

DOCUMENT RESUME

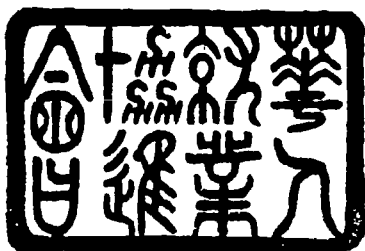
ED 071 442

EM 010 690

AUTHOR Fong, Katheryn M.
TITLE FCC Oral Arguments of the Chinese Media Committee.
INSTITUTION Chinese for Affirmative Action, San Francisco, Calif.
Chinese Media Committee.
PUB DATE 8 Jan 73
NOTE 13p.; Speech presented to the Federal Communications
Commission's Hearings on Children's Television
(Washington, D.C., January 8-10, 1973)
EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.65 HC-\$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Chinese Americans; Commercial Television; Cultural
Background; Cultural Images; *Ethnic Stereotypes;
*Programing (Broadcast); *Self Concept;
*Television
IDENTIFIERS *San Francisco

ABSTRACT

Monitoring of television programs has revealed that few programs present Chinese characters. The Chinese which are represented in television shows perpetuate stereotypes: either pig-tailed hatchet-killers or the clever, intelligent Charlie Chan. The networks have ignored both the large body of Chinese myths and the contribution of Chinese in American, e.g., building the railroads. Broadcasters have failed to perform public ascertainment within ethnic communities and rationalize this shirking of responsibility by reviving the placid stereotype of Charlie Chan. This stereotype keeps Chinese in their place in white society by not allowing Chinese to behave aggressively or outspokenly. San Francisco has the largest Chinese community in proportion to its total population (8.2%), but even here no responsible programing on China has been shown. Correspondence between the Chinese Media Committee and CBS Television is appended in regard to two CBS programs, "Anna and the King" and "The Chan Clan." CBS replies that Asian-Americans were consulted in preparing the programs. (JK)



CHINESE FOR AFFIRMATIVE ACTION (CAA)

669 CLAY STREET, 3/F.
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94111
(415) 398-8212

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRO-
DUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM
THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIG-
INATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPIN-
IONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY
REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDU-
CATION POSITION OR POLICY

FCC ORAL ARGUMENTS JANUARY 8, 9, 10, 1973

My name is Katheryn M. Fong, Community Coordinator of the Chinese Media Committee of Chinese for Affirmative Action - a community based organization dedicated to eliminating injustices against the Chinese in America and to advocating for increased employment opportunities for Chinese.

The Chinese Media Committee came into existence in late 1969 as the result of concern and frustration in the San Francisco Chinese community because of the plethora of negative Hollywood stereotypes of Chinese and the dearth of programming relevant to Asian-American people. For the last three years, the Chinese Media Committee has been active in the production of local origination television and radio programs in the San Francisco Bay Area.

However, we have barely scratched the surface of anti-Chinese defamation and the stereotyping and distortion of Chinese and Chinese-Americans in the media. We have been most disturbed by the ethnic content or lack of it in children's programming. In programs specifically aimed at children, very few Asian characters are visible and those that are included perpetuate the same stereotypes as adult media have presented of Asians. Thus, weekday afternoon children's programming offers Chinese villains with long pigtailed, sinuous eyes, with hatchets in hand fighting the "good guys" and frightening children. If the Chinese are not portrayed as villains, then the other extreme image is that of the super hero, Charlie Chan, who is defined by whites in one dimensional terms as intelligent, wise, and non-aggressive. The CBS children's cartoon series, The Amazing Chan and the Chan Clan, is an example of

ED 071442

EM 010 690

the stereotype that presents Chinese as so perfect as to be inhuman. Unfortunately, these stereotypes that restrict the actions and behavior of Asians are accepted as positive images. The attached correspondence clarifies the points at issue between the Chinese community and the Chan Clan producers who had already decided to broadcast the series to the children's audience long before consulting with any Chinese-Americans. (See Newsweek Magazine, May 22, 1972)

The one question that has been churning in the minds of Asian-Americans is, "Why the revival of Charlie Chan?" Why does CBS, the network that produced Misunderstanding China, the hour-long documentary on the negative stereotypes of China and the Chinese, broadcast The Amazing Chan and the Chan Clan as their contribution to presenting Chinese to American children? Why has the history of Chinese in America and the culture of Chinese-Americans been ignored? Why does an episode of NBC's cartoon series, Around the World in 80 Days try to teach children about the Trans-continental Railroad and its importance to the development of the American West without a single mention of the Chinese laborers who built the iron roads through the Sierra Nevada mountains? Why haven't Chinese folktales like "Monkey and The Journey to the West" been translated into a culturally enlightening series for children in America since these stories have fascinated and entertained Chinese children for centuries? Why haven't Chinese-American authors and writers, teachers and artists been consulted by broadcasters for ideas in children's programming that will give ethnic understanding and communicate differences and similarities in the mosaic ethnic society that is America?

The conclusion we have reached is that white broadcasters have failed to perform public ascertainment within ethnic communities and rationalize this shirking of responsibility by reviving the placid stereotype of Charlie Chan. Chinese have been kept in their place through the Chan stereotype and any aggressive or outspoken behavior by Chinese is criticized as out of the norm and therefore negative in the judgment of whites. The result of this stereotyping has been identity insecurity

by Asian-Americans; a kind of schizoid reflection of their place in American society.

Since San Francisco comprises the highest percentage of Chinese population in relation to its total population, 58,626 or 8.2 percent, than any other city in the nation; it is tragic that the networks have not requested community consultation from these Chinese-Americans when purporting to present material on Chinese-Americanism

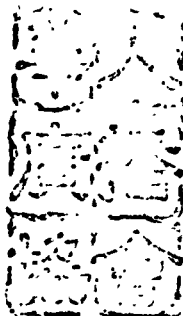
The Action for Children's Television proposal to establish children's programming on a daily basis with a minimum of 14 hours a week, has the inherent potential of stimulating both local and national broadcasters to seek new ideas and perform thorough ascertainsments in ethnic communities. Figures compiled in November 1971 by the San Francisco Unified School District show that 22% of the enrollment in the public schools is Asian, yet a study conducted by the Committee on Children's Television in December 1972 reveals that only 3% of a Saturday's children programming involved any Asian images.

There are over 435,000 Chinese in America, yet what do you know about the Chinese-Americans? Has the media presented a variety of contrasting images of us for you to understand our joys, our dreams, our pains, our successes and our failures? Do the broadcasters know about the Chinese Historical Society, the Kearny Street Workshop, the Chiang Ch'ing Dance Troupe, the Visual Communications Center, or the Frank Chins/Lawson Inadas/Diana Changs of the published Asian-American authors?

The FCC has the opportunity to open the lines of communication between the networks and the ethnic communities by enforcing the rule of affirmative community ascertainment and asking that the media disseminators satisfy the needs and requirements of their audience, which happens to include non-white children.

The topic of these hearings has had children as the focal issue. I hope that the Commission will take under serious consideration the children of America who are black, brown, red, yellow and white. Children should be allowed to feel proud

of their ethnic heritage and not have to cringe before the televised images that Hollywood decides best fits the race stereotype. Children of one ethnic background could then appreciate and understand the differences of other ethnic peoples and cultures. Simultaneously, these youngsters could grasp the similarities of human emotion that all children share no matter what their ethnic background. In the midwestern homes of America, it could be such a gratifying experience if white children who have little or no contact with Asian-American children could watch television programs that portrayed cultural diversity and revealed the richness of America's ethnic heterogeneity.



CHINESE MEDIA COMMITTEE
T. V. ENGLISH PROJECT

669 CLAY STREET
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94111
(415) 398-8212

M. Lia
September

加省三藩市企李街六六九號 電話:(四一五)三九八-八二一二

October 20, 1972

Mr. John Schneider
President - Broadcasting
CBS
51 West 52nd Street
New York, N.Y. 10019

Dear Mr. Schneider:

The Chinese Media Committee is concerned about two CBS series now being broadcast on national television. Anna and the King of Siam and The Amazing Chan and the Chan Clan are presently transmitting images of Asians to millions of Americans.

The condescending plot situation of Anna and the King, a white teacher going to an Asian country to "educate" the Thai people, is nothing more than a repetition of the white supremacy theme. Ancient Thai culture and the Thai people are made the object of ridicule and laughter, while the white teacher is ever so patiently standing by to save the ignorant heathens from themselves.

In this enlightened era of political rapproachment between the East and West, the series could have presented to America an insight into the rich and elegant culture of Thailand and shown the uniqueness of the Thai people so that viewers would be educated to the great differences between the Thai and other Asian cultures and people.

The Hannah-Barbera Chan Clan series is a children's show that is watched by many youngsters around the country who have had little or no contact at all with Asian-Americans. The young, impressionable viewing audience does not discriminate between the televised image and the world defined as their reality. The series does not explain why the ten children of Chan Clan have no mother; nor do the Chan children ever interact with other children - white or ethnics - in the series. The media continues to isolate generations of Chinese - Americans as being "different".

An English language teaching series produced in collaboration with KPIX, CHANNEL 5, PUBLIC AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT and a volunteer Community Task Force.

Funded by: HEW - OFFICE OF EDUCATION and the SAN FRANCISCO FOUNDATION
Grantee Agency: CHINESE FOR AFFIRMATION ACTION

Mr. John Schneider
October 20, 1972
Page 2

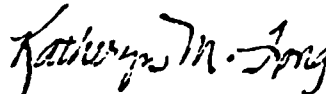
Chan Clan is an exploitation of the 1930's and 40's Charlie Chan image. "Charlie" has been dropped from the title, but the character is the same kowtowing detective intoning stilted, fortune-cookie English spoken in proverbs. No wonder Americans of Asian descent are told patronizingly, "Oh, your English is so good!" Good for what? "Good" compared to the media stereotype of how we speak?

Irvin Paik, a Japanese-American actor, has written, "Where does the child see the Asian as a human being? Nowhere as often as he sees him as a fool. The white child learns that Asians are subjects for laughter, but what does the Asian child learn? Does he learn that he is a fool and so rejects his Asian identity to "join" his white friends? Does he learn that he is a fool and so hides from his white friends? But why must he be pushed into these corners?

"Producers of films and TV that blatantly parade stereotypes have defended their creations by saying that white people are depicted in degrading situations also. That's true, but for every bad white image there are ten good ones to shift the balance. Whereas a single caricature of a white person is accepted as an exaggerated truth, a stereotype is accepted as the whole and complete truth about all Asians."

Broadcasters, producers, and sponsors must achieve a sensitivity towards the pride and dignity of Asians and realize that the perpetuated demeaning stereotyping of Asians is an insult to people who desire no more than to be portrayed as human beings with the same emotions and needs for respect as all mankind.

Very truly yours,



Katheryn M. Fong
Community Coordinator

KMF/cy

copies to:

Sally Williams - Committee on Children's TV, San Francisco
Al Kramer, esq. - Citizens Communications Center, Washington, D.C.
Paul Louie - Human Relations Commission, Los Angeles
George Takai - Japanese American Citizens League (JACL)
Nicholas Johnson - Federal Communications Commission (FCC)
Edison Uno - Community Coalition for Media Change, San Francisco
Len Schlosser - Community Affairs KPIX-TV, San Francisco
Joe Barbera - Hannah-Barbera Productions



CHINESE MEDIA COMMITTEE

T. V. ENGLISH PROJECT

669 CLAY STREET

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94111

(415) 398-8212

加省三藩市企李街六六九號 電話:(四一五) 三九八-八二一二

November 30, 1972

Mr. John Schneider
President
Broadcasting
CBS
51 West 52nd Street
New York, New York 10019

Dear Mr. Schneider:

The Chinese Media Committee is delighted that Anna and the King of Siam has been cancelled.

However, we are still concerned that the Amazing Chan and the Chan Clan has not been altered nor improved, or totally cancelled. As I stated in my letter to you of October 20, 1972, the racial subtleties which stereotype and isolate Chinese-Americans are perpetuated in Chan Clan.

Furthermore, as a children's program, the series is not only a negative model for our Asian Children to emulate, but gives the white child little to respect and relate to for interaction with Asian-American children. Nowhere in the series do the "Chan" children ever interact with other children-white or ethnics. Are Chinese-American children so "foreign" that the media continues to isolate them even in a cartoon series?

Basically, the "crime-solving detective" format is poor subject matter for children to digest. If a Chinese-oriented cartoon series is desired, why not tap the wealth of Chinese folktales and legends that have entertained and fascinated generations of children for centuries? These ancient stories of adventure and intrigue have enthralled Chinese children as the Arabian Nights and Greek mythology have captivated Western children.

An English language teaching series produced in collaboration with KPIX, CHANNEL 5, PUBLIC AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT and a volunteer Community Task Force.

*Funded by: HEW - OFFICE OF EDUCATION and the SAN FRANCISCO FOUNDATION
Grantee Agency: CHINESE FOR AFFIRMATION ACTION*

Mr. John Schneider
November 30, 1972
Page Two

If this suggestion appeals to you, the Chinese Media Committee would be more than willing to offer you technical assistance in developing such a cartoon series that would be both entertaining and culturally educational.

I look forward to your comments and response to these critical remarks and constructive suggestions.

Very truly yours,


Katheryn M. Fong
Community Coordinator

KMF/cy

cc: Sally Williams-Committee on Children's TV, San Francisco
Al Kramer, Esq.-Citizens Communications Center, Washington, D.C.
Nicholas Johnson-Federal Communications Commission, Washington D.C.
Phil Chin-Office of Asian-American Affairs, HEW
Wayne Nishioka-U.S. Commission on Civil Rights
Joe Barbera-Hannah-Barbera Productions

DEC 15 1972

CBS TELEVISION NETWORK

A Division of Columbia Broadcasting System, Inc.
61 West 52 Street
New York, New York 10019
(212) 765-4321

Robert D. Wood, President

Dear Miss Fong:

This letter is in response to yours of October 20 and November 30 to Mr. Schneider. Hopefully, that which follows will indicate our sincere interest in the points you raised.

When we originally selected ANNA AND THE KING as part of our fall schedule, we were aware of the unhappiness caused by previous treatments of Margaret Landon's material. With that awareness, before the series went into production, various CBS executives in Los Angeles in Programming, Production and Program Practices set up a series of meetings with members of the Asian-American community. Included in these meetings were representatives of The National Cultural Affairs Committee of the Japanese-American Citizen's League, The Commission on Human Relations of the County of Los Angeles, The Asian-American Studies Group at UCLA and The Brotherhood of Artists. They viewed the pilot film (the one which was shown as the initial episode of the series) and offered a number of most helpful suggestions. Their prime concern was especially meritorious and was adopted as one of our standards: In the course of the series, Anna should and would learn at least as much from her exposure to the Siamese culture as the Siamese would learn from their exposure to her. The program sought to show how much differing cultures have to share, certainly not that one is superior to the other.

We feel that on balance, we achieved that aim. I think you should also know that the writers and producers, seeking story material with more historical accuracy than what was available in Mrs. Landon's recollections, went to other sources. Much of the inspiration for various episodes was drawn from Mongkut, The King of Siam by Abbot

DEC 15 1972

2

Low Moffat and the very comprehensive article, "King Mongkut in Perspective," by A. B. Griswold.

You're absolutely right that a wealth of material remains to be tapped for American television audiences to gain new insights into the Thai people's culture. Unfortunately, the series failed to attract an audience of sufficient size to warrant its continuation. As you're aware, the last episode will air on Sunday, December 31.

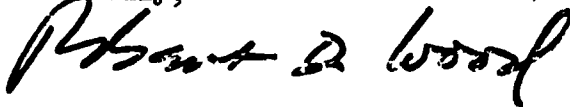
As to THE AMAZING CHAN AND THE CHAN CLAN, this series, like ANNA, went into production only after consultations with the same Asian-American groups and spokesmen with whom we maintained close and continuing contact. CHAN, obviously, is a lighthearted escapist program for youngsters. Nonetheless, present in the entertainment are a number of sub-themes which should not be overlooked: The attitude toward the father is clearly one of respect. CHAN is shown to be smarter and wiser than most of his Caucasian associates. Beyond that, if there's a social effect stemming from the series, we would hope that CBS' CHAN might begin to replace some of the abrasive imagery created by the old Charlie Chan character. It's just possible that some of your own dissatisfaction might well stem more from a remembrance of that earlier stereotype than from our 1972 cartoon version.

One final point about both ANNA and CHAN. Our Los Angeles people know Irvin Paik, the actor whom you quote, and have gone over most of these same points with him. His contributions have been helpful and welcome.

We shall continue to do our best, even though we cannot hope always to please everyone in our heterogeneous audience, nor for that matter, every group representing the various segments of that audience.

Please accept my gratitude for expressing your views and for giving me an opportunity to go on record with our position.

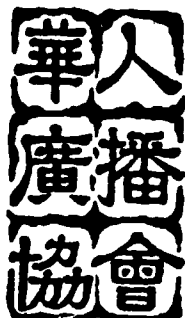
Cordially,



Miss Katheryn M. Fong
Community Coordinator
Chinese Media Committee
669 Clay Street
San Francisco, California 94111

cc John A. Schneider

December 12, 1972



CHINESE MEDIA COMMITTEE
T. V. ENGLISH PROJECT

669 CLAY STREET
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94111
(415) 398-8212

加省三藩市企李街六六九號 電話:(四一五) 三九八-八二一二

December 27, 1972

Robert D. Wood
President
CBS Television Network
51 West 52 Street
New York, New York 10019

Dear Mr. Wood:

It is apparent from your letter of December 12, 1972, that you are very much aware of what Charlie Chan symbolizes:

1. "the attitude of respect for the father"
2. "smarter and wiser than most of his Caucasian associates"
3. "CBS' Chan might begin to replace some of the abrasive imagery created by the old Charlie Chan character."

Unless you are an Asian who has had to live with these limiting, shallow and stereotyped categorizations, you may not understand why these so-called "positive" images are as offensive as the "Step-N-Fetchit" stereotype is to blacks in America. Neither are realistic in terms of human interaction, and the Chan "qualities" were devised by a condescending Caucasian who boxed-in succeeding generations of Chinese-Americans into this single dimensional mold. White society found the stereotype convenient to perpetuate since it effectively prevented the Chinese in America from aggressively asserting themselves.

An active, outspoken eighth grader of Chinese descent lamented last semester that his white teacher was puzzled by his aggressiveness in class and reprimanded him with the standard phrase known to all Chinese-Americans, "Why can't you be good and behave like Chinese are supposed to?"

Smarter? Wiser? Certainly, as long as we remember our place and do not contradict white society's definition of how we should behave. The great tragedy is the media's success in convincing many people that this kowtowing caricature is acceptable.

An English language teaching series produced in collaboration with KPIX, CHANNEL 5, PUBLIC AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT and a volunteer Community Task Force.

*Funded by: HEW - OFFICE OF EDUCATION and the SAN FRANCISCO FOUNDATION
Grantee Agency: CHINESE FOR AFFIRMATION ACTION*

Robert D. Wood
December 27, 1972
Page Two

If CBS did a cartoon called "Hitler's Haus" along the same lines of "respect" and German pragmatism as your interpretation of Chan's wisdom, would that begin to replace some of the abrasive imagery created by the old Hitler and make him more acceptable to Jews? The analogy is not absurd when viewing Hitler's and Chan's destruction on specific races of people.

Chinese-Americans are attempting to educate the public to the crimes of psychological castration and social isolation that Charlie Chan has wreaked on Asia-America. Charlie Chan should not have been exhumed from the past in any children's cartoon that continues to isolate Chinese into "proper" roles and teaches all children that Chinese are still "different" and do not interact with children of other races and never have a mother.

As for your ascertainment of comments from the Asian-American community in Los Angeles, it is regretful that since Chan Clan exploits the Chinese you did not bother to solicit input from the largest Chinese community in the United States here in San Francisco. Furthermore, it is obvious that since Los Angeles and the Hollywood area are the hub of television and film production that you are asking the junkie if heroin is good or bad if you ask an actor or production consultant if his product and means of livelihood is good or bad. The networks who deal the dope and manipulate programming can always find a starving Third World person to sell his product.

However, in talking with some of those contacts in Los Angeles, it seems that they registered their comments and criticisms, which you confirm there were, so this does indicate their discomfort with the series. If your solicitation of their comments is similar to local community ascertainment as performed by stations, I can assume that what happened was several Asians were invited in to preview the series and then the studio and network justified the broadcast of the series by saying they had carried out the ascertainment.

I hope that these points will be taken under your consideration and transmitted to Hanna-Barbera so that our position can be on record.

Very truly yours,


Katheryn M. Fong
Community Coordinator

cc: John Schneider - CBS
Irvin Paik - Brotherhood of Artists, Los Angeles
Nicholas Johnson - Federal Communications Commission
Phil Chin - Office of Asian-American Affairs, HEW
Sally Williams - Committee on Children's Television, San Francisco

DEC 23 1972



HERBERT L. CARTER
Executive Director

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS

GARY DEMAREST
President

December 21, 1972

Miss Katheryn M. Fong
Chinese Media Committee
669 Clay St.
San Francisco, California 94111

Dear Katheryn:

During late August 1972, Lowell Chung-Hoon, George Takei, and I met with the Hanna Barbera people and CBS officials regarding the proposed Chan series. We talked over a number of things but substantially the series could not be stopped because too much was involved. It was agreed that the title be "The Chan Family" and the familiar term "Charlie" term would not be used.

On September after the airing of the Chan series for a few weeks, Mr. Schnebel of CBS in Los Angeles phoned me and asked me for an Asian reaction to the Chan film. For the next few weeks and up to now there have been no negative criticism of the series which I have heard of. Because of this I have not followed up and telephoned Mr. Schnebel.

I think that this is characteristic of the reaction to "The Chan Clan" on Saturday mornings. Not too much adverse criticism has surfaced. At least I am not aware of it.

Trusting that this note will describe what has been happening here in regards "The Chan Clan" I remain,

Cordially

Paul Louie
Consultant

PL/mv