

〔国際学研究フォーラム講演録 2〕

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## Media, Film-making and Social Movements

報告者：李 恩子 Lee Eun Ja

(Professor, School of International Studies, Kwansai Gakuin University)

2018年6月19日、上記のテーマでニューヨーク市在住のドキュメンタリーフィルム制作者である JT Takagi 氏を招いて講演会を開いた。Takagi 氏はアメリカで最も歴史の長い、ドキュメンタリー作品の広報、教育、人材育成を目的とする NPO Third World Newsreel のチーフディレクターとして活動しながら、ニューヨーク市立大学などでフィルム制作における音響技術などを教えている。講演会は通訳なしの英語のみということもあって主に英語を母語とする学生参加者が多かった。しかし、公民権運動から始まるアメリカ社会の貴重な映像をふんだんに使ってなされた講演は、日本の学生にも十分理解ができたと思う。質疑応答ではアメリカ社会の抱える問題についての質問やメディアの役割などについても熱い意見交換がなされた。講演の要約は以下の通りである。



Logo of the original Newsreel collective, now known as Third World Newsreel

On Tuesday, June 19<sup>th</sup> 2018, JT Takagi, an Asian American filmmaker, sound engineer, and the director of an alternative media center in NY gave a talk on “Media, Filmmaking and Social Movements: A View from Third World Newsreel”, illustrated by film clips and power point images. A long time filmmaker and activist, Ms. Takagi has made a dozen films, several which have been on national public television in the US. mostly about Asian-Americans and US-Korea relations.

Her organization, Third World Newsreel, is a nonprofit alternative media center that produces, distributes films, and trains emerging filmmakers, focusing on people of color – meaning Black and Latinx and Native American and Asian and other minority groups. This organization prioritizes these communities because in the United States, the life and history of these groups has been mostly left out of mainstream media and history. The group has also been very much involved with documenting social movements since the late 1960s and continues to produce and distribute films on critical social issues. Ms. Takagi’s talk was to look at social change and media from her organiza-

tion's point of view.

Third World Newsreel started in 1967 and at that time, was named the NEWSREEL, and its formation was spurred by the political climate of that time. The 1960s was a period of heightened social conflict, turbulence and enormous numbers of people were calling for change in the U.S. and throughout the world. In the U.S., Black Americans, along with Latinx, Asian and Native Americans, were struggling for civil and human rights, women were pressing for their rights, and by the mid-1960s, the country was also in conflict over the Vietnam War (1965-1975), which forcibly drafted thousands of young men into an unpopular and losing war. The Vietnam War was the largest and most destructive of the many struggles taking place at that time across the world, as countries that had been under colonial domination struggled for national liberation. The Vietnam War was a version of that struggle as Vietnamese fought a civil war over how their country should be run – while the U.S. intervened, in an attempt to oppose the growth of communism.

During this period, the U.S. government and mainstream media pointed to communism as the greatest danger to human kind – and framed almost all protests – from Black people picketing for their voting rights, to students rallying against the draft, as communist dangers.

Challenging this view, some of the many young filmmakers who had been filming the various protests, decided that the only way to challenge mainstream messaging was to work together to make films that would show Americans what was really happening – and to get them to become active in changing society for the better.

So, at the end of 1967, after a huge march on Washington, a group of about 60 people met and created a collective that would pool their film footage together, make films, show them and talk about them with audiences. That group called itself the NEWSREEL.

In those days – people shot on film, there was no video – there were only three television networks and there was no internet or YouTube, so there were few ways that people could be exposed to alternate viewpoints. So this new collective, Newsreel, formed in New York and quickly grew to have chapters in a dozen cities – from Boston to San Francisco and even Tokyo and Mexico City, making over 60 films between 1967 and 1973 that documented events and activities ranging from student protests, anti-Vietnam war rallies, and women's movement meetings, to the growth of the Black power movement, Latinx and Asian movements and more. The key to the group's ability to gain recognition and impact was that it filmed events and issues that were either ignored or misrepresented by mainstream media, took a clear opposing point of view – and worked aggressively to show their films and talk about them on campuses and at community groups across America.

One of the things that Newsreel documented were groups that were highly influential to the course of progressive and radical politics but were viewed in the eyes of the government and mainstream media, as “dangerous”. These were groups of Black and Latinx<sup>1)</sup> radicals like the Black Panther Party and the Young Lords Party, who felt that peaceful protests were not working, who supported communities taking control of their own neighborhoods, and demanded their right to fair treatment, decent housing, jobs, health and education, and promoted being able to defend themselves against police brutality. These groups had a huge influence on the thinking and self-image of people of color seeking change – and continue to influence people to this day – and the films that docu-

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1) “Latinx” is the current term for Latino/Latina

mented them remain influential as well.

Because of Newsreel's reputation, the group also became the underground distributors for revolutionary groups and national liberation forces – all groups and countries that the U.S. was either attacking or not dealing with – like China, Cuba, North Vietnam, and North Korea.

The late 1960s and early 1970s were also the time when modern feminism started – what is called the 2<sup>nd</sup> wave of the women's movement. The first wave was in the 1800s and early 1900s to get things like voting rights for women, but this second wave had to do with women's work, women's role in family and society and many women's consciousness raising groups formed around the country. Newsreel had a woman's caucus which made films that showed how women were organizing to change their lives – including creating the first daycare centers, protesting against the Miss America pageant as demeaning and more.

Ms. Takagi's talk then focused on media and social change as it impacted Asian-Americans. A third generation Japanese-American, she spoke about how until the 1960s, there really didn't exist a concept of "Asian-American", much less a movement. There were Chinese-Americans, Japanese-Americans, etc. – who organized pretty much separately on separate issues. As the idea of "Asian-American" came into being, heavily influenced by the Black and Latinx power movements – people came to realize that there was greater power in working together as Asians and working in solidarity with other people of color who were fighting for their rights.

The history of Asians in America has been one of discrimination – for a long time, Asians couldn't become citizens, couldn't vote, couldn't marry other races, or own property. For much of the time, Asians were also hardly ever seen in films, and when depicted, usually painfully stereotyped as Fu Manchu and Dragon Ladies. And up until the 1960s, Asian history in America was also mostly left out of history books as well, which meant that many Asian-Americans grew up without knowing their own past. With the burgeoning of the Asian-American movement, though, there were groups organizing to have Asian-American studies programs in colleges, along with Black Studies and Latinx studies, pushing for the civil rights for Asian-American communities and eventually, organizing to have the injustice of the World War II incarceration of Japanese Americans recognized by the government as an injustice – and redressed.

Newsreel, which became Third World Newsreel by the mid-1970s, along with other filmmakers, started making films that not only talked about Black and Brown<sup>2)</sup> people organizing but Asian-American history and organizing. Filmmakers like Christine Choy, who was one of the founders of Third World Newsreel made films like *From Spikes to Spindles (1976)* about Chinese American history and the growth of New York's Chinatown, while colleagues on the west coast like Visual Communications in Los Angeles, and filmmaker Loni Ding in San Francisco, also made films that exposed the hidden history of Asians in America. Many of these films become important documentaries of American history.

One seminal documentary for Asian-Americans focused on the violent discrimination that has haunted the lives of Asian-Americans from the beginning of Asian immigration to the U.S. Christine

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2) "Brown" is the current term to denote Latinx, Native American and other groups that are not Black, but are people of color.

Choy and Renee Tajima-Pena made the film *Who Killed Vincent Chin*, which was nominated for an Oscar.

This film actually helped to make change in the broader society. Completed in 1987, *Who Killed Vincent Chin* was about the killing of a young Chinese-American man in 1982, by white Detroit auto workers who thought he was Japanese – and blamed him and Japanese people for supposedly taking their jobs.

This murder – which was not the only violence against Asians, but was one of the most horrific – and the film, galvanized Asian-Americans to organize to stop racist acts against Asians, and groups formed to work on these issues – and continue to work today. Unfortunately, since that time, there have been other, also horrific acts of violence against Asians, connected to racism, xenophobia, and the post-9/11 war on terror. The post 9/11 atmosphere and the current Washington administration have sadly promoted many white Americans' fears about people who look different, and have different languages and customs.

Ms. Takagi then talked about how things have changed for media, filmmaking, and social movements.

The same organization that resulted in the formation of the different Black, Brown, Asian, women's and Lesbian and Gay (LGBTQ) movements, both inspired and was inspired by the growth of independent filmmaking that addressed these issues. Groups formed to pressure public television networks to fund more diverse films by diverse peoples, not just films by established white filmmakers, and organizations formed to support filmmakers of color and more independent films began to be made by people of color about their own communities and histories.

However, this hasn't necessarily made a huge difference in whose films or videos were shown in theaters or on television – and this remains a problem.

Even though there is now the internet, cable and all kinds of social media – there remains the issue of “official” recognition.

A serious issue remains in U.S. media – of whose stories get told, who gets to tell those stories and who has access to show these stories to broad audiences. For this reason, there has been a recent upsurge in film groups organizing to pressure funders and distributors to help change this landscape.

The hashtag #OscarsSoWhite from 2015 was only the culmination of people's frustration that the majority of Hollywood films – that get funded and get recognition, are by white people, and the majority are about white people, with few minorities in the cast – which is not representative of the United States as a whole. And besides the people in front of the camera, there are few people of color directing and producing these films. At the same time, the #MeToo movement has shown that discrimination and harassment of women has persisted despite all the efforts made by women for equality.

But a movement that is the clear indicator of how things have not changed enough but has to – is the Black Lives Matter movement, which started in the wake of the 2013 killing of a young unarmed African-American teenager, Trayvon Martin in Florida – when his killer was acquitted of all charges. Most people of color in the US were outraged – as were many white people too, but the unjustified killings of Black men, especially by the police – have not stopped.

Finally, Ms. Takagi talked about the current Washington administration's impact on people of color and media. She talked about the current president having made outrageous comments about immigrants and women – and making policies which attack them. These comments have incited racists and anti-immigrant groups to feel discrimination is justified. A whole list of acts – from attempting to build a wall between the US and Mexico, to separating migrating families at the border, efforts to end protection of the environment, safety in the workplace and curtailing efforts to protect voting rights and human rights, and immigrant rights – have all led to endangering people's lives – but – has also led to greater numbers of people becoming active politically. This year, for example, many new community-based organizations have formed to try to stop the administration's activities, and many new, progressive women and men are running for elected offices to change the direction of the country.

But really – the problems Americans are facing are the same ones that they have been facing for decades – only just heightened now. Discrimination did not start with this U.S. administration – so the work that progressive activists and filmmakers in the US have to do is the same that it has always been – it's just needed now more than ever. So filmmakers and groups like Third World Newsreel still continue to fulfill a mission – to promote and help to make films that show the full diversity of the American people, to present a progressive view of how society could and should change – and to inspire work to make those changes in our society.