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"LOVELIEST DAUGHTER OF OUR ANCIENT CATHAY!": REPRESENTATIONS OF ETHNIC AND GENDER IDENTITY IN THE MISS CHINATOWN U. S. A. BEAUTY PAGEANT

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In February 1958, seventeen young women came from throughout the country to compete in the first Miss Chinatown U.S.A. Beauty Pageant. Sponsored by the San Francisco Chinese Chamber of Commerce (CCC) as part of the Chinese New Year celebration, the competition sought to find "the most beautiful Chinese girl with the right proportion of beauty, personality and talent." The organizers promised that "honor, fame and awards ... is (sic) ahead for her majesty in this, the most Cinderella-like moment of her young life." June Gong, a 21 year-old senior majoring in Home Economics at the University of New Hampshire, captured the title of the first Miss Chinatown U.S.A. Although she expressed surprise at winning, Gong had a history of competing successfully in beauty contests. She had won the titles of freshman queen and football queen at college. In 1957, she placed second in the Miss New Hampshire beauty pageant, a preliminary for the Miss America competition. She also won the 1957 Miss New York Chinatown title, which provided her with the opportunity to compete in the national pageant. Years later, she explained that the Miss Chinatown U.S.A. pageant was not "a beauty contest"; it was "more like a matter of ethnic representation." Having grown up in Miami, Florida, with only a few Chinese families, Gong's participation in the San Francisco event provided her with the opportunity to come into contact with the largest community of Chinese people outside of China and to learn about her ancestral culture.[1]

The popularity of the first Miss Chinatown U.S.A. beauty pageant made the event one of the highlights of the Chinese New Year celebration, which it continues to be today. Without it, one organizer explained, there would be no focus to the celebration: no pageant, no coronation ball, no Miss Chinatown float for the annual parade, and no fashion show. These Chinese New Year events draw hundreds of thousands of tourists into San Francisco's Chinatown, serving the dual purposes of educating the public about Chinese American culture and attracting business for Chinatown merchants.

The Miss Chinatown U.S.A. Beauty Pageant has served as a beauty competition, a promotional event to attract tourism, and a means for exploring and celebrating ethnic identity. Because of its multiple purposes, an analysis of the pageant provides insights into Chinese American efforts to construct both gender and ethnic identity during the post-World-War-II era. In defining the ideal woman to represent Chinatown, pageant organizers responded to developing cultural, economic, and political tensions within the Chinese American community and the broader American society. In turn, these efforts to represent Chinese American womanhood generated a variety of responses, which reflected

community conflicts surrounding not only gender roles and ethnic identity but also class divisions and international politics.[2]

Using pageant publications, oral histories, and Bay Area and Chinese American community newspapers, this paper analyzes the Miss Chinatown U.S.A. beauty pageant from its origins and popularization in the late 1950s and the 1960s, through the growing controversy that surrounded it in the late 1960s and 1970s. During the height of the Cold War and the era of racial integration, pageant supporters successfully balanced tensions within the Chinese American community and with the broader society by depicting their ethnic identity as a non-threatening blend of Eastern Confucian and modern Western cultures. However, with the rise of social movements during the late 1960s and 1970s, this conception of ethnic identity came under attack for presenting an outdated and exotic image of Chinese Americans in general and women in particular. Critics argued that Miss Chinatown did not represent the "real" Chinatown women who tended to be working class or the revolutionary Asian women in the Third World. Pageant supporters responded by emphasizing the importance of beautiful and articulate Chinese American women as role models for promoting respect for the community.[3]

Ethnic beauty pageants, a subject rarely explored by scholars, provide an opportunity to examine how idealized versions of womanhood reflect broader concerns about power and culture. In a recently published collection of essays devoted to the study of beauty pageants, *Beauty Queens on the Global Stage*, the editors, Colleen Ballerino Cohen, Richard Wilk, and Beverly Stoeltje, argue that pageants:

> showcase values, concepts, and behavior that exist at the center of a group's sense of itself and exhibit values of morality, gender, and place.... The beauty contest stage is where these identities and cultures can be—and frequently are—made public and visible.

In studying the formation and evolution of a community ceremony, I had the opportunity to not only examine how the pageant publicly and visibly reflects the community's identity and culture, but also how the event shaped and developed community values. In other words, the history of the pageant and the community dialogue that the event generated provide insight into evolving conflicts concerning ethnic and gender identity as well as class divisions and international politics.[4]

Furthermore, the study of the Miss Chinatown U.S.A. beauty pageant suggests the need to reevaluate dichotomous models of gender and ethnic systems. Beauty pageants do not simply victimize women through male domination; both women and men supported, as well as criticized, the pageant. Similarly, the cultural content of the pageant cannot be evaluated in terms of ethnic assimilation versus retention. Rather, both pageant supporters and critics defined ethnic identity by synthesizing elements of both Chinese and American traditions. While contending groups questioned their opponents' cultural authenticity and commitment to women's advancement, their conflicts often arose because they advocated different strategies to advance similar goals of gender and racial equality.

A melting pot of the East and the West

From the very beginning of the pageant, organizers had an ideal image of Miss Chinatown contestants as the perfect blend of Chinese and American cultures. Businessman and community leader H. K. Wong, who is credited with coming up with the idea of the pageant, explained that contenders for the crown must have the "looks that made China's beauties so fascinating" as well as the language skills to answer "key questions" in their own native dialect during the quiz portion of the competition. In addition to these Chinese attributes, contestants had to display modern American qualities. They needed "adequate education, training and the versatility to meet the challenge of the modern world." The Cheong-sam (long gown) dresses that contestants wore symbolized this theme of "East-meets-West." First introduced by Manchu women of the Qing Dynasty, the Cheong-sam, "the figure-delineating sheath dress with high-necked collar and slit skirt," became "the national costume of Chinese women." For the purposes of the pageant, modern dressmakers modified the design of the Cheong-sam to emphasize the cleavage area, creating "the 'poured-in' look so highly desired." Furthermore, the slit up the side of the dress was increased "to endow the basically simple Cheong-sam with a touch of intrigue ... [,] a tantalizing suggestion about the beauty of its wearer." This conception of Chinese American identity as a blend of East and West allowed pageant supporters to negotiate cultural, economic, and political tensions within the Chinese American community and with the broader community during the late 1950s and 1960s.[5]

Organizers argued that the beauty pageant demonstrated both the assimilation of the Chinese American community and their need to preserve Chinese culture. CCC leaders explained that they wanted to organize "something western" to attract the interest of the American-born generations as they became more assimilated. After nearly a century of racial exclusion and segregation, Chinese Americans became increasingly integrated into American society during the post-World-War-II era. Because of the alliance between China and the U.S. during the war, Chinese Americans for the first time gained the right to become naturalized citizens. With changes in segregationist residential restrictions after the War, middle-class Chinese Americans began moving out of Chinatown. They also gained access to white-collar jobs as occupational racial barriers decreased. These opportunities encouraged college-educated Chinese American women to join the labor force. The pageant provided a means for Chinese Americans to demonstrate their assimilation by inviting young, educated women to participate in an event which was becoming popular in American society during the post-War era, the beauty pageant.[6]

At the same time, the pageant also sought to preserve Chinese culture among those who were merging into the mainstream. For contestants like June Gong, San Francisco Chinatown represented their first contact with a large population of Chinese Americans. She exclaimed upon her arrival in San Francisco, "I had never seen so many Chinese people." Her unfamiliarity with Chinese culture made the event exciting and educational. She recalled that "it was even fun discovering Chinese food." Other contestants expressed similar sentiments about the pageant. One contestant from Glendale, Arizona explained that she came

to San Francisco to catch "her first glimpse of Chinese life." She told a reporter, "When you're born and raised in Glendale, China doesn't mean too much to you. . . . To me, San Francisco's Chinatown is China."[7]

In addition to promoting awareness of Chinese culture among contestants, organizers pointed out that the beauty pageant fostered a more cohesive sense of identity among Chinese Americans across generations and throughout the country. Because the pageant successfully attracted young Chinese American women and encouraged their interest in Chinese culture, the event helped bring together generations that might have been separated by cultural differences. One organizer explained that H. K. Wong thought of the pageant as "a joyful event to get the families and the parents involved in the New Year show." In addition, the pageant fostered cooperation among Chinese Americans nationwide. In order to attract contestants from diverse geographical regions, pageant organizers sought the assistance of Chinese Chambers of Commerce, merchant organizations, and families' associations in other cities. Some areas that already had community beauty pageants began sending their representatives to San Francisco. Others initiated contests in order to participate in the Miss Chinatown U.S.A. beauty pageant. The solidification of these networks helped foster a sense of a national Chinese American identity.[8]

The pageant and the New Year festival not only promoted an awareness of ethnic identity among Chinese Americans, but the events also educated the general public about the value of Chinese culture. As the embodiment of the positive aspects of ethnic identity, Miss Chinatown U.S.A. held symbolic importance in promoting greater acceptance of Chinese Americans. Historically, the white community viewed Chinatown as a disease-ridden society populated by unattached men. The stereotypes of Chinese American women as exotic slave girls or sequestered women with bound feet symbolized the moral corruption of the community. The pageant offered an alternative view of Chinese American women, which in turn emphasized the progress of the community. First, the pageant demonstrated the demographic changes of the community from a "bachelor society" to a "family society." By presenting beautiful, charming, and intelligent Chinese American women, the competition also paid tribute to the families of these contestants, as implied by the lyric from the official pageant song, "loveliest daughter of our Ancient Cathay." Second, the pageant also demonstrated the modernization of Chinese American gender roles. One pageant booklet charted the advances of women "from dim memories of wee bound-feet to present day stiletto heels." In this statement, the accessory of high heels is supposed to symbolize the advancement and independence of Chinese American women. While bound feet suggests the enforced debilitation of women by outdated cultural practices, the ability to wear high heels suggests women's economic power to purchase modern commodities. Chinese American women, like their American counterparts, were becoming part of a commercialized world.[9]

These images of Chinese American women and the conception of ethnic identity as a blend of the East and the West not only served to educate the broader American public but also helped draw tourists to Chinatown. While the pageant was usually attended by Chinese Americans, the proceeds from the event helped fund the annual New Year Parade, which attracted hundreds of

thousands of non-Chinese people. In addition, pageant contestants served as models for advertisements for the festival, and their presence at various New Year events helped attract tourists, who shopped in Chinatown stores and ate in Chinese restaurants.

The developing commercial viability of Chinatown coincided with broader social interest in Asian culture following World War II. The military presence in the Pacific theater during the War and the political, commercial, and military interest in Asian countries during the Cold War led to increased contact between Western and Asian peoples. American popular culture reflected this fascination with the "Orient," which also included "Orientals" in the U.S.; San Francisco officials and business leaders actively supported the Chinese New Year festival and the Miss Chinatown U.S.A. Beauty Pageant for commercial purposes. As early as 1957, political and civic leaders expressed interest in promoting the festival as a distinctively San Franciscan cultural event that would draw tourists into the city. They wanted a festival "to rival Mardi Gras." The presence of ethnic beauty queens constituted an important component of the plan to encourage tourism. One non-Chinese festival organizer envisioned that "we'll have floats from Siam, Japan and Korea and we'll have pretty Chinese girls from all over the world ... [and] I really think we will have an attraction to equal the Mardi Gras in five years."[10]

The joint interests of the CCC and city officials in promoting the commercial benefits of Chinatown fostered tensions as well as cooperation. Ironically, while Chinatown organizers sought to promote the compatibility of East and West through their events, white organizers cautioned Chinese Americans against over-assimilation. In a speech to the Chinese Historical Society of America, journalist Donald Canter, who regularly covered the Chinese New Year festival and Miss Chinatown U.S.A. beauty pageant, explained that the annual parade had become so Americanized that, "I wasn't quite sure whether I was viewing the Rose Parade in Pasadena or a New Year's parade of the largest Chinatown outside the Orient." To promote more tourism for the community, he encouraged organizers to highlight Chinese cultural practices. Instead of having the Miss Chinatown queen and princesses ride in floats for the parade, he suggested the "possibility of having the Queen, and possibly her court, carried in sedan chairs with the carriers performing their chore in relays." He argued that this practice would be "much more Chinese" and would appeal:

> much more to the imagination of the hundreds of thousands viewing this annual spectacle.... Wouldn't they write their folks and friends across the country about that eerie spectacle of a Chinese Queen and Chinese princesses being carried in Chinese sedan chairs? ... And consequently, with a proper Chinese sense for reality, wouldn't [that] lure more tourists and their dollars into San Francisco and Chinatown?

To attract white tourists interested in seeing the "bizarre," Canter encouraged CCC leaders to emphasize an "Orientalist" image of Chinatown by creating cultural practices that were not relevant to Chinese Americans.[11]

CCC leaders did not entirely disagree with this approach of portraying Chinatown as something "exotic" and "foreign" in order to maintain its commercial viability. Pageant publications regularly invited tourists to visit San Francisco

Chinatown because of its resemblance to "the Orient." The souvenir booklet explained that "if you have not been to the Orient, your trip to Chinatown will be as if you were visiting Formosa or Hong Kong." At the same time that pageant organizers promoted a positive conception of Chinese American identity to encourage self-pride and cultural awareness, they also consciously promoted an exotic image to fulfill the expectations of white tourists.[12]

The CCC efforts to balance their agenda of ethnic representation and commercial viability were further complicated by the international political context of the Cold War, which ignited immense hostility towards Communist China. The *San Francisco Chronicle* regularly placed its coverage of the New Year events next to articles on the People's Republic of China (PRC). To distance themselves from the negative images of "Red China," pageant and festival organizers emphasized a non-aggressive conception of Chinese culture. One CCC publication explained that the Chinese:

> seldom express their passion, particularly in public. This, combined with the Confucian doctrine of the dignity of man, makes them a calm and pacific race. Fatalism plays an important role in the Chinese mind. Generally they are quite content with their station in life. For this reason, the western sense of the word "revolution" has no appeal to the Chinese mind.

This portrayal of Chinese American identity as orderly and content with the existing order also encompassed Cold War conceptions of gender identity. Pageant founder H. K. Wong explained that the pageant represented a quest by "Chinatown Elders ... for [a] Queen with Ancient Virtues of Chinese Womanhood." He defined the ideal Chinese woman as obeying the patriarchal figures of the Chinese family. She must respect "first your father, then your brother, then your husband." This emphasis on female submissiveness was part of a more general portrayal of Chinese people as culturally passive. Both conceptions of ethnic and gender identity were consciously promoted to counter the notion that all Chinese were potentially red subversives. Furthermore, pageant supporters also implied that their version of Chinese culture was more authentic than the changes taking place in the PRC, because they traced their cultural origins to "Confucian" doctrines.[13]

CCC organizers simultaneously claimed Chinese cultural authenticity and emphasized their loyalty to America. They argued that the ability to celebrate their culture in the U.S. demonstrated the superiority of American society. According to James H. Loo, president of the CCC in 1962,

> In the turmoil of the world situation, we citizens of Chinese ancestry want to take this opportunity to demonstrate to the peoples of the world, particularly those who are living behind the iron and bamboo curtains, how American democracy really works.... We, like many Europeans, who came to settle in this free land, are also proud of our ancient culture and endeavor to retain the best of our heritage. The New Year celebration exemplifies the expression of such a love of freedom and liberty.

The close affiliation of the Taiwanese government (ROC) with the pageant and the festival reinforced CCC antagonism towards communism. Members of the ROC Consulate participated regularly in the festival and the pageant.

Officials were presented as dignitaries during the beauty pageant and the New Year parade. The wife of the consul also served several times as a judge for the Miss Chinatown U.S.A. contest. Chow Shu-Kai, ROC Ambassador to the U.S., explained that his country supported the pageant and the festival as a reminder to "our compatriots on the mainland of China, who do not have the means to celebrate nor the freedom to commemorate occasions significant and meaningful according to the traditions of the old country." The ambassador as well as CCC officials emphasized the freedom of Chinese Americans to celebrate their culture and the authenticity of their version of Chinese culture compared to communist China.[14]

To support their argument that the beauty pageant represented an expression of authentic Chinese culture, organizers pointed to a Chinese tradition of appreciating female beauty. Although the more conservative Chinese philosophers emphasized female modesty and advocated the seclusion of women to the inner quarters of the home, poets, playwrights, as well as folk storytellers celebrated the beauty of famous women. H. K. Wong drew on these literary traditions to describe the standard of beauty used to select Miss Chinatown. He suggested that

> the elusive memory of ancient China's greatest beauties might lurk in the judges' minds as they ponder their decision. Their thoughts might linger on the centuries-old Chinese concept of beauty such as melon-seed face, new moon eyebrows, phoenix eyes, peachlike cheek, shapely nose, cherry lips, medium height, willowy figure, radiant smile and jet black hair.

Interestingly, the modern beauty pageant did resemble certain Chinese cultural practices. During the Northern Sung, Ming and Qing dynasties, the imperial court instituted a female draft to select palace maids, consorts, and wives. Choices were based on both the girl's personal appearance and on her family status. Pageant organizers used these Chinese traditions of appreciating feminine beauty to justify the Miss Chinatown U.S.A. competition as an expression of Chinese, as well as American, culture.[15]

The conception of ethnic and gender identity promoted by the Miss Chinatown U.S.A. and Chinese New Year Festival during the 1950s and 1960s emphasized the blend of the exotic, passive Confucian East and the modern, democratic West. This interpretation of Chinese American culture allowed pageant supporters to negotiate tensions within the community and with the broader society during the post-World-War-II era. Reacting to the integrationist impulse among Chinese Americans, Chinatown organizers used an "American" event to attract the interest of the younger generation and to encourage the maintenance of Chinese culture. The pageant's emphasis on modern Chinese American women also served to educate the broader public about the "progress" of the community, even as the exotic foreignness of the events attracted tourists for Chinatown. The community's ability to celebrate their ancestral culture demonstrated the freedom that existed within democratic societies, while the pageant's emphasis on a non-revolutionary, Confucian notion of Chinese culture allowed Chinese Americans to claim cultural authenticity while also distancing themselves from the negative images of Communist Chinese.

The formulation of gender and ethnic identity presented by the Miss Chinatown beauty pageant suggests the vulnerability of the Chinese American community during the 1950s. While the aftermath of World War II brought increased economic and social opportunities, Chinese Americans also sensed the possibilities of community dispersion and political persecution. In this context, the pageant represented a means to promote a sense of community among Chinese Americans and between Chinese Americans and the broader American population.

The ability of the Miss Chinatown U.S.A. beauty pageant to reconcile tensions within the Chinese American community and with the broader society helped the event achieve widespread popularity. Throughout the 1960s, spectators annually filled the Masonic Auditorium which seated over 3,000. One organizer for the New Year parade recalled that the pageant was the premier event for Chinatown, attracting the "who's who" of the community. Because of the popularity of the pageant, people often complained of the difficulties of obtaining tickets for the event. Those who could not get tickets either watched the pageant as it was televised to another auditorium or else listened to the program on radio. By the 1960s, then, the pageant had become a recognized tradition in the community.[16]

"China Dolls" and "Iron Girls": Contending Images of Chinese American Women

During the late 1960s and 1970s, a generation of Chinese Americans who became involved with grass-roots social movements increasingly criticized the popular Miss Chinatown U.S.A. beauty pageant. Influenced by the civil rights, Black liberation, anti-war, and women's movements, college-educated and community youth began organizing to address social problems within Chinatown. While some advocated social reform, others questioned the fundamental assumptions of American capitalism and sought inspiration from Third World and socialist movements. Their criticisms of the Miss Chinatown U.S.A. beauty pageant and the Chinese New Year Festival demonstrated their attempts to redefine the ethnic and gender identities of Chinese Americans.

The rise in political consciousness among a young generation of Chinese Americans coincided with changing demographic trends in the Chinatown community. In 1965, the U.S. Congress abolished discriminatory national-origins quotas, allowing immigrants from Asian countries to come to the U.S. in the same proportions as Europeans. The new Chinese immigrants followed pre-existing demographic patterns. Educated professionals and technicians settled in areas outside of Chinatown, while unskilled workers and those with limited English facility became part of the older community. The heavy influx of working-class immigrants into San Francisco's Chinatown, estimated at "two to four thousand new residents" annually, both revitalized the community and exacerbated its social problems. With this rise in population, Chinatown's poverty level increased, its housing conditions deteriorated, and health and social services became inadequate. Both parents in Chinese immigrant families were likely to work long hours in service and light manufacturing jobs for low wages. Immigrant women also worked a "second shift," which included taking care of

children and doing housework. Because of the crowded conditions in Chinatown and the poor quality of housing available, immigrant families were likely to live in small tenement rooms with inadequate plumbing facilities, no central heating, communal kitchens and bathrooms. These poor and overcrowded living conditions increased the health risks among community residents.[17]

Like other ghetto communities, however, Chinatown lacked the resources to respond to the needs of its residents. Government programs like the San Francisco Equal Employment Opportunity Commission were reluctant to allocate funds to assist immigrants or to address systemic problems within the community. Chinese Americans also lacked the political clout to combat the widespread belief that Asian Americans constituted model minorities who could succeed solely through hard work and perseverance.

In reaction to the ghettoization of Chinatown, young activists advocated new solutions to address these problems. They sought to educate themselves and the broader public about the needs of the community, and they demanded the reallocation of government and community resources for social services. During the 1960s and 1970s, liberal and radical activists formed agencies to serve the economic, educational, cultural, and social concerns of Chinatown residents. They also initiated grass-roots campaigns to mobilize Chinese Americans to demand better living and working conditions. As part of their broader agenda to fundamentally change the existing social structure, they began criticizing the popular Miss Chinatown U.S.A. beauty pageant. The new generation of activists questioned the role of tourism in the community, the images of Chinese American women promoted by the pageant, and the appropriateness of Confucian values and the ROC in representing Chinese culture. For them, Miss Chinatown represented a symbol of a commercialized, anti-revolutionary, middle-class Chinese American identity, exactly what reformers, radicals, and feminists sought to change in the community.

During the 1960s and 1970s, critics of the pageant and New Year festival increasingly questioned the use of community resources to promote tourism and the educational benefits provided by tourism. *East West*, a liberal Chinese American newspaper, noted that Chinese New Year

> is the time when people near and far come to visit the Chinatown.... But would the visitors be able to see the real Chinatown? Would they have a chance to meet our residents? Would they begin to understand our many community problems? At the moment, what we are showing the visitors are the rides in the carnival, beauty contestants, an occasional cherry bomb, and busy restaurants where service could best be described as chaotic.

Because of the enormous crowds that the Chinese New Year attracted, keeping peace and order proved difficult. While the city's fire chief annually threatened to ban firecrackers to lessen chances of injury and fire, the police chief increased security during Chinese New Year to prevent fights and public disturbances. In 1969, a full-fledged riot broke out, resulting in thirty-five arrests and eighty-nine injuries. An observer's account suggests that Chinese New Year did not necessarily inspire greater appreciation of Chinese culture. George Chu, who described himself as "a square middle-class Chinese," explained that Chinese New Year was a particularly volatile time in the community. Because of racial

tensions, fights between Chinese and whites had the potential to escalate. These tensions were exacerbated by the behavior of white tourists, who indiscriminately threw firecrackers without watching for people around them. Others strolled through the community, "tearing posters and paper lanterns from the booths for souvenirs, [acting] as if Chinatown was theirs for the picking." Police security for the festival did not help the situation since officers tended to ignore these incidents. When they did intervene, they tended to assume the Chinese were at fault. Even Chinatown residents who volunteered to help patrol the streets were warned that "when the cops come, stay out of it; they can't tell the Chinese apart." Some Chinese Americans, angry about the racist treatment by the police and the disrespect of tourists, criticized the CCC for promoting the festival.[18]

The tensions between business leaders and activists came into focus when the Holiday Inn decided to build a hotel to provide luxury accommodations for tourists in Chinatown. As part of the hotel's promotional campaign, they sponsored a contestant, Celeste Wong (alias), for the Miss Chinatown U.S.A. beauty pageant. As a publicity stunt for the gala grand opening of the Holiday Inn, Wong jumped out of a giant fortune cookie. Across the street, members of the Red Guard Party, a radical organization of Chinatown youth, and other Asian Americans staged a rally protesting the "invasion of Chinatown's territory" by the Holiday Inn. Citing the crowded conditions of San Francisco's Chinatown, protesters asked "how many of our people have had to move out of their shops and homes to make way for the growing financial district?" Questioning the displacement of Chinatown people for commercial enterprises like the Holiday Inn, the protesters demanded "low cost housing for our people!" During the New Year Parade, some protesters went so far as to throw eggs at Celeste Wong for representing the Holiday Inn. In the end, she had to be removed from the float because of public hostility. Activists criticized the Miss Chinatown U.S.A. beauty pageant for helping to promote a false commercial image of Chinatown in order to attract tourism. One community activist highlighted the contradictions between the tourist image of Chinatown and the actual experiences of its residents.

> In Holiday Inn ... there is a swimming pool on the roof and a grand view of the city ... there is the plush of soft carpets, bright lights, and spacious quarters ... there are bell boys in smart uniforms ... there are hostesses in mini skirts and cheong sams ... there is ... Miss Holiday Inn, and now Miss San Francisco Chinatown ... there are tourists and business men with their briefcases ... it's all there, across from Portsmouth Square, where the poor, the old, and the very young while their time away before the sun goes down.[19]

The growing awareness about racial and class oppression also fostered critiques of the Miss Chinatown U.S.A. beauty pageant for objectifying Chinese American women. Beginning in the late 1960s and escalating throughout the decade, Chinese Americans criticized the pageant for judging women based on physical standards and portraying them as "China dolls." Their criticisms were partly inspired by the broader movement for women's equality. In 1968, women involved with the budding feminist movement conducted a widely-publicized protest of the Miss America pageant in Atlantic City. They crowned "a live sheep to sym-

bolize the beauty pageant's objectification of female bodies, and filled a 'freedom trashcan' with objects of female torture—girdles, bras, curlers, issues of *Ladies' Home Journal*." Although no bras were actually burned, the media referred to protesters as "bra-burners," which then became a simplistic derogatory term to refer to feminists.[20]

Chinese Americans concerned about women's issues echoed white feminist criticisms of beauty pageants. Although Miss Chinatown contestants were supposedly judged according to their intelligence, "talent, beauty, charm and knowledge of Chinese culture," critics argued that physical appearance tended to be the main criterion. Pageant observers pointed out that many "would-be queens" displayed a "sad lack of 'talent.'" Others commented that the interview session of the contest did not really demonstrate the contestants' knowledge of Chinese culture or their intelligence. After attending her first Miss Chinatown U.S.A. beauty pageant, Judy Yung criticized the candidates for obviously memorizing their responses to the Chinese portion of the interview session: "But even with preparation, their answers don't always make sense, since they speak Chinese with a heavy American accent." Because of these problems, the Chinese portion of the interview eventually became optional in 1980. Yung further complained that the English portion of the interview did not challenge the intelligence of the contestants, for judges asked questions such as

> (1) If you saw your best friend cheating, what would you do? or (2) If you dressed informally to a formal party, what would you do? or (3) If you found your hem falling during a public appearance, what would you do? Evidently, the judges are more interested in finding out how you can get out of difficult situations than what your knowledge and opinions are on current events and social problems.

Other critics of the pageant pointed out that the main purpose of the event was to display a "parade of flesh." One documentary film maker portrayed the 1973 Miss Chinatown beauty pageant, which took place during the year of the Ox, as a "Livestock Show."[21]

Chinese American feminists expanded beyond mainstream criticisms that beauty pageants objectified women by pointing out the racial implications of certain female images. Critics argued that despite the flowery language used to describe Chinese standards of beauty, the Miss Chinatown U.S.A. beauty pageant actually used white standards to judge Chinese American women. One community member stated her belief that the contest "shows that the closer you look like the Whites, the prettier you are." Another critic agreed that Asian Americans internalized "white standards" of beauty promoted by mass media. These images emphasized that "a beautiful woman has a high-bridged, narrow nose, a large bosom, and long legs." She pointed out that while "these and many other physical traits are not inherent in most Asian women," beauty pageants like the Miss Chinatown U.S.A. contest encouraged women to achieve that ideal. Asian women "can compensate by setting our hair, curling our eyelashes, or wearing false ones, applying gobs of eye make-up, and going to great lengths to be the most 'feminine' women in the world." In attempting to achieve this feminine image, Chinese American women perpetuated the stereotype of Asian women as the "exotic-erotic-Susie Wong-Geisha girl dream of white American

males." As white women became active in demanding social equality, Asian women became associated with the sexuality and the submissiveness of the "ideal" woman.[22]

Contestant statements and articles on the beauty pageant support this notion that white standards of physical beauty were used to judge the competition. Some candidates, organizers, and observers believed that judges preferred taller contestants. One entrant, who was 5 foot 2, complained that "it was obvious those girls with height had it." Other evidence suggests that "Caucasian" eyes represented a standard of beauty for Chinese American contestants. When one 1973 entrant was asked if she had any special attributes that might make her stand out, she said that her eyes might be an advantage, because they were "larger than [those of] some of the girls." Larger eyes with double eyelids and longer eye lashes have traditionally been associated with a "western look," as opposed to smaller eyes with single eyelids. During the late 1960s, the double eyelid look gained increasing popularity among Asians in Asia and the U.S. To achieve that look, women resorted to various methods. While teen-agers "place[d] scotch tape or a gluey substance over their eyelids overnight," those with more resources paid for "plastic surgery to westernize Oriental eyes." One pageant souvenir book even carried an advertisement for cosmetic surgery to convert "'oriental eyes' with single eyelids into 'Caucasian eyes' (with double-eyelids)."[23]

This emphasis on physical appearance placed psychological and emotional burdens on the contestants. In preparing for the competition, entrants experienced subtle and overt pressures to alter their physical appearance through cosmetics, dieting, and even plastic surgery. This emphasis on viewing women as sexual objects may have led to more abusive forms of behavior, such as sexual harassment. Celeste Wong remembered that "alot of the people who directed the activities in Chinatown were older men who took advantage of the situation.... You'd be in a taxi or car with somebody and all of a sudden you'd feel a hand slipping under your dress." Her sponsor, the Holiday Inn hotel, provided her with a white male escort and required her to attend various functions to promote their business projects. Once, when the Holiday Inn flew her to Memphis for the opening of a hotel, her escort reserved only one room for both of them. Only sixteen years old at the time, Wong responded to these advances by ignoring them or escaping from the situations. However, she did not have the words or confidence to expose the treatment she received. Wong later interpreted these incidents as a result of the beauty pageant, which encouraged young women to present themselves as physically desirable. The sexual harassment "had to do with the contest and had to do with being a young woman who's supposed [to] just win based on what you looked like." The men who harassed her translated the accessibility of her body image for commercial and cultural purposes as an accessibility of her body for their sexual purposes.[24]

In addition to exposing the personal and psychological effects of beauty pageants, community activists also criticized the pageant for promoting an elite image of Chinese American women. Because the competition sought to highlight educated, accomplished, poised, and beautiful Chinese American women, critics considered the image of contestants "bourgeois." They argued that "most of the contestants come from wealthy and influential backgrounds and know very little about Chinatown, the ghetto." Because the competition sought to

present "the most 'beautiful' Chinese women in their fine clothes and just perfect make-up, pranc[ing] around the stage," critics did not consider this image as representative of Chinese American women. They pointed out that "the majority of Chinese women are hard-working, either with jobs or full-time family responsibilities, and in most cases it's both. They are not women of leisure and their 'beauty' is not in their 'made-up, worked on for hours' physical outward appearance." Instead of promoting exceptional women as representative of Chinese American womanhood, critics sought further recognition of the problems facing women as workers and family members.[25]

Activists preferred to promote an image of Chinese American women as protesters of injustice. Challenging the CCC's portrayal of Chinese culture as passive and non-revolutionary, the critics pointed to the growing militancy of women in Chinatown and throughout the Third World. Just as some Chinatown publications regularly featured women from beauty contests, papers with more liberal and radical agendas emphasized women's activism in movements for social justice. For example, articles in the latter papers frequently covered the struggles of garment workers, striking for better working conditions and wages. The photographs of middle-aged women holding picket signs represented a dramatic departure from the images of young women in cheong-sams and make-up. Community members concerned about working women's issues also began celebrating International Women's Day in Chinatown during this time period. Occurring in early March, this annual event could be interpreted as a symbolic alternative to the Miss Chinatown U.S.A. beauty pageant, which usually took place in late January or February.

These images of women as protesters rather than beauty queens were directly inspired by Third World female revolutionaries. Radicals criticized the CCC's emphasis on Confucian values as representative of Chinese culture. Instead, they sought inspiration from the new socialist societies forming throughout Asia. *Getting Together*, the newspaper for an Asian American Marxist-Leninist organization, regularly featured images of female cadre and revolutionaries transforming patriarchal family structures and building new societies in the People's Republic of China (PRC), Vietnam, the Philippines, and North Korea. Community radicals sought inspiration from the image of China's "Iron Girls," a group of women "who took on the most difficult and demanding tasks at work" and who developed legendary reputations for exerting superhuman energy. Community activists who promoted the Third World revolutionary women as role models for Chinese American women criticized the involvement of the ROC in the Chinese New Year Festival. As an alternative, pro-PRC supporters organized a noncommercial celebration of Chinese New Year. Rather than emphasizing China's Confucian tradition, their Spring Festival highlighted "the creative and innovative aspects of Chinese culture," as represented by developments in the PRC.[26]

The criticisms leveled against the Chinese New Year Festival and the Miss Chinatown U.S.A. pageant during the late 1960s and 1970s represented a contest over the definition of ethnic and gender identity. Influenced by radical social movements, a new generation of Chinese Americans began advocating new forms of inter-racial, gender, and class relationships. Instead of promoting a commercial image of Chinatown to attract tourists, the activists demanded sup-

port from city officials and community leaders to address social issues. Instead of encouraging women to achieve certain standards of beauty or personal advancement, they advocated community responsibility and political activism. Instead of seeking cultural inspiration from a Confucian past and political legitimation from nationalist Taiwan, they turned to Communist China. The vociferousness of community debates regarding gender and ethnic identity reflected the high degree of conflict within San Francisco Chinatown during the late 1960s and 1970s.

The Reform Tradition of Radicalism

The responses of pageant supporters to their critics demonstrate the diverse and often contradictory strategies available to advance racial and gender equality. On the one hand, pageant organizers and contestants expressed fundamental disagreement with the agenda of community reformers, radicals, and feminists. They questioned the cultural authenticity of their critics and disagreed with their views on tourism, the class bias of the pageant, and the gender roles portrayed through the image of Miss Chinatown. At the same time, pageant and New Year festival supporters also proclaimed their commitment to community service, accurate portrayals of Chinese culture, and women's achievements. While their critics sought to expose the contradictions involved in the Miss Chinatown U.S.A. beauty contest, pageant supporters revealed the contradictions embedded within the social movements that advocated racial and gender equality.

Reacting to criticisms of the pageant and the Chinese New Year festival, supporters questioned the ability of their critics to speak on behalf of Chinatown. One observer of the Holiday Inn rally suggested that the young radicals protesting for the good of the "community" did not necessarily understand the community. He pointed out that when one journalist asked the protesters what some older female residents were talking about in Chinese, "all the youths could respond was, 'I don't understand Chinese.' " Just as pageant critics questioned the ability of the CCC and other establishment leaders to represent the community, the ability of the liberals and radicals to speak on behalf of Chinatown also came into question.[27]

Claiming that they had the interest of the community at heart, pageant and festival supporters argued for the benefits of tourism. They suggested that "there's nothing wrong in bringing in large crowds" to Chinatown. Tourism provided an economic lifeline by supporting the restaurants and stores which in turn employed Chinatown residents. Furthermore, the public exposure gained through the Miss Chinatown U.S.A. beauty pageant and Chinese New Year festival helped Chinese Americans gain national and international attention. Some community members agreed that "in spite of the commercialization of Chinese New Year, it does help remind us that we belong to a unique culture." New Year festival supporters further suggested that those who wanted a less commercial version of Chinese New Year should turn to private celebrations. One organizer explained that "you have to understand the private and public celebrations are two very different things.... People will go on having the traditional New Year family reunions, feasts and gift-giving regardless of the parade." Pageant support-

ers thus downplayed their power to define ethnic identity by emphasizing the community's ability to celebrate cultural events in diverse ways.[28]

Pageant supporters also argued that the beauty competition transcended class divisions and helped promote upward mobility. They pointed to the enormous popularity of the pageant among the working class in Chinatown and the opportunities that the contest provided for women. Cynthia Chin-Lee, a 1977 contestant from Harvard University, agreed with this argument. She remembered that the pageant was more of a casual, fun experience for her, because "I was going to Harvard and I knew I had a different type of career ahead of me." However, other contestants who "didn't have real high power careers" approached the competition more seriously, because it offered an opportunity for social recognition and career advancement. The experiences of Rose Chung, Miss Chinatown 1981, illustrates the argument that beauty pageants provided opportunities for working-class women. Growing up in a single-parent household, Chung remembered that she stayed home to take care of her four siblings while her mother worked as a seamstress. The pageant offered an opportunity to gain public exposure and participate in a glamorous event. After winning the Miss Chinatown title, she received a $2000 scholarship and free trips to locations in the U.S., Canada, and Asia. Chung also became an instant celebrity, receiving recognition from the Chinatown community. She recalled that because of her sheltered childhood, she "always wanted to participate in community activities." After she won the Miss Chinatown title, Chung served as the president of the women's auxiliary group of her family association, as president of the San Francisco General Hospital Chinese Employee Association, and as a member of the Republican County Central Committee. She traces these accomplishments to her victory in the Miss Chinatown U.S.A. pageant.[29]

Pageant defenders also countered their critics by challenging the goals and methods of the women's movement. They disagreed with feminist critics on issues concerning the importance of beauty, marriage, and radical protest. Although supporters acknowledged that beauty pageants objectified women and fostered their feelings of insecurity, they believed that the competition provided overriding benefits. Because of the racial discrimination against minorities in mainstream pageants such as the Miss America contest, the Miss Chinatown U.S.A. and other ethnic pageants gave women of those backgrounds the opportunity to achieve recognition. The experiences of Sandra Wong, Miss 1973 Chinatown U.S.A., demonstrated this function of ethnic beauty pageants. Prior to entering the Miss Chinatown pageant, Wong competed twice in the local Miss San Leandro contest. Had she won, she would have been the first Asian American to be represented in the Miss California contest, a preliminary for the Miss America pageant. Although Wong won both the talent and swimsuit contests during her first attempt, she did not win the competition. During both years, she placed as first runner-up. She did not publicly protest these results as racially motivated, but others did. Journalist John Lum's exposé of Wong's experiences concluded that "discrimination doesn't only extend to housing, education, and jobs, it extends to beauty 'contests,' too." Because of racial discrimination in mainstream beauty pageants, as well as in careers involving modeling, acting and performance, pageant defenders argued that the Miss Chinatown U.S.A.

competition was important for promoting positive images of Chinese Americans. These supporters disagreed with feminist critics who argued that emphasis on external appearances necessarily degraded women.[30]

Pageant backers also explained their disregard for feminist criticisms by proclaiming their support for more traditional female roles. When questioned about their thoughts on "women's lib" and on their future plans, many contestants discussed their dual commitments to career and marriage. Contestants during the late 1960s tended to view the two goals in conflict and prioritized marriage over careers. For example, 1967 contestant Irene Ung acknowledged gender discrimination against women in her field of international marketing when she remarked that "being a woman can be a handicap when you're looking for a man's job in a man's world." However, Ung did not necessarily aspire to "a career of working." "Like any other girl," Ung explained, "someday I'll want to get married and have children," goals which presumably set her apart from the feminist movement. Other contestants also voiced their preference for more "gentlemen-like" behavior from their male companions. One contestant explained that she "still enjoys having her cigarette lit and having somebody hold the door for her." She interpreted these desires as antagonistic to the feminist agenda. Still other contestants expressed their dissatisfaction with critiques of beauty pageants by emphasizing the radical image of feminists. Sandra Wong explained that she did not believe the women's liberation movement's members "protesting and burning their bras." By explaining that feminists and beauty contestants operated in separate worlds and held different values, pageant supporters could partly explain their disregard of feminist criticisms.[31]

Even as they questioned their critics' authority and disagreed with the radical agenda, pageant defenders also professed similar goals of racial and gender equality. In response to criticisms raised during the 1960s and 1970s, organizers and participants altered the pageant and the New Year festival to assist community service projects and to project a less "plastic" version of Chinese culture. They also argued that the pageant promoted the goal of gender equality by emphasizing the importance of female bonding, women's achievements in the public realm, and sexual liberation. Pageant defenders argued that they, like their critics, shared the goals of advancing the Chinese American community and Chinese American women.

These reform efforts were often initiated by a new generation of pageant supporters who had activist credentials. Gordon Yaw provides one example. Yaw's family moved out of San Francisco when he was a young boy, but he returned to attend Chinese school. Because he grew up in an Oakland neighborhood where the Black Panthers had a positive influence, Yaw became involved with the Berkeley Third World Strike during the late 1960s. Through his protest activities, he met many Asian American students who criticized the CCC and other Chinatown establishment leaders for ignoring the needs of the community. They also condemned the Miss Chinatown U.S.A. beauty pageant as a symbol of the status quo. Rather than just criticize the event, however, Yaw became involved and encouraged others to volunteer in order to change the pageant and the Chinese New Year festival. *East West* editors applauded these efforts, pointing out that "as presently arranged, most of the New Year activities are organized by and for only a small segment of the community. Changes are needed

to involve the young and those in the middle years, as well as the elderly, with meaningful activities."[32]

The involvement of younger people altered some of the content of the New Year festival. Through the lobbying efforts of Chinatown youth organizations, the CCC consented to include a community-sponsored Street Fair as part of the celebration in 1969. Rather than having a "traditional carnival organized by professional concessionaires," members of thirty youth organizations came together to create a street fair to raise funds for community services. The events, which included a run through Chinatown, ping-pong tournaments, cooking and shadow boxing demonstrations, were intended to "inform the public about Chinese culture, history and tradition" as well as to involve community members in recreational social activities. The organizers of the Street Fair wanted to use Chinese New Year to benefit the community directly. Beauty pageant contestants also demonstrated a growing consciousness about the need for social service. While pageant queens previously helped to raise funds and generate publicity about community projects, such as playgrounds for children, contestants in the 1970s also expressed career ambitions to serve the community. As one 1974 entrant explained, her life goal was "to be a social worker."[33]

In addition to emphasizing community service in the New Year festivities, the new generation of organizers and participants also sought to alter the cultural content of the events. Sensitive to charges that the festival projected an artificial tourist-oriented version of Chinese culture, organizers sought to revitalize the image of the celebration. For example, David Lei, one of the younger generation of organizers, traveled to Taiwan to research Chinese culture and purchase artifacts. To encourage tourists to look beyond "the old 'chop suey image' where people have a very superficial idea of what's Chinese culture," he "included a block-long bridal procession of the Han period" in the 1977 parade. Organizers of the beauty pageant also sought to incorporate Chinese culture into the event. One year, pageant organizer Louella Leon scripted the pageant in the form of a Chinese opera. The demographic changes in the Chinese American population also helped revitalize cultural aspects of the pageant. As immigrants from Hong Kong and Taiwan entered the pageant, contestants demonstrated greater knowledge and familiarity with Chinese language and culture.[34]

In addition to promoting community service and cultural education, younger pageant supporters also expressed their commitment to women's accomplishments. Like contemporary women's rights activists, they emphasized the importance of "sisterhood," women's achievements in the public realm, and sexual liberation. Almost all the contestants explained that their desire to meet other Chinese women constituted an important motivation for their decisions to enter the pageant. Jennifer Chung, a 1967 contestant, expressed her hope for "everlasting friends[hip]" with the other contestants. In their parting statements, Miss Chinatowns frequently invoked the rhetoric of female friendships. These expressions of "sisterhood" may not have reflected real experiences. When asked if she had developed any close friendships with other contestants, Chung admitted that her busy schedule preparing for the pageant did not allow her time to do so. Competition among contestants and the unequal treatment of winners and losers after the pageant presented obstacles as well. Despite the unevenness of women's relationships with one another, the use of rhetoric emphasizing female

bonding suggests that pageant supporters viewed sisterhood as an important value that helped to justify the competition.[35]

Whatever the obstacles to female friendships, the beauty competition promoted female achievements according to organizers. Participating in the Miss Chinatown U.S.A. beauty pageant provided contestants with an opportunity to acquire poise, grace, confidence, and public-speaking experience. These skills provided an important foundation for activities in the public realm. As one community member remarked, the pageant "gives Chinese girls an opportunity to meet people and get into things. Too many of them sit at home and don't do anything." In fact, many contestants viewed the pageant as a steppingstone to other challenges. In contrast to late 1960s' contestants, who prioritized marriage over their careers, the 1970s' contestants mainly discussed their future work plans or else emphasized the compatibility of marriage with careers. Jeannie Fung, Miss Chinatown U.S.A. 1975, expressed her desire to "be a medical technician and eventually to teach in junior college." Arleen Chow, a 1972 contestant, discussed the complementary roles of worker and mother. She believed that "a girl can do a man's job, mentally and physically, if trained properly.... The wife should be both a parent and a supporter." For these contestants, participation in the pageant did not conflict with goals for women's social equality. Many contestants explained that they supported women's liberation to the extent that they believed in equal access to jobs and in "equal pay for equal jobs." In fact, the description of pageant contestants as "intelligent, ambitious, and mature women" matched the image of "modern" career women.[36]

Perhaps in response to feminist criticisms, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce also began to promote female leadership among pageant organizers. Although women had always participated in organizing the pageant, the leadership positions had previously been male-dominated. In 1974, the CCC selected Carolyn Gan as the first female editor-in-chief for the annual souvenir book. In 1979, a woman was elected to the CCC board of directors. The all female fashion show committee also made some adjustments in 1976 that appeared to respond to feminist critiques. In the midst of community debates about the exploitation of women, the fashion committee decided to include male models and men's fashions in the traditionally all female fashion show. While these changes could be interpreted as responses to the growing criticisms of the pageant, their limited nature also demonstrate the difficulty of fundamentally changing the pageant or the CCC. The numbers of women in recognized leadership roles remained small, while the inclusion of male models and fashions occurred for only one year.

In addition to these attempts to integrate the leadership and content of the pageant, some proponents further claimed that their support for sexual liberation demonstrated their commitment to women's equality. In 1974, the fashion show committee included a "feminist fashion" selection that emphasized revealing clothing. One of the "Women's Lib" outfits was described as "a black full-length evening gown with neckline in back swooping to the waist." Others associated female activists with wearing mini-skirts. These interpretations of "feminism" emphasized women's willingness to express their sexual desirability in shocking ways. Ironically, this emphasis on physical exposure reinforced the objectification of female bodies that feminists criticized. For example, 1972 contestant Patricia

Moy decided to give a speech on free love as her talent presentation. She argued that:

> a) No one objects to free love, love meaning everything excluding the physical act of sex, which can be considered love. . . .
> b) Virginity shouldn't be a prerequisite for marriage.
> c) Homosexuality is not necessarily "bad" as society has always labeled it.

The main points of her speech coincided with developing feminist critiques of socially constructed heterosexual ideals and represented a radical departure from more conservative Chinese notions of sexuality. However, the manner of her presentation during the pageant suggests that she may have reinforced traditional sexual roles for women rather than transcended them. She began her act "by stripping off the top half of her pantsuit to reveal a bikini top, and then proceeded to deliver her original speech on free love, virginity, and homosexuality." Moy's decision to expose her body expressed her sexual freedom but also encouraged audience "gawkers" to view her as a sexual object.[37]

This relationship between increased sexual freedom and sexual exposure offers one explanation for the introduction of the swimsuit component to the Miss Chinatown U.S.A. beauty pageant. When the competition first began in 1958, organizers prided themselves for not having their contestants parade around in bathing suits. However, organizers introduced a "playsuit" portion in 1962, in which contestants displayed themselves in short-skirt outfits. In 1967, the bathing suit replaced the playsuit. One organizer claimed that the new requirement responded to the contestants' interest in displaying their beauty through wearing swimsuits. Although this explanation is not confirmed by other sources, his comment suggests that arguments for sexual liberation may have been used to justify sexual exploitation.[38]

During the 1960s and 1970s, pageant participants and supporters responded to critics both by disagreeing with them and by expressing their own commitments to gender and racial equality. The ability of pageant organizers to use the same concepts to refer to different strategies demonstrates the tensions within movements promoting social equality. By emphasizing the importance of individual role models to inspire Chinese Americans, women, and members of the working class, pageant supporters negated arguments calling for systemic structural changes. By stressing the importance of promoting beautiful images for Chinese Americans because of racial discrimination, pageant defenders downplayed the danger of encouraging women to use their physical appearance to gain social acceptance. Their arguments reveal the multiple and often contradictory strategies that could be used to advance racial and gender equality.

The Modern Chinese and Chinese American Woman

The debates surrounding the Miss Chinatown U.S.A. and Chinese New Year festival demonstrate the complex struggles to define Chinese American identity through gender images. The intensity of criticisms against the pageant coincided with the degree of community conflict surrounding issues of ethnic representation and gender roles, as well as class divisions and international allegiances.

During the Cold War, organizers of the Miss Chinatown U.S.A. beauty pageant successfully balanced tensions within the Chinese American community. By representing the Chinese community as a blend of the East and West, sponsors were able to address growing generational and cultural conflicts at a time when Chinese Americans sought to integrate into the broader community while also maintaining their cultural values. This conception of Chinese American identity as embodied by Miss Chinatown also served cultural, economic, and political purposes in the community's relationship with the broader society. However, as social movements of the 1960s raised fundamental critiques of the existing racial, sexual, and economic hierarchies, the Miss Chinatown pageant also came under attack. Pageant and festival supporters disagreed fundamentally with their critics on the importance of tourism, the evaluation of women based on physical standards, and the role of the ROC in the pageant. However, a new generation of organizers did reform certain aspects of the pageant in response to the criticisms. By emphasizing the importance of individual role models, pageant organizers justified the pageant as a means to promote gender and ethnic equality.

While the overt conflict surrounding the pageant decreased in the 1980s with the decline of radical social movements, the process of negotiating gender and ethnic identity continues both internationally and domestically. Both the PRC's changing attitudes towards commercial images of women and the motivations of Miss Chinatown U.S.A. contestants in the 1980s demonstrate the ambiguous benefits of beauty pageants.

With the normalization of relations between Communist China and the U.S. in 1979, political pressure was placed on CCC leaders to lessen its pro-Taiwan stance and extend a hand of welcome to the PRC. Pageant and festival supporters did so reluctantly. In the 1979 Chinese New Year Parade, Chinese school marching bands and an airline sponsor of the Miss Chinatown U.S.A. beauty pageant displayed the Nationalist flag, even after Mayor Dianne Feinstein asked for assurances from organizers that this would not occur. In 1980, after Feinstein applied political pressure, the CCC reluctantly issued a last-minute invitation to the envoy of the PRC and then quickly withdrew the invitation to both the communist and the nationalist representatives. Pageant organizers chose to distance themselves from both countries rather than be forced to extend friendship to Communist China.

Despite the reluctance of the CCC to establish relations with the PRC, China was shifting its public image to accommodate the political, economic, and social changes that occurred following the Cultural Revolution. Ironically, even as Chinatown radicals promoted Third World socialist role models of working and revolutionary women, the PRC was commercializing the image of women to promote economic development and trade with the West. According to historians Emily Honig and Gail Hershatter, "adornment and sexuality, topics that had been off-limits to the generation of the Cultural Revolution, dominated publications for young women in the 1980s. Attention to beauty and fashion was part of a growing concern with the quality of personal life, and clearly captured the public fancy." Some state-owned businesses in China began instituting beauty requirements to hire women for service jobs. Beauty pageants reportedly have become very popular throughout China. Ironically, the living Chinese culture

that community radicals promoted was evolving to adopt Western practices of commodifying women's beauty.[39]

Just as Communist China recognized the commercial uses of women's bodies in promoting their national economy, Chinese American women in the 1980s and 1990s continued to use the pageant as a means for personal and community advancement. According to filmmaker Valerie Soe, Miss Chinatown 1984 Cynthia Gouw first entered the Los Angeles pageant as part of an undercover reporting assignment for a school newspaper. Gouw was supposed to "expose the contest from a feminist, leftist, socialist point of view ... [and uncover] the oppression of Asian American women." However, after Gouw won the Miss L.A. and then the Miss Chinatown U.S.A. titles, she decided not to criticize the event. Gouw argued that there was no contradiction between the pageant and her feminist and political beliefs:

> I didn't feel exploited at all.... I want to show people that I can be very articulate and assertive as opposed to a stereotypical beauty pageant winner.... What I want to represent to the Asian population is that I am very concerned about the community.

Gouw suggests that her personal advancement reflected upon the entire community, because groups who have traditionally been disadvantaged, women as well as racial minorities, need role models and spokespersons. After she won Miss Chinatown U.S.A., Gouw entered and won the Spokesmodel competition for Star Search. Since then, she has appeared in films and TV commercials and worked as a news reporter. For her, the pageant opened up numerous opportunities, allowing her to achieve, in the words of Valerie Soe, the "American Dream." The question of whether Gouw in fact transcended stereotypes of Chinese American women, or merely benefited from perpetuating them, remains unanswered.[40]

The history of the Miss Chinatown U.S.A. pageant, from the early years of success through the years of controversy, demonstrates how idealized roles of womanhood represent broader concerns about power. Activists of the late 1960s and 1970s, like commercial leaders of the late 1950s, recognized the significance of gender roles in defining the identity of a community. The intensity of their debates about the pageant reflected a contest over ethnic and gender identity as well as international politics and class relations. The persistent success of the Miss Chinatown U.S.A. beauty pageant into the 1980s and 1990s suggests its unique ability to reconcile conflicting impulses within the Chinese American community. The competition continues to provide a means for exceptional Chinese American women to use their physical appearance and personality skills to achieve recognition within the existing commercialized society. The cultural event promotes recognition of disadvantaged groups without threatening the fundamental American values of individualism and meritocracy. The continued popularity of the pageant combined with the decrease in vocal opposition suggests the decline of alternative strategies that advocate structural change and group-based solutions to achieve gender and racial equality.

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ENDNOTES

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1. *Miss Chinatown U.S.A. Pageant Program*, 21–22–23 February 1958; "June Chin," *California Living Magazine*, 17 February 1985, p. 9; The overall Chinese American population in 1960 was 237,292. Of the 29,000 Chinese living in San Francisco in 1960, 18,000 lived in Chinatown.

2. Although the pageant held symbolic value for Chinese American communities throughout the country, I focus on San Francisco and Bay Area responses to the competition as a part of the annual Chinese New Year celebration. On the one hand, San Francisco's Chinatown could be considered unique because of its large Chinese population, its historical relationship with the Nationalist Republic of China, and its exposure to local social movements. On the other hand, the tensions in San Francisco's community, the unofficial capital of American Chinatowns, were often representative of the conflicts in other Chinese American communities.

3. The main newspapers used for research include: *East West*, *San Francisco Journal*, and *Getting Together*, all bilingual Chinese American publications based in San Francisco's Chinatown; *Chinatown News*, a Chinese Canadian publication based in Vancouver, B.C.; *Asian Week*, an Asian American publication based in San Francisco; and the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Because of my limited Chinese reading skills, I was not able to access systematically Chinese language materials. Consequently, the experiences and perspectives of Chinese Americans who felt more comfortable expressing themselves in Chinese will not be represented as well as those who wrote in English. The perspectives of the former are not less valuable, but are nevertheless not accessible to me at this point. Fortunately, the staff of the bilingual newspapers did publish translations of some Chinese articles on the Miss Chinatown U.S.A. beauty pageant.

4. Colleen Ballerino Cohen, Richard Wilk, Beverly Stoeltje, eds., *Beauty Queens on the Global Stage: Gender, Contests, and Power* (New York, 1996), p. 2. This collection examines a variety of beauty contests throughout the world for their significance concerning not only gender roles but also ethnic, class and national identity formation. Prior to the publication of this collection, most scholars of beauty contests tended to focus on the Miss America pageant, which involves predominantly white contestants. See Frank Deford, *There She Is* (New York, 1971), A. R. Riverol, *Live From Atlantic City* (Bowling Green, OH, 1992), and Lois W. Banner, *American Beauty* (New York, 1983). A few scholars have analyzed state or local beauty pageants and their significance in terms of community representation. See Frank Deford, "Beauty and Everlasting Faith at the Local Level," *Audience 1971* 1:5, p. 56–72; Geoffrey Dunn and Mark Schwartz, directors, *Miss … or Myth?* (Distributors: Cinema Guild, 1986), film; Robert Lavenda, "Minnesota Queen Pageants: Play, Fun, and Dead Seriousness in a Festive Mood," *Journal of American Folklore* 101:400 (1988): 68–175.

For the most part, scholars of Chinese American women have not analyzed the Miss Chinatown U.S.A. beauty pageant. Their studies tend to focus on the emergence of women from the private realm of family concerns to the public realm of political organizing and work. See Huping Ling, "Surviving on the Gold Mountain: Chinese American Women and Their Lives," (Ph.D. dissertation, Miami University, 1991); Stacey G. H. Yap, *Gather Your Strength, Sisters: The Emerging Role of Chinese Women Community Workers* (New York, 1989); and Judy Yung, *Unbound Feet: A Social History of Chinese Women in San*

Francisco (Berkeley, 1995). One exception is Judy Yung's paper entitled, "Miss Chinatown USA and the Representation of Beauty." She presented it at the 1992 Association for Asian American Studies National Conference in San Jose, but it is not available to the public at this time.

5. The title for this section is quoted from James H. Loo, "Who are the Chinese?" *San Francisco Chinatown On Parade* (San Francisco, 1961), pp. 6–7.

Beginning in the 1910s, San Francisco's Chinatown organizations sporadically sponsored community pageants as fundraisers for social services, such as the Chinese Hospital. In 1948, various merchant, family, and civic organizations initiated an annual Miss Chinatown pageant. Inspired by the earlier tradition of fundraising, the winners were determined by the contestants' ability to sell raffle tickets to benefit a social cause. H. K. Wong is credited with proposing the joint sponsorship of the beauty contest and the public celebration of the Chinese New Year festival in 1953. In the late 1950s, the CCC altered the format of the pageant so that a panel of judges selected winners based on such criteria as beauty, personality, and poise. Lim P. Lee, "The Chinese New Year Festival," *Asian Week*, 5 February 1981, p. 4, and "The Chinese New Year Festival II," *Asian Week*, 12 February 1981, [p. 2]; H. K. Wong, "Miss Chinatown USA Pageant," *San Francisco Chinese New Year Festival*, Souvenir Program, 4–7 February 1960; Alice Lowe, "Concealing-Yet Revealing," *San Francisco Chinatown On Parade*, pp. 26–27.

6. Julie Smith, "A Little Tiff At the Chinese New Year," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 18 February 1977, p. 2; the proportions of Chinese American in the labor force exceeded those for white women during the decade of the 1940s. Whereas 39.5 percent of white women worked for pay compared to 22.3 percent of Chinese women in 1940, 30.8 percent of Chinese women compared to 28.1 percent of white women worked in 1950. In 1960, 44.2 percent of Chinese women worked in the labor force compared to only 36.0 percent of white women. The gap in labor participation between the two groups continued to increase. Huping Ling, "Surviving on the Gold Mountain: Chinese American Women and Their Lives," pp. 134–135.

Following the War, the Miss America pageant increasingly gained popularity, culminating in its first national televised broadcast in 1954. Whereas previous pageants held significance mainly for the local audience of Atlantic City, television made the event a truly national one so that by 1959, every state was finally represented at the "Miss America" pageant. A. R. Riverol, *Live From Atlantic City*, p. 56.

7. "June Chin," *California Living Magazine*; Donald Canter, "In New Year of the Boar: Chinatown 'Moves West,'" 9 February 1959, clipping from Chinese Historical Society, San Francisco, Box 3, folder 16. The collection is located at the Asian American Studies Library of the University of California, Berkeley. Hereafter cited as CHS-SF.

8. Lim P. Lee, "The Chinese New Year Festival," *Asian Week*, 5 February 1981, p. 4.

9. Pageant souvenir booklets regularly included informational pieces explaining Chinese culture to audiences unfamiliar with the community.

Victor and Brett de Bary Nee use the terms "bachelor society" and "family society" to characterize the evolution of the San Francisco's Chinatown community; see *Longtime Californ': A Documentary Study of an American Chinatown* (Stanford, 1972). The development of the beauty pageant coincided with the balancing of sex ratios among Chinese Americans. In 1890, when the Chinese population reached a 19th-century peak of 107,488 in the U.S., men outnumbered women 26.8 to 1. Due to the combined influence of natural birth rates and immigration, the sex ratio became 1.3 to 1 by 1960. (Huping Ling, "Surviving on the Gold Mountain," p. 127.) For further discussions of Chinese American family and community life in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, see Peggy Pascoe, "Gender Systems in Conflict: The Marriages of Mission-Educated Chinese American Women, 1874–1939," in *Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader in U.S. Women's History*, ed. by Ellen Carol DuBois and Vicki L. Ruiz (New York, 1990)

and Sucheng Chan, "The Exclusion of Chinese Women,, 1870–1943," in *Entry Denied: Exclusion and the Chinese Community in America, 1882–1943* (Philadelphia, 1991).

Lyrics to "Miss Chinatown" by Charles L. Leong and Kenneth Lee, 1964, published in *Miss Chinatown U.S.A.: Chinese New Year Festival Souvenir Program*, 1975. Robert H. Lavenda makes a similar argument that contestants of community pageants tend to represent "the community's daughters." Lavenda, "Minnesota Queen Pageants: Play, Fun, and Dead Seriousness in a Festive Mode," *Journal of American Folklore* 101 (1988), p. 169. Daisy Chinn, "Women of Initiative," *San Francisco Chinatown On Parade*, p. 64.

10. For an examination of how international relations influence portrayals of Asian Americans in popular culture, see *Slaying the Dragon*, directed by Deborah Gee (San Francisco: NAATA/Cross Current Media, 1987). In the late 1950s, C. Y. Lee's *Flower Drum Song* (New York, 1957) a love story about intergenerational and cultural tensions set in San Francisco's Chinatown, became a best-seller. Rodgers and Hammerstein subsequently turned the book first into a Broadway musical hit and then into a motion picture, leading Hollywood and Broadway to declare 1959 the "year of the Oriental." Chinatown organizers cashed in on the publicity by honoring and promoting the author of the book during the New Year festivals in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

As part of the city's efforts to promote the Miss Chinatown U.S.A. beauty pageant and the Chinese New Year Festival, mayors, police commissioners, and supervisors regularly appeared in the annual parade. Politicians and their wives served as judges for the pageant, and in 1963 the San Francisco Convention and Visitors Bureau became a co-sponsor of the festival. "To Rival Mardi Gras? Mayor Urges Big Chinatown Festival," 24 January 1957, CHS-SF, Box 3, folder 16; Arthur Hoppe, "Festival Overture, Opus I: Montgomery St. Hails Chinese New Year," clipping from CHS-SSF, Box 3, folder 15.

11. Donald Canter, "Speech," Chinese Historical Society of America, 1965, CHS-SF, box 3, folder 27.

12. T. Kong Lee, President, Chinese Chamber of Commerce, "Welcome to Chinatown," *San Francisco Chinatown On Parade*, p. 2.

13. James H. Loo, "Who are the Chinese?" *San Francisco Chinatown On Parade*, pp. 6–7; W. K. Wong, "Interview," *Longtime Californ'*, pp. 244–245.

14. *San Francisco Chinatown Souvenir Annual*, 1962.

15. H. K. Wong, "Concept of Beauty," *San Francisco Chinatown On Parade*, p. 79; Evelyn S. Rawski, "Ch'ing Imperial Marriage and Problems of Rulership," in *Marriage and Inequality in Chinese Society*, ed. by Rubie S. Watson and Patricia Buckley Ebrey (Berkeley, 1991), p. 180; Although pageant organizers argued that the beauty pageant drew inspiration from Chinese as well as American cultural practice, scholars attribute the growing popularity of beauty pageants in Asian countries following World War II to the commercialization and Westernization of those countries. Corporations in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, the Philippines, and Southeast Asia increasingly sponsored pageants as a way to help advertise their products and to promote tourism. Some scholars further suggest that businesses "actively promote[d] Western-style sexual objectification as a means of insuring employee loyalty" by channeling the energy of female workers towards self-beautification through purchasing commodities. Barbara Ehrenreich and Annette Fuentes, "Life on the Global Assembly Line," *Feminist Frameworks*, ed. by Alison M. Jaggar and Paula S. Rothenberg (New York, 1984), p. 285.

16. David Lei, Telephone Interview, San Francisco, 23 November 1993; Shirley Sun, "Jumbo Banana Split Proves Too Much for Beautiful May Chiang," *East West*, 21 February 1967, p. 5.

17. In 1971, 41 percent of Chinatown's population fell below the federally defined poverty level partly because of the low wages paid to immigrant workers. Immigrant men

commonly found service jobs, such as waiters, and tended to work "ten hours a day, six days a week, for wages that average from $350 to an occasional high of $700 a month." Immigrant women usually worked as garment workers, receiving pay not by the hour but by the piece. These low wages as well as the lack of cultural familiarity made it unlikely that immigrant families would move out of Chinatown, despite the fact that 77 percent of the housing was considered substandard by city codes. In 1970, the population density of the community was the second highest in the country with 120 to 180 persons per acre. These crowded conditions created enormous health risks as demonstrated by the fact that Chinatown had the highest tuberculosis and suicide rates in the nation. To service its population of over forty thousand people, Chinatown had only one hospital with sixty beds. Nee, *Longtime Californ'*, pp. xxi–xxv.

18. "The Most Visible Event," *East West*, 14 February 1973, p. 2; George Chu, "A Wild Night in Old Chinatown," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 9 March 1969, pp. 18, 21. The racial tensions between Chinatown residents and white tourists and police officers were not necessarily new. However, the growing numbers of Chinese American youth as a result of immigration and the increased awareness of racial injustice during the 1960s raised the volatility of inter-group contact.

19. "Liberate Holiday Inn," *Getting Together*, February 1971, p. 2; Jade Fong, "The CHI-am Corner," *East West*, 3 February 1971, p. 3.

20. Sara Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York, 1979), p. 214, and "No More Miss America! August 1968," in *Sisterhood Is Powerful*, ed. by Robin Morgan (New York, 1970), pp. 521–524.

21. "A Queen for the Year of the Canine," *East West*, 10 December 1969, p. 1; Ben Wong-Torres, "Miss Chinatown—a Few Immodest Proposals," *East West*, 11 March 1967, p. 3; Judy Yung wrote under the pen name, Jade Fong, "The CHI-am Corner," *East West*, 1 March 1972, p. 3; Mabel Ng, "The Chinatown Pageant ... A Miscarriage of Grace," *East West*, 30 January 1974, p. 10; Wei Chih, "Queen Contestants," translated from the *Chinese Pacific Weekly*, 16 January 1975, printed in *East West*, 22 January 1975, p. 2; Curtis Choy, *The Year of the Ox: The 1973 Livestock Show* (Oakland, 1985).

22. Lisa Fangonilo, quoted in "What Do You Think about the Miss Chinatown USA Beauty Contest?" *East West*, 27 January 1971, p. 9; Pam Lee, "Letter to the Editor," *East West*, 15 April 1970, p. 2.

23. Louella Leon, conversation with author. As of 1987, "the average height of Miss Chinatown U.S.A. winners is 5 feet 5.3 inches." *Miss Chinatown U.S.A. Pageant Souvenir Program*, 1987; Paul Hui, "Alice Kong Also Ran ... ," *East West*, 20 February 1974, p. 5; Curtis Choy, *The Year of the Ox*; "Oriental Eyes Get Western Look," *Chinatown News*, 3 December 1969, p. 4.

The 1970 Miss Chinatown U.S.A. beauty pageant souvenir book carried an advertisement for cosmetic surgery by a Dr. David Wang, who invented a special technique for converting "'oriental eyes' with single eyelids into 'Caucasian eyes' (with double-eyelids)." Wang developed this technique through experiments done on volunteers who tended to be female "movie actresses, singing stars and participants in beauty contests." "Dr. David Wang—Face-Lifting Surgeon," *Chinatown News*, 18 December 1969, pp. 10–15.

24. The experiences of Nathele Sue Dong, reported in a promotion piece for the pageant, demonstrate the importance of cosmetics for helping contestants compete successfully. When Dong decided to run for the Miss Chinatown U.S.A. pageant in 1961, one of her supporters encouraged her to seek the advice of Helen Lew, the director of the Patricia Stevens modeling agency. Lew taught Dong the importance of cosmetics, clothing, jewelry, and hair-styling for creating the image of a beauty pageant contestant:

> Helen told the girl the only reason her face was shiny was because she'd never worn make-up, corrected it with a color that blends with Nathele's skin. Two pencil strokes and Nathele's eyebrows were intriguingly accentuated and slightly higher; a green Chinese dress (because green is very becoming with the Oriental skin) brought out the red pigment in her face. Nathele's first pair of earrings (rhinestone drops) a visit to the hairdresser (her hair shaped in closer) and you can see for yourself how Nathele has acquired the poise, personality and good looks required of a candidate for Miss Chinatown USA. ("They Look Twice Now," *San Francisco News-Call Bulletin*, 17 February 1961 CHS-SF, box 3, folder 20.)

One Miss Chinatown contestant reportedly had a face lift operation prior to the pageant. (Manchester Fu, "Manny and the Celestial 5," *East West*, 21 January 1970, p. 3); Many observers noted the disappointment of candidates who did not win a title in the pageant. Ronda Wei Jeyn-Ching, Miss Chinatown 1980, commented that "many young girls develop a poor self-image after failing to win a pageant title." ("A Parting Queen's Reflections," *Asian Week*, 26 February 1981). This feeling of inferiority partly arose from their failure to fulfill the expectations of parents and sponsors. Pageant organizer Louella "Lulu" Leon recalled that one contestant who did not win a title began crying backstage. She became even more traumatized when her mother yelled at her for making mistakes and not presenting herself in the best light during the competition. Because of what occurred, organizers decided to ban family members from backstage areas of the pageant. (Louella Leon communicated this incident regarding the contestant who lost in a conversation with me.)

Celeste Wong (pseudonym), Interview, San Francisco, 8 December 1993; Wong had lied about her age to enter the Miss Chinatown U.S.A. beauty pageant, which required contestants to be between the ages of 17 and 26.

25. Pamela Tau, *East West*, 3 February 1971, p. 5; Pam Lee, "Letter to the Editor," *East West*, 15 April 1970, p. 2; "Reflections on Chinese New Year—2 Views," *Getting Together*, 3–16 February 1973, p. 3.

26. Emily Honig and Gail Hershatter, *Personal Voices: Chinese Women in the 1980s*, (Stanford, 1988), p. 24; "Public Invited to Spring Festival Celebration," *San Francisco Journal*, 9 February 1977.

27. Stan Yee, "Notes of a Chinese Bum on Holiday Inn," *East West*, 20 January 1971, p. 2.

28. Ann F. Nakao, "A Hard Look: The Fires behind Chinatown's Parade," *San Francisco Examiner*, 15 February 1977, p. 8; Carole Jan Lee, "Carole's Barrel," *East West*, 18 February 1970.

29. Cynthia Denise Chin-Lee, Telephone Interview, Palo Alto, 20 February 1994; Rose Chung, Telephone Interview, San Francisco, 2 December 1993.

30. John Lum, "The Miss San Leandro Contest: There's No Point to It," *East West*, 17 May 1972, p. 6; Y. C. Hong, a judge for the 1965 competition, explained that if he had a daughter, he would not wish her to enter the contest because he sympathized "with the heartaches of many beautiful girls who failed to get within the 'magic circle' and the disappointments of their parents and sponsors." Despite these reservations, he applauded the contestants for entering the competition and demonstrating the positive aspects of Chinese American culture. He believed that "it is a good thing for our Chinese in showing the peoples of the world that we do have many beautiful and talented Chinese girls from all parts of the country." Y. C. Hong, "Letter to the Editor," *East West*, 21 March 1967, p. 2.

31. Irene Ung, "Irene Ung Satisfied with Simple Things in Life," *East West*, 21 February 1967, p. 7; "Interviews with Two Bay Area Beauty Pageant Contestants," *East West*, 4 February 1976, p. 11; Doris G. Worsham, "There is a 'There' for Her," *Oakland Tribune*,

17 February 1973; clipping found in "Beauty Contests-CA" folder at UC Berkely's Asian American Studies Library.

32. Gordon Yaw, Telephone Interview, Oakland, 7 February 1994; "Consider the Alternatives," *East West*, 30 January 1974, p. 2.

33. "Only a 'Fair' Fair," *East West*, 19 March 1969, p. 2; Katie Choy, "E-W interviews 'Miss Chinatown' Contestants," *East West*, 23 January 1974, p. 6.

34. Nakao, "A Hard Look," pp. 1, 6.

35. Shirley Sun, "Tall & Lissome Jennifer Chung Fulfills Her Childhood Dream," *East West*, 21 February 1967, p. 6. Thanking the other contestants, Miss Chinatown U.S.A. 1976 Linda Chun wrote that we "are all dear friends and I shall cherish our moments together always." Linda Sue Kwai En Chun, "Reflections," *Chinatown San Francisco*, Souvenir Program, 1977, p. 42; Celeste Wong recalled that after she won the title of Miss San Francisco Chinatown, her fellow contestants were not as friendly towards her. Celeste Wong, Interview.

36. Melanie Feng, "What Do You Think about the Miss Chinatown USA Beauty Contest?" *East West*, 27 January 1971, p. 4; Katie Choy and Paul K. Hui, "3 Beauties Interviewed," *East West*, 22 January 1975, p. 5; Judy Quan, "Three Queen Contestants: the Person Behind the Face," *East West*, 16 February 1972, p. 7; Worsham, "There is a 'There' for Her"; Fang Wei Lyan, "Under Those Plastic Smiles," *East West*, 21 January 1967, pp. 1–2.

In some cases, the pageant provided more opportunities for women to gain exposure to certain public sectors. Women interested in modeling, movie, or public relations careers viewed the pageant as a good way to gain recognition. After winning the Miss Chinatown U.S.A. title, Sandra Wong auditioned for a movie role opposite Clint Eastwood. Contestants who won trips to Asia gained some exposure to international politics by meeting such dignitaries as ROC President Chiang Kai-shek. Contestants might also learn about international finance, for the Chinese Chamber of Commerce used these "goodwill tours" to build trade relations with Taiwan, Hong Kong, and other Asian countries. The participation of recognizable national and state politicians, such as Anne Chennault and March K. Wong, as pageant judges also provided models of successful Chinese American women who transcended traditional female roles. In other words, pageant supporters argued that they, like their feminist critics, sought to promote female achievements in the public realm.

37. Mary Jew, "Fantastic Turnout at Fashion Show," *East West*, 13 February 1974, p. 5; "Come Alive," Editorial, *East West* 28 August 1968, p. 2; Judy Quan, "Three Queen Contestants: The Person Behind the Face," *East West*, 16 February 1972, p. 7. Moy did not win the pageant; Wally Lee, "Wahine Stewardess Miss Chinatown USA," *East West*, 23 February 1972, pp. 1–10.

38. Hing C. Tse, Interview, San Francisco, 12 November 1993.

39. Honig and Hershatter, *Personal Voices: Chinese Women in the 1980s*, p. 335; "China Wants Good-Looking Stewardesses," *Chinatown News*, 18 January 1980, reprint from *New York Times*.

40. Cynsin: *An American Princess*, video by Valerie Soe, 1991; Lorena Tong, "Miss Chinatown Cynthia Gouw Insists She Is Not the 'Beauty Pageant' Type," *East West*, 5 December 1984, p. 8.