

MR. JOSEY: Thank you again.

Our next speaker is Ms. Judy Yung, the librarian of the Asian Community Library of Oakland.

STATEMENT OF
JUDY YUNG
ASIAN COMMUNITY LIBRARY, OAKLAND PUBLIC LIBRARY

MS. YUNG: Good evening. My name is Judy Yung. I'm the branch librarian of the Asian Branch of the Oakland Public Library System. The Asian Branch Library was started in 1975 with a Federal Library Services and Construction Act grant and has a collection of 30,000 titles in Asian languages. The library also specializes in English materials on Asian and Asian American subjects. Prior to my work at the Asian Library I was the head librarian of the Chinatown Branch Library in San Francisco, and Associate Editor of East-West Chinese American Journal.

I welcome this opportunity to address the Task Force on Cultural Minorities on the library needs of Asian Americans and hope that my input will be of help in the formulation of a federal policy which will better meet those needs. To expedite communication on this matter, I wish to comment on each of the five broad areas as outlined in your news release of March 12th.

Materials and resources: There are approximately two million Asians living in the United States; yet, there are but a handful of public libraries with adequate collections to meet their needs. The first surge of Asian immigrants came in the 1850's with the arrival of the Chinese during the California Gold Rush. They were soon followed by the Japanese, and after World War II, by the Filipinos and Koreans, and of late, the Indo-chinese. For many of these immigrants, there is a crying need for literature and information in their native languages and for English learning materials, things they should be able to find in their public library, but often do not. For their children and grandchildren born and raised in the United States, there should be library materials on their cultural heritage and on the history and literature of Asians in America, but there often are none. Considering that three-fifths of the world's population speak and read an Asian language, it is appalling to see that most public libraries who have foreign language collections do not carry literature in Asian languages.

Personnel: Ideally, bilingual/bicultural personnel should be available in libraries to serve the Asian clientele, but this is impossible at this point because of the small number of Asians in the public libraries. Most of the Asian librarians can be found in the academic libraries only.

There is, therefore, a need to recruit such needed personnel through affirmative action programs. Libraries, especially those in areas with high concentrations of Asians, should be encouraged, if not required, to conduct workshops that would sensitize their staff to the library needs of Asian Americans and how these needs may be met.

Programs: Foremost of importance in serving the Asian patron is a relevant collection. Other ways include an efficient information and referral service and an active outreach program. Cooperation with Asian community agencies and the media will help to keep a library's information and referral file up-to-date and the library's resources foremost in the mind of the Asian community.

Other programs that I have used in serving the Asian community include bilingual story hours and class visits, tutorial services, book lists, participation in community events, programs of interest to the Asian community in the library, bookmobile stops in the community, an active Friends of the Asian Library, and constant press releases of the library's activities in the media.

Funding and needs: For lack of funds, lack of staff expertise, lack of consciousness or lack of community pressure, public libraries have not been successful in meeting the library needs of Asian Americans.

The Latin American Library and the Asian Branch Library in Oakland were only made possible through the initiation of Oakland Public Library and the financial support of the Federal Government. No other public library could afford to duplicate these two library services, especially in light of today's budget deficits at the local levels. There is, therefore, a need for the Federal Government to encourage such services by providing funding and professional assistance.

I have always felt that libraries, despite all their good intentions, will only begin to serve the Asian patron when the government requires it, or when the government does it for them. By the former, I mean enforceable legislation or laws. By the latter, I mean that the government funds these services or operates an acquisition and processing center that provides the needed materials and resources to all libraries designed to serve the Asian patron.

Here I concluded my comments on how library services to the Asian American community can be improved. If I can be of further assistance, please don't hesitate to let me know. And you are all welcome to come and visit the Asian Branch Library at Ninth and Broadway Streets in Oakland Chinatown.

I'd also like to respond to Mr. Benton's question about Indochinese, services to them in libraries. We do serve many of the Vietnamese, but some Laotians and Cambodians, with not only literature in their own language, which is now readily available from publishers in the United States, but also intensive English as a Second Language materials in terms of books and cassettes that are available also through a number of publishers locally.

And the Department of Education as well as the Center for Applied Linguistics have made available many useful sources and lists and bibliographies for libraries to use. However, I've been unsuccessful in finding any Federal funds to help hire staff to continue buying more materials for this increasing population among the Asians. Thank you.

MR. JOSEY: Thank you very much, Ms. Yung.

Our next speaker is Ms. Rhonda Abrams. Is Ms. Abrams here?

STATEMENT OF
RHONDA ABRAMS
ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE OF B'NAI B'RITH

MS. ABRAMS: Good evening. I'm Rhonda Abrams, the Regional Director of the Anti-Defamation League.

I would first of all like to thank the Library Commission for providing me with this opportunity to speak before you today. I am not speaking today as a librarian or as an expert on literature, neither of which I am, but as a representative of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.

As you may know, the ADL is a 68-year-old human rights organization formed to advance good will and mutual understanding among all Americans, and to combat discrimination against Jews and other religious, racial and ethnic groups.

We've come a long way from the days of "Look, Jane, look" and "Run, Spot, run." That was the generation that had the image of the two-child family, the two-car garage, with the blonde dog, the blonde parents, blonde children and a generally blonde life.

For some years now, authors and publishers have begun to talk about city kids, street kids, Black kids, and that's good--but it is only a beginning. And that is, of course, why we are here today.