

Survey Indicates That Asian Americans Are Still The "Other" Despite Contributions to U.S.

Contributed by Harris Interactive
Wednesday, 13 May 2009

Results uncover glaring disparity in perceptions between general population and Chinese Americans on loyalty, power and equity

More than eight years after their revealing report on perceptions of Asian Americans, the Committee of 100 (C-100) today released, *Still the "Other"? Public Attitudes Toward Chinese and Asian Americans*, conducted by Harris Interactive.

The report indicates that, despite a positive trend in attitudes toward Asian Americans, racial discrimination and suspicions still exist.

An underlying current throughout the survey results is the recognition that "even in 2009" the majority of the general population cannot make a distinction between Chinese Americans and Asian Americans in general, treating all as one generic, monolithic ethnic group, with 28 percent or more saying they rarely or never interact with Asian Americans.

"Race is not black and white - literally nor figuratively. Whatever our own individual backgrounds or political preferences, the facts are clear "the face of the nation is changing as it never has before," said Frank H. Wu, Vice Chair for Research at C-100 and the author of *Yellow: Race In America Beyond Black and White*.

"As we strive to make good on the American Dream that attracted so many of us and our ancestors, we must see our shared interests in advancing civil rights principles. All of us benefit from the principles of diversity and inclusion. We cannot succeed without bridge building."

"At a time when some pundits claim that America has moved beyond race, this survey shows that there is broad ignorance of significant populations of Americans. In the absence of real information, harmful stereotypes still render Asian Americans as "Other" outsiders to our democracy," said Helen Zia, Vice Chair for Media at C-100 and the author of *Asian American Dreams: The Emergence of An American People*.

"This survey underscores how our whole society benefits when attitudes and policies are based on factual knowledge and attitudes that allow for the full participation of all Americans."

Most notable in the data are the misperceptions around:

- Loyalty of Asian Americans: Despite the approximately 59,141 Asian Americans serving in active duty in the U.S. Armed Services, and the more than 300 Asian Americans who have been injured or died in Operation Iraqi Freedom, there are still suspicions about the loyalty of Asian Americans.

Among the general population, 45 percent believe Asian Americans are more loyal to their countries of ancestry than to the United States, up from 37 percent in the 2001 survey.

- Political Influence: While the Asian American community celebrated the cabinet appointments of members to the Obama administration "Energy Secretary Steven Chu, Commerce Secretary Gary Locke, and Veterans Affairs Secretary General Eric Shinseki" there is a significant lack of representation among other federal, state and local elected leadership.

There are currently six Asian American members of the House of Representatives from continental U.S. states and two Senators from Hawaii (no Senator from a continental U.S. state), and only one Governor, Bobby Jindal of Louisiana.

C-100's survey reports that 36 percent of the general population thinks that Asian Americans have the right amount of power and influence in Washington, while only 15 percent of Chinese Americans believe this to be true.

However, 47 percent of the general population believes that Asian Americans have too little power in Washington, with 82 percent of Chinese Americans agreeing.

- Leadership in Education Institutions & Corporate America: Although stereotypes around Asian Americans as the "model minority" continue to be perpetuated in educational institutions and in the workforce, the presence of Asian Americans is not matched with representation in leadership:

Education: The report shows that 65 percent of the general population believes Asian American students are adequately represented on college campuses, with 45 percent of Chinese Americans agreeing and 36 percent arguing that they are underrepresented.

In reality, there are only 33 Asian American college presidents in the United States (out of about 3,200) and, while analysis shows that among the top sector of higher education institutions “as listed in U.S. News & World Report’s 2005 rankings” Asian Americans are well represented as students (6.4 percent) and faculty (6.2 percent), only about 2.4 percent are represented in the positions of president, provost or chancellor.

Corporate America: Similarly, while Asian Americans hold only about 1.5 percent of corporate board seats among Fortune 500 Companies, C-100’s report found that 50 percent of the general population believes Asian Americans are adequately represented on corporate boards, while only 23 percent of Chinese Americans agree.

Forty-six percent of the general population also believes Asian Americans are promoted at the same pace as Caucasian Americans, with only 29 percent of Chinese Americans saying the same.

C-100 is a national non-partisan, non-profit membership organization composed of American citizens of Chinese descent.

Each member has achieved positions of leadership in the United States in a broad range of professions, and collectively pool their strengths and experience to address important issues concerning the Chinese American community, as well as issues affecting U.S.-China relations.

Prominent members include: I.M. Pei (architect), Yo-Yo Ma (cellist), David Ho (AIDS researcher), Michelle Kwan (figure skating champion) and Steve Chen (YouTube co-founder).

Washington, D.C. “April 2009