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Editor's Preface

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Minority peoples, whatever their location, struggle with the process of relating to and gaining acceptance from a majority community characterized by different cultural assumptions and physical characteristics. Stories of hostility, overt discrimination, and violence usually populate the record of majority reaction to their presence. Dislocated and/or immigrant groups also generally find themselves entering a social context that includes a long-established but substantially disenfranchised population, separated from the channels of power by isolators like race, religion, and language. Even after gaining a measure of stability and toleration, however, the newcomers (in relative terms, at least) often find themselves locked in a position somewhere between inclusion and ostracism—between the dominant and the subordinate. Their subaltern status, not to mention that of the people judged to be beneath them, seems particularly unjust in a nation-state like the United States, whose diversity is so great and whose ideals promise the possibility of realized dreams to all.

The articles offered in this issue of *JAAS* analyze the experiences of Asian Americans with particular attention to the dynamics of life “in the middle.” Leslie Bow interrogates the purported achievement of social equality by Asian Americans in the Mississippi River delta, finding in its place a minority community that still occupies the space of the “partly colored.” Susie Lan Cassel examines footbinding and its historical meaning for Chinese women, while taking to task the use of this custom as a

literary device by authors who too frequently combine their advocacy for equality with cultural ignorance. Keith Osajima seeks to identify the key ingredients that inspire dedication to informed activism in Asian American young people, with the aim of positing a strategy for developing this “next generation” of leaders. Through their efforts, Bow, Cassel, and Osajima effectively move the discussion beyond complaints of victimization and multicultural pretension toward assertive models of positive change.

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