

Evolving Korean America at a Crossroads

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1. Brief History of Korean Immigration

Some 7,000 Koreans, mostly young bachelors, were recruited and brought to Hawaii as plantation laborers, from January 1903 to July 1905.¹⁾ This short-lived first wave of Korean immigration ended abruptly as the government of Japan did not want to see additional Korean laborers compete with the Japanese in Hawaii. Through the secret Taft-Katsura Agreement of July 1905, the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in August 1905, the Treaty of Portsmouth in September 1905, and the Protectorate Treaty of 1905 at the conclusion of Russo-Japanese War,²⁾ Japan had secured sole control over Korea from competing hegemonic actors in the Far East—the United States, Great Britain, and Russia.

Abolition of slavery after the civil war and booming activities in mines, railroads, and farms in Hawaii and California in the second half of the nineteenth century created a strong demand for cheap labor. Chinese were the first ones recruited and brought in from the Far East Asian region. When their numbers multiplied, white settlers became nervous and put barriers on Chinese entry. During the decade of 1871–80, 123,000 Chinese arrived. The Chinese Exclusion Law was enacted in 1882. Chinese immigration receded sharply thereafter. Japanese were brought in next to fill the vacuum. When the rapidly increasing Japanese presence in California caught the attention of white folks at the dawn of the twentieth century, the U.S. government, under their pressure, initiated the Gentlemen's Agreement (1906) and eventually put a stop to Japanese labor immigration. Between 1901 and 1910, 130,000 Japanese immigrants arrived, but their numbers declined sharply afterwards. A significant number of Filipino workers were brought in at about the same period, but because the Philippines was under U.S. possession, Filipino migrants were not counted within immigration statistics. Koreans were the last of the four groups brought in from the Far East, but their immigration was terminated two years after it began.

Before the door for immigration was completely closed to Asians in 1924, approximately 1,100 Korean picture brides,³⁾ and 600 students and political exiles also arrived.⁴⁾ Approximately 289 Korean students arrived with passports issued by the Japanese government between 1921 and 1940.⁵⁾ Due to a great imbalance in numbers between men and women and existing anti-miscegenation laws, many among the first wave of Korean immigrants stayed

¹⁾ For a detailed political economic analysis of the early Korean immigration to Hawaii, see Wayne Patterson, *The Korean Frontier in America: Immigration to Hawaii, 1896–1910* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1988).

²⁾ Ki-baik Lee, *A New History of Korea* (Seoul: Ilchokak, 1984), 309–310.

single throughout their lives. Consequently, the total number of Koreans in the U.S. never exceeded 10,000 until 1950. Of these, most were concentrated in Hawaii (approximately 8,000) and California (approximately 2,000).

These Koreans were never accepted into the mainstream. Most of the first wave of Korean immigrants survived as hard laborers on Hawaiian sugar plantations, California fruit farms, Utah and Colorado railroad construction sites and mines, and Alaskan fish processing plants. These laborers were the back-bone of the Korean community between 1903 and 1950. These were the people who funded the armed contingent of independence fighters in China and the provisional Korean government in Shanghai. These stateless people found meaning through their fierce struggle to help regain Korea's independence from colonial rule, and were able to sustain a community by and for this goal.

American intervention in the Korean War (1950–53) triggered the second wave of Korean immigration. American soldiers stationed in Korea brought home Korean brides, arranged adoption of war orphans, and sponsored students to come to the United States. Between 1951 and 1964, approximately 6,500 GI brides, 6,300 adoptee, and 6,000 students came to this country.⁶⁾ These three groups have been a significant component of Korean immigration to the United States ever since.

The early 1960's marked the beginning of immigration of Korean nurses and doctors. The Korean government adopted a pro-emigration policy in 1962 as a means to spur economic development, and passed special laws to facilitate emigration. The number of Korean immigrants to the U.S. jumped from 1,538 in 1962 to 2,580 in 1963. Since then, the annual number remained consistent at around 2,000+ until 1966, at which point rapid acceleration began.

After the national origin quota system based on race was eliminated from U.S. immigration laws in 1965, Koreans were able to immigrate to the United States as families. Until this time, Korean immigrants were assigned to special categories as laborers, picture brides, political exiles, war brides, orphans, students, and trainees. After 1965, students who completed degrees were able to apply for green cards under provisions of the new immigration laws. Between 1965 and 1970, student-turned-professionals constituted the majority of Korean immigration. Subsequently, these professionals and wives of U.S. servicemen petitioned for their spouses, siblings, and parents to immigrate as well.

The effects of the 1965 immigration law became visible beginning in 1967. The number

³⁾ Most of the Korean labor immigrants were poor and not able to afford a trans-Pacific journey to find a spouse. Instead, pictures were exchanged between prospective spouses. Women brought through such arrangements were called picture brides. This practice was also common for Japanese and Filipino immigrants at the time.

⁴⁾ Warren Kim, *Koreans in America* (Seoul: Po Chin Chai, 1971), 23–26.

⁵⁾ Won Moo Hurh and Kwang Chung Kim, *Korean Immigrants in America: A Structural Analysis of Ethnic Confinement and Adhesive Adaptation* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1984), 49.

⁶⁾ Won Moo Hurh and Kwang Chung Kim, 49–52.

of Korean immigrants admitted in 1966 was 2,492. In 1971, the number shot up dramatically, topping 14,000. The annual number of Korean immigrants entering the U.S. continued to grow at an accelerated rate until it reached its peak at 35,849 in 1987, with a steady decline since then.

The total number of Korean immigrants admitted between 1981 and 1990 was 333,746, but it declined to less than half that number in the decade after to only 164,166 between 1991 and 2000. Between 1974 and 1988, Korean immigrants accounted for more than 5% of the total immigrants admitted to the United States every year. Since 1990, the annual percentage share has declined to around 2%. Annual Korean immigrant admission reached its lowest point in the fiscal year 2003 at 12,512, which accounted for 1.77% of total immigrants that year. It shot up again to 19,766 in 2004, or 2.09% of total admittance. Since 1992, annual Korean admittance has fluctuated between 12,000 and 21,000. The cumulative total of 878,079 Korean immigrants who arrived in the United States since 1948 accounts for 1.26% of all immigrants admitted to the United States since 1820.

This paper focuses on the changes that have transpired in Korean immigration since 1990. The first section will deal with characteristics of immigration patterns. The second section focuses on characteristics of the Korean population as reflected in the 2000 U.S. Census. The third section discusses changes in the Korean American economy and community in recent years. Census data, immigration statistics, community records (including Korean American newspapers), and the author's own observations as a participant of the community are utilized as source material for this study.

2. Characteristics of Korean Immigration Since 1990

(1) Decline in Volume of Immigration

The year 1990 marks the beginning of a visible decline in immigration from Korea. During the peak period of Korean immigration, 1981–90, the annual flow of Korean immigrants accounted for well over 5% of all immigrants admitted. Since 1991, Koreans' relative share has declined to less than 2.3%. This decline can at least to some degree be attributed to the visible improvement in Korea's economy in recent decades. Korea's gross domestic product was a mere \$1.3 billion in 1953 when the Korean War ended. It rose to \$2.1 billion in 1960, \$8.1 billion in 1970, \$63.8 billion in 1980, \$264 billion in 1990, and \$680 billion in 2004. Similarly, Korea's per capita income was \$100 in 1963.⁷⁾ It rose to \$1,000 in 1977, exceeded \$10,000 in 1995 and stood at over \$14,162 by 2004. Korea's foreign exchange reserve also saw visible improvement from \$38 million in 1953 to \$160 million in 1960, \$20.4 billion in 1997, and \$205 billion in 2004. As of 2004, Korea's economy was the 11th largest in the world.⁸⁾ As high-rise apartment complexes moved steadily upward and modern satellite cities were added around

⁷⁾ When I boarded a U.S. troop transport ship in Incheon for a ride to the United States for advanced study in 1963, I had \$100 in my pocket.

⁸⁾ *Sixty Years through the Numbers*, Seoul: Bank of Korea, 2005.

major metropolitan centers, housing conditions improved significantly. The urban subway and cross-country rail systems were greatly enhanced during the 1980's and 1990's. Cars also became a household necessity. These improved living conditions and the country's growing overall economy may have played a role in reducing Koreans' level of desire to emigrate overseas.

(2) Increase of Non-Immigrant Arrivals

A decline in numbers reflected in formal immigration statistics does not necessarily indicate an actual reduction in the flow of actual numbers of people arriving in the United States for long term or permanent stay. It has become increasingly clear in recent decades that formal international migration is only one portion of a greater international movement of people. Change in residence across national borders has taken many different forms in recent years. Many people move to another country and live there for an extended period of time, often several years or more, for business, study and work, among other reasons. In 2004, 946,000 total "immigrants" from all over the world were admitted to the United States.⁹⁾ In that same year, 30,781,335 "non-immigrants" were also admitted, a number 30 times greater than that of immigrant admission. Although the majority of non-immigrant admissions are for the short-term, there are a significant number of people admitted as non-immigrants who go on to reside in the country for long periods of time. Students, exchange visitors, intra-company transferees and those admitted with work visas are major categories of long-term arrivals among non-immigrant admissions. Also, many short-term arrivals such as temporary visitors for pleasure become long-term or permanent residents after arrival. Even if we subtract the 27 million temporary arrivals for pleasure and business from the 31 million in the non-immigrant pool, we still have 3,385,299 persons who are not classified as temporary visitors. This number is over 3.5 times higher than the number of 'formal' immigrants admitted to the United States in 2004. Among these are 656,373 students and families, 760,709 temporary workers and families, 360,777 exchange visitors and families, and 456,583 intra-company transferees and families. The total number in these four categories of non-immigrants is 2.23 million, which is more than two times greater than the number of formal immigrants admitted. Many of these non-immigrants usually stay in the United States for a considerable period of time, becoming constituents of their respective communities. A significant number of these people eventually become permanent residents.

Koreans are no exception. While immigrant Korean arrivals declined, non-immigrant Korean arrivals have steadily increased. The yearly number of Korean immigrants admitted to the U.S. declined from 35,273 in 1985 to 32,301 in 1990, 16,047 in 1995, 15,830 in 2000, and 19,441 in 2004.¹⁰⁾ In contrast, the number of non-immigrant Koreans (minus temporary visitors for pleasure) entering the United States increased from 65,000 in 1985 to 115,000 in 1990,

⁹⁾ *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics 2004*. U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2004.

¹⁰⁾ *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics 1985, 1990, 1995, 2000, 2004*.

185,000 in 1995, 215,000 in 1999 and 283,000 in 2004.

The total number of Korean non-immigrants admitted to the United States in 2004 is 829,031. Subtracting 651,863 temporary visitors from this number leaves 160,856 Koreans who are not immigrants but who will be staying in the country for a considerable period of time. Of these, 89,579 are students, 16,548 temporary workers, 19,413 exchange visitors, and 7,842 intra-company transferees with families. These four groups together total 133,760, which constituted approximately 10% of the 1.3 million Koreans in the United States in 2004. This group of non-immigrant Koreans is nearly seven times greater than the number of Koreans admitted as immigrants. Cumulatively over the years, these non-immigrants constitute a very significant proportion of the Korean American community. Additionally, although exact numbers are not known, it is very likely that a considerable number of temporary visitors for business or pleasure go on to stay for an extended period of time. Some of these people eventually become legal immigrants through status changes. Many others become permanent “illegal aliens.” The U.S. Census Bureau estimates 55,000 Korean illegal aliens out of the 7 million total illegal aliens in the United States as of 2000.¹¹⁾

The number of Korean students admitted to the United States has increased noticeably in recent years. Between 1998 and 2004, the annual number of Korean students admitted to the U.S. increased from 46,274 to 78,926, an increase of 70.6%.¹²⁾ In contrast, the number of Japanese students admitted decreased from 83,192 in 1998 to 77,044 in 2004, a decline of 7.4%. In 1998, twice as many Japanese students came to the United States than Korean students. By 2004, Korean students were the largest group among students from all countries arriving in the United States. Korean students are also more likely to be accompanied by their spouses and children than students from other countries. In 2004, for every 100 students admitted, Koreans were accompanied by 13.5 spouses and children, compared to 7.1 for Chinese and 4.2 for Japanese.¹³⁾

Similar situations exist in the categories of temporary workers, exchange visitors and intra-company transferees. In all categories, Koreans show a higher growth rate of annual admittance and are more likely to bring their spouses and children as compared to those in other groups. Exchange visitors admitted in 1998 were 4,389 from Korea, 11,608 from Japan, and 8,408 from China including Taiwan. Japanese exchange visitors were nearly three times as many as Koreans. Chinese exchange visitors were nearly twice as high as Koreans. In 2004, however, Korean exchange visitors admitted were 12,339, higher than 12,336 Japanese and 10,464 Chinese counterparts. The rate of increase was 181.1% for Korean exchange visitors, 6.3% for the Japanese, and 24.5% for the Chinese counterparts. For every 100 exchange visitors, 57.3 spouses and children were brought from Korea, 41.5 were accompanied from Japan, and 27.3 came from China.

¹¹⁾ *Statistical Abstracts of the United States 2004–2005*. U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2005. Table 6.

¹²⁾ *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics 1998, 2004*.

¹³⁾ *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics 2002, 2003, 2004*.

Intra-company transferees from Japan far outnumber those from either Korea or China/Taiwan. In 1998, 32,018 Japanese were admitted under this category as compared with 3,217 from Korea and 5,137 from China/Taiwan. In 2004, the Japanese intra-company transferees admitted were 30,807, a slight decline of 3.9% from 1998. The Korean intra-company transferees admitted in 2004 were 4,779, an increase of 48.6% from 1998. The Chinese intra-company transferees admitted also were 5,137 in 2004, a decline of 7.0% from 1998. The family-accompanying ratio is relatively high in this category for all three countries. For every 100 intra-company transferees admitted in 2004, 63.5 spouses and children came from Korea, 58.2 spouses and children came from Japan and 53.0 spouses and children came from China.

Consequently, long-term non-immigrant Korean arrivals are likely to stay for longer periods of time than those from Japan or China. Long-term non-immigrant Koreans included, the size of the Korean community in the U.S. is quite possibly much higher than what is reflected in census statistics.

(3) Status Changes a Norm

Approximately two-thirds of Korean immigrants as shown in official immigration statistics to have arrived in recent years have in fact already been residing in the U.S. for many years as non-immigrants, but have recently changed their status to immigrants. Status-adjusted cases accounted for 47.0% of all Korean immigrants admitted in 1997. The percent of status-adjusted cases has exceeded the 50% mark since 2000. In 2001 and 2002, status-adjusted individuals accounted for over 68% of total Korean immigrants admitted. In 2002, those who had arrived as temporary visitors for pleasure or business accounted for 32.5% of total status-adjusted Korean immigrants. The percentage of temporary visitors among status-adjusters was far higher among Koreans than among any other group in 2004. Temporary visitors accounted for only 11.0% of Japanese and 16.4% of all Asian status-adjusters in the same year. Status adjusters are defined as those who came as non-immigrant arrivals and later become permanent residents.¹⁴⁾

(4) Continuation of Sex Ratio Imbalance among Young Immigrants

In terms of sex ratio as measured by the number of males per 100 females, Korean male immigrants are significantly under-represented between the ages of 20 to 44. The numbers of Korean males per 100 females admitted in 2001 were 62.0 for ages 20–24, 28.2 for ages 25–29, 50.7 for ages 30–34, and 76.0 for ages 35–39. This pattern of sex imbalance in favor of young Korean females has continued ever since the new wave of immigration began in 1965.

This over-representation of young females in the immigration flow to the United States is not unique to Koreans. The overall female-to-male sex ratio was 81.2 (men per 100 women) for all immigrants to the United States in 2001, with 67.7 for immigrants from China, 76.0 from

¹⁴⁾ *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics 1997, 2001, 2002, 2004.*

Korea, 36.9 from Japan, 66.2 from the Philippines, 131.1 from the United Kingdom, 83.8 from Germany, and 92.6 from Canada. Sex ratios are more balanced among immigrants coming from Western countries. The United Kingdom is the only country from which there are significantly more men than women in the immigration flow. Young females between the ages of 20–34 are extremely over-represented among immigrants coming from China, Korea, Japan, and the Philippines. Among these four countries, sex imbalance is most extreme among young Japanese immigrants. For every 100 women, only 14 men are found among Japanese immigrants between the ages of 25 and 29. The male-to-female sex ratio for Japanese immigrants is 17.8 for ages 20–24, 14.0 for ages 25–29, 26.5 for ages 30–34, and 34.9 for ages 35–39. One reason for this may be that young Asian females may feel the desire to free themselves from the constraints of traditional male dominance still embedded deeply in Asian society. America may also be offering more opportunities for young female immigrants regardless of what country they originate from. One consequence of this sustained imbalance in sex ratio among young immigrants is that it has become less likely for young Asian women to find mates from their own ethnic groups.

(5) Emergence of “Kirogi (Wild Geese) Families”

The term “kirogi families” was introduced in Korea and overseas Korean communities in the early 1990’s. Thanks to increased foreign currency reserves, the Korean government eased overseas travel restrictions for its people in the late 1980’s. Mandatory qualifying examinations for study abroad were abolished. Koreans were free to enroll at any school overseas. The new state policy provided opportunities for Korean parents to help their children escape the harsh educational landscape in Korea, and send them to any number of international schools. Willing parents who are able to afford the expenses have taken their elementary through high school aged children to the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand for schooling.¹⁵⁾ The most popular destination has been the U.S. After being successfully enrolled, some children are left alone or with their mothers in the U.S. Fathers often return to their jobs in Korea and occasionally make trips to the United States for family reunions. Such families are referred to as “kirogi kajok” or “wild geese families”. Fathers are called “kirogi abba,” mothers “kirogi omma,” and children “kirogi a-ee-dul.” With the hundreds of thousands such new arrivals each year, the number of kirogi families is steadily increasing.

Many students, investors, workers, exchange visitors, and intra-company transferees leave their wives and children in the U.S for schooling when they return to Korea after their stays in the U.S. Children of long-term non-immigrant arrivals who have attended American schools also often find it difficult to make a smooth readjustment to the very competitive Korean school environment. A majority of these children therefore choose to stay on in the

¹⁵⁾ *Jookan Hankook (Weekly Hankook)*, March 21, 2005, quoting a Ph.D. dissertation of Yangsook Choi, Yonsei University, 2005.

U.S. by themselves or with their mothers. The kirogi family is one form of this type of transnational family. As trans-Pacific passenger flights become more convenient, frequent and affordable, the number of kirogi families is expected to grow further.

Kirogi families have become an important segment of the Korean community in the United States. Many Korean American churches have Sunday school classes specially designed for kirogi children. Kirogi parents believe that their children will have superior educations or, at the very least, improve their English language skills. However, this type of family arrangement also has potentially risky consequences on family stability, and the psychological, emotional, and mental well-being of both children and parents, including potentially negative effects on marital relationships.

3. Characteristics of the Korean Population Reflected in the Census 2000

(1) Population Size

The steady and substantial inflow of immigration from Korea has accelerated the size of the Korean population in the United States. It increased from about 70,000 in 1970 to 355,000 in 1980, 799,000 in 1990 and to 1,077,000 in 2000. This reflects a more than 15 fold increase in the Korean population in the U.S. in the last thirty-year period. Between 1990 and 2000, the Korean population in the U.S. grew by 35%, while the U.S. total population increased by only 13%. New immigrants admitted accounted for 59% of the total increase of Koreans between 1990 and 2000. If ethnically and racially mixed Koreans are included in the tally, the size of the U.S. Korean population as of 2000 is 1,228,427 instead of 1,076,872. The total number of ethnically and/or racially mixed Koreans is 151,555, which accounts for 12% of all Koreans. In Hawaii, 43% of all persons of Korean heritage are found to be persons of mixed ethnic and/or racial heritage. Furthermore, the total number of Koreans is much higher than what is shown in the census reports if non-immigrant residents are also included.

(2) Distribution

Koreans, like other East Asians, have traditionally been concentrated in the Western region of the United States. Hawaii and California were home to the great majority of Korean Americans until the 1950's. The West still dominates in terms of numbers of Korean residents. As of 2000, 44% of all Koreans in the U.S., in contrast to 22% of the general population, were counted in Western states. Since the 1960's, however, Koreans have been gradually dispersing themselves across wider regions of the United States. The 2000 Census revealed that 23% of Koreans living in the U.S. are located in the Northeast, 12% in the Midwest and 21% in the South. For the general U.S. population, the percentage shares are 19% in the Northeast, 21% in the Midwest, and 36% in the South.

As compared with other Asians, Koreans are over-represented in the South. In 2000, 21% of all Koreans were found in Southern states whereas only 10% of Japanese, 14% of Chinese, and 13% of Filipinos were located in this region. Between 1990 and 2000, Southern states showed the highest rate of increase of Korean populations in the country at 46%. During this

decade, the Korean population in Georgia experienced the highest rate of increase among all 50 states at 88%. The high growth rate was particularly noticed among states on the Atlantic coastal region. Six of the 10 fastest growing states in terms of Korean population were in the South-Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Delaware, Florida and Virginia. The relatively high presence of Koreans in the South may be partially due to the preponderance of urban retail business among Koreans as compared to other Asian groups. It may also reflect an adventurous and aggressive nature in settlement patterns among Korean immigrants.

Koreans' tendency for dispersed clustering is more evident in local areas. In Los Angeles County, where 17% of all Koreans in the U.S. are situated, there are six distinct areas where Koreans are concentrated: 1) Koreatown, 2) the Diamond Bar-Rowland Heights-Walnut area, 3) the Downey-Cerritos-La Mirada area, 4) the Gardena-Torrance-Palos Verdes area, 5) the Glendale-La Crescenta-La Canada area, and 6) the Northridge area. Korean churches, supermarkets and businesses serving mainly Korean clientele are found in these areas. These six areas form satellite communities of Koreans in Southern California with Koreatown serving as the central business district. Koreans constitute about 20% of the Koreatown resident population, but 36% of the county's Korean population. Most of the law firms, CPA offices, doctors' offices, and cultural facilities serving Koreans in Southern California are located in Koreatown.¹⁶⁾ Between 1990 and 2000, Koreatown greatly expanded its boundaries to upscale residential communities westward. The Korean population in Koreatown increased from 35,000 to 47,000 during this decade. The dispersed clustering of Koreans exhibits a clear contrast to the Chinese pattern. Chinese in Los Angeles are mostly concentrated in a single stretch of the vast county region extending from Monterey Park to Chino Hills.

(3) Socio-Economic Status

Koreans are a relatively recent immigrant group, and a great majority of the adult population is still foreign (Korean) born. According to the 2000 Census, foreign-born persons 18 years of age and older make up 90% of Koreans, 84% of Chinese, 81% of Filipinos, 94% of Vietnamese, and 41% of Japanese. On the other hand, younger Asians below the age of 18 are mostly U.S.-born. Native-born people under the age of 18 make up 78% of Filipinos, 76% of Chinese, 73% of Japanese, 73% of Vietnamese, and 60% of Koreans. These statistics reflect that Japanese are basically a community of native (U.S.)-born people and other Asian communities are largely comprised of foreign-born immigrants. This nativity composition is a significant factor in explaining the socio-economic status of Koreans in the United States when compared with other groups.

Another leading factor affecting Koreans' life and economic status is the use of language.

¹⁶⁾ Eui-Young Yu, "Koreatown in Los Angeles: Emergence of a New Inner-City Ethnic Community," *Bulletin of the Population and Development Studies Center* Volume XIV (Seoul: Seoul National University, 1985), p. 37; Eui-Young Yu, Peter Choe, Sang Il Han, and Kimberly Yu, "Emerging Diversity: Los Angeles' Koreatown, 1990-2000," *Amerasia Journal* 30, no. 1 (2004); 25-52.

Hangul is the language of the Korean family, church, and community. For a majority of *Il-se* (first generation) Koreans, English is a foreign language and rarely spoken in their daily lives. According to the 2000 Census, people living in linguistically isolated households (defined as a household in which there is no responsible person who is a fluent English speaker) constitute 46% of Vietnamese, 41% of Koreans, 35% of Chinese, 22% of Japanese, 11% of Filipinos, and 11% of Indians. The extensive use of Hangul helps Koreans strengthen ethnic solidarity and organize their community better, but difficulty with English limits their participation in mainstream jobs and political processes. Koreans with a relatively high education often find their jobs in the low-paying ethnic labor market, primarily due to difficulty in English. As far as English proficiency is concerned, earned degrees in Korea do not seem to be very helpful for Korean immigrants.

(a) Education:

In terms of educational achievement, Asians outrank all others in the United States. Asians as a whole are a highly educated group. Koreans, similar to other Asian groups, continue to exhibit one of the highest levels of education overall. According to the 2000 Census, the four-year college graduation rate for Asians 25 years of age and over is nearly twice as high as Americans in general; 44% versus 24%. Among Asians, Indians showed the highest level with 64% completing at least a college education. The next highest group is Chinese with 48%. Koreans, Filipinos, and Japanese all show a college completion rate of at least 40%. By comparison, college completion rates are 26% for Whites, 14% for African Americans, and 10% for Latinos.

U.S.-born Koreans exhibit an educational achievement rate higher than that of other racial and ethnic groups as well as compared to their parents' generation. For U.S.- born persons, this figure is 65% for Chinese, 55% for Koreans, 51% for Asian Indians, 46% for Vietnamese, 41% for Japanese, and 32% for Filipinos according to 2000 Census PUMS data. The corresponding figure is 28% for whites, 16% for African Americans, and 15% for Hispanics. Second-generation children of post-1965 Asian immigrants are still relatively young, the oldest of whom are now reaching their 30's. These U.S.-born Koreans are found in increasing numbers in junior staff positions in the parliament, government bureaucracies, and in corporate management. In ten to twenty years, their impact on the mainstream positions will be tremendous, and it is doubtful that they will remain in the traditional middle-man minority position.¹⁷⁾

(b) Income:

The 1990 Census, 2000 Census, and PUMS 2000 data all show two distinct qualities for Korean immigrants in terms of income when compared to other Asian groups, races, and the

¹⁷⁾ Ivan Light and Edna Bonacich, *Immigrant Entrepreneurs: Koreans in Los Angeles 1965-1982* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 368.

nation as a whole. First, Koreans record incomes far less than expected when compared to their relatively high levels of educational attainment. The language problem of *Il-se* (first generation) Koreans who come to this country with college degrees appears to be a major obstacle in realizing the full potential of their educational backgrounds. Second, the mean income for Koreans is notably higher than their median income, and the standard deviation of income distribution is the highest for all Asian and racial groups, indicating that Koreans experience a high disparity in income within their own community. Koreans show an extremely skewed income distribution relative to other groups. Simply put, Koreans have a highly polarized economic stratification. The mean family, household, and individual income for Koreans all fluctuate around national averages, surpassing Blacks and Hispanic, but significantly trailing behind Asian Indians, Japanese, and Chinese. The 1990 Census showed a median family income for Koreans (\$33,909) slightly lower than the national average (\$35,225). But the Korean median income was much lower than that of the Japanese (\$51,550), Indians (\$49,309), Filipinos (\$46,698), and Chinese (\$41,316). A similar pattern was observed in the Census 2000. The median household income for Koreans (\$40,039) was slightly below the national average (\$41,994), but far behind Asian Indians (\$63,669), Filipinos (\$60,570), Japanese (\$52,060), and Chinese (\$51,444). On the other hand, the general poverty rate is significantly higher among Koreans as compared with other Asian groups according to the 2000 Census. It is 23.7% for Blacks, 22.1% for Latinos, 15.8% for Vietnamese, 14.4% for Koreans, 13.2% for Chinese, 9.6% for Indians, 9.5% for Japanese, 8.9% for Whites, and 6.2% for Filipinos.

The mean individual income for persons between the ages of 25 and 64 is \$32,807 for Koreans as compared with the national average of \$35,017 according to the 2000 Census PUMS data set. Its respective standard deviation is \$53,623 for Koreans and \$44,260 for the nation as a whole. Among Asian groups, only Indians surpassed Koreans in standard deviation. On the other hand, when comparing the median individual income for persons between the ages of 25 and 64, Koreans, at \$20,000, fall far below the national level at \$26,000. The median for Koreans is among the lowest of all racial and Asian ethnic groups. This marked difference between mean and median individual income for Koreans, combined with the large standard deviation in mean income indicate a significant income discrepancy among Koreans.

(c) Why the Big Discrepancy between Education and Income?

There are several possible explanations for the discrepancy between education and income levels for Koreans. First, the tendency to concentrate in self-owned business is highest for Koreans, yet their businesses are still mostly in retail and personal service sectors where profit margins are slim. Second, although Koreans possess relatively high education levels, they experience greater difficulty adjusting to new environments due to their English language limitations. Third, Koreans are relatively new immigrants when compared with the Japanese and Chinese, and accordingly, mainstreaming is relatively shallow. Last, people who engage in self-owned, cash-based small businesses tend to underreport their income, and a large segment of Koreans operate small businesses.

The situation is quite different among U.S.-born Koreans, according to the 2000 Census PUMS data set. U.S.-born Koreans are ahead of all other groups in median family (\$70,000), household (\$60,240), and individual income (\$32,080), with the exception of second generation Chinese, who score \$86,700 for median family, \$61,300 for median household, and \$38,000 for individual income. It is apparent from the data that although first generation Korean immigrants still struggle, U.S.-born second generation Koreans seem to fare well in terms of education and income.

4. Business and Economy

A frequent source of income for Koreans in the United States is small business. Surveys conducted in Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, and Atlanta confirm that about one-third of Korean immigrant householders engage in self-owned businesses, about one-fifth in professional work, and the rest in other salaried occupations.¹⁸⁾ A typical pattern in the 1970's was for a newly arriving family to start a small business after a few years of work on assembly lines or with maintenance companies. Nowadays, many start businesses shortly after arrival, with the help of the strong economy and liberalization of foreign currency exchange laws in Korea.

The 1997 U.S. Economic Census provides detailed information regarding the status of business firms owned by minorities. According to the 1997 Economic Census, Asian and Pacific Islander-owned businesses totaled about 913,000, employed more than 2.2 million people, and generated \$306.9 billion in revenues in 1997. The vast majority of Asian and Pacific Islander-owned firms, 71%, were unincorporated businesses owned by individuals. Koreans are the third ranking group among Asians in terms of the number of firms owned in 1997, trailing Chinese and Asian Indians. But their business concentration is one of the highest among all minority ethnic/racial groups. The ratio of the proportion of business firms owned by an ethnic or racial group divided by the proportion of the same group's population to the total U.S. population is 1.713 for Koreans, 1.467 for Japanese, 1.411 for Chinese, 1.335 for Asian Indians, 1.174 for Vietnamese, 0.615 for Filipinos, 0.459 for Hispanics and 0.315 for Blacks. The ratio of 1 indicates that the proportion of business ownership in one group is the same as its proportion of population in the nation. The 1.713 ratio for Koreans indicates that their share of business ownership is 71% higher than their share of the national population. Koreans as a whole represent a business class.¹⁹⁾

¹⁸⁾ Pyong Gap Min, "Problems of Korean Immigrant Entrepreneurs," A paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Asian Studies Association, San Francisco, March 26, 1988, 2; Eui-Young Yu, "Korean Communities in America: Past, Present, and Future," *Amerasia* 10, no. 2 (1983); 23-35; Won Moo Hurh and Kwang Chung Kim, *Korean Immigrants in America*, 226. The Los Angeles Times Poll reported in Karl Schoenberger, "Moving Between 2 Worlds," *Los Angeles Times*, July 12, 1992, p. A24.

¹⁹⁾ Eui-Young Yu, Peter Choe and Sang Il Han, "Korean Population in the United States, 2000: Demographic Characteristics and Socio-Economic Status," *International Journal of Korean Studies*, Spring/Summer 2002, Volume VI, Number 1, 71-108.

The high concentration of Koreans in self-owned business is also evident in the 2000 Census. About one in ten (10.1%) people in the employed civilian population in the nation 16 years of age and older is self-employed. Chinese, Asian Indians, and Vietnamese show about the same ratio in the self-employed sector as the population as a whole. Whites and Japanese show a one-percentage point higher ratio (11.3%) than the national average. Koreans alone stand out with a ratio of 22.7% in the self-employed sector.

Korean business ownership varies greatly by type of industry. The Korean population constitutes only 0.38% of the U.S. population, but they own 1.49% of all retail trade firms in the United States. The 42,916 Korean-owned retail trade firms make up 32% of all business firms owned by Koreans. Korean business concentration ratios are the highest among apparel and accessory stores, food stores, and general merchandise stores. Koreans own more than 3% of each of these types of stores in the nation. Koreans also own a high percentage of textile production businesses, eating and drinking establishments, personal service businesses, and local and interurban passenger transit services. The high concentration of Koreans in these types of industries helps explain the high dispersion of Koreans over wide regions of the country as compared with other Asian groups.

The majority of Korean-owned businesses are labor intensive, family-run or individually operated with one or two outside helpers.²⁰⁾ Nevertheless, the small business nature of Korean entrepreneurship is changing rapidly. Korean businesses have grown rapidly since the 1970's, in number, revenue, and industry type. The number of Korean firms in the United States grew from 1,201 in 1972, to 8,504 in 1977, 69,304 in 1987, and 135,571 in 1997. The total yearly revenue of Korean firms grew from \$64,839,999 in 1972 to \$554,040,000 in 1977, \$7,082,255,000 in 1987 and \$45,936,497,000 in 1997. The average yearly revenue per Korean firm increased from \$53,986 in 1972, to \$65,151 in 1977, to \$110,849 in 1987, and finally to \$338,837 in 1997.²¹⁾

The composition of Korean firms in regards to type of industry has also changed significantly. In 1977, 61.6% of all Korean firms were concentrated in the retail trade business. This ratio declined to 31.7% in 1997. By contrast, the ratio of Korean firms in wholesale trade has increased from 2.5% in 1977 to 5.1% in 1997. In terms of total revenue generated, the share of retail trade firms declined from 61.6% in 1977 to 52.9% in 1987, to 37.4% in 1997. By contrast, the share of wholesale trade firms increased from 6.4% in 1977 to 11.4% in 1987, to 29.1% in 1997. Total revenue of Korean wholesale trade firms increased by 1,424% in contrast with a 322% in retail firms between 1987 and 1997. This growth rate in the wholesale sector was the fastest among all types of Korean business firms during this period. Economic data pertaining to specific ethnic minority groups has not been made available public in the 2002

²⁰⁾ Eui-Young Yu, "Entrepreneurs par Excellence," in *The New Faces of Asian Pacific America*, ed. Eric Lai & Dennis Arguelles (San Francisco: Asia Week, 2003), 57-62.

²¹⁾ Moonsong Oh, "Formation and Growth of Korean American Economy," in *100 Year History of Korean Immigration to America*, ed. Eui-Young Yu, (Los Angeles: Korean American United Foundation, 2002), 149-158.

Economic Census. However, it is expected that the total revenue generated by wholesale trade firms will come close to the contribution by the retail trade industry when data becomes available for Korean firms in the 2002 Economic Census.

5. L.A. Koreatown: Behind Boom Lurks Bleak Demographics:

The 1991-92 *Korean Business Directory* published by the Hankook Ilbo, LA Edition, listed 9,217 businesses in Los Angeles and Orange Counties. By 2005, the Joong-Ang Ilbo, LA Edition had listed 25,000 businesses in its 2005-06 *Korean Business Directory*.²²⁾ The number of businesses listed in Korean directories in Southern California had doubled during the course of 10 years. Commonwealth Business Bank, a Korean-American bank operating in Los Angeles, estimates the total volume of the Korean American economy in Los Angeles at approximately \$18 billion as of 2004, which is equivalent to 1/40 of the South Korean GDP, \$679.7 billion.²³⁾

The rapid expansion of the Korean American economy since the late 1980's is well demonstrated in the banking and real estate industries in Southern California. The Korea Exchange Bank opened in Los Angeles as the first full service Korean bank in 1971. It initially operated as a subsidiary of the Korea Exchange Bank in Seoul, but in 1973 it incorporated as an independent Korean American bank. More Korean American banks incorporated in subsequent years. Wilshire Bank opened in 1974, Global Savings and Loan Bank followed in 1981, Hanmi Bank in 1982, Center Bank in 1986, Mijoo (Nara) Bank in 1989, Saehan Bank in 1991, Pacific Union Bank in 2000, Unity Bank in 2001, Mirae Bank in 2002, and Pacific Bank in 2003. As of 2005, a total of 11 full-service Korean American banks are in operation in Los Angeles. Of these, four (Nara Bank, Wilshire Bank, Hanmi Bank, and Center Bank) are listed in the Nasdaq Stock Exchange. As of April 2004, among all the banks registered in Los Angeles County, in terms of total capital assets, Hanmi Bank ranked 5th (\$3,085,000,000), Nara Bank 14th (\$1,395,200,000), Wilshire Bank 15th, (\$1,202,500,000) and Center Bank 16th, (\$1,186,000,000.) City National Bank ranked 1st, (\$13,200,000,000) and Cathay Bank was 2nd (\$5,700,000,000).²⁴⁾ According to the Joong Ang Ilbo, LA Edition, the 11 Korean banks in Los Angeles accounted for 27% (\$235,620,000) of the total SBA loans (\$887,240,000) transacted in Los Angeles County between October 1, 2004 and June 30, 2005. Mirae Bank and Wilshire Bank ranked 3rd and 4th respectively in the amount of SBA loans transacted among all banks

²²⁾ Joong Ang Ilbo Los Angeles Edition, August 8, 2005. It lists 25,000 Korean businesses with 1,011 real estate related firms, 915 eating places, 827 md offices and hospitals, 658 schools and learning centers (hakwon), 633 dentist offices, 521 insurance related businesses, 443 acupuncturists and/or oriental medicine office, 428 clothing wholesale and manufacturing, 416 beauty and supply shops, 400 law offices, 367 auto repair shops, 332 trading businesses, 284 health food stores, 267 cpa's, 249 construction firms/contractors, etc.

²³⁾ Hankook Ilbo Los Angeles Edition, July 14, 2005.

²⁴⁾ Joongangusa.com. September 24, 2004.

²⁵⁾ Joong Ang Ilbo Los Angeles Edition, July 22, 2005.

in LA County (Mirae at \$43,389,000 and Wilshire at \$42,174,000).²⁵⁾

The proliferation of Korean American banks is largely due to the overall growth of the Korean American economy, particularly in the clothing industry. But it also closely corresponded to the liberalization of foreign currency transaction laws in Korea. The Korean government drastically liberalized its foreign investment and foreign currency exchange laws toward the end of the 1980's. Effective March 25, 1988, Koreans were allowed to send foreign currency abroad up to \$2,000 at one time, with no restrictions on frequency. Each emigrating family was allowed to carry up to \$200,000 with them when they left Korea. Individuals were allowed foreign investments of up to \$1,000,000 for business ventures, and up to \$2,000,000 for real estate properties.²⁶⁾ Beginning in 1997, the Korean government allowed foreign citizens to take out foreign currency of up to \$1,000,000 each time with no restriction on how many times.²⁷⁾ One Korean American bank official estimates that approximately one-third of the transaction volume in Korean American banks in Los Angeles is generated by money flowing in from South Korea.

As mainstream firms moved out of the Koreatown mid-Wilshire district of Los Angeles in the late 1980's, Koreans began to take over high-rise office buildings along Wilshire Boulevard. The Texaco building in the center of Koreatown was the first high-rise building that Koreans purchased, for \$13,500,000, in 1987.²⁸⁾ California Market (Kajoo Market), the first modern Korean supermarket in Koreatown, opened at the corner of 3rd Street and Western Avenue in the same year. Prior to the opening of California Market, most Korean groceries in Koreatown were small family-owned businesses. Those family-owned groceries have become virtually non-existent in Koreatown, as giant Korean supermarkets, whose profits rival mainstream supermarkets such as Ralphs, Vons and Albertsons, subsequently dominated the industry. In 1988, the 430,000 square-foot Korea Town Plaza with a 550-car indoor garage, supermarket, food court, and variety of upscale retail shops, began construction at Western Avenue and 9th Street. It was a \$25 million project backed by a Korean investor in Japan. In the same year, the 23,000 square-foot Hannam Chain Supermarket opened near the corner of Olympic Boulevard and Vermont Avenue. In 1989, Korean Air bought the Los Angeles Hilton Hotel on Wilshire Boulevard and Sepulveda Avenue at the western edge of downtown Los Angeles.²⁹⁾ In 1991 Koreana Hotel in Seoul bought the Wilshire Hyatt Hotel at the corner of Normandie Avenue and Wilshire Boulevard in Koreatown. Oxford Palace Hotel opened at the corner of 8th Street and Oxford Avenue in 1992. Starting in the late 1990's, Jamison Properties Inc. headed by David Lee, a Korean American medical doctor, began to purchase large size commercial buildings in and around Los Angeles Koreatown. Jamison Properties Inc., a consortium of Korean American medical doctors and investors, owns over 87 commercial buildings (including

²⁶⁾ *Thirty-Year History of Korea Times (Hankook Ilbo): 1969-1999* (Los Angeles: Hankook Ilbo Los Angeles Edition, 1999), 160.

²⁷⁾ Hankook Ilbo Los Angeles Edition, November 1, 1997.

²⁸⁾ Hankook Ilbo Los Angeles Edition, May 22, 1987.

²⁹⁾ *Thirty-Year History*, 160.

7 medical buildings, 1 golf course, and 1 shopping center) in Los Angeles as of July 2005. Many of the Jamison properties are high-rise office buildings in Koreatown. With a market capitalization of over \$1 billion, Jamison Properties, Inc. continues to expand by actively pursuing commercial real estate in the Los Angeles market. Aroma Wilshire Center, a luxurious seven-story multi-purpose complex with a huge indoor golf practice range on Wilshire Boulevard and Serrano Avenue, opened in 2001. It was a \$30 million investment by Hanil Cement Corporation in South Korea. According to a real estate industry source in Koreatown, Koreans currently own a majority of the high-rise office buildings in the mid-Wilshire business district of Koreatown between Highland Avenue and Hoover Street. The fact that Koreans own 23 golf courses in Southern California is another example of the rapidly expanding Korean American economy.³⁰⁾ Real estate related businesses (1,011) were the largest category of the 25,000 Korean businesses listed in the *2004-05 Korean Business Directory* (Joong Ang Ilbo, LA Edition).

The recent political appointment of five Koreans to heavyweight city commission posts by newly elected Los Angeles Mayor Villaraigosa is an indication of the increasing economic clout of the Los Angeles Korean community. Villaraigosa appointed Maurice Suh as his deputy mayor for homeland security and public safety, Paula Daniels to a public works commissioner, Kaylin Kim to the Harbor Commission, Steward Kim to the Affordable Housing Commission, and retired LAPD Commander Paul Kim to the Board of Transportation Commissioners.³¹⁾ All of these are second generation or 1.5 generation professionals in their 30's 40's.

Yet, the *Il-se* community is largely insulated from the outside and polarized within. Social networking is restricted to their own ethnic institutions such as churches, alumni, social, professional and trade organizations, kye meetings, and sport clubs. Such life strategy strengthens ethnic solidarity, but isolates them from the outside world. Koreans maintain a separate social world by themselves. Their interactions with others are confined to business transactions and impersonal public encounters. This lifestyle poses a serious vulnerability in places like Los Angeles Koreatown, where commercial building and store managers are largely Koreans and residents and workers are mostly low-income Latinos. Korean landlords, shop owners, physicians, accountants, and other professionals who run business in Koreatown commute from posh suburban towns. Their social world is far apart from low-income Koreans who live in Koreatown.

The Census 2000 reveals some unsettling statistics. Residents who live in Koreatown are among the poorest economic class in the country.³²⁾ According to the Census 2000, Latinos in Koreatown, who make up a numeric majority, show a median household income of \$23,429. Their poverty rate is 37.2%. Koreans in Koreatown, who make up 20% of the town's

³⁰⁾ Hankook Ilbo Los Angeles Edition, August 19, 2005.

³¹⁾ Los Angeles Times, August 2, 2005, August 17, 2005.

³²⁾ *Koreatown on the Edge: Immigrant Dreams and Realities in One of Los Angeles' Poorest Communities*. A report prepared by the Korean Immigrant Workers Advocates in association with Edward J. Park, March 2005, Los Angeles: KIWA, 2005.

population, show a median household income of \$27,007. But their income is far less than the \$35,292 for Koreans in Los Angeles County, and \$47,374 in Orange County. The poverty rate for Koreans is 23.0% in Koreatown, 15.8% in Los Angeles County, and 12.9% in Orange County. Koreans in Koreatown are largely employed in the ethnic job market. Salary, wages, and benefit level for workers in ethnic markets are known to be much lower than in the mainstream market and in some extreme cases, it is known to be less than half.

Conclusion

Koreans enthusiastically responded to the drastic liberalization of U.S. immigration laws in the 1960's, and for the first time in Korea's history, large numbers of Koreans moved to the United States. The number of Koreans in America has reached more than one million, and this number is in actuality doubled when non-immigrant Koreans, undocumented Koreans and *kirogi* families are counted. Koreans have become a visible and significant minority in this multi-ethnic and multi-cultural nation.

In their struggle to settle into their new land, Koreans have adopted an aggressive entrepreneurial strategy. They have built up a community, which is institutionally complete and aggressively dynamic. Their economy has grown from small-scale family operated retail shops into rapidly expanding corporate chains of retail stores, franchise stores, wholesale marts, high rise office buildings, suburban shopping malls, and golf courses. They have taken up a deteriorating section of inner city Los Angeles and built it into a booming Koreatown. Their children are graduating from top rate universities and entering in increasing numbers into mainstream law firms, media, corporate America, and government bureaucracies. This hard-working, highly educated, and actively organized community is increasing its stake in American society.

Nevertheless, unsettling issues remain. During three days from April 29—May 1, 1992 (Sa-I-Gu) in Los Angeles, 2,300 Korean shops were damaged, burned or destroyed in the LA Riots. The LA Riots were an explosion of Black anger and frustration accumulated over centuries of discrimination and injustice Black people have endured in this country. Korean shops took the brunt of the damage largely because they were at the epicenter of the explosion. Sa-I-Gu is a defining moment for the century-old Korean Diaspora. Blacks and Koreans were pitted against each other in the nation's first media-inspired, manufactured race war between minorities. Korean victims were largely left out in the post-riot rebuilding projects. Some Korean victims left for other cities, and some returned to Korea.

Sa-I-Gu, the greatest urban upheaval in modern American history, signals a radical departure from the enduring 'black-white' paradigm. It exposed the widening ethnic, class and cultural chasms between the inner-city poor and the suburban middle class; immigrants and natives; English-speakers and non-English speakers. Yet, 13 years later, Koreatown's *Il-se* movers and shakers are largely in denial, refusing to break out of their own insulated box in the city's volatile multi-racial chemistry. More unsettling is that many second generation children don't even know what Sa-I-Gu is, much less about its meanings to the future survival of Korean

Americans as a cohesive and inclusive people in the United States. It may take generations to fully understand and digest the impact of the LA Riots.

Today's Korean American community has gone through seismic shifts so rapidly that it has become a pluralistic and disparate mosaic in need of a new value system of community consciousness, particularly in this nation of competing groups and interests. After a century of existence in America, *Il-se* community leaders are still preoccupied with home country dignitaries and issues. Community action is needed to bring about inclusion, dialogue and direction for the long-range survival of this increasingly disparate and divided community. These questions will challenge a new generation of scholars, opinion leaders and community leaders alike for the coming years.³³⁾

³³⁾ Deep appreciation is extended to my friend, K. W. Lee for valuable ideas and suggestions for this paper, particularly in the concluding section.

Appendix Tables

Table 1. Immigration by Country of Last Residence for Selected Countries, 1851–2004

Year	China	Japan	Korea	Philippines
1851–60	41,397			
1861–70	64,301	186		
1871–80	123,201	149		
1881–90	61,711	2,270		
1891–1900	14,799	25,942		
1901–10	20,605	129,797		
1911–20	21,278	83,837		
1921–30	29,907	33,462		
1931–40	4,928	1,948		528
1941–50	16,709	1,555	107	4,691
1951–60	25,198	46,250	6,231	19,307
1961–70	109,771	39,988	34,526	98,376
1971–80	237,793	49,775	267,638	354,987
1981–90	444,962	47,085	333,746	548,764
1991–2000	528,893	67,942	164,166	503,945
2001	61,128	10,464	19,933	50,870
2002	63,926	9,150	20,114	48,674
2003	42,415	6,724	12,177	43,258
2004	51,363	8,652	19,441	54,632
Total: 1820–2004	1,964,331	565,176	878,079	1,728,032
% of Total Immigrants	2.81	0.81	1.26	2.47

Source: *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics: 2003, 2004*, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Table 2.
 Note: Numbers for China include immigrants from mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan.

Table 2. Non-immigrants Admitted by Class of Admission and Country of Last Residence, 1985–2004

Year	All Countries		Korea		Japan		China	
Year	All Classes	All other than pleasure	All Classes	All other than pleasure	All Classes	All other than pleasure	All Classes	All other than pleasure
1985	9,540,000	2,931,000	91,000	65,000	1,555,000	278,000	183,000	100,000
1990	17,574,000	4,156,000	235,000	115,000	3,298,000	452,000	329,000	142,000
1994	22,118,706		525,097		3,887,239		567,479	
1995	22,640,524	5,029,000	612,222	185,000	4,380,416	394,000	614,059	236,000
1996	24,842,503		736,706		4,048,986		618,140	
1998	30,174,627		438,089		5,160,213		654,694	
1999	31,446,054	7,342,000	520,206	215,000	4,900,462	482,000	697,994	294,000
2000	33,690,082		710,038		5,119,915		771,119	
2001	32,824,088		736,938		4,932,835		720,721	
2002	27,907,139		694,349		3,526,243		564,222	
2003	27,849,443		730,137		3,463,108		457,260	
2004	30,781,330	7,978,000	714,820	283,000	4,208,240	559,000	559,506	281,000

Source: *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, 1985–2004*. U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 1985–2004.

Table 3. Percent Status Adjusted Among Korean Immigrants Admitted, 1997–2002

Fiscal Year	Total immigrants Admitted	Status Adjusted	Percent Adjusted
1997	14,239	6,698	47.04
1998	14,268	6,560	45.98
1999	12,840	4,637	36.11
2000	15,830	8,498	53.68
2001	20,742	14,253	68.72
2002	21,021	14,380	68.41
Total	98,940	55,026	55.62

Source: *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, 1997–2002*. U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 1997–2002.

Table 4. Percent Immigrants Admitted by Status Adjusted, Categories, and Country of Citizenship, 2002

Country of Citizenship	Total Immigrants	Status Adjusted	Percent Status Adjusted	Temporary Visitors	Percent Temporary Visitors
China	61,282	29,449	48.1%	4,924	16.7%
Hong Kong	6,090	1,765	29.0%	327	18.5%
Japan	8,301	4,679	56.4%	513	11.0%
Korea	21,021	14,380	68.4%	4,670	32.5%
Taiwan	9,836	5,551	56.4%	1,223	22.0%
Vietnam	33,627	15,779	46.9%	544	3.4%
All Asian Countries	342,099	179,410	52.4%	29,389	16.4%
All Countries	1,063,732	679,305	63.9%	98,026	14.4%

Source: *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, 2002*, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2002.

Table 5. Students and Spouses & Children Admitted by Country of Citizenship, 1998–2004

Fiscal Year	Korea		Japan		China	
	Students	Spouses & Children	Students	Spouses & Children	Students	Spouses & Children
1998	46,274	7,074	83,192	2,450	54,617	5,251
1999	44,693	7,871	82,655	2,679	57,281	5,826
2000	57,224	9,211	91,048	3,047	68,628	6,072
2001	63,646	9,452	95,201	3,353	73,823	6,632
2002	67,145	10,030	87,478	3,437	68,722	3,799
2003	74,115	10,986	81,558	3,257	56,870	4,578
2004	78,926	10,653	77,044	3,270	63,940	4,536

Source: *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, 1998–2004*, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 1998–2004.

Table 6. Temporary Workers and Spouses & Children Admitted by Country of Citizenship

Fiscal Year	Korea		Japan		China	
	Temporary Workers	Spouses & Children	Temporary Workers	Spouses & Children	Temporary Workers	Spouses & Children
1998	3,615	1,421	12,064	3,049	10,100	3,532
1999	5,134	2,739	14,045	3,224	13,347	4,658
2000	7,058	3,570	15,768	3,457	17,410	5,382
2001	8,534	4,201	16,626	3,734	19,332	5,868
2002	9,767	4,396	16,903	3,799	18,544	5,945
2003	11,094	4,947	17,118	3,257	14,743	4,877
2004	11,291	5,257	18,465	4,232	17,024	5,491

Source: *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, 1998–2004*, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 1998–2004.

Table 7. Exchange Visitors and Spouses & Children Admitted by Country of Citizenship, 1998–2004

Fiscal Year	Korea		Japan		China	
	Exchange Visitors	Spouses & Children	Exchange Visitors	Spouses & Children	Exchange Visitors	Spouses & Children
1998	4,389	4,101	11,608	5,775	8,408	3,789
1999	5,419	4,548	12,195	5,610	8,555	4,524
2000	7,260	5,854	13,042	5,965	10,002	5,121
2001	8,856	6,788	13,411	5,784	10,383	5,218
2002	9,951	6,561	12,684	5,487	9,795	4,395
2003	11,421	7,373	12,733	5,394	7,890	3,188
2004	12,339	7,074	12,336	5,119	10,464	2,854

Source: *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, 1998–2004*, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 1998–2004.

Table 8. Intracompany Transferees, Spouses, Children Admitted by Country of Citizenship, 1998–2004

Fiscal Year	Korea		Japan		China	
	Intraco Transfer	Spouses & Children	Intraco Transfer	Spouses & Children	Intraco Transfer	Spouses & Children
1998	3,217	2,367	32,018	19,413	5,137	2,560
1999	3,252	2,334	32,584	19,568	4,449	2,348
2000	4,180	2,857	34,527	19,906	4,567	2,511
2001	4,654	2,976	34,821	20,188	4,570	2,436
2002	4,769	3,138	31,044	18,311	4,572	2,433
2003	4,519	2,960	29,176	17,445	4,187	2,196
2004	4,779	3,063	30,807	17,922	4,775	2,532

Source: *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, 1998–2004*, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 1998–2004.

Table 9. Sex Ratio of Immigrants Admitted by Age Group and Country of Birth, 2001

	All Immigrants	China	Korea	Japan	Philippines	United Kingdom	Germany	Canada
All Ages	81.2	67.7	76.0	36.9	66.2	131.1	83.8	92.6
Under 5 years	82.9	9.7	119.4	85.8	112.5	1110.3	96.4	116.7
5-9 years	103.3	102.5	109.3	110.1	102.7	107.3	115.2	102.9
10-14 years	104.4	105.5	109.8	100.0	107.4	97.1	115.4	102.5
15-19 years	102.0	108.9	116.3	92.3	101.0	103.1	75.8	94.4
20-24 years	70.0	44.2	62.0	17.8	54.1	89.2	29.1	64.3
25-29 years	68.4	42.6	28.2	14.3	38.5	119.4	53.6	72.6
30-34 years	82.8	61.1	50.7	26.5	55.7	145.0	90.2	92.7
35-39 years	83.3	97.0	76.0	34.9	65.9	150.3	107.7	98.9
40-44 years	77.7	83.0	81.8	48.6	64.4	150.2	103.7	90.4
45-49 years	78.7	86.9	97.4	81.3	60.0	151.8	109.9	101.0
50-54 years	77.0	87.8	125.7	112.2	67.3	153.0	88.7	109.6
55-59 years	68.6	74.3	82.2	122.0	64.6	169.1	79.0	116.4
60-64 years	65.9	59.7	65.0	91.7	67.1	150.5	89.2	108.4
65-69 years	73.5	88.2	52.8	69.0	65.5	124.1	92.9	126.1
70-74 years	72.3	111.0	58.7	51.7	55.5	106.7	68.8	140.0
75-79 years	69.6	98.4	65.5	30.0	42.5	107.4	50.0	116.7
80 years and over	60.4	82.0	72.7	42.9	54.4	42.6	23.1	25.0

Note: Sex ratio is the number of men per hundred women. Source: *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics 2001*, U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Table 13.

Table 10. Population in the United States by Race/Ethnicity, 1990-2000

	1990		2000		1990-2000 Percent Change
	Number	Percent %	Number	Percent %	
TOTAL	248,709,873	100.00	281,421,906	100.00	13.15
WHITE	199,686,070	80.29	211,460,626	75.14	5.90
BLACK	29,986,060	12.06	34,658,190	12.32	15.58
HISPANIC/LATINO	22,354,059	8.99	35,305,818	12.55	57.94
ASIAN	6,908,638	2.77	10,242,998	3.64	48.26
Korean	798,848	0.32	1,076,872	0.38	34.80
Asian Indian	815,447	0.33	1,678,765	0.60	105.87
Chinese	1,645,472	0.66	2,435,585	0.86	47.84
Filipino	1,406,770	0.57	1,850,314	0.66	31.53
Japanese	847,562	0.34	796,700	0.28	-6.00
Vietnamese	614,547	0.25	1,122,528	0.40	82.66
PACIFIC ISLANDER	365,024	0.15	398,835	0.14	9.26

NOTE #1: Hispanic/Latino is not a racial category. It may encompass one or more races and/or ethnicities. Therefore, the sum of our population figures may exceed 100%.

NOTE #2: The data on race and ethnicity reflect only single race members.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Census, 1990, 2000.

Table 11. Employment by Sector by Race, Hispanic category, and Asian ethnicity, 2000
[Employed Civilian Population 16 Years and above]

United States	Private Sector	Government Sector	Self-employed Sector
Total Population	75.3%	14.6%	10.1%
White Alone	74.8%	14.1%	11.1%
Black or African American	74.2%	21.2%	4.6%
American Indian and Alaskan Native alone	70.3%	22.1%	7.6%
Asian Alone	77.3%	12.3%	10.4%
Asian Indian alone	79.1%	10.8%	10.1%
Chinese alone	76.7%	12.8%	10.5%
Filipino alone	80.4%	14.6%	5.0%
Japanese alone	69.9%	18.8%	11.3%
Korean alone	68.1%	9.2%	22.7%
Vietnamese alone	81.5%	8.2%	10.4%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	78.1%	15.4%	6.4%
Some other race alone	84.0%	9.8%	6.2%
Two or more races	78.3%	13.0%	8.7%
Hispanic or Latino	81.8%	11.2%	7.0%
Non Hispanic White	74.5%	14.2%	11.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census of Population and Housing.

Table 12. Educational Attainment by Race, Hispanic category, and Asian ethnicity, 2000
[Bachelor's Degree or above, People 25 Years and above]

United States	
Total Population	24.4%
White Alone	26.1%
Black of African American	14.3%
American Indian and Alaskan Native alone	11.5%
Asian Alone	44.1%
Asian Indian alone	63.9%
Chinese alone	48.1%
Filipino alone	43.8%
Japanese alone	41.9%
Korean alone	43.8%
Vietnamese alone	19.4%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	13.8%
Some other race alone	7.3%
Two or more races	19.6%
Hispanic or Latino	10.4%
Non Hispanic White	27.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census of Population and Housing.

Table 13. Median Household Income (\$) by Race, Hispanic category, and Asian ethnicity, 2000
[Households]

United States	
Total Population	\$41,994
White Alone	44,687
Black or African American	29,423
American Indian and Alaskan Native alone	30,599
Asian Alone	51,908
Asian Indian alone	63,669
Chinese alone	51,444
Filipino alone	60,570
Japanese alone	52,060
Korean alone	40,037
Vietnamese alone	45,085
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	42,717
Some other race alone	32,694
Two or more races	35,587
Hispanic or Latino	33,676
Non Hispanic White	45,367

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census of Population and Housing.

Table 14. Per Capita Income (\$) by Race, Hispanic category, and Asian ethnicity, 2000
[Total Population]

United States	
Total Population	\$21,587
White Alone	23,918
Black or African American	14,437
American Indian and Alaskan Native alone	12,893
Asian Alone	21,823
Asian Indian alone	27,514
Chinese alone	23,756
Filipino alone	21,267
Japanese alone	30,075
Korean alone	18,805
Vietnamese alone	15,655
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	15,054
Some other race alone	10,813
Two or more races	13,405
Hispanic or Latino	12,111
Non Hispanic White	24,819

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census of Population and Housing.

Table 15. Poverty Rate by Race, Hispanic category, and Asian ethnicity, 2000
[Population for which poverty was determined]

United States	
Total Population	12.0%
White Alone	8.9%
Black or African American	23.7%
American Indian and Alaskan Native alone	24.8%
Asian Alone	12.4%
Asian Indian alone	9.6%
Chinese alone	13.2%
Filipino alone	6.2%
Japanese alone	9.5%
Korean alone	14.4%
Vietnamese alone	15.8%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	17.0%
Some other race alone	23.9%
Two or more races	17.7%
Hispanic or Latino	22.1%
Non Hispanic White	7.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census of Population and Housing.

Table 16. Percent of Persons in Linguistically Isolated Households by Race and Ethnicity, 2000

United States	
Total Population	4.1%
White Alone	2.5%
Black or African American	1.3%
American Indian and Alaskan Native alone	5.4%
Asian Alone	26.5%
Asian Indian alone	10.8%
Chinese alone	35.3%
Filipino alone	11.1%
Japanese alone	21.7%
Korean alone	41.0%
Vietnamese alone	46.1%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	6.2%
Some other race alone	26.6%
Two or more races	12.4%
Hispanic or Latino	26.4%
Non Hispanic White	1.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census of Population and Housing.

Table 17-1. Nativity by Age and by Hispanic category and Asian ethnicity, 2000 [Total Population]

	Total Population	White Alone	Hispanic	Asian	Asian Indian
Under 18 years	72,142,757	49,547,420	12,264,210	2,433,891	408,520
% Native	95.6%	97.5%	85.8%	73.2%	70.9%
% Foreign born	4.4%	2.5%	14.2%	26.8%	29.1%
18 years & over	209,279,149	161,806,305	22,974,271	7,737,929	1,236,990
% Native	86.7%	92.5%	45.9%	17.8%	9.3%
% Foreign born	13.3%	7.5%	54.1%	82.2%	90.7%
Foreign born	27,901,599	12,135,165	12,421,983	6,360,427	1,121,997
% Naturalized	43.0%	46.0%	30.2%	52.2%	41.1%
% Not a citizen	57.0%	54.0%	69.8%	47.8%	58.9%
Under 18 years	72,142,757	49,547,420	12,264,210	2,433,891	408,520

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census of Population and Housing.

Table 17-2. Nativity by Age and by Hispanic category and Asian ethnicity, 2000 [Total Population]

	Chinese	Filipino	Japanese	Korean	Vietnamese
Under 18 years	517,722	412,496	96,023	260,128	299,168
% Native	75.8%	78.2%	73.4%	59.5%	72.7%
% Foreign born	24.2%	21.8%	26.6%	40.5%	27.3%
18 years & over	1,905,248	1,451,624	699,028	812,554	811,039
% Native	16.5%	19.3%	58.7%	10.4%	5.9%
% Foreign born	83.5%	80.7%	41.3%	89.6%	94.1%
Foreign born	1,591,225	1,171,482	288,643	728,136	763,312
% Naturalized	55.1%	63.8%	27.3%	51.7%	60.7%
% Not a citizen	44.9%	36.2%	72.7%	48.3%	39.3%
Under 18 years	517,722	412,496	96,023	260,128	299,168

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census of Population and Housing.

Table 18. Number of Korean Firms and Total Revenues Generated, 1972, 1977, 1987, 1997

Year	Number of Firms	Total Revenues (\$1,000)	Average Revenue per Firm (\$)	Percent Increase		
				Number of Firms (%)	Total Revenues (%)	Average Revenue (%)
1972	1,201	64,839	53,986	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1977	8,504	554,040	65,151	608.0	754.5	20.7
1987	69,304	7,082,255	110,849	715.0	1,286.5	70.1
1997	135,571	45,936,497	338,837	95.6	498.0	205.7

Source: U.S. Economic Census, 1972, 1977, 1987, 1997

Moonsong Oh, "Formation and Growth of Korean American Economy," in *100 Year History of Korean Immigration to America*, ed. -Young Yu, (Los Angeles: Korean American United Foundation, 2002), 149-158.

Table 19. Korean Establishments in Koreatown and Los Angeles Metropolitan Area by Type, 2001

Type of Business	Number of Establishments		Percent in Koreatown
	Koreatown	Los Angeles Metro Area	
Community Service Centers	41	66	62.12%
Community Associations	162	307	52.76%
Hospital/Doctors' Offices	410	1074	38.18%
Attorney at Law Offices	193	294	65.65%
Acupuncture/Herbal Medicine	204	388	52.58%
Korean Banks	37	67	55.22%
CPA Offices	184	245	75.10%
Seminaries	12	30	40.00%
Korean Churches (Protestant)	122	558	21.86%
Catholic Churches	3	14	21.43%
Buddhist Temples	23	32	71.88%
Construction/Architect/Carpentry	183	361	50.69%
Night Clubs/Room Salons/Bars	41	62	66.13%
Karaoke/Music Studios	23	41	56.10%
Markets/Liquor Stores	16	124	12.90%
Media (TV, Radio, Newspaper)	61	102	59.80%
Travel Agencies	116	162	71.60%
Moving Companies	32	250	12.80%
Bookstores	34	63	53.97%

SOURCE: 2001-2002 *Korean Yellowpage*, Los Angeles, CA: InfoKorea, Inc., 2002. Eui-Young Yu, et. al, "Emerging Diversity: Los Angeles' Koreatown, 1990-2000," *Amerasia Journal* 30-1 (2004): 25-52. Note: Koreatown is defined as those areas covered by the following mail zip codes: 90004, 90005, 90006, 90010, 90019, 90020, 90036, and 90057. The Los Angeles Metropolitan Area here refers to the area covered by five counties (Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura).