

Status of Taiwanese-Americans in the U.S.A.

(Why Taiwanese-Americans should be a separate category
in race items of the 1980 Census questionnaire)

Introduction

This document is a summary of opinions expressed by the representatives of Taiwanese-American communities in the San Francisco Bay Area during a Census Community Meeting held on March 29, 1978 in San Jose, Santa Clara County, CA. The meeting was chaired by Ms Eva Gay, Community Services Representative, U. S. Bureau of the Census and Mr. Fred St. Claire, Human Relation Commission, Santa Clara County, CA. This article was prepared by Liao J. Shieh, 930 Damian Way, Los Altos, CA. 94022. (Tel. 415-961-4174)

Participants of Taiwanese-Americans

- Charles C Yang, Ph.D., President, Taiwanese Alliance for Interculture (TAI), San Jose, CA.
Rev. Dr. Thomas Tai, Minister, Formosan United Methodist Church, Hayward, CA.
Winston H. Chen, Ph.D., Board of Director, TAI.
(Past President of TAI, 1976)
Tu Chen, Ph.D., Advisor, Northern California Formosan Federation (NCFE), San Francisco, CA.
(Past President of NCFE, 1976-1977)
Lung Chen, M.A., Director, Community Development, Formosan United Methodist Church, Hayward, CA.
Patrick C Huang, M.S., Executive Secretary, NCFE.
Liao J. Shieh, Ph.D., Member, TAI. (Past President, TAI, 1975)

Summary of Opinions

1. The number of Taiwanese-Americans in this country is approaching 100,000. The majority of these people arrived here after 1960. The trend of immigration from Taiwan increases year by year and it is expected that the Taiwanese in the States will reach a total of a quarter million in the next 10-15 years. These immigrants have their own unique social background. Their educational level, spoken language, and culture tradition are grossly different from those of the early Chinese immigrants. As a result, these two communities rarely established a meaningful communication between them. It is a mistake to consider them as one and the same minority group.
2. Due to the past and present political status of Taiwan, Taiwanese have been isolated from Mainland China for hundred years. The distinction between Taiwanese and Chinese far exceeds the difference between Chicano and Mexican-American. The majority of Taiwanese do not want to be called "Chinese".
3. Sooner or later the U. S. Government will formally recognize the Government of the People's Republic of China. It is undeniable that large percentage of the U. S. populace still exhibit certain

antagonism against the Communists. It is unfair to categorize Taiwanese as Chinese and let Taiwanese bear this adverse reaction. We believe that Taiwanese-Americans have a basic human right to ask their government to avoid this possible misunderstanding.

4. During the past 10 years, 200 or so community organizations were established in this country by Taiwanese people. It can be said that "If there is a group of Taiwanese in a place, there is a Taiwanese community organization." None of these organizations identified themselves as Chinese in their title. It is obvious that Taiwanese people want to establish their own identity. We hope the U. S. Government will respect the dignity of these citizens.
5. Taiwanese-Americans in this country are very active in the community services. They believe in the fundamental human rights and respect the U. S. Constitution. Their community organizations regularly hold meetings, give seminars, issue newsletters and publish journals to promote this basic belief. The contribution of Taiwanese-Americans to the society will be greatly enhanced if their identity is formally recognized by the general public.
6. In recent years, many community organizations in this country realized the necessity and importance of considering Taiwanese-American as a separate minority group. For examples, in 1977 the National Council of both United Methodists and Presbyterian Churches formally recognized that Taiwanese is a distinct minority. Likewise, the International Folk Fair in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania accepted Taiwanese in this country as a separate entry in this year's event to be held on May 5-7. We wish the U. S. Government could acknowledge this trend.
7. Taiwanese communities in this country will work hard with Bureau of the Census to bring about a successful 1980 Census. We will appreciate the assistance that the Census Bureau can give us. In addition, we hope Ms. Eva Gay will inform her supervisors and other affiliated organizations about the opinions taht we expressed in this meeting.

Epilogue

A special committee entitled "Joint Committee of Taiwanese-Americans for 1980 U. S. Census", was formed on April 2, 1978. This committee is sponsored by the Taiwanese Alliance for Interculture, San Jose, CA; the Bay Area Formosan United Methodist Church, Hayward, CA; and the Northern California Formosan Federation, San Francisco, CA. The purposes of this committee are: 1) to coordinate a nationwide campaign to inform Taiwanese-Americans the importance of census, 2) to work with Bureau of the Census for 1980 U. S. Census, and 3) to seek Census Bureau to recognize Taiwanese-Americans as a minority group and give a separate category in the race question items of 1980 Census questionnaire. This committee consists of seven members and is chaired by Liao J. Shieh. The Committee welcomes any comments and suggestions. Please address all correspondece to P.O. Box 6822, San Jose, CA 95125.