" in 1980 Census, accessed March 5, 2020, https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/1980/compendia/statab/101ed/1980-03.pdf?#.

[39] Min Zhou, *Chinatown The Socioeconomic Potential of an Urban Enclave* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press,1992), 80. Data source: U.S. Census of Population, 1910-1980.

[40] Huey Jung, "I Wor Kuen."

thousand individuals occupying oversized dwellings" and fifteen thousand apartments as "second homes."[41] The *Wall Street Journal* wrote that "homes for rent become increasingly scarce as the housing market tightens" in its front page on May 14, 1970, therefore "landlords become more selective about their tenants."[42] Landlords dominated the housing market in New York City in 1970. This situation raised challenges for immigrants and racial minorities who were easily excluded from the housing by "selective landlords." In 1963, Congress of Racial Equality took a "sandwich testing" in New York City. Two white testers and one black tester went to the housing agents to inquire about apartments for rent. Agents provided black and Puerto Rican testers with bad conditions housing or lied to them that apartment was unavailable. The result concluded that agents followed the landlords' instructions of showing an apartment only to whites.[43]

The intervention of the federal government and city council were not valid. Tenants expected the federal government to resolve the problem of supplying houses, but the federal government disappointed them. Although the 1968 Housing Act promised to build 26 million dwellings, the federal Treasury Secretary admitted in 1970 that housing "would just have to wait" for substantial gains until inflation declined. It meant the housing shortage could not be relieved by the federal government.[44] The shrinking private housing market intensified the urban crisis.

In the city level, New York's rent control and rent stabilization laws did not aid newcomers. Only tenants who had lived in buildings built before 1947, where tenants were in continuous

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[41] "Instant Housing," *Wall Street Journal*, January 21, 1970, 14.

[42] "Business Bulletin," *Wall Street Journal*, May 14, 1970, 1.

[43] Helens Levine, "Re: Discriminatory practices of real estate agents Michael Kaufman, 21 First Ave., Erwin Weiss, 198 E. 7th St., and D.D. Stein, 30 Ave. B.," November 16, 1963, box 2 folder 2, the Downtown CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) Records, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archive, New York University.

[44] Richard Janssen, "The Outlook," *Wall Street Journal*, May 2, 1970, 1.

occupancy prior to 1971 (rent control), or in buildings built before 1947 but have more than six units (rent stabilization) could pay the rent according to a statutory and reasonable growth rate.[45] Most immigrants who had just arrived did not occupy apartments since 1971 or rent more than six unit. The rent burden for them was more oppressive than local tenants. Disappointed by federal and municipal governments, immigrants tended to seek help from radical organizations that advocated new-left ideas and revolutions.

Progressive ideas attracted immigrants and minorities when conventional policies could not solve their problems. In cities like Philadelphia and New York City, poor people in minority communities were displaced by the urban renewal.[46] Minority residents could not afford the price of housing after renewal. Asian American activists advocated the affordable housing as fundamental human rights. A minority organization in New York analyzed the reason for housing as a human right: The earth should provide the best housing fitting for the shelter of human beings. Every man, woman, and child deserved decent housing.[47] More and more activists repeated the idea of decent housing as a human right.

Manhattan's Chinatown was typical of lacking affordable housing urgently in New York. According to a survey in 1968 completed by Asian college students at Columbia University, 60.5 percent of Manhattan's Chinatown residents thought finding a vacant apartment was "very difficult."[48] Their publication, *The Chinatown Report 1969*, provides a window into the

[45] New York City Rent Guidelines Board, "Rent Control FAQ," accessed on May 4, 2020, https://rentguidelinesboard.cityofnewyork.us/resources/faqs/rent-control/.

[46] Kokua Kalama Committee, "Special Issue: Kalama Valley struggle," *the University of Hawai'i at Manoa Library Digital Image Collections*, accessed September 24, 2019, https://digital.library.manoa.hawaii.edu/items/show/31317; Maeda, *Rethinking*, 81; Mary Yee, "The Save Chinatown Movement: Surviving against All Odds." *Pennsylvania Legacies* 12, no. 1 (2012): 24–31.

[47] People's Housing Coalition, "Charter of the People's Housing Coalition," 1970-1970, series I, box 69, folder 1, the Metropolitan Council on Housing Records, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archive, New York University.

[48] Study Group, *The Chinatown Report*, preface.

economic and social challenges Chinatown faced at that time, helping us to compare the transformation of Chinatown residents from 1969 to the same community in the 1970s. According to *The Chinatown Report 1969,* the rent of 56.4 percent of Manhattan's Chinatown apartments was less than 50 dollars per month.[49] The Chinatown Study Group did not predict the low rent and did not include lower prices ranges, such as "$25 to $50." The rent in Manhattan's Chinatown in 1969 was indeed very cheap. However, due to the limited supply of housing, people had to tolerate unhygienic living conditions. According to *the Chinatown Report 1969,* only 36.7 percent of landlords had repainted in the last three years, while 76.5 percent and 35.2 percent of families suffered from cockroaches and rats.[50] The reasons for living in such places were "common language and culture (29.2 percent)," "Chinese food and other articles (28.3 percent)," and "friends and/or relatives (20.4 percent)."[51] A newspaper article in 1980 titled "Why People Stay in Chinatown" wrote, "it's not only the cheap rents but a style of life among friends."[52] Consequently, Chinatown residents were opposed to being evicted if they could not find alternative housing that was affordable and sizable in the other parts of New York. The practical stress was the financial element – affordable rents – that kept Chinese Americans in their neighborhood and the cultural connections that consolidated it.

Chinatowns attracted immigrants with cheap rent, extensive job opportunities, and reliable social networks. The rising population in Manhattan's Chinatown also attracted investment, thereby creating more jobs. [53] An article published in *Bridge,* a popular Asian American cultural

[49] Study Group, *The Chinatown Report*, 9.
[50] Study Group, *The Chinatown Report*, 12.
[51] Study Group, *The Chinatown Report*, 30.
[52] Charles Correa and George Cooper, "Why People Stay in Chinatown?" *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, March 20, 1980, accessed May 6, 2020. https://www.newspapers.com/image/275983787/?terms=Why%2BPeople%2BStay%2Bin%2BChinatown
[53] Xiaojian Zhao, Edward J. E. Park, eds., *Asian Americans; An Encyclopedia of Social, Cultural, Economic, and Political History* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, L.L.C., 2014), 219.

magazine, indicated the result of an increasing population: "The sudden, large influx (in New York City Chinatown) made the demand for housing greater than it really was." Consequently, the affordable housing in Chinatown became scarce after 1965. Meanwhile, more landlords refused to make repairs while also raising rents. If both landlords and tenants were Chinese, they settled the conflicts within the community in Chinese ways, i.e., immigrants' leaders would mediate both sides.[54] However, if landlords spoke English, but tenants could not, the conflicts often escalated. Chinese mechanism of conflict resolution did not usually work on English-speaking landlords. Therefore, Chinese tenants turned to other options like radical political organizations.

New York City has a tradition of tenant resistance beginning in the early twentieth century. The earliest ethnic tenant coalition dated from 1904. Tenants in Jewish neighborhoods formed a short-lived "union."[55] Owing to "social and political groundwork" from 1917 to 1929, the first New York City rent control program was formally enacted in 1943, empowering tenants to have more privileges than before.[56] Whereas after the economic resurgence and increasing of the population in New York City, the privileges of tenants decreased after World War II. In 1963, the African and Puerto Rican tenants in Harlem initiated a rent strike involving more than 50 buildings.[57] Although these strikes, as well as other rent strikes from 1963 to 1964, failed to mobilize the poor people, scholars argued that Harlem tenants tipped the balance and left a

[54] Asian Americans For Equal Employment, "What Did Immigrant Leaders Do?" *Special Bulletin on Asian Americans For Equal Employment*, June 1974, 6, Museum of Chinese in America, New York.

[55] Joel Schwartz, "The New York City Rent Strikes of 1963-1964," *Social Service Review* 57, no. 4 (1983): 546.

[56] Robert Fogelson, *The Great Rent Wars: New York City, 1917-1929* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013).

[57] Martin Gansberg, "City to Respect Slum Tenements," *New York Times*, December 6, 1963; "City Welfare Dept. Ready to Join Rent Strike Against Slumlords: Rent Strike Spreads to 50 Buildings as Harlem Tenants Fight Violations." *New Pittsburgh Courier*, December 7, 1963, National Edition.

network of tenant organizing. It resulted in many tenant unions and community organizations.[58] Manhattan's Chinatown housing protests came quickly after the housing struggles of the mid-1960s. Manhattan's Chinatown protesters had likely learned how to mobilize from the Harlem Rent Strike, since they had consulted with Black Panther or Young Lord activists.

Although New York City had a tradition of tenant struggles, Chinese-American tenants had never collectively protested for housing rights before.[59] The Chinese community was poor and loosely organized in the early twentieth century. After World War II, they observed laws to meet the stereotype of model minority. Besides, Chinatown had an internal mechanism of conflict resolution with the mediation of Chinese leaders and associations.

In sum, after the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 had abolished the national quota of immigrants, thousands of immigrants flooded into New York's Chinese community in the 1970s. The influx of immigrants led to a shortage of housing and other social resources. The urban crisis of New York City exacerbated people's discontent. Asian Americans demanded a fair distribution of housing and other resources. Some immigrant leaders became activists after the city government rejected their legitimate rights and interests. The Chinese community transformed profoundly during the 1970s.

In the summer of 1969, the New York Bell Telephone Company bought several residential buildings in Chinatown. These buildings occupied half of the block bounded by Madison, Catherine, Market, and Henry Street.[60] All four bordered street name plates were written in

[58] Schwartz, "The New York City Rent Strikes," 559-61; Mandi Jackson, "Harlem's Rent Strike and Rat War: Representation, Housing Access and Tenant Resistance in New York, 1958-1964," *American Studies* 47, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 53-79.

[59] Lawson, *The Tenant Movement in New York City*; Gold, *When Tenants Claimed the City.*

[60] Pamela Howard, "Chinese Squatters Downtown," *New York Post,* September 26, 1970, 2; IWK, "We Won't Move," *Getting Together* 1, no. 3, July 1970, accessed October 29, 2018, https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/ncm-1a/iwk-wont-move.htm.

Chinese. Three Chinese Churches located in this block. According to the record of the New York City Department of Building, those buildings bought by the telephone company were built in 1900, 1910, and 1920.[61] A picture provided by IWK showed that rooms of this building had fossilized tubes and cracked walls.[62] Tenants were living in substandard conditions.

The telephone company planned to demolish residential buildings at the end of 1970 with the ultimate goal of using the property for a new switching station. However, the telephone company overlooked the difficulties of relocating those tenants. Chinese tenants believed the landlord's request for moving was "eviction." Landlord's request endangered their core interests, i.e., housing and communities, and awoke the silent Chinese community. If they were forced to move, those tenants who lived on this block, the Chinatown border, could not afford comparable housing nearby and would have to leave their community. The widely held belief that the telephone company was evicting them demonstrated the poor communication between landlords and tenants. The telephone company ignored the social network that shaped the Chinese community. The company made efforts to understand Chinese concerns but blundered into not compensating tenants.

IWK highlighted this struggle in their party organ *Getting Together*, explaining that 296 families were going to be evicted.[63] In July 1970, 45 apartments had been vacated and boarded up. After the first tenants were removed in the batch first, the telephone company's wreckers demolished doors, windows, and electric wires and removed refrigerators and other appliances.[64] *Getting Together* criticized the telephone company's actions as "an impersonal, crumbling, self-

[61] "Building Footprints," N.Y.C. Open Data, accessed September 9, 2019, https://data.cityofnewyork.us/Housing-Development/Building-Footprints/nqwf-w8eh.

[62] IWK, "We Demand an Immediate End to the Construction of Our Community," *Getting Together* 2, no. 1, January 1971, 7, Museum of Chinese in America, New York.

[63] IWK, "We Won't Move."

[64] "Chinatown U.S.A. Renewed out of Existence," *Yellow Seed*, May 1974, 5.

destructive system."[65] IWK thought that violent eviction was not only inhuman but destructive to the possibility of negotiation and betrayed Chinese customers' trust. Infuriated by the attitude of the telephone company, the rest of the residents refused to move and joined the "We Won't Move" Tenant Committee initiated by Metropolitan Council on Housing.[66]

The Metropolitan Council on Housing was a tenants' rights membership organization established in 1959. They "utilized rent strikes, pickets, vigils, and occupations to fight for the needs of tenants."[67] On May 6, 1969, under the pressure of being "emptied and demolished for public and private construction," Fifty tenant leaders organized the "We Won't Move" Committee to aid all New York City tenants who were in a similar situation.[68] They reminded tenants, "stipends never compensate the loss of your home and never pay for the exorbitant rent in your new quarters."[69] The founding chair of this committee was Woji Gerolmo. "We Won't Move" Committee raised funds from tenants and mobilized the Manhattan's Chinatown tenants in 1970. A "We Won't Move" Committee member, Arthur Dong, who had lived Chinatown all his life, led the first Chinese-American collective tenant struggle in New York's history. [70]

There were interracial coalitions among Chinese, African, and Puerto Rican American political organizations. Chinese, African, and Puerto Rican activists had common aims, such as racial equality and anti-imperialism. When the Puerto Rican community magazine introduced IWK, Puerto Ricans appealed to "unify all progressive elements" for "the liberation of all people

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[65] IWK, "We Won't Move."

[66] Metropolitan Council on Housing, "Assembly," June 16, 1969, Series I box 1 folder 5, the Metropolitan Council on Housing Records, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archive, New York University.

[67] Maggie Schreiner, "Introduction: Met Council on Housing Organization and Tactics,"(master's thesis, New York University, n.d.) Accessed September 25, 2019, http://metcouncilonhousing.org/our_history/introduction.

[68] Metropolitan Council on Housing, "We Won't Move Committee," *Tenant News*, May-June 1969, 2.

[69] Metropolitan Council on Housing, "We Won't Move Committee."

[70] The primary sources about him could not be found. Grace Lichtenstein, "Tenants Assail Phone Company," *New York Times*. July 19, 1970, 25.

and particular Third World people."[71] Furthermore, the new left ideas influenced Chinese-American and Puerto Rican activists alike. Many believed that third-world countries should unite to fight against imperialism, or in their words, "an impersonal, crumbling, self-destructive system."[72] In 1970, IWK and the Young Lords released their platforms in very similar wording.[73] In the party organ of Young Lords, they described their ally's rival, the telephone company's segregation boards as "backward elements." They believed that IWK would achieve the goals of self-determination because "the spirit of the people is greater than the man's technology."[74] In sum, these new-left organizations used the discourse of Marxism and Maoism to participate in politics and to rejuvenate minority communities. However, they were too idealistic to compromise with capitalists.

African-American, Puerto Rican, and Asian activists translated their words into action. IWK introduced the "colonial history" of Puerto Rico and African Americans' struggles in *Getting Together*.[75] Meanwhile, IWK encouraged Chinese people to join a Black Panther demonstration on April 4, 1970.[76] The three communities not only attended each other's demonstrations but held a mock trial charging displacement of poor people in ghettos in December 1970.[77] The lesson from African American tenants inspired Asian Americans to choose appropriate tactics.[78]

The "We Won't Move" Committee organized two demonstrations, including a small-scale one at the downtown office of the telephone company and a large-scale one with several hundred

[71] Huey Jung, "I Wor Kuen."
[72] Huey Jung, "I Wor Kuen;" IWK, "We Won't Move."
[73] I Wor Kuen, "12 Point;" Young Lords, "13 Point ."
[74] Huey Jung, "I Wor Kuen."
[75] IWK, "Puerto Rico," *Getting Together* 1, no.2, 1970, 9, Museum of Chinese in America, New York; IWK, "Free the panther 21," *Getting Together* 1, no.2, 1970, 8, Museum of Chinese in America, New York.
[76] IWK, "Protest on April 4 for the Black Panthers Party," *Getting Together* 1, no.2, 1970, 4, Museum of Chinese in America, New York..
[77] "A Mock Trial Here On 'Housing Crimes' Censures Lindsay," *New York Times*, December 7, 1970, 47.
[78] The story of Richard Aoki and the Black Panthers is another example like this one of IWK and Panthers. See also Diane Fujino, *Samurai among Panthers*.

protesters on Chinatown Market Street. About 70 protesters came to the first demonstration, probably making a limited influence. Later, *Getting Together* called people to protest on Saturday, July 18, 1970.[79] On that day, as The *New York Times* reported, "several hundred Chinese, Italian, Puerto Rican, black and Jewish" residents participated in this demonstration, which meant that most of 296 evicted Chinese and Italian family members attended it, and other racial groups came to support.[80] Although Chinese and Italian tenants had limited interactions when they had lived together, they collaborated to protect their apartments.[81] They decided to ask the mayor for intervention.

On the spot of this demonstration, Arthur Dong sought more action from Mayor John Lindsay's office when a New *York Times* reporter interviewed him. Except for the Mayor's office, tenants asked state and national legislators to attend their demonstration. The intervention of politicians made the telephone company consider this event seriously. Two politicians, Bella Abzug and Louis DeSalvio who were running for congressional and assembly election respectively in November 1970, attended this demonstration and declared their support for tenants. The *New York Times* reported that Abzug "stood atop on a huge red telephone company cable reel" to show her strong support to her voters.[82] Although there is little evidence to support any communication between tenants and politicians, if the tenants had not persuaded her to take up their cause, it is unlikely that she would have expressed her opinions so openly.[83] The

[79] IWK, "We Won't Move."

[80] Lichtenstein, "Tenants Assail Phone Company."

[81] See also Xinyang Wang, *Surviving the City: the Chinese and Italian Immigrant Experience in New York, 1890-1970* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001).

[82] Lichtenstein, "Tenants Assail Phone Company."

[83] Bella Abzug Papers, 1970-1976, Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Columbia University; Louis DeSalvio Papers, 1958-1978, M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, University at Albany, State University of New York; See also Leandra Zarnow, *Battling Bella: The Protest Politics of Bella Abzug* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019).

pressure of protesters and politicians possibly pushed delegates from the telephone company to declare a negotiation with the city to choose another site for their facility.[84]

However, the telephone company did not allow tenants to return from July to September. On the morning of September 25, twenty-four Chinese families unlocked the apartments vacated by the telephone company armed with screwdrivers and crow-bars with the assistance of IWK, Metropolitan Council on Housing and a community service organization called the Two Bridge Neighborhood Council.[85] Moderates paired up with radicals. *Getting Together* claimed that they has "liberated" fifty apartments.[86] The tactics of squatters had been popular since July 1970.[87] Then, the counterattack of the telephone company intensified the conflict. *Getting Together* claimed, on September 27, that the telephone company had "arrested" two squatters. On September 28th and 29th, the landlord hired the Relocation Management Association to forcibly remove people and systematically destroy the remaining apartments.[88] Ironically, a year before, in August 1969, Mayor Lindsay had announced a crackdown on relocation companies.[89] Secretary of Metropolitan Council on Housing soon criticized this solution.[90] The violence that occurred in September 1970 demonstrated the failure of Lindsay's crackdown on relocation companies.

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[84] Lichtenstein, "Tenants Assail Phone Company."

[85] Howard, "Chinese Squatters Downtown."

[86] IWK, "But We Will Move In."

[87] Edith Asbury, "Squatter Movement Grows as Housing Protest Tactic," *New York Times*, July 22, 1970, 42.

[88] IWK, "But We Will Move In." Metropolitan Council on Housing, "Minutes of September 28, 1970 Met Council Executive Board," Series I box 1 folder 5, the Metropolitan Council on Housing Records, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archive, New York University.

[89] Edward Burks, "Eviction Abuses Bring City Action: Crackdown Is Ordered on Relocation Concerns," *New York Times*, August 23, 1969, 32.

[90] Esther Rand, "To Ban Demolitions." *New York Times*, August 27, 1969; Metropolitan Council on Housing, "On the Squatter Front." *Tenant News*, June-July 1970, 1, 3.

Moreover, as activists claimed, the telephone company "hired undercover plainclothes detectives to snoop on residents of the area, and police patrols were increased in order to prevent any further 'liberation' of apartments."[91] The participation of police patrol disappointed tenants again, firming their belief that Mayor Lindsay was on the side of the telephone company.

Metropolitan Council on Housing, as a principal organizer, took a mock trial at Columbia University on December 7, 1970. They invited the Black Panther Party, Young Lords, and other community organizations as presiding judges. IWK's delegates did not sit in the rostrum, suggesting their relatively low position in the interracial coalition.[92] Chinatown tenants who were evicted by the telephone company attended the trial as witness.[93] This mock trial was another example of the interracial coalition in 1970s New York.

They claimed their aim was "to educate the masses."[94] They drew the public's attention to this issue. White, African, Puerto Rican, and Chinese-American activists gathered at Columbia University. According to *the New York Times*, more than one thousand people attended this trial, including a "revolutionary coalition" of delegates from the various community organizations.[95] Metropolitan Council on Housing organized this trial and their Chairwoman acted as the chief judge.

They accused city government, landlords, and bankers of attempting to "gobble up housing in the ghetto and other areas to exacerbate racial and ethnic tension." Black Panther members were extremely disappointed by city officers and landlords. They described landlords as "criminal" and city officers as forming a "conspiracy." No city officers attended the trial, which

[91] IWK, "But We Will Move In."
[92] Gold, *When Tenants Claimed the City,* Figure 12.
[93] IWK, "We Demand an Immediate End."
[94] "New York City Criminal Slumlords Are Crime Partners with City Government Officials and Courts," *The Black Panther*, December 14, 1970, 1.
[95] "A Mock Trial," *New York Times*; Gold, *When Tenants Claimed the City,* 169-70.

lasted nine hours and heard witnesses that described the "horror of their apartment buildings."[96] Finally, judges sentenced defendants to death to create an effect like "a revolutionary bang."[97]

Organizers submitted an indictment to the Court. This indictment revealed the living conditions in slums and city government, landlords, and bankers' violation. Landlords violated building, fire, maintenance, health, and administrative codes of the city. The poor, particularly the African-American and Puerto Rican people, refused to make way for middle-income or luxury housing or recreational facilities. The indictment emphasized that Puerto Rican and Chinese people might not understand English, so that landlords had used "fraud, deceit and trickery," provided insufficient fundamental services, and evicted tenants and squatters. Landlords destroyed "structurally sound housings" all in the name of urban renewal. They charged landlords with "racism" and described eviction as harassment or even genocide.[98] The city government did not enforce the rent, relocation, and penal laws to protect tenant rights. City officers neglected the poor's living conditions and provided welfare recipients with insufficient or lousy city-owned houses.[99] Organizers resisted "Model Cities" and "Urban Renewal," regarding them as disguises for destruction and eviction.

Essential to this mock trial was not only affordable housing but self-determination of minority communities. The telephone company purchased residential buildings located in Chinatown but arbitrarily moved all tenants. The discourse power of the ethnic community on local projects was weak and ignored by white proprietors in the 1960s. After this mock trial, New York proprietors recognized the power of collective minorities to demand decent housing.

[96] "Criminal Slumlords," *The Black Panther*, 1.
[97] "Criminal Slumlords," *The Black Panther*, 1.
[98] "Criminal Slumlords," *The Black Panther*, 1-3.
[99] "Criminal Slumlords," *The Black Panther*, 2-3.

If proprietors planned to remove any tenants in minority communities, they had to consider the consequence of resistance.

Tenants did not sue in the city court because they believe judges would only protect the property right of landlords. The vice president of a tenant association told the reporter of *China Daily News,* "based on the experience of the past nine years, it would be vain to find houses via laws."[100] They had considered the strategy of lawsuits. However, they abandoned this traditional strategy and went on the street due to laws favoring landlords. They insisted that "we come to live here because this is where our people are."[101] In other words, they claimed that although eviction was technically legal, it was nevertheless unjust.

In sum, community organizers were educated activists rather than simply extremists. Although their appeals were radical, they cited city laws, listed solid evidence, and created a logical and rigorous indictment. Their tactic of mock trial was successful, for it highlighted their struggles. After this event, the housing issue in New York's minority communities became well-known.

Moderate organizations represented tenants to negotiate with the telephone company. Buildings bought by the telephone company were a part of the Two Bridge neighborhood. Two Bridge Neighborhood Council served "the residential, commercial, and cultural life of Manhattan's Lower East Side through community-based programs and strategic partnerships."[102] The Two Bridge Neighborhood Council hired a social worker, Jeffery Mason, as early as the squatter action in September.[103] Mason organized tenants to negotiate with the telephone

[100] Jiang Lin, "New York Poor People Were Forced to Move," *China Daily News,* September 30, 1970, 4.
[101] IWK, "We Won't Move."
[102] Two Bridges Neighborhood Council, "About us," accessed March 26, 2020, https://twobridges.org/about-us/.
[103] Howard, "Chinese Squatters Downtown."

company for several months. Another Chinese community activist, Harold Lui, also contributed to the event. Lui was Hamilton-Madison House staff between 1964 and 1971. Historian Wei categorized Lui as a "reformist." Reformists delivered human services and provided scarce resources to improve lives in the community.[104] They did not criticize capitalism and city officers because most of them were elder Chinese and were accustomed to peaceful negotiation.

By contrast, IWK and other radical activists sought to overturn the institutions of American society by revolutions. They refused to take traditional political strategies. They led people to protest in the streets and insulted city officers as "pigs." Admittedly, radical activists pressured the city government and developers to surrender. During the squatter crisis in September 1970, IWK and the Two Bridge Neighborhood Council assisted each other.

The participation of moderate organizations and reformist Chinese activists cushioned the aggressiveness and ignorance of radical organizations. Mason and Lui advised IWK based on long-term social work experience of Two Bridge Neighborhood Council and Hamilton-Madison House. The experience was significant for IWK, a second-year organization. IWK, Metropolitan Council on Housing and Two Bridge Neighborhood Council, cooperated well even though they had different standings, doing what they were experts in each one's field to help tenants. The success of this struggle was the result of cooperation between radical political organizations and moderate community service organizations.

Radical activists disagreed with conservative elites' strategy. The divergence between first-generation and second-generation Asian Americans was the choice of strategies, a peaceful approach, or a radical approach. Start-up Asian American organizations were composed of second generations and educated Asian Americans. The New York city council regarded the

[104] William Wei, *The Asian American Movement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press), 1993, 202.

Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association as the delegate of the Chinese community. The president of the CCBA was nicknamed the "Mayor of Chinatown." CCBA elites consisted of "factory owners, merchants and landlords," most of whom were the conservative rich.[105] CCBA had deep roots in the Chinese right-wing party, Kuomington. IWK, as a new-left political organization, was hostile to CCBA. IWK criticized that "much to the dismay of CCBA businessmen idiots who fear to taint the reputation of Chinatown, the people of this block are creating a lot of noise and publicity about the real conditions that exist."[106] Left-wing activists expected no help from CCBA and even suspected that their right-wing opponents sold land of Chinatown to capitalists.[107] The divergence between the younger generation and older generation of Chinese community emerged in this event and widened in the subsequent struggle for equal employment.

Under pressure from the City Hall and smarting from the damage done to its corporate image, the telephone company signed an agreement in 1971 to give tenants a ten-year lease and find an alternative site for the switching station.[108] Tenants still occupy these now. The first Asian-American tenant struggle in New York City ended in a tenant victory.

The first Chinese tenants' collective movement changed New York whites' stereotype of Asian American activism. IWK summarized that "this is an unprecedented event in the history of Chinatown. For the first time, the Chinese people are waging a struggle against a white corporation by throwing off the stigma of the 'timid' Chinese and fighting for their homes."[109] Although this comment by *Getting Together* may exaggerate its position to some extent,

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[105] Kwong, *The New Chinatown*, 90-96.
[106] IWK, "But We Will Move In."
[107] IWK, "We Demand an Immediate End."
[108] "Chinatown U.S.A," *Yellow Seed*.
[109] IWK, "But We Will Move In."

Manhattan's Chinatown Tenant Struggle of 1969-1971 changed other New Yorkers' stereotype on Chinese Americans. The Puerto Rican community publication, *Palante,* said IWK had combated the racist stereotype images of Chinese people: model Chinese never protest and are happy with their plight in the United States, Chinese men as docile and inferior; and Chinese women as a subservient slave.[110]

This struggle mobilized hundreds of Chinese Americans to participate in politics. It established a paradigm for the following housing struggles. Manhattan's Chinese community transformed from 90 percent absence in political clubs to several hundred in attendance at demonstrations because this eviction threatened their core interests. In 1971, IWK appealed to the Chinese to "stand up" in this event.[111] Although most Chinese were still apolitical, the awakening of Chinese tenants impressed political and business figures in New York City, which was an essential step from sojourners to settlers in their self-identity. In terms of Philip Yang's standard, the higher homeownership is strong evidence of settlers.[112] We can learn from this event, tenants who stuck their rented housing closed to identify themselves as the master of this block. If those tenants identified themselves as settlers or an American, the increasing political participation could be understood. Tenants believed that they would take root in the United States, and their struggles were for their descendants. Even if tenants were in a hopeless situation in 1969, they insisted on the process of voicing their discontent regardless of their success or failure. The housing shortage under the background of social movements unintentionally played

[110] Huey Jung, "I Wor Kuen."

[111] "The time has come when the Chinese can no longer survive as a community and people if we do not stand up and fight the aggressive, greedy, sticky-fingered encroachment." in IWK, "We Demand an Immediate End."

[112] Philip Q. Yang, "Sojourners or Settlers: Post-1965 Chinese Immigrants," *Journal of Asian American Studies* 2, no. 1 (February 1999): 61-86.

the role of increasing the political participation and Americanization for those tenants who were first-generation immigrants.

Chinatown tenants' struggles succeeded because of the younger generation's active commitment and the interracial alliance the Asian Americans joined. Although many Chinese community members supported the CCBA's peaceful approach against the radical approach, this first Asian-American tenant struggle mobilized hundreds of Asian Americans to participate in American political mainstream. Those tenants' actions established a paradigm and inspired following housing resistance in the 1980s.[113]

The struggle for housing was a cross-class movement. The massive protest in July did not make the landlord compromise. It was Chinese elites that organized a cross-class coalition of tenants to fight for affordable housing instead of elite interests. This struggle for self-determination supports the arguments of Michael Liu that the Asian American movement was a "self-determination movement" rather than a "middle-class movement" proposed by William Wei.[114] The subsequent struggle for equal employment was not only a cross-class but a cross-professional movement.

The struggle established a multilevel and pragmatic paradigm for the subsequent resistance that has been overlooked by other scholars. "Since then, the lack of cheap and comfortable housing has always been the main community problem in Chinatown."[115] Later Chinese tenants' resistance in New York City, such as tenants from 54-56 Henry Street in 1980 and the Union of

[113] Maeda, *Rethinking*, 81; Yee, "The Save Chinatown Movement."

[114]Maeda, "Discussion of the Literature," in "The Asian American Movement;" Fujino, "Who Studies the Asian American Movement?" 139.

[115] Chinese Progressive Association (New York), *Chinese Progressive Association Tenth Anniversary Celebration*, December 21, 1987, 5, Museum of Chinese in America.

The Special Manhattan Bridge District in 1981, drew lessons from the struggle of 1969-1971 like organizing tenant committees and coalitions with other community organizations.[116]

Their strategies had three-fold features. First, those tenants joined a tenant committee, "We Won't Move," powered by a large and experienced organization, the Metropolitan Council on Housing. This committee worked as the mainstay for ten tenant struggles. Second, they sought support from political figures and pressured the landlords though the media. Asian American activists gradually mastered mainstream political tools. Third, they steered public attention to their case from July to December 1970 through demonstrations, occupying apartments, and a mock trial. They managed to attack the Achilles' Heel of the telephone company who cared about its corporate image and time to build a new facility. I compared the Harlem tenant struggle in 1963-1964 with those in Chinatown in 1969-1971, arguing the latter's strategies were more diverse, flexible, and mature. For example, the slogan of "We Won't Move" was an unprecedented expression of tenants' self-awareness and determination. In 2005, Interference Archive in Brooklyn exhibited collective action by New York City tenants from the 1940s to the present.[117] They chose "We Won't Move" as their slogan, which indicated the merits of this easy-to-remember and powerful message.

As for its legacy in the New York City Tenant Movement, this struggle added the housing issue into the agenda of the Chinese community. This event exercised more influence on Chinese community rather than IWK. IWK only regarded this protest as one of their numerous

[116] Progressive Association, *Tenth Anniversary Celebration.*

[117] Interference Archive, "We Won't Move: Tenants Organize in New York City," accessed February 11, 2019, http://interferencearchive.org/we-wont-move-tenants-organize-in-new-york-city/

achievements and mentioned it in a few sentences in their autobiography.[118] By contrast, Chinese Americans remembered the 1970 story in 1987, proving the successful precedent it created.[119]

Struggles for Equal Employment

New immigrants were eager for jobs to make a living. Margaret Chin, the first Asian New York City councilwoman and a founder of Asian Americans For Equal Employment, regarded the employment issue as the priority of fighting for justice and equality.[120]

In 1974, activists and workers in New York's Chinatown organized a series of large-scale demonstrations. They protested against the Confucius Plaza project that hired only two Asian American workers. Finally, the city, developer, and AAFEE reached a settlement, which included thirty-nine additional positions for Asian workers or trainees and recognition of the need to alleviate discrimination against Asian Americans in the construction workers' union. [121] AAFEE used American social movement strategies, frequently having a conflict with the conservative Chinatown leaders. Conservative leaders intended to negotiate with developers and rejected other racial groups' participation.

Some American construction companies did not recognize immigrant construction workers' professional skills and experience in their homelands. According to the 1970 census, 14 percent of Asian male laborers who held professional, technical, or managerial jobs in China, applied for less skilled positions like construction workers in the United States between 1965 and 1970.[122] Racism and other barriers like licensing requirements forced immigrants to abandon

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[118] IWK, "History of I Wor Kuen."

[119] Progressive Association, *Tenth Anniversary Celebration.*

[120] Margaret Chin, "MEET MARGARET," accessed March 7, 2020, https://www.margaretchin.nyc/aboutmargaret.

[121] Huping Ling and Allan W. Austin, *Asian American History and Culture: An Encyclopedia* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015), 25.

[122] "Asian American Census Highlights," in Emma Gee, eds, *Counterpoint: Perspectives on Asian America* (Los Angeles: Asian American Studies Center, University of California, 1976), 564. Source: *1970 Census, Vol. II:*

careers they had in their homeland for lower-level jobs in the United States. U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission sponsored a case study on the San Francisco Bay Area and found that "Asian-Americans experience substantial job discrimination in many major industries."[123] That study "noted that construction was among the top ten industries in the Bay Area where Asians were 'underemployed.'"[124]

The rising unemployment rate for African American workers illustrated the severity of the equal employment problem. The U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics announced that the unemployment rate for black workers rose 0.8 percent to 9.5 percent in May 1974. By contrast, the unemployment rate for white workers rose 0.2 percent to 4.7 percent at the same time. American teenager workers of all races accounted for most of the rise in joblessness.[125] In sum, racial minority workers, especially for teenagers, were more likely to lose their jobs. The rising unemployment rate disappointed young minorities and forced them to struggle for equal employment. During the struggle, a community organization in New York's Chinatown described there as a community with "a high level of unemployment" when they condemned the Confucius Plaza's developer.[126]

To implement a city affirmative action program designed to secure more equality in employment, Mayor John Lindsay, began a job training program with Executive Order No.71, 1968.[127] The city financed construction projects to give on-the-job training for all qualified

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Asian Americans, Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Office of Special Concerns, Washington, D.C.: HEW Publication, 1974), 75-121.

[123] "Asian Demand Jobs at Confucius Plaza," *Rice Paper* 1, no. 1, (1974): 24, Museum of Chinese in America, New York.

[124] "Asian Demand Jobs at Confucius Plaza," *Rice Paper*.

[125] "Unemployment Continues to Rise," *The New York Voice (Jamaica)*, June 21, 1974, 16, New York Public Library.

[126] "Asian Demand," *Rice Paper*.

[127] The City of New York Office of The Mayor, Executive Orders No. 71, April 2, 1968, Municipal Archive, New York.

minority journeymen.[128] This program was voluntary rather than mandatory for construction contractors and real estate developers. Workers criticized the voluntary clause because developers rarely volunteered to hire minority workers under the pressure of white unions. The follow-up Executive Order No. 20, 1970, stipulated that minority journeymen were eligible for immediate union membership. Nevertheless, the implementation of this voluntary plan did not meet expectations. AAFEE claimed that the actual number for trained journeymen to join the union was less than one percent in the first year after the plan's implementation.[129] In December 1970, Howard University released a "study documenting allegations that federally funded training programs designed to put more minorities into the construction trades had failed." Researchers charged that the federal government was "aiding and abetting discriminatory racial practices."[130]

Confucius Plaza was a federally and municipally aided housing development. It ambitiously consisted of middle-income cooperative housing, a school, stores, and community service facilities.[131] In 1967, two organizations of businessmen, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce of New York and The Association for Chinatown Housing, formed a corporation to lobby the city council to approve of the Confucius Plaza project. They regarded it as "the largest Chinese-sponsored apartment complex that has been built to date anywhere in the nation."[132] The DeMatteis Organization, a construction company founded by white people, contracted to build it. DeMatteis was responsible to hire workers. This project received New York city funding, thus

[128] The City of New York Office of The Mayor, Executive Orders No. 20, July 15, 1970, Municipal Archive, New York.

[129] Mayor Lindsay, Executive Orders No. 20; AAFEE, "Neighbor Questions & Answers," *Special Bulletin on Asian Americans For Equal Employment*, June 1974, 7, Museum of Chinese in America.

[130] Charlayne Hunter, "Month of Victories Marks Herbert Hill's 25th Year as N.A.A.C.P. Labor Director," *New York Times*, December 17, 1974, 21.

[131] The Chinese Chamber of Commerce of New York and The Association for Chinatown Housing, "Confucius Plaza, New York City, 1965-1978," March 1st, 1978, Museum of Chinese in America.

[132] Chinese Chamber of Commerce, "Confucius Plaza."

had to follow the city's guidelines regarding minority hiring. Governments and Chinese businessmen invested forty-eight million dollars on it. Chinese community members believed that the investment included their own money. Therefore, they criticized this expensive project when developers refused to hire local workers.

To solve this equal employment problem, some activists, job seekers, and groups established AAFEE to fight against employment discrimination and to open new ways of finding jobs in December 1973.[133] Japanese activist Takashi Yanagida was one of the founders. Chinese founders included Margaret Chin, Bill Chong, Yee Ling Poon, and Harold Lui. Poon recollected the reason of establishing AAFEE, "So people get together. We have to do something, and now is a golden opportunity."[134] Lui got experience from Manhattan's Chinatown housing struggle in 1970. Chin and Chong learned experience from AAFEE to serve their future political careers. AAFEE aimed to fight against discriminatory hiring practices of developer DeMatteis Construction Corporation in Chinatown, expanding to fight for Asian-American equality in all fields later.

AAFEE founders set the principle of including other racial groups in AAFEE activities and then insisted on their inclusion. Specifically, AAFEE received "warm encouragement and valuable suggestions" from African-American groups.[135] One AAFEE founder said, "[AAFEE] really focuses on collaboration coalition-building … so even from the beginning, the understanding was broader than just Chinese."[136] Chong emphasized the principle of "not just Asians," he said "the foundation of what is a belief system is … a conscious effort to include at

[133] AAFEE, "Stop Racial Discrimination Immediately!"
[134] Yee Ling Poon, "Beyond Activism."
[135] AAFEE, "We Warmly Welcome the Support of Black and Puerto Rican Friends," *Special Bulletin on Asian Americans For Equal Employment*, June 1974, 4, Museum of Chinese in America.
[136] Margaret Chin, "Beyond Activism."

African, Latinos in this fight."[137] The principle was one of foundations of future interracial coalitions, proved as an essential reason of AAFEE's success.

Social movement activists in the 1970s took unconventional strategies like street protests, sit-ins, and picket lines. They were different from traditional advocacy groups who sought judicial remedy or legislators' help. Some activists used violent tactics like trespassing. Chinese activists learned lessons from the 1970 housing struggles. They strengthened their connections with African and Puerto Rican activists. As before, they did not seek legal remedies because the contract did not require DeMatteis to hire local workers, and New York's Affirmative Action guidelines for the construction industry were voluntary. AAFEE attempted to negotiate with DeMatteis in December 1973, but talks broke down.[138] "Activists carried new strategies such as filing the petition to the developer and setting picket lines.[139] These evolutions proved the maturity of Chinese activists during the Asian American movements.

Yanagida, founder of AAFEE, claimed that more than one hundred Asian American workers had applied for jobs at Confucius Plaza, but none had been hired.[140] More than one-third of applicants had six or more years of construction experience. For instance, after coming to the United States in 1968, Mr. Moy, a bricklayer with seven years' experience in Hong Kong, was unable to get a construction job at the Confucius Plaza. Instead, he had to make a living as a cook.[141] This fact showed an obvious employment discrimination.

Nevertheless, the City Housing and Development Administrators and President of DeMatteis insisted that DeMatteis followed minority-hiring policies. A site count conducted by

[137] Bill Chong, "Beyond Activism."
[138] Maeda, *Rethinking,* chapter 3.
[139] Paul Montgomery, "Asians Picket Building Site, Charging Bias: City Sees Compliance Traditional Jobs Dwindling." *New York Times,* June 1, 1974, 33
[140] Montgomery, "Asians Picket Building Site"; Yanagida, "The AAFEE Story," 394.
[141] Montgomery, "Asians Picket."

the Housing and Development Administration showed 32 of 71 workers belonging to minority groups.[142] However, AAFEE argued that these workers were allocated by DeMatteis from other DeMatteis' sites to meet the quota and to mislead administrators, which was known as "checkerboarding."[143] The precise number of minority workers was unknown, but AAFEE's claimed that only two Chinese workers were hired. The controversy of this event was whether the developer refused to employ Chinese workers based on racial factors. As the African and Puerto Rican coalition claimed, their people would not apply for jobs in Confucius Plaza to support Chinese workers.[144] In this way, those non-Chinese minority workers at Confucius Plaza indeed were imported from other sites when Housing and Development administrators came. Most workers at Confucius Plaza were whites initially.

The developer broke its promise to hire community workers for unknown reasons. As Yanagida claimed, DeMatteis promised to hire community workers (particularly, Chinese workers) to the area's Community Planning Board No.3 and the sponsors in the process of getting the building approved.[145] Therefore, DeMatteis broke their promise when they acquired the city funding. There is no evidence of whether DeMatteis' promise was verbal or written. Nevertheless, if they really did not hire enough Asian workers substantively, then they violated city affirmative action executive orders No.71 (1968) and No. 20 (1970). "It is unreasonable to reject Chinese workers!" read one protesters sign.[146] "DeMatteis, you are a big liar!" protesters yelled at the site.[147] The reasons for DeMatteis hiring so few Asian workers is unclear from the

[142] Montgomery, "Asians Picket."
[143] AAFEE, "Neighbor Questions & Answers;" Montgomery, "Asians Picket."
[144] AAFEE, "We Warmly Welcome."
[145] Yanagida, "The AAFEE Story."
[146] AAFEE, "It is unreasonable to reject Chinese workers," *Special Bulletin on Asian Americans For Equal Employment*, June 1974, 4, Museum of Chinese in America.
[147] AAFEE, "Revealing DeMatteis: Seeing His Ugly Real Face Clearly," *Special Bulletin on Asian Americans For Equal Employment*, June 1974, 2, Museum of Chinese in America.

evidence, but it was likely that DeMatteis had little experience with Asian workers in the past. DeMatteis was also subject to union hiring rules. The Construction Worker Union's members in the 1970s New York City were mainly white. Unions largely excluded minority and immigrant construction workers. They also underrated the Chinese community's reactions and ability of mobilization, which was like the telephone company.

AAFEE launched long-term demonstrations since DeMatteis rejected their requirements of equal employment. AAFEE asked DeMatteis to immediately hire forty Chinese-American workers and to ensure a quota of twenty percent of Chinese-American workers in the future. Meanwhile, an Asian American investigator should monitor the firm's hiring practices. On May 8, 1974, AAFEE submitted a petition with more than eight thousand signatures to the construction site but was rejected by DeMatteis. [148]

Afterward, on May 16, AAFEE mobilized hundreds of people, including students and elders, to rally at a Chinatown square. They protested discrimination in the entire construction industry. They regarded employment opportunities as a "democratic right."[149] They made their point by trespassing on the construction site. They halted the work of the project by sitting in and forcing workers to shut down.[150] Additionally, they set a picket line. DeMatteis reported the disturbance to the police, and the police arrested seven protesters on May 16. AAFEE members met every Tuesday evening to discuss the strategies since January. The composition of protesters covered not only construction workers but most popular Chinatown's professions, such as garment workers and Chinese restaurant workers. Other professionals donated money, food, and

[148] AAFEE, "Stop Racial Discrimination Immediately!"

[149] Janice Chin, "United to Fight Discrimination in the Construction Industry", Poster collected by Asian Americans For Equality, New York City.

[150] "Asian Demand," *Rice Paper*.

coffee to protesters.[151] They held two weeks of demonstrations in which the police arrested fifty-seven protesters totally.[152] Among those arrested were African and Puerto Rican activists. In June 1974, the court dismissed all charges for criminal trespassing.[153]

The demonstrations reached their peak on May 31 when 400 people protested in Chinatown.[154] This massive protest was a major historical event, generating many photographs and news reports city-wide. AAFEE continued to set pickets outside Confucius Plaza, and the mass marched through Chinatown that gathered protesters of all ages, races, and professions.[155] The elders from the Chinese Golden Age Club attended. A middle-aged protester held a sign that read: "For Our Children, We Want Jobs Now."[156] Student protesters raised their signs, in English and Chinese, i.e., "The Asians built the railroad; Why not Confucius Plaza?" This student's sign illustrated the tragic history and reality of Chinese Americans. During the 1860s, 15,000 to 20,000 Chinese workers built the projects of transcontinental railroads. Chinese workers were paid less than their white counterpart and worked longer hours.[157] Transcontinental railroads shaped the United States. Chinese-American workers, many believed, ought to get the desired jobs because of their fathers' contributions to this country. However, Chinese-American descendants in 1974 suffered from unequal treatment as terrible as their fathers in the 1860s.

Signs from other protesters illustrated the interracial dimensions of the fight. "Hire Chinese NOW," read the sign of a white woman who chatted with a Chinese lady holding a

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[151] AAFEE, "Garment Sisters Come Together to Support," "Restaurant Workers Donate Tea, Water and Money along the Way," *Special Bulletin on Asian Americans For Equal Employment*, June 1974, 3-4, Museum of Chinese in America.

[152] Yanagida, "The AAFEE Story," 396.

[153] Yanagida, "The AAFEE Story," 396.

[154] AAFEE claimed over 500 people were there.

[155] "Asian Demand," *Rice Paper*.

[156] Montgomery, "Asians Picket."

[157] Chinese Railroad Workers in North America Project, "Key Questions," accessed March 6, 2020, https://web.stanford.edu/group/chineserailroad/cgi-bin/website/faqs/.

baby.[158] An African American protester allied with other workers and raised a sign "Hire Chinese Workers for Jobs in Construction."[159] African Americans required the developer to hire Chinese instead of themselves at the project of Confucius Plaza. Their humanism helped forge alliances between the Chinese community and other racial groups in the city.

African-American and Puerto Rican activists volunteered to stand and fight together with Asian Americans. Some African-American and Puerto Rican activists were arrested by police during the demonstrations at Confucius Plaza.[160] The African and Puerto Rican construction workers did not get jobs provided by the final settlement because their activists promised not to claim any achievements during this struggle. The reason for their participation was to make an impact on widespread racial discrimination in the construction industry. African protesters raised the sign "Fight for The Democratic Rights of National Minorities" or "Fight Discrimination in Construction Industry."[161] They emphasized that all minorities should be equally hired.

AAFEE's mobilization for supporting their struggle was effective. Protesters drummed on developer's discrimination, avoiding mentioning the actual high unemployment rate in the United States. Activists knew the actual factors would not attract people. One activist described the success of their strategy, "we realized that community people were behind us."[162] Recognizing that so many community members had joined the protests, Chinese businessmen who had invested in Confucius Plaza shifted their support to the activists.

Reactions of the leading Chinatown group, the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association were torpid. The CCBA remained silent in the first few days of demonstrations.

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[158] Asian Americans For Equality, "Beyond Activism."
[159] Asian Americans For Equality, "Beyond Activism."
[160] AAFEE, "We Warmly Welcome."
[161] Asian Americans For Equality, "Beyond Activism."
[162] Poon, "Beyond Activism."

AAFEE gently criticized the CCBA's indifference.[163] Later, the CCBA released an announcement to call for a suspension of demonstrations and negotiate with the developer in a peaceful approach on May 27. CCBA leaders did not agree with young activists on halting the progress of construction. The sponsor of Confucius Plaza, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce of New York, was one of seven CCBA permanent board members. Some leaders of the CCBA were involved as businessmen creating the Confucius Plaza project. Those leaders silenced CCBA at the beginning of the struggle because they worried that their years' lobbyism of Confucius Plaza would be in ruin. In the dedication ceremony of Confucius Plaza in 1978, businessmen described those protests as a "frustration and [as] obstacles," refusing to see any benefits from the demonstrations. The divergence between radical organizations and conservative community associations widened. AAFEE insisted on grassroots political strategies like demonstrations and picket lines. However, some CCBA leaders persisted in a peaceful strategy. They relied on their long-term experience of dealing with whites, keeping modesty, and not being noisy in the street.

CCBA opposed the participation of other racial groups in this event. On May 31, the African and Puerto Rican Coalition and a Harlem-based organization of minority construction workers came and supported AAFEE. CCBA insisted "the goal of fighting is to hire Chinese," opposing AAFEE to use the name of "Asian" and to include African and Puerto Ricans. AAFEE analyzed the elder's stereotypes, "partial immigrant leaders are unkind to other minorities and criticize those people as impolite barbarians."[164] Admittedly, a few elderly Chinese immigrants discriminated against African Americans in the 1970s. Their racial discrimination against African Americans obstructed the construction of the interracial political coalition. Some elderly

[163] AAFEE, "What Did Immigrant Leaders Do?"
[164] AAFEE, "What Did Immigrant Leaders Do?"

Chinese did not receive racial equality education before emigrating from China, a mono-ethnic nation. They withheld their discrimination in public but excluded African Americans in private. Fortunately, Asian college student protesters embraced African-American and Puerto Rican activists because of their education in American schools.

American education reshaped the ideologies of younger generation Asian Americans. As the story of student groups at Columbia University revealed, the younger generation activists learned the concept of racial equality on campuses. They discredited Asian stereotypes, particularly that of the silent, apolitical immigrant. As the Chairman of the CCBA commented on the demonstration of May 31, 1974, "this generation [second-generation] has education … they do things the American way … the older people try to do it the Chinese way."[165] Younger generation Asian Americans encouraged their fathers to cast off the chains of "law-abiding citizens" and go to protest. AAFEE asked their "immigrant leader uncles," "can we break the wall of discrimination if we discriminate against other racial groups because we have relatively superiority?"[166] AAFEE attempted to correct some elder's racial discrimination. "We are suffering. Can we discriminate against black friends who suffered deeper than us? Why did we call them 'negro' and curse them 'slacker'?" AAFEE reminded the Chinese community that Puerto Ricans' housing conditions, health care, and public education were "as bad and short as us."[167] Therefore, "we shall stand together in fighting for equal rights." AAFEE warned the Chinese community that if the elder discriminated against the African Americans and Puerto Ricans, it would split their united powers.[168]

[165] Montgomery, "Asians Picket."
[166] AAFEE, "What Did Immigrant Leaders Do?"
[167] AAFEE, "We Warmly Welcome."
[168] AAFEE, "We Warmly Welcome."

CCBA leaders misjudged the situation in the 1970s. First, although most AAFEE members were Chinese, they used the name of "Asian" to broadcast the voice to more sympathizers. AAFEE leaders included other Asian group members like Japanese. The struggle of Confucius Plaza proved Daryl Maeda's argument that one of the achievements of Asian American Movements was consolidating all racial groups of Asians. Second, the interracial coalition was the key to the success of the Civil Rights Movement and Chinese-American struggle for housing in 1970. Chinese activists admitted that they learned from their black friends' experience of struggling.[169] AAFEE said, "Blacks and Puerto Ricans had rich experiences of struggles in the past. It is important to get their support and help and to welcome them."[170] African-American and Puerto Rican activists advanced a set of "five principles" to support the leadership of AAFEE. African-American and Puerto Rican activists promised not damage construction equipment ant not require any outcomes of this event.[171]

Besides, CCBA demanded to lead the whole work in Confucius Plaza in their announcement on May 27. However, CCBA's interests with Chinese businessmen were too convoluted to earn the people's trust. CCBA's slowness and bureaucratism did not convince community members as before. In the past, CCBA covered most community service before the Asian American movements. If Chinatown residents got into trouble, the first thing they would do was seek help from the CCBA. CCBA assisted newcomers with nearly everything before the first half of the 20th century.[172] As the emergence of new community organizations during the late 1960s through the mid-1970s, Asian-American start-up organizations did careful and efficient community service and compensated for the deficiency of CCBA. AAFEE concluded

[169] AAFEE, "We Warmly Welcome."
[170] AAFEE, "What Did Immigrant Leaders Do?"
[171] AAFEE, "We Warmly Welcome."
[172] AAFEE, "What Did Immigrant Leaders Do?"

"CCBA's influence has decreased because they could not carry those tasks."[173] In this way, more Chinese immigrants followed community service and student organizations and gradually accepted the ideas of fighting against racial discrimination in housing in 1970. The success of the housing struggle in 1970 encouraged ordinary Chinese Americans to believe radical ideas and to discredit CCBA's role. Another reason was the exclusion of Taiwan from the United Nations. In 1971, the People's Republic of China replaced Taiwan's seat and propagandized this news in New York, the location of the United Nation's Headquarters. As the representative of the Kuomintang, CCBA was in an embarrassing situation. Some Chinese community members believed CCBA represented an unrecognized government. Therefore, the domination of CCBA in New York's Chinatown declined.

The local government intervened in this dispute and persuaded DeMatteis to provide jobs for Asian workers. In June 1974, the City Hall held three meetings and coordinated the developer and protesters. All parties reached an agreement on July 10. The Housing and Development Administration arranged twelve positions of journeymen for AAFEE's workers in the outside of Confucius Plaza. DeMatteis hired ten to twelve trainees in Confucius Plaza. DeMatteis abided by the New York Plan that asked developers voluntarily to hire minority workers. Additionally, Confucius Plaza and the neighboring site hired fifteen Asian workers.[174] The local community regarded this result as a victory. Supporters rallied in Columbia Park to celebrate it in August 1974.[175]

The federal government heard minorities' dissatisfaction with the New York voluntary job-training plan. They reviewed this plan in November 1974 and withdrew it. Finally, the

[173] AAFEE, "What Did Immigrant Leaders Do?"

[174] AAFEE, "Gains at Confucius" *Special Bulletin on Asian Americans For Equal Employment*, August 1974, 1, Museum of Chinese in America.

[175] Yanagida, "The AAFEE Story," 397.

federal government put into effect a mandatory plan for private companies to hire minority workers.[176] The struggle at New York's Chinatown made a national difference.

The struggle for equal employment at Confucius Plaza had a profound impact on New York's Chinese community. Yanagida identified it as a "watershed in the history of Chinatown and the struggle of Asian American equality everywhere."[177] Historian Daryl Maeda and Peter Kwong also affirm the positive legacy of this struggle on Chinese community activism.[178] I will deepen their conclusions to two aspects, training future activists and building interracial coalitions.

AAFEE developed into a permanent organization. It changed its name to "Asian Americans For Equality" and still exists today. They comment on their founders' struggle, "in so doing, they [the protesters in Confucius Plaza] created a powerful grassroots movement that has endured for four decades."[179] Many Americans have joined the rally of Asian American movements since the victory at Confucius Plaza in 1974.

The Confucius Plaza struggle in 1974 motivated many students to devote themselves to lifelong community service. The growth of community leaders was a more significant achievement of this struggle, even than job positions got from the developer. Founders of AAFEE, Margaret Chin, and Bill Chong ran city officials after the baptism of Confucius Plaza's struggle. Margaret Chin participated in Confucius Plaza's struggle when she was a 20-year-old City College of New York student. She was the president of Asian Americans For Equality from 1982 to 1986. She then became the first Asian-American woman to serve as a New York City

[176] Hunter, "Month of Victories."
[177] Montgomery, "Asians Picket."
[178] Maeda, *Rethinking*, chapter 3; Kwong, *The New Chinatown*, 163.
[179] Asian Americans For Equality, "Our History," accessed December 3rd, 2019, https://www.aafe.org/who-we-are/our-history

Council, having served since 2010.[180] When she recollected the experience in AAFEE, she said: "everything that you have to fight for you just can't expect this to happen cause it doesn't, and you have to make your voices work."[181] In the summer of 1973, Bill Chong worked to pick up trash in empty lots on the Lower East Side.[182] He knew the difficulties of finding a suitable job. He served as President of Asian Americans For Equality from 1987-1994. In 2010, NYC Mayor appointed him Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Youth and Community Development. Chong encouraged young social workers to measure their success by how many jobs and housing they created for the community[183] Yee Ling Poon, another founder of AAFEE, earned the Juris Doctor degree at New York University in 1989.[184] She found an immigration law office to continue her fighting. Motivated by Asian American movements in the 1970s, she served as AAFEE President and many Asian organizations' legal advisors voluntarily. Other founders joined nonprofit organizations.[185] The struggle for equal employment trained future Chinese activists like Chin, Chong, and Poon. They started their career by serving the community during the protest of 1974 when they were students.

This event left a legacy on the interracial coalition. As Asian Americans For Equality comment in their website, "the rising unity of Asian and other minority workers was the most

[180] Margaret Chin, "MEET MARGARET."

[181] Margaret Chin, "Beyond Activism."

[182] "NYC Commissioner Bill Chong Recalls His Summer Job on the Lower East Side," The Lo-Down News, accessed March 7, 2020, http://www.thelodownny.com/leslog/2016/08/nyc-commissioner-bill-chong-recalls-his-summer-job-on-the-lower-east-side.html.

[183] Bill Chong, "Beyond Activism."

[184] Homepage of Yee Ling Poon, LLC, accessed March 26, 2020, https://www.linkedin.com/in/yee-ling-poon-%E6%BD%98%E7%B6%BA%E7%8E%B2%E5%BE%8B%E5%B8%AB-a0ba5290/.

[185] Doris Koo, "Profile." Pacific Hospital Preservation & Development Authority (website). accessed March 26, 2020, https://www.phpda.org/about-the-phpda/governing-council/doris-koo-msw; Lydia Tom, "Profile," Enterprise Community (website), accessed March 26, 2020, https://www.enterprisecommunity.org/about/our-people/lydia-tom.

important result of the Confucius Plaza struggle."[186] Their humanism and internationalism support changed the Chinese community's impression on African-American and Puerto Rican groups to some extent. Interracial coalitions in housing and equal employment contributed to the fading of racism in Chinatown. Elder Chinese Americans' infighting racial discrimination against the other racial group faded. CCBA gradually invited African and Latino friends to their festival celebrations later.[187]

Although most believed that the Confucius Plaza demonstrations were protests against racial discrimination, AAFEE thought beyond racism and activism after the event. Chong appealed people to "work together to go beyond just simply discrimination issue in the American dream." Another founder of AAFEE revealed their struggle aimed to "react to a system that pretended that we (Asian Americans) didn't exist." Activists advocated that employment was one of the basic human rights, as well as the principle like "local projects hire local workers." Furthermore, activists fought for a higher theme, the self-determination of the ethnic community. IWK summarized the lesson from their struggle against the telephone company, "if people had not organized to resist … the Chinese can no longer survive as a community."[188] An AAFEE activist emphasized that "Regardless of how many jobs came out of that movement, it was really the community standing up for himself."[189] Both of them emphasized the necessity of collective standing-up when the community was in danger. It illustrated a self-determination awareness breeding in the 1970s Chinatown.

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[186] AAFEE, "Unite with Nat. Minority" *Special Bulletin on Asian Americans For Equal Employment*, August 1974, 1, Museum of Chinese in America.

[187] "President Eric Ng attended the Lunar New Year celebration hosted by the Newyork-Presbyterian Lower Manhattan Hospital," CCBA, accessed March 27, 2020, https://www.ccbanyc.org/photo202001/200205%20NYP%20Lower%20Manhattan.html.

[188] IWK, "We Demand an Immediate End."

[189] Fay Matsuda, "Beyond Activism."

Conclusion

In conclusion, both financial and racial reasons led to conflicts between white landlords or developers and Asian-American residents. The gentrification of Manhattan's Chinatown deprived people of affordable apartments. Asian-American tenants blamed the landlord's arbitrary eviction for their homelessness. In the pursuit of profit, landlords evicted Asian-American tenants to build a commercial facility under the assumption of "timid" Asians and the rise of Chinatown's land values. The situation in Confucius Plaza was similar. The developer did not recognize Chinese workers' construction experiences acquired from China, which was inherently racist bias. However, the developer also confronted relatively high labor costs to meet the minority worker quota. Consequently, the origins of the two conflicts were not only racial discrimination as activists claimed but also actual financial factors that were deliberately avoided by activists. If activists pointed out the essentials, gentrification, and labor cost, it would be difficult to mobilize ordinary people and build a coalition. Slogans as "fighting against racial discrimination" was more persuasive and powerful than the socioeconomics analysis that ordinal people could not understand.

Struggles for affordable housing and equal employment left legacies both inside and outside of Chinatown. They mobilized community members and reformed the problem-solving mechanism in Chinatown. Demonstration became an option for Asian Americans who suffered from racial discrimination. When one activist recollected another demonstration with 10,000 Chinese protesters in the next year, she asserted that the demonstration "was built upon the experience of Confucius Plaza that people would not afraid to demonstrate to show their feeling."[190] The interracial coalition's mock trial aroused New Yorkers' concern on the living

[190] Lydia Tom, "Beyond Activism."

conditions of racial minority communities. African, Asian, and Puerto Rican Americans protested against the entire construction industries' racial discrimination. These two struggles added racial minority housing and employment problems to the city's agenda and established paradigms for subsequent civil rights struggles.

These two struggles changed New Yorkers' perceptions of the Chinese community. Some whites abandoned the stereotype of "docile" Chinese.[191] African and Latino activists accepted Chinese activists as a vital member of their interracial coalition. Asian-American activism grew from something rooted narrowly within ethnic communities to city-wide social movements.

The interracial coalition played the role of enlightenment and guidance for Asian-American organizations. African-American civil rights pioneers enlightened Asian American college students who took social work after graduation. Start-up Asian-American organizations looked to the Black Panther's and the Young Lord's as role models. The Black Panther and the Young Lords invited Chinatown witness to their mock trial and advertised the IWK in their crowd-pleasing community magazines. Furthermore, they attended Asian Americans' demonstrations to support Asian Americans. Without the help of African and Puerto Rican activists, Asian American activists would spend more time and cost to achieve their goals.

IWK and AAFEE spurred the reformation of CCBA. CCBA helped immigrants on arbitrations, opening businesses, travel visas, and nearly all Chinatown self-governing affairs.[192] It had the persuasiveness to judge the right and wrong in daily lives and businesses because of their dominant reputation.[193] During the Asian American movements, more professional community organizations established and took over CCBA's tasks. Although the influence and

[191] Huey Jung, "I Wor Kuen."
[192] AAFEE, "What Did Immigrant Leaders Do?".
[193] CCBA, "Services," accessed March 6, 2020, https://www.ccbanyc.org/eservices.html.

reputation of CCBA declined, they were still leading the organization of Chinatown. Many elder Chinese Americans supported CCBA's conservative standings because they received help from it. It has gradually narrowed the scope of work since the 1970s, so that over time they stopped providing arbitrations and business services.[194] The competitiveness from start-up organizations spurred CCBA to simplify its business. The gradual reformation of it contributed this hundred-year organization to exist until present after several progressive waves in New York City.

Asian-American activists focused on community services during the mid-1970s but did not address the structural economic or social challenges faced by the Asian community. American leftists tackled reform by preaching structural economic reform in the 1930s. Activists in the 1970s recognized the urgency of it and called for a socialist society in IWK's platform. Nevertheless, the inflated economy by the early 1970s forced Asian-American activists to concentrate on immediate financial problems. Meanwhile, African civil rights activists influenced Asian American activists to focus on racial discrimination, especially the question of rights. And the older generation of conservative Asian immigrants had no real impetus for structural reforms. Younger generations took little appetite in the political sphere for structural changes under financial pressure. New York's Asian community did not have an Asian representative to speak for them until the first Asian American won New York citywide office in 2001.[195]

Asian-Americans in New York engaged with other Asian-American groups across the United States. IWK demanded self-determination of Asian-American communities in their party

[194] CCBA, "Services."

[195] Larry Tung, "Asian Americans: A Growing Force in City Politics," *Gotham Gazette*, January 20, 2009, accessed May 5, 2020, https://www.gothamgazette.com/demographics/112-asian-americans-a-growing-force-in-city-politics.

platform No.5.[196] From Honolulu to Boston, and Philadelphia, Asian Americans saved their communities by fighting against eviction during the 1970s. From 1971 to 1977, Asian activists saved a Chinese Catholic Church when an expressway project planned to cut through it in Philadelphia.[197] IWK took the example of Boston's Chinatown to mobilize people against eviction. "Capitalists" would take over the entire Manhattan's Chinatown like Massachusetts Turnpike vanished half of Boston's Chinatown.[198] In 1974, Hawaiian, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and Filipino Americans collectively fought against Chinatown evictions.[199] They opposed the destruction of cheap elder residential hotels and succeeded in forcing the city to construct replacement housing.[200] These community self-determination movements held a lot in common. First, younger generations led social movements. Second, these activities consolidated community members. Third, they earned sympathy and support from other racial groups. They created powerful slogans like "We Won't Move (New York)" and "Save Chinatown (Philadelphia)." They were skilled at communicating with the media. Positive news pressured city governments and developers.

Comparing self-determination movements on the national scale, I found them to have contributed to the maturation of the Asian American movements. Activists embraced American education and capitalized on their experience in antiwar movements, thereby honing their fighting abilities. After the training of the 1970s social movements, they learned practical skills like how to mobilize the community and negotiate with governments. Furthermore, many

[196] IWK, "12 Points Platform and Program."

[197] Yee, "The Save Chinatown Movement," 24–31; Kathryn Wilson, " 'Same Struggle, Same Fight': Yellow Seeds and the Asian American Movement in Philadelphia's Chinatown." *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 140, no. 3 (2016): 423–25.

[198] IWK, "We Demand an Immediate End."

[199] Kelly, John, "People against Chinatown eviction," *UHM Library Digital Image Collections*, accessed March 28, 2020, 2, https://digital.library.manoa.hawaii.edu/items/show/31281.

[200] Maeda, "The Asian American Movement."

community organizations like IWK, AAFEE, Yellow Seeds (Philadelphia), and People Against Chinatown Eviction (Honolulu) were born during the Asian American movements. Most of them were active during the late 1970s and 1980s. Mature Asian civil rights organizations were signs of the maturation of the Asian American movements.

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