



Committee of 100

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Representative Betty Brown
Room E1.404, Capitol Extension
Texas House of Representatives
Austin, TX 78701

April 16, 2009

Dear Representative Brown:

We are writing on behalf of the Committee of 100 (C-100), a national non-partisan, non-profit membership organization comprised of prominent Chinese Americans in a broad range of professions. With their knowledge and experience, the Committee has dedicated its efforts to a dual mission: (1) encouraging constructive relations between the peoples of the United States and Greater China, and (2) encouraging the full participation of Chinese Americans in all aspects of American life. Prominent members include: I.M. Pei (architect), Yo-Yo Ma (cellist), Jerry Yang (Yahoo! Founder), and Michelle Kwan (figure skating champion).

We understand you have recently expressed concern about Chinese American participation in the democratic processes of this great nation of ours. As you consider pending legislation in Texas, we thought it would be useful to you if we offered some background on Chinese American civic engagement through history. While we have no view on the bill before you, we always believe it important to emphasize that the approximately 3.5 million Chinese people residing in the United States (74% of them are U.S. citizens) and the approximately 150,000 Chinese people residing in Texas (68% of them are U.S. citizens) are proud to be Americans and eager to contribute to this nation culturally, economically, politically, socially, and in every other meaningful way.

People of Chinese ancestry have migrated to the United States since the 1830s. Indeed, there were Chinese immigrant soldiers in both the Union and Confederate Armies during the Civil War. Perhaps the best-known accomplishment of the earliest generations of Chinese immigrants was the participation of thousands of them in the work crews that built the Transcontinental Railroad, helping to bring together the continent. In Texas, there have been Chinese communities since the 1870s. Even though Chinese immigrants faced discrimination, unfortunately even violent at times, including exclusion from the nation, bars on naturalization, and an inability to testify in court, own real estate, or intermarry, they were not deterred from pursuing freedom and opportunity.

Today, Chinese Americans belong as equals here. There are some Chinese Americans who can claim to be fifth-generation Americans, even fifth-generation Texans. There are people such as our own Texan members: Robert Gee (former

Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Department of Energy and former Chairman of the Public Utility Commission of Texas), Harry Gee (Attorney at Law at Harry Gee & Associates), Larry Tu (Senior VP and General Counsel at Dell, Inc.), Wilson Chu (Partner of Haynes and Boone, LLP), Paul Chu (Professor at University of Houston and President of Hong Kong University of Science & Technology), and Leroy Chiao (former Astronaut and Professor). Some have had their family names changed, in some instances like members of white ethnic groups by immigration officials upon entry; others of them have Anglicized given names; and others have chosen to keep their Chinese given names and family names, in proud recognition of their heritage but of course written in conventional English through one of the recognized systems of transliteration developed by experts.

We appreciate your recent apology and comments as an important first step to heal the wound. Like you, we are citizens who wish to ensure that the ideals of this nation – which attracted our ancestors and continue to serve as an inspiration around the globe – are realized in practice. We are confident that leaders such as yourself, who are people of goodwill, will make fair judgments based on the facts. If we are able to be of any assistance, please feel free to call on us. Enclosed is a copy of the key findings for our recent survey of public opinions regarding Chinese Americans and Asian Americans.

Best wishes.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John L. Fugh". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

John L. Fugh
Major General, U.S. Army (Retired)
Chairman