

KAs must forge multiethnic coalitions

By Edward T. Chang

Not guilty! Not guilty! Not guilty!

Racist white America spoke loud and clear who was in charge of this country. It was a total break down and failure of our judicial and democratic system. It sends a wrong message that it is OK to beat up a person as long as one wears a blue uniform.



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Burn, Baby, Burn!

Angry voices of black America spread quickly in the streets of Los Angeles as rioters and looters were engaged in the massive destruction of our communities. All of a sudden, Americans discovered the new place called "South Central Los Angeles." Synonymous with South Central Los Angeles are poverty, drugs, gangs, joblessness and despair. America has forgotten about this "foreign land" for the past 27 years since the 1965 Watts riot.

Rage! Anger! Betrayal! Abandonment!

The Korean American community was the hardest hit by the Los Angeles riot. At least 2,000 Korean-owned businesses suffered a partial or a total loss of their properties. Property damage is estimated to exceed \$350 million, which is more than 50 percent of the total damage estimated by the city of Los Angeles. Did you hear the angry voices of Korean Americans? Where were the police? Why did the National Guard come in so late? Who is going to protect the life, liberty, and property of an individual American citizen?

Have you heard the desperate cries of penniless Korean Americans who lost their entire life savings? "I did not work 14 hours a day for 365 days a year for the past 10 years to watch my dream go up in smoke." Somebody, please explain.

Eyes on South Central Los Angeles!

Image is everything as the destruction, devastation and cries of hungry babies in South Central Los Angeles demand foods, clothes and other necessity items into South Central Los Angeles. Some white Americans will visit South Central Los Angeles for the first time. Will this be the beginning of the construction of a new America?

Triple Oppression!

It is extremely difficult to be a Korean American in Los Angeles in May 1992. Promises of the American dream are gone. For some, it may be gone forever. Korean Americans were victimized by several days of senseless violence and destruction. Their stores were looted, burned and firebombed. At least one Korean American was killed and more than 50 were wounded during the riot.

The Los Angeles Police Department prides itself on being an organization that will "protect and serve" its citizens. Again, where was the police? Were they at the Beverly Center protecting the rich, white American-owned properties? Somebody, please explain why the LAPD abandoned the Korean American community!

The Korean American community also was victimized by the press that portrayed Korean Americans as an invisible minority. The media worked hard to present the 1992 Los Angeles riot as a Korean-black issue. It is a total distortion of reality. The main causes of the riots were the pervasive racism and poverty in urban America that has been neglected by the Reagan-Bush administrations of the 1980s and 1990s. It is both a race and class issue that stems from white racism. Wake up, America. The time has come to cure our sickness of society's ills — racism.

Build, Baby, Build!

We cannot afford to rebuild Los Angeles as it was before. We must build a new America that is inclusive of all people regardless of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and nationality. Let's remember that differences are beautiful.

The Korean American community of Los Angeles will bounce back from this tragedy. Korean Americans must take a leadership role in building understanding and forging coalitions between different races, ethnicities and creeds.

Edward Chang is a professor of ethnic and women's studies at Cal Poly Pomona.