



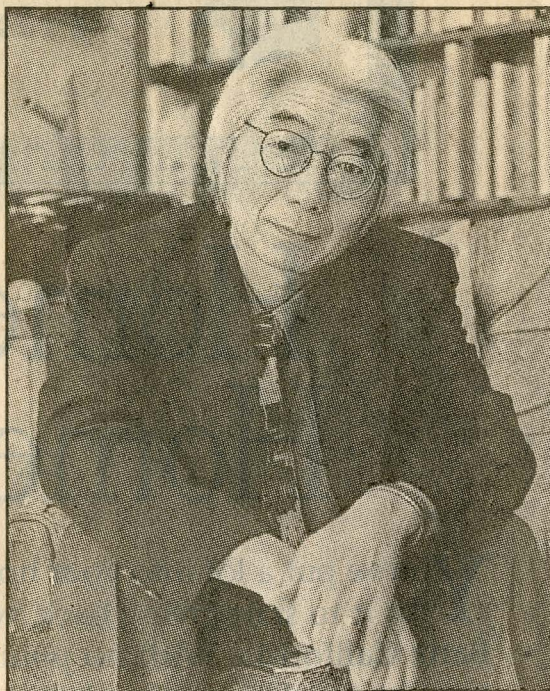
**VERTICAL FILE**  
FOR REFERENCE USE ONLY  
**EXCELSIOR**

A 1908 photo showed Japanese students at the University of California at Berkeley

COURTESY OF BERKELEY SOUTH BRANCH LIBRARY

# Looking to Hawaii for Harmony

Professor Ronald Takaki, who has his own roots in Hawaii's sugar plantations, specializes in ethnic studies at the University of California at Berkeley



BY LIZ HAFALIA/THE CHRONICLE

## Japanese American panel wants a model for the new California

By Charles Burrress  
Chronicle Staff Writer

Except for a lonely plaque that marks the neighborhood's forgotten name, "Loren," there is little left of South Berkeley's once-thriving community of those who followed the migration route from Japan to Hawaii to California.

But the ghosts of that era have been summoned back to life in a special series of events that will reach their most ambitious peak tonight with an attempt in Berkeley to address what may be the biggest problem looming on America's hori-

zon: racial strife.

It was no accident that President Clinton came to California in June to issue his high-profile call for a national conversation on race. Calling the problem "the greatest challenge we face," Clinton noted that California will have no majority ethnic group within three years, and within 50 years, the same will be true for the whole country.

America already has one state without a majority ethnic group, Hawaii, which Clinton praised as "a wonderful place of

**JAPANESE:** Page A18 Col. 1



# JAPANESE: Exploring Roots of Immigration

From Page A17

exuberance and friendship and patriotism."

But he stopped short of answering the natural question of whether Hawaii — with its unique history and ethnic mix — can serve as a model for the mainland.

A panel of five prominent Japanese Americans with roots in Hawaii will try to answer that question tonight at a forum in Berkeley. Americans of Japanese ancestry are the largest minority in Hawaii, as whites soon will be in California, and they have much experience with the challenges that such a position can entail.

The idea is to "explore the issues of whether Hawaii is a multicultural society and whether or not multiculturalism will work here on the mainland," said Patty Wong, manager of Berkeley's South Branch library, where the 7:30 p.m. program will be held.

"It's an important program because of its timing," said Professor Ronald Takaki, a historian specializing in ethnic studies at the University of California at Berkeley. "This is a way of responding to Clinton's invitation for a national conversation on race."

Hawaii has not always enjoyed racial harmony, but neither has it in recent years endured the kind of racially charged debates heard in California over Proposition 209, which ended affirmative action in state government, and Proposition 187, which would tighten restrictions on immigration.

"By looking at Hawaii," Takaki said, "anyone in California can find some reassurance that these groups need not be nervous about one another."

Takaki, who helped organize the event, has his own roots in Hawaii's once-vast sugar plantations, as do many of the state's Japanese Americans. Workers were recruited from Japan along with laborers from the Philippines, China, Portugal and other places in a mix that combined with native Hawaiians to produce the complex diversity of the state today.

Wong termed the panel discussion the "most serious" in a series of related events — including readings and a historical photo exhibit — that are throwing a spotlight on Japanese Americans from Hawaii. All are being held at the Berkeley library's South Branch, situated in the area that once had a train station called Loren.

The neighborhood's immigrants from Hawaii made up a sizable portion of the 1,300 people of Japanese descent who lived in Berkeley until 1942, when they were swept away by the wartime relocation to concentration camps. But thanks to groups like the National Japanese American Historical Society in San Francisco and the Berkeley chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League, co-sponsors of the Berkeley library series, the story of the immigrants remains alive.

It is a story marked indelibly by the sugar plantations. The communities that were bonded to the vast cane fields helped lay the foundation not only for Hawaii's multiethnic society today but also for a distinct identity shared by many Americans whose family began in Japan and spent a generation or more in Hawaii.

Their culture has enjoyed a surge of attention in recent years through movies such as "Picture

Bride" and through various books, including the novels of Milton Murayama, who is credited with writing the first novel to use the Hawaiian vernacular called "pidgin."

The unique patois of slang mixed with native Hawaiian, English and other tongues has long served as an emblem of Hawaiianess among residents, and it lately has begun to earn literary respectability, Murayama said after a reading he gave last week in the series at the Berkeley library.

Takaki recalls his plantation-born "Uncle Richard" using pidgin in a conversation 20 years ago that prompted Takaki to switch from obscure academic writing to the general audience works that have won wide recognition.

"One day," Takaki recalled, "he said to me: 'Hey Ronald, why you no go write a book about us, huh?'"

The result was Takaki's "Pau Hana: Plantation Life and Labor in Hawaii, 1835-1920," from which he read for the keynote address for the series at the Berkeley library.

Photographs of the early immigrants, working in Hawaii and making their way to the West Coast, are another part of the Berkeley program. They are on view in an exhibit at the library through November 14.

Tonight's panel will feature attorney and musician George Yamasaki, playwright and performer Lane Nishikawa, journalist Annie Nakao, architect Gerald Takano and educator Gayle Nishikawa. The moderator will be George Yoshida, a jazz historian and performer.

The South Branch library is located at 1901 Russell St.