

# Short History of Yellow Seeds in Philadelphia 1972-1977

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Yellow Seeds established itself in Philadelphia in 1972, opening an office on the edge of Chinatown. Though it focused on services and claimed that it represented no "political philosophies," it was clearly associated with the Asian American Movement currents of the time.

Yellow Seeds published a bilingual English–Chinese newspaper of the same name and initially offered referral services around translation, housing, the elderly (see article on Mr. Lao), the military draft, and other areas.

However, its Movement orientation could be seen in not only the provision of free services but also draft counseling, implicit and later explicit support for the People's Republic of China, and calls for democratic participation of working people in community decision–making. It supported uniting Asian Americans and people of color. It also prodded and pointed out the shortcomings of groups such as the Chinese Benevolent Association and Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation.

One major local concern, as in other Chinatowns, was the urban renewal threat to Chinatown. Philadelphia had already put highway expansion through Chinatown and active plans to develop the commercial area near the community. Other issues focused on the conditions of the Chinese working class – garment and restaurant workers.

Beginning in 1975, influenced by Workers Viewpoint, its political direction shifted in a more overtly confrontational and sharper direction. It began to criticize its past work and reforms and publish its paper erratically. In 1977, Yellow Seeds characterized the struggle of Chinese Americans as part of that of the working class. How helpful this new direction would be could not be demonstrated as the organization dissolved soon after, though individual members remained active.