



Marginalised, Invisible and Forgotten: An Exploration of Asian American Historiography

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This essay explores the historiography of Asian American history and the way historians have approached and written about these histories. What makes this area of history worthy of historiographical analysis is that American history and American academics have historically ignored and excluded the study of Asian American narratives, thereby resulting in a lack of information and data in this area.¹ Thus, Asian American history is interesting for historiographical analysis because the politics of representation and re-piecing together forgotten histories paves way for my essay to explore how historians have approached this field in ways that are engaging, urgent and refreshing.

Firstly, I analyse Ronald Takaki's book *Strangers from a Different Shore* and the way he examines Asian American history through an ethnographic lens, which I argue provides a strong sense of intimacy and recognition for Takaki's subjects. Also, I argue that Takaki's source is inescapably political because he critiques the ways history as a discipline omits marginal groups and voices.² Secondly, I explore Gary Okihiro's *Margins and Mainstreams: Asians in American History and Culture* and how he adopts a similar approach to Takaki in that he moves beyond "dates, act, and names" in order to make his histories and writing both personal and urgent.³ Importantly too, Okihiro also critiques how the writing of Asian American history is commonly preoccupied with "Chinese and Japanese immigrants, heterosexual men who laboured in California from the mid-nineteenth century".⁴ The latter point shows how Okihiro moves beyond Takaki whose source primarily focuses on these aforementioned male labourers. Thirdly, I briefly examine Roger Daniels' book *Asian America: Chinese and Japanese in the United States since 1850* and discuss how his more detached and quantitative approach differs considerably from both Takaki and Okihiro. Additionally, I will

¹ Sucheng Chan, "The Changing Contours of Asian-American Historiography," *Rethinking History* 11, no. 1 (2007), 125.

² Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1998), 4.

³ Gary Y. Okihiro, *Margins and Mainstreams: Asians in American History and Culture* (University of Washington: University of Washington Press, 1994), 93.

⁴ Okihiro, *Margins*, xiv.

also briefly examine how Daniels critiques the ways other people have represented Asians in academia.

Indeed, the historiographical issues of Asian American history is further problematised by the relatively adolescent nature of this discipline in that limited scholars, sources, and funding in the field means that academics can face unique challenges when they are approaching the study of Asian American histories.⁵ Ultimately, I will show that the approaches these historians use to conduct their research and findings are valid. Furthermore, the histories they present are significant in capturing the past and present lives of Asian Americans, and these historians have preserved and published narratives that were on the cusp of disappearing not a long while ago.

Ronald Takaki: *Strangers from a Different Shore*

Ronald Takaki's *Strangers* documents the history of Asian immigrants and Asian-born Americans and the ways that 'mainstream' America treated these groups of people. Takaki's source is unique and revealing in the way he gathers his historical data not just through documents, statistics or traditional primary sources, but through an ethnographic approach that predominantly incorporates personal interviews and memory.⁶ Where Takaki is unable to find individual interviews for his research, he still locates and carefully selects other sources such as personal interviews and oral histories. For instance, his study of Korean American labour in a fruit farm in Sacramento, California during the 1910s is mostly composed via personal recounts.⁷ Takaki includes how a Korean farmer recounted his day:

“Waking up at five o'clock, they ate breakfast and then... ‘They told you where to...work in the fields,’ a Korean worker recalled... ‘If you picked grapes you had to be careful...because black widow spiders and yellow-jacket hornets were all over the grapevines.’ Workers were often stung. ‘As soon as I was stung by yellow-jackets I used to make mud-packs and place them on the wound’ ...As the sun rose, it became very hot and dry... ‘The day starts out around seventy degrees and by noontime the temperature reaches around a hundred and ten degrees...no breeze whatsoever...’”⁸

“‘Most of us took our lunch which consisted of rice, kimchi, and maybe some beef. Each of us picked our own tree and ate under the shade and after...we took a short nap.’ At one o'clock work began again and continued until five. ‘By the end of the day your arms and legs felt very heavy and your back really ached.’ Returning home about six

⁵ Lili M. Kim, “Doing Korean American History in the Twenty-First Century,” *Journal of Asian American Studies* 11, no. 2 (2008): 200.

⁶ Takaki, *Strangers*, 7.

⁷ Takaki, *Strangers*, 274.

⁸ Takaki, *Strangers*, 274.

o'clock, 'everybody fought to take a bath because...your whole body got covered with dirt from head to toe...'”⁹

Takaki's choice of source not only demonstrates his tendency to lend considerable weight to oral histories. However, the sources he chooses almost have a journal-like quality. He deliberately nominates sources that are not only mere accounts of people's lives in places like farms, but that capture the routine and the mundane quality of day-to-day life.¹⁰ Thus, Takaki's histories and writings are not only ethnographic in their approach, but the way Takaki uses his oral and personal sources allows his history to feel 'lived-in' and microscopic in that his audience is able to readily sympathise with the subjects in his book. Whilst Takaki does incorporate sweeping overviews and statistics that document events in Asian American history,¹¹ his decision to dress his macro, large-scale observations with the inclusion of individual accounts and their day-to-day lives gives his book a very intimate and personalised quality. More specifically, the intimacy created by Takaki is one that allows readers to empathise with Takaki's subjects whilst the ethnographic and detailed description of everyday life allows readers to inhabit and dwell in the history Takaki writes about. This idea is complemented by the historian Gordon H. Chang, who argues that Takaki's work not only discusses the social, political and economic institutions that Asians have encountered in America, but is unique in that it also “describes their life patterns and experiences to convey their hopes and tragedies” to his audience.¹²

However, Takaki is not only providing a unique retelling of Asian American history but uses his historical platform to politicise the history itself by critiquing how history frequently omits the narratives pertaining to Asian Americans.¹³ This idea is immediately established in the preface, where Takaki points out how prominent academics like E.D. Hirsch's *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know* actively erase the stories and histories of many different American groups.¹⁴ Specifically, Takaki notes that whilst Hirsch discusses the history of New York's Ellis Island, a place synonymous with European immigration, he fails to even acknowledge the existence of Angel Island in San Francisco, which was an island where the American government processed the first groups of East Asian immigrants.¹⁵ Takaki suggests that such an “ethnocentric” understanding of “white” and “European” as the definition of an ‘American’ is a result of histories and books that ignore and

⁹ Takaki, *Strangers*, 275.

¹⁰ Takaki, *Strangers*, 275.

¹¹ Takaki, *Strangers*, 6.

¹² Gordon H. Chang, “Asian Americans and the Writing of Their History,” *Radical History Review* 53, no. 1 (1992): 109.

¹³ Takaki, *Strangers*, 3.

¹⁴ Takaki, *Strangers*, xi.

¹⁵ Takaki, *Strangers*, xi.

forget other groups like African Americans, Native Americans, or specifically in this case, Asian Americans.¹⁶

Moreover, Takaki discusses how such ideas played out in his youth when he recounts how his multicultural upbringing in Hawaii abruptly ended when he attended college in America's Midwest where students and academics alike designated him as a "foreign student" and invited him to "dinners for foreign students".¹⁷ Whilst Takaki's experiences occurred before the publication of books like *Cultural Literacy*, it seems that Takaki deliberately places these examples together to demonstrate how pervasive and embedded such ideas are within the American social psyche. Therefore, his study of Asian American history, he suggests, is politicised because it is necessary to use such histories to reframe American conversations around American-ness, discrimination, and privilege.¹⁸ This idea is reinforced by the historian Lisa Sun-Hee Park, who contends that immigrants face consistent doubt about their presence in a so-called "foreign land".¹⁹ Moreover, she notes that children of immigrants continue to face this dilemma, thus highlighting the multi-generational issues around the nature of American-ness and discrimination. Indeed, Takaki argues that the discipline of American history needs to be "re-visioned" to include Asian American narratives, but including these narratives in such a way that consciously documents their stories and "experiences".²⁰ Put simply then, Takaki himself implies that he intends to and believes that this particular history is best approached ethnographically. Thus, his ethnographic approach complements the politicised nature of *Strangers* in that oral histories and personal accounts give Takaki's peripheral subjects faces and voices, whereas a more detached approach would have continued to reduce his subjects to mere facts and faceless figures. Thus, this book shows that the way history is written not only produces a profound effect on how we understand and relate to the people we read about but it also prevents historical erasure. Takaki is able to acknowledge the blind spots of the historical discipline by directly calling out the way history omits, disregards and forgets marginal populations and 'other' narratives.²¹ This notion is best reinforced and summarised by Lili Kim, who writes that scholars of Asian American history have "changed history" itself in the way it brings the marginalised into the forefront.²²

Gary Okihiro: *Margins and Mainstreams: Asians in American History and Culture*

Similar to Takaki, Gary Okihiro's documentation of Asian American history is approached with an ethnographic lens. However, Okihiro's particular ethnographic approach and the

¹⁶ Takaki, *Strangers*, xii.

¹⁷ Takaki, *Strangers*, 3.

¹⁸ Takaki, *Strangers*, 6.

¹⁹ Lisa Sun-Hee Park, "Continuing Significance of the Model Minority Myth: The Second Generation," *Social Justice* 35, no. 2 (2008): 134.

²⁰ Takaki, *Strangers*, 7.

²¹ Takaki, *Strangers*, 7.

²² Kim, "Korean American," 199.

content of *Margins* itself differs to Takaki's work in many ways. Specifically, one difference is the way Okiihiro addresses how traditional Asian American histories are biased toward documenting the stories of Japanese and Chinese male immigrants only, thereby omitting women, other groups of Asian descent, and younger generations.²³ Second, Okiihiro differs from Takaki in that his work commonly links Asian Americans, their experiences and histories with the histories of their 'motherland'.²⁴ In doing so, Okiihiro demonstrates the transcontinental qualities of Asian American experiences and how it is impossible to perceive these histories without appreciating its inherent links with the Asian continent.²⁵ And third, Okiihiro also emphasises the cultural heritage, practices and traditions of his subjects.²⁶ By integrating aspects of Asian American culture, Okiihiro gives his work a sense of cohesiveness and completeness. In other words, his book is not just one concerned with history, but it considers how culture and history is intertwined, making his book a manual that surveys the fullness of Asian American experiences.

A considerable section of *Margins* "re-centres women" into the narratives of Asian American history. Whilst this is a quality that appeals to the discipline of gender history, Okiihiro lends even more weight to issues of gender by approaching it as an intersectional study of gender history.²⁷ Put simply, Okiihiro considers how race, immigration and gender have impacted the experiences and histories of Asian American women. For example, Okiihiro talks about Merle Woo, a prominent figure of Asian American feminism during the 1960s.²⁸ In particular, Okiihiro discusses her life not through his own interpretation and writing, but mostly by only using the writings of Woo, specifically the letters she wrote between her mother and herself. In one letter, Woo noted the intersectionality of her race and gender in defining her identity as an Asian American woman, "now I begin to love myself more, see our potential, and fight for just that kind of social change that will affirm me, my race, my sex, my heritage. And while I affirm myself, Ma, I affirm you".²⁹ She referred to herself not just as a feminist, but as an Asian American feminist and as a "yellow feminist" and she extended her fight against sexism and racism beyond American or Western borders and into the domain of "Third World Women", writing that, "In loving ourselves for who we are—American women of colour—we can make a vision for the future where we are free to fulfil our human potential".³⁰ Indeed, using personal letters, especially those shared between family members, is much more intimate in terms of historical scale, and like Takaki, Okiihiro's approach here moves beyond "dates, act, and names" by being able to attach faces and voices to the people he documents.³¹

²³ Okiihiro, *Margins*, xiv.

²⁴ Okiihiro, *Margins*, 95.

²⁵ Okiihiro, *Margins*, 87.

²⁶ Okiihiro, *Margins*, 113.

²⁷ Okiihiro, *Margins*, 86.

²⁸ Okiihiro, *Margins*, 86.

²⁹ Okiihiro, *Margins*, 86.

³⁰ Okiihiro, *Margins*, 86.

³¹ Okiihiro, *Margins*, 93.

More importantly, however, Okiihiro consciously moves himself away from the spotlight in his approach when he writes about Asian American women. In other words, instead of taking over and completely analysing and writing about these histories and letting his own voice dominate, Okiihiro's main priority seems to be the sources itself. In doing so, the female histories and voices in Okiihiro's book are able to take centre stage. In another example, Okiihiro discusses one of the few Asian American memoirs written by a woman, and the only Korean American memoir written by a woman, that covers the 20th century. Mary Paik Lee's 1990 memoir, *Quiet Odyssey: A Pioneer Korean Woman in America*, is discussed in Okiihiro's book and it sheds light on the complexities of female histories relating to Asian American women.³² Okiihiro spotlights how Lee's source recalls the way white students "formed a ring around" her, hitting her in the neck and spat on her face in school; and other times when churchgoers banned her from entering the church for being a "dirty Jap" (although Lee was of Korean heritage); and instances where people "asked if she were human".³³ Indeed, Okiihiro selected Lee's source to present the confrontational and unpleasant imagery that corrupted the experiences of many Asian Americans living in the first half of the twentieth century.³⁴

Furthermore, Okiihiro includes a passage from Lee's memoir that includes experiences specific to women as Lee grew up. For example, Lee recalls how she had "never forgotten" the guidance her father offered her as a young woman growing up in the 1910s, "although girls and woman were supposed to be soft and obedient...they should also learn to think like men and make correct judgments. He told me to speak up when the occasion demanded and to stand up for what is right. That advice gave me strength in later life".³⁵ Moreover, Okiihiro also highlights how Lee's memoir recalls a time when she "hit" a white man "as hard as I could" for verbally and physically harassing her, possibly acting on the guidance her father gave her.³⁶ Additionally, Lee writes about the ways she made friends with Mexican and African Americans because "due to our mutual problems, all minorities felt a sympathetic bond with one another".³⁷ Thus, Okiihiro includes instances of racism, sexism, and female empowerment from Lee's memoir to demonstrate how issues of race and gender not only intersect within the sphere of Asian American history but that these issues are so tightly stitched together that it becomes inseparable. Indeed, such inclusions of female narratives, especially ones of female agency and power, are omitted from many sources of history, whether they be Asian American history or other histories, as they are populated by dominant male narratives.³⁸ Here, however, Okiihiro not only includes these female narratives, but the way he structures his work to prioritise the voice of the female primary source as opposed to his own adds further nuance and genuine depth to the Asian American female histories that Okiihiro presents to us.³⁹

³² Okiihiro, *Margins*, 86.

³³ Okiihiro, *Margins*, 89.

³⁴ Okiihiro, *Margins*, 89.

³⁵ Okiihiro, *Margins*, 89.

³⁶ Okiihiro, *Margins*, 89.

³⁷ Okiihiro, *Margins*, 90.

³⁸ Okiihiro, *Margins*, xiv.

³⁹ Okiihiro, *Margins*, 87.

Another idea that Okiihiro considers is the ways many Asian American histories are inherently correlated with the histories and narratives belonging to Asia itself. Indeed, whilst Asian American history must first deal with the histories of the Asian diaspora in America, Okiihiro suggests that it is also vital to understand the ways such histories can be, should be and are undeniably linked to the histories of the Asian continent. For instance, in citing Lee's memoir, Okiihiro writes about how the Japanese colonisation in Korea "was the first source of dislocation in Lee's life".⁴⁰ Okiihiro talks about how the Japanese forced Lee's family to move away from their home in Pyongyang, and hoping to escape further violence from the Japanese, Lee's family signed a deal with a Hawaiian sugar plantation and migrated to the United States in 1905.⁴¹ Okiihiro uses Lee's example as a starting point to emphasise the mass migration of Asians into America throughout the 20th century, from reasons ranging from family reunions and being a "picture bride" to the Vietnam war and the Cambodian genocide.⁴² Moreover, Okiihiro recognises that whilst earlier periods of Asian migration and settlement in America mostly involved the migration of Asian men, he still spotlights the way these men were linked to Asia by virtue of language and culture.⁴³ More importantly, however, Okiihiro shows that these new migrants "were not solitary figures moving in splendid isolation", but argues that they were "intimately connected" with Asia, specifically with the women—their wives, mothers and daughters.⁴⁴ For example, Okiihiro references historian Connie Young Yu and notes how she talks about how her grandmother provided her the cultural ties linking her back to her family chain that started in Asia.⁴⁵ Yu notes that this helped "fill in her narrative", suggesting the importance of her Asian roots in forging her identity as an Asian American.⁴⁶ Indeed then, Okiihiro's book demonstrates that much of the history of Asians on the American continent are continuations of their histories that originated in Asia, much like how the history of white Americans can be said to have connections with their ancestors from Europe.

Lastly, another major point in Okiihiro's book is how a considerable part moves beyond history or historical analysis, but presents itself as a document about cultural and familial traditions practised by Asian Americans from all backgrounds.⁴⁷ For instance, Okiihiro discusses the importance of food in South Asian culture and how an Indian American woman described the importance of her family's evening meal, "It is a hearty Gujarati-Indian meal...food always seemed to be a central part of the family...Food is *the* main gathering point around the table. Mother would spend the entire day preparing, with my grandfather helping. It brought them together".⁴⁸ In another example, Okiihiro talks about how food represented an integral element in linking the dead with the living for Chinese Americans.⁴⁹ One woman

⁴⁰ Okiihiro, *Margins*, 87.

⁴¹ Okiihiro, *Margins*, 87.

⁴² Okiihiro, *Margins*, 88.

⁴³ Okiihiro, *Margins*, 67.

⁴⁴ Okiihiro, *Margins*, 68.

⁴⁵ Okiihiro, *Margins*, 66.

⁴⁶ Okiihiro, *Margins*, 66.

⁴⁷ Okiihiro, *Margins*, 113.

⁴⁸ Okiihiro, *Margins*, 113.

⁴⁹ Okiihiro, *Margins*, 113.

documents the traditions of her family, “Whenever I visit my mother during a Chinese holiday and she has the special food and settings out to honour our ancestors...I always light some incense, kowtow several times and kneel before pictures of my ancestors”.⁵⁰ Moreover, visitations to the graves of her grandparents became another opportunity for her to exhibit her culture and get together with her family. She recalls,

“we would bring a chicken...roast pork...and sweet cakes to the cemetery. Then there were oranges and apples...and then pour three tea cups of Johnny Walker Red on the ground. The food and whiskey is symbolic; it is our way of offering them a special meal each year to honour and remember them, so they won’t go hungry. Then we burn paper money, lots of it...And we bring along a cassette of Chinese music which we play, so that my grandparents can enjoy music while they are eating”.⁵¹

Okiihiro dedicates a large part of his book to offer detailed passages and sources rich with cultural imagery about the cultural practices of different Asian groups in America. Put simply, these examples show how Okiihiro makes his book more than the “dates, act, and names”⁵² and more than history in that it also becomes a document that educates his readers about supposedly “foreign” cultural practices as quintessentially Asian American, and thereby a part of American culture itself. Thus, by discussing the cultures and traditions of people of different Asian backgrounds, Okiihiro gives his work a sense of comprehensiveness and nuance in that he acknowledges how history is woven and inherent within the cultural tapestry of his subjects. In other words, this book is not just a standard historical account of a particular history, but it plays a dual role in documenting and celebrating the lives and experiences of his subjects. In doing so, it brings these histories away from the “margins” and into the “mainstream”.⁵³ This is supported by Mae M. Ngai, who argues that Asian Americans have faced the complex diasporic life of “two social worlds an ocean apart” and a need to always “negotiate cultural...boundaries”.⁵⁴ She suggests that such “dualisms” can be mitigated by weaving these different social worlds into the fabric of mainstream American culture.

Roger Daniels: *Asian America: Chinese and Japanese in the United States since 1850*

Roger Daniels approaches this historiography differently to Takaki and Okiihiro. Specifically, whilst Daniels does indeed work with some written sources and personal correspondences, the majority of his work is supported by quantitative research. His book uses these examples of government data and documents to trace the movement of Asian immigration and draw

⁵⁰ Okiihiro, *Margins*, 114.

⁵¹ Okiihiro, *Margins*, 114.

⁵² Okiihiro, *Margins*, 93.

⁵³ Okiihiro, *Margins*, ix.

⁵⁴ Mae M. Ngai, “Asian American History—Reflections on the De-centering of the Field,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 25, no. 4 (2006): 101.

conclusions about their everyday lives after settlement. Daniels' writing is more detached and the way he deconstructs his sources is very succinct. For example, his examination of Chinese and Japanese American incomes in the 1960s is clearly expressed and written in an economical manner,

“the 1960 census data show that income for both Asian American groups is surprisingly low. Japanese American men had a median income of \$4,304, while Chinese American men earned only four-fifths of that amount, or \$3,471. Asian American women, of course, made much less: Japanese American women earned only 46 percent as much as their male counterparts...It is relatively easy to explain the depressed earnings of Asian Americans. Long established patterns of discrimination, exclusion from of the best-paid sectors of the economy, particularly from those sectors in which effective unionisation had occurred, and the economic losses of the war period for the Japanese Americans, all contributed”⁵⁵.

Indeed, this approach is more macro and offers a bird's-eye-view to any given event that Daniels writes about. Daniels' approach here, then, offers snapshots into the general state of particular groups of Asians in America in any given time and is useful as a tool to easily grasp the social, political and economic shifts that have taken place.

Daniels acknowledges the flaws in earlier approaches toward the discipline. Specifically, he argues that many earlier historians have written about Asian American history as “negative history” in that “other immigrant groups were celebrated for what they had accomplished”, whilst “Asians were important for what had been done to them”.⁵⁶ Moreover, Daniels references other historians like Carl Wittke and critiques him for arguing that Asian history in America represented “a brief and strange interlude”.⁵⁷ He also cites Edith Abbott who contended that “Orientals” needed to be excluded from conversations surrounding American history and immigration for fear that it would be “complicated” for Americans because “the very different problems of Chinese and Japanese immigration” would “confuse” them.⁵⁸ Whilst both Wittke and Abbott worked in the 1920s and 1930s, Daniels spotlights such historians to demonstrate how people have made attempts to push away or even eliminate certain groups and narratives from the grander narrative of American history. Importantly then, what Daniels does here is to rewrite Asian Americans into America's history, when before they were “outside the canon of...history”.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Roger Daniels, *Asian America: Chinese and Japanese in the United States since 1850* (University of Washington: University of Washington Press, 1988), 314.

⁵⁶ Daniels, *Asian America*, 6.

⁵⁷ Daniels, *Asian America*, 5.

⁵⁸ Daniels, *Asian America*, 5.

⁵⁹ Daniels, *Asian America*, 6.

Comparisons and Conclusions

The books discussed here demonstrate the several different approaches historians have taken when writing about Asian American histories. Specifically, Daniels' book uses a more traditional chronological approach, whilst Takaki and Okihiro choose to organise their books thematically. Moreover, Takaki and Okihiro's thematic approach is enhanced by their use of oral histories and their ethnographic style. Whilst different in their own respective ways, the approaches that these historians use give their work a sense of intimacy and closeness to their subjects. Put simply, Takaki's and Okihiro's audience are able to readily sympathise, appreciate and possibly even relate to the people that they write about because Takaki and Okihiro give their subjects names and talk about their stories and struggles with great depth and universality. Specifically, Takaki's ethnographic approach is slightly different to Okihiro's because the former tends to give more visibility and space to Chinese and Japanese American men.⁶⁰ This is the case in Daniels' book as well. On the other hand, whilst both Takaki and Okihiro discuss Asian groups that are not of an East Asian background, Okihiro also lends considerable emphasis on the narratives of Asian American women. As Okihiro argues, women's history is not only about filling the "empty spaces" of men's history, but re-centring women's narratives "resurrects gender as a prominent social category" and is able to consider "social change as a product of gender relations" and also reflects the pivotal position of women "within the social formation".⁶¹ Put simply, the inclusion of women's histories broadens the discipline of Asian American history itself. Additionally, Okihiro also looks at the cultural practices of different Asian American groups, pointing to what the historian Minako K. Maykovich calls a resurgence and solidification of an "ethnic consciousness".⁶²

Daniels' chronological approach is also complemented by his detached and concise tone and therefore decidedly different from Takaki and Okihiro's more intimate and urgent books. In doing so, it lacks the more personal characteristics seen in the works of the former two historians, but is instead larger and sweeping in its scale.⁶³ This is also a strength too, specifically in that Daniels' book can be readily used as a source that complements the smaller scale observations made in Takaki and Okihiro's works. In other words, the personalised stories, oral histories and interviews in Takaki and Okihiro's books can work as a companion that qualifies, gives depth, and more meaning to the numbers on Daniels' pages. And vice versa: the numbers and tables that Daniels collates can help quantify, make sense and position the subjects in Takaki and Okihiro's works relative to the everything else that is happening in the world.

⁶⁰ Takaki, *Strangers*, 275.

⁶¹ Okihiro, *Margins*, 79.

⁶² Minako K. Maykovich, *Japanese American Identity Dilemma* (Tokyo: Waseda University Press, 1972), 1.

⁶³ Daniels, *Asian America*, 314.

To conclude on an important point: all three historians address the politicised nature of Asian American history, specifically illustrating the ways they understand that Asian American histories have historically been pushed far away into the margins, and the diasporic struggles that Asian Americans have faced and continue to face. Indeed, this discipline is relatively new compared to the other American histories that have been written. Despite Asian American histories spanning nearly two hundred years, the discipline's birth toward the second half of the 20th century meant that historians of this area are yet to establish a singular approach, formula, or method to guide their research and findings. Thus, several approaches have emerged: ones that are oral in nature, ethnographic in style, politicised, quantitatively driven, or a hybrid approach that intersects with other disciplines like anthropology or cultural studies. Regardless, all these approaches have broadened the ways we understand and sympathise with the subjects these historians write about. Importantly then, historians in this discipline have turned these “faceless, nameless groups”⁶⁴ into a continuous string of narratives that has finally helped preserve “the collective memories of Asian Americans”.⁶⁵ This is a growing and important discipline that lends a voice to the peripheral and dives into the vernacular of everyday life of Asian Americans from all backgrounds.

⁶⁴ Daniels, *Asian America*, 6.

⁶⁵ Okihiro, *Margins*, 66.

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