

Tapping into California's Central Valley's Hidden Wealth: Its Rich Cultural Capital

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An untapped and powerful resource exists in the Central Valley of California: the social capital and cultural richness of its people. The Central Valley is one of the most ethnically diverse regions in the United States, yet many of its people remain hidden and relatively untapped as civic participants. Harnessing the hidden energy of the Valley's rich diversity would allow for the development and utilization of the cultural capital emerging from ethnic communities throughout the Central Valley. This cultural capital and knowledge, turned to the socioeconomic advantage of the Valley's diverse communities, can be harnessed in helping increase the political¹ and economic capital² of these marginalized ethnic groups and benefit the entire Central Valley. Generally, as immigrant communities get established, they begin addressing issues that are important to creating better lives for the members of their communities. This has been the migration history of groups adapting to their new host settlement in the United States. These adaptations might include creating equal access to resources, gaining a fuller understanding of their new host society, increasing opportunities for quality education and creating working conditions paying a living wage.

This paper examines the rich ethnic diversity of the Central Valley, its ever strengthening cultural and economic capital, and the Valley's potential to harness its cultural and economic capital to create political mobilization within the region. Such political mobilization of the region's communities would allow the communities themselves to work towards resolving their social and economic concerns, and would bring much needed national attention to the region. What follows is an overview of the Valley's ethnic diversity, patterns of immigrant settlement, the ethnic contribution to the Valley's (and California's) agriculture, various barriers to settlement and different strategies that ethnic groups have developed to deal with these barriers. Finally, the paper concludes with a discussion of possibilities for political empowerment (increasing political capital) by tapping into the rich vein of cultural capital which currently exists in Valley communities. The initial steps

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1. Political capital can be conceptualized as influenced gain in both the formal and informal political institutions shaping these marginal communities. Political capital can be viewed as political empowerment, since we are specifically dealing with marginalized groups.

2. Economic capital is conceptualized as the ability to gain financial resources available for investment.

towards engaging this cultural capital involve understanding Central Valley immigrant communities and discovering the similarity of their concerns, the problems they face, and the possibilities of resolving them by working together.

Clues and Indicators of Diversity in the Central Valley

The evidence and indicators of cultural richness in the Central Valley are everywhere: in the abundant variety of spiritual centers and religious sites, the diversity within the agricultural industry, its cuisine, world languages, ethnic media outlets, and cultural and ethnic festivals. In order to better understand how harnessing cultural capital can enhance political and economic capital throughout Valley communities, it is useful to describe the current ethnographic makeup of the Valley and its historical development. By viewing these 'clues and indicators to diversity,' one begins to see a clearer picture of the abundant cultural wealth existing in the Valley and the possibilities of harnessing this wealth. These 'clues and indicators to diversity' are prevalent throughout the Valley, making the Central Valley one of the most culturally prolific regions of California.

These diversity indicators encompass linkages that go well beyond the Valley's boundaries, yet remain localized.³ These linkages go beyond state and national boundaries, connecting communities transnationally, as immigrant groups in Central Valley towns retain vital links with their villages of origin in Europe, Latin America, Asia, and Africa.⁴ Mapping the locations of these ethnic centers reveals a dramatic mosaic of mosques, temples, Sikh gurdwaras, festivals, and ethnic media outlets reaching audiences in their native languages.⁵ Diversity extends beyond nationality to encompass regional attachments, spiritual orientation, cultural practices, and language. For example, Sacramento has nine mosques that serve distinct Afghan, Iranian, and Pakistani communities, with worship services in Pushtu, Farsi, Urdu, as well as Arabic.⁶ Diversity exists within ethnic groups as well. The Sikhs are mainly Punjabis, but other Punjabis in the Central Valley are Hindus and Moslems, each with their own religious sites. Similarly, Buddhists temples represent distinct sects, including Zen, Pure Land, and Theravadan. Ethnic places of worship also serve important functions as social centers. For Koreans, Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, Khmer, Laotian, and Middle Eastern groups, churches, temples, and mosques are sites for festivals and celebrations within the Central Valley. These sites increasingly serve as cross-cultural meeting grounds, bringing together the ethnic community, as well as townspeople in the surrounding areas, providing insight into the untapped cultural capital within the Central Valley's ethnic communities. If one wanted to go around the world, one need only take a trip through the cultural mosaic which is California's Central Valley.

By mapping these spiritual and cultural centers, one gains a spatial sense of the diversity in the Valley. There exists a wide dispersion of different Mosques,

3. See MICHAEL PETER SMITH, TRANSNATIONAL URBANISM: LOCATING GLOBALIZATION 170-72, 188 (2001).

4. *Id.*

5. Examples of ethnic media resources include the thirty-five media stations offering some or all programming in Spanish.

6. Interview with leaders of Masjid Annur Mosque, in Sacramento, Cal. (Sept., 2002).

Sikh Gurdwaras and Buddhist temples in the Central Valley. There is even more diversity within the Buddhist Temples, as other sects flourish in the Vietnamese, Laotian, and Cambodian communities. Additional diversity of ethnic spiritual centers can be found in the abundance of Portuguese and Latino Catholic and Protestant churches and Greek and Russian Orthodox churches in the Central Valley. These spiritual centers play an important social and cultural role within the Valley's communities. They are used as places for learning, sharing, and community building. Many of these centers have language schools which teach both English and their home language. The Buddhist temples have long offered language instruction and martial arts for their respective ethnic communities, but now serve a larger audience beyond only Buddhists worshipers. These places of worship also engage in community building activities, through celebrations and fundraisers such as food festivals and bazaars which encompass a strong cultural component.

The concentration of immigrants is particularly pronounced in the southern part of the San Joaquin Valley, the site of America's top farming counties. The Public Policy Institute of California reports that this region has the majority of newcomers from other countries.⁷ In northern regions of the Valley, population growth comes from other parts of California or other states.⁸ The principal draw in all these areas is the demand for workers and the comparably lower cost of living. Whatever the centripetal forces drawing these populations to the Central Valley, they create a strong regional dynamism propelled by the ethnic diversity representing cultures from around the world.

Additional evidence of diversity extends to the Central Valley's agriculture industry, where producers, as well as workers, bring a decided mix of ethnic identities. The dairy sector, for example, has been the domain of Dutch and Portuguese immigrants, the latter predominately from the Azores.⁹ At one time, Punjabis accounted for producing half of the clingstone peaches used for canning.¹⁰ Croatians and Sicilians are prominent in the production of table grapes, and Armenians specialized in figs and raisins. Historically, the Japanese were important producers of peaches, nectarines, plums, apricots, and strawberries.¹¹ Farmers of Japanese descent decreased in great numbers after 2nd and 3rd generations began to gain further education and leave the agricultural sector. Southeast Asians refugees began taking the place of Japanese farmers.¹² In Fresno County alone, there are over 900 Laotian and Hmong families running small scale farm operations.¹³ These

7. HANS P. JOHNSON & JOSEPH M. HAYES, THE CENTRAL VALLEY AT A CROSSROADS: MIGRATION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS 22-23 (2004), available at http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R_1104HJR.pdf.

8. *Id.*

9. Alvin R. Graves, Azorean Portuguese: A Study of the Portuguese Dairymen in the San Joaquin Valley of California (1970) (unpublished Master's thesis, Fresno State College) (on file with Fresno State College).

10. Interview with Thomas M. Gradziel, Professor of Pomology, University of California, Davis, (Sept. 3, 1998).

11. *E.g.*, DAVID M. MASUMOTO, EPITAPH FOR PEACH: FOUR SEASONS ON MY FAMILY FARM (1995).

12. PEDRO ILLIC, THE SOUTHEAST ASIAN FARMERS IN FRESNO COUNTY STATUS REPORT (1992).

13. *Id.*

farmers are growing vegetable varieties from their Southeast Asian homelands.¹⁴ They serve the needs of their own ethnic communities as well as the internationalization of California cuisine.¹⁵ After the Vietnam War ended in 1975, many refugees from Southeast Asia found their way to Stockton, Merced, and Fresno.¹⁶ About 30,000 Hmong live in Fresno County.¹⁷ In 1982, about 830 Southeast Asian families – Hmong, Lao, Mien, Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Thai – operated small family farms on 3,579 acres in Fresno County.¹⁸ However, the Southeast Asians' production has already had an impact, as restaurateurs and consumers buy fresh produce daily from many Asian farmers in the Valley.¹⁹

The Valley's agriculture is widely recognized as the prime source of economic capital for the Central Valley and as such, is given due recognition. What has not been given its due is the *cultural* capital inherent within the Valley's ethnically diverse population. Cultural capital is revealed in the everyday presentation of a place's physical structures, a community's information flow, or something as simple as the cuisine available in a neighborhood.

The spectacular ethnic cuisine is an important indicator of diversity available in the Valley. In addition to celebrated California classics, such as Mexican tamales and enchiladas and crisp Chinese and Japanese vegetables, we now add Vietnamese avocado drinks and pho (rice noodle) seafood soup, and Punjabi clay-oven roasted chicken tikka masala.²⁰ This constant evolution of cuisine and food products reveals the patchwork of diversity in the ethnically changing communities of the Valley.

Another signal of diversity is the presence and use of the ethnic media. According to New America Media, "Ethnic media are the primary source of news and information for over half of the state's [California] new ethnic majority" where 17 million people rely on some form of ethnic media as their source of information.²¹ The presence and role of the ethnic media in the Central Valley underscores the importance and recognition of different world views in that region.²²

There are some 35 radio stations in the Central Valley that have some or all of their programs in Spanish.²³ Such stations include KNXT-TV, a Catholic Spanish-language radio station in Fresno which also provides programming in Portuguese and Hmong. *Radio Bilingüe*, another radio station in Fresno broadcasts both in Spanish and indigenous languages such as Mixtec from Mexico. *Radio*

14. *Id.*

15. ISAO FUJIMOTO & MARILU CARTER, GETTING TO KNOW THE CENTRAL VALLEY 6-7 (1998).

16. *Id.*

17. Interview with Peter Vang, Hmong Educational Leadership Foundation (2004).

18. ILLIC, *supra* note 12.

19. Interview with Peter Vang, Hmong Educational Leadership Foundation (2004).

20. FUJIMOTO & CARTER, *supra* note 15.

21. New America Media Web Site, About Us, http://news.newamericamedia.org/news/view_custom.html?custom_page_id=87 (last visited April 7, 2007).

22. Ethnic media encompasses diversity of languages in print and electronic media targeting specific ethnic groups.

23. See New America Media National Ethnic Media Directory, available at <http://news.ncmonline.com/directory>. (Last visited April 7 2007).

Campesino in Visalia focuses its programs on reaching immigrant farm workers by broadcasting updates to issues related to the agricultural fields. The varied perspectives presented by the ethnic media provide a broader portrait of the social realities of California and of the Central Valley.

Another indicator of the diversity of the Central Valley is the region's celebration of ethnic festivals. Recognizing the abundance of these unique events, the California Cultural Tourism Coalition maintains a website that includes an ethnic festivals calendar showing the details of the various festivals taking place throughout the state at any given time.²⁴ The California Auto Association (AAA) includes in its monthly magazine listings of various festivals throughout the state, including ethnic ones such as the Obon, which is celebrated by the Japanese Buddhist community throughout California.²⁵ The Obon commemorates the joining of the spirits of the living and the dead with festivities that combine street dancing and a bazaar that features exhibits, games, and ethnic food delicacies. The AAA notes for its members more than 40 of these Obon festivals that occur during the summer months of July and August.²⁶ Though efforts by mainstream agencies and publications to include ethnic events are increasing, there tends to be an undercounting of the total number of ethnic festivals. For example, in the State Tourist Agency's ethnic festival calendar, there were a total of four Portuguese festivals listed. In contrast, a directory that made up the centerfold of the weekly Portuguese American Chronicle listed 400 Portuguese festivals, 70 in the Central Valley alone.²⁷

One problem that emerges as a result of having a vast number of ethnic and linguistic communities within the Central Valley is the difficulty in accounting for each one's existence. For example, in the 2000 census a problem arose in counting the populations in the Valley. People from different cultures were undercounted. Indeed, towns like Parlier, in Fresno County, had 50 percent of the people not counted at all in the 1990 census.²⁸ This means that in the Central Valley, with a large immigrant, migrant worker, and non-English speaking population, communities may not get the financial support they merit for schools and various public services. This is because funds are distributed in direct relation to the number of people counted as residents in a community.²⁹ The census provides the important data for these allocations. When people get missed in a census count, the community pays a detrimental price.

Many reasons accounted for this discrepancy, beginning with the basic instructions given to census counters to "go to a house and knock on the door."³⁰

24. California Cultural Tourism Coalition, Events Calendar, at <http://www.culturecalifornia.com/culturecalifornia/events.asp>.

25. Via Online, <http://www.viamagazine.com/weeklyevents/2268.asp> (last visited April 7, 2007).

26. Via Online, http://www.viamagazine.com/events_content.asp?eventId=3552 (last visited April 7, 2007).

27. PORTUGUESE AMERICAN CHRONICLE (Stockton, Cal.), April 8, 2003.

28. See generally interviews with participants from the Central Valley Partnerships' Census Workshops, (1999) (on file with author).

29. U.S. Census Bureau, Question & Answer Center, https://ask.census.gov/cgi-bin/askcensus.cfg/php/enduser/std_alp.php (follow "page 10" hyperlink; then follow "301" hyperlink).

30. See generally interviews with participants from the Central Valley Partnerships' Census Workshops, (1999) (on file with author).

The problematic word here is “door.” In various marginal communities, people live in places where there is no door at all. They may be living in abandoned chicken shelters, tool sheds, or camped out in the backyard. Missing such residents can lead to great undercounting results.³¹ The Central Valley Partnership, a collaborative network of longstanding and established community based organizations working to improve the lives of immigrant, refugees, migrant, and low income communities, was involved in training local organizations to assist in the 2000 census to insure a more accurate count.³² But even a more diligent search was not enough. When people were found, the census taker oftentimes discovered that “we couldn’t talk to them, they spoke a different language.”³³ Asking these populations if they spoke English, Spanish, or Hmong was not enough because there were many other languages that required translating. For example, in one exchange, a request came for translators familiar with Cambajol and Mam, Mayan languages used by workers from the highlands of Guatemala.³⁴ It is not enough to ask a person’s country of origin, because a large proportion of Central Valley residents identify themselves not by the country they are from, but by their particular ethnic, cultural, or linguistic affiliations.³⁵ The Central Valley is home to thousands of people from Laos, but many people from this Southeast Asian country may not consider themselves Laotian. Instead, they identify themselves as Hmong, Mien, or Lahu, some 3,000 of the latter being concentrated in the Tulare county seat of Visalia.³⁶ Another example of the vast array of group identifications comes from a multiethnic Mosque in Sacramento, which includes among its attendants Moslems from Vietnam.³⁷ These are the Cham, descendants of the Champa Empire that a millennium ago controlled regions of modern day Cambodia and southern Vietnam.

Moreover, the Central Valley has a large contingent of workers from Mexico for whom Spanish is a second language. Among such workers are the Mixtecs and Zapotecs from the state of Oaxaca. Oaxaca is home to 16 different indigenous groups, among which are the Chatino, Mixe, and Triqui who are also working in the fields of California.

The abundance of diversity and all its possible benefits has not been celebrated, much less beneficially harnessed, by mainstream California. Many of the clues to diversity described here have in fact been used in a detrimental way to scapegoat immigrants. Much of this diversity has historically been seen as a negative or a threat to the well-being of California’s economic and social health. Contemporary examples include Proposition 187, which proposed to eliminate social services, health care services, and educational services to undocumented immigrants. Another example is Proposition 227, the anti-bilingual education initiative, which passed 61 to 39 percent in California.³⁸

31. *Id.*

32. *Id.*

33. *Id.*

34. Interview with Gunner Nielson, Projecto Campesino in Visalia, Cal. (1999).

35. See generally interviews with participants from the Central Valley Partnerships’ Census Workshops, (1999) (on file with author).

36. FUJIMOTO & CARTER, *supra* note 15.

37. Field observations, cultural centers in Central Valley in 2002.

38. Nanette Asimov, *Prop. 227 Challenged in Lawsuit: Latino, Asian Bid to Save State’s*

Historical Roots of California Diversity

An abundance of diversity is nothing new to California. Historically, the establishment of diversity in California has seen both struggles and positive developments. This struggle for diversity is prevalent in the tumultuous history of the Native Americans of California and their struggle for survival and recognition within the state. In 1769, when the Spanish began to colonize Alta California, more than 60 Native American tribes resided there.³⁹ An estimated 100,000 Native Americans, speaking some 30 different languages, lived in the Central Valley prior to the arrival of the Spanish.⁴⁰ Today, their Native American descendants are still active members of 103 federally recognized California tribal groups.⁴¹ Of California's 103 diverse native groups, nine live in the Central Valley, although changing court decisions as to which tribes are to be recognized by the federal government makes neatly numbered categories impossible.⁴² Classifying social groups varies widely, depending upon definitions of bands, sociopolitical units, tribal associations, complex political alliances, and language families.⁴³ The cultural legacies of California's ethnic groups remain intact as traces of many languages endure in California's place names.⁴⁴

Patterns of Settlement

Ethnic enclaves are everywhere in the Central Valley, making the Valley a patchwork of ethnic niches, neighborhoods, and communities. These enclaves are teeming with family, social, and cultural networks that provide a resource base for immigrant adaptation. Historically, California's Central Valley has attracted a great diversity of ethnic groups. For example, there are established communities of Sikhs from the Punjab region of India in Yuba City, Filipinos in Stockton, Assyrians in Turlock, Swedes in Kingsburg, Mennonites in Reedley, and Hmong in Merced.

Bilingual Classes, S.F. CHRON., June 4, 1998, at A1.

39. Interview with Steven J. Crum, Associate Professor, Native American Studies, University of California, Davis, Cal. (Aug. 5, 1998).

40. *Id.*

41. Interview with Brian Golding, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Sacramento, Cal. (July 30, 1998).

42. Interview with Jack D. Forbes, Professor Emeritus, Native American Studies, University of California Davis, Davis, Cal. (Jan. 2007). What tribes get recognized or not relate to controversies surrounding the push for Indian casinos.

43. *Id.*; See also JACK D. FORBES, NATIVE AMERICANS OF CALIFORNIA AND NEVADA 171-74 (1982).

44. For instance, just north of the Central Valley, Shasta County retains its name from the native Shatasla, Sastise, or Tschasta Nation. In the southern part of the Valley, the name, Tulare, originates from an Aztec word. The Spanish imported the word to refer to nearby tullin, tollin, or tule, the cattail leaves that resemble swords. The city of Chowchilla is the Spanish corruption of the Yokut or Miwok word, Chauciles. Similarly, Colusa comes from the Patwin word Coru, Colussas, or Colus. Tehama is corrupted from the Wintun word Tehama, just as Yuba City is from the Maidu word Yubu, Yupu, or Jubu. From their Alta California heritage, many Valley place names retain their Spanish language designations: Fresno, Modesto, Sacramento, and San Joaquin. Acampo signifies pasture; Avenal (oat field), Dos Palos (two sticks), Escalon (stair-steps), Los Banos (the baths), Madera (wood or lumber), Manteca (lard) and Merced (grace). Hence, the ethnic heritage of California is very much engrained within the naming of California cities and important geographical monuments.

Today, one fourth of the Central Valley's residents are immigrants.⁴⁵ Examining patterns of settlement for the different communities of the Central Valley illuminates the historical roots of some of their most pressing current socio-economic issues.

The history of ethnic settlements in the Valley, illustrate variations in origin and distributions influenced by specific migration strategies and family and social networks.

Following the persecution of Armenians by the Turks in the beginning of the 20th Century, many Armenians immigrated to California. During the early days of Armenian immigration to California, they settled mostly in Los Angeles and in Fresno Counties.⁴⁶ The Armenians are major contributors to the fig and raisin industry in the state. They introduced their agricultural skills to the region, developed and adapted to local marketing arrangements, and remain a major force in the raisin industry to this day.

The Mennonites are another Central Valley group of European origin. Just like the Quakers, Brethren, Hutterites, and Amish, the Mennonites are members of a Peace church. Their religious convictions and stance on non-violence, anti-war efforts, and non-participation in the military have made them targets of persecution. The Mennonites originated in the German speaking areas of Europe. A large contingent was invited to settle in Russia by Catherine the Great. After Catherine's demise, the Mennonites were persecuted in Russia, and ended up in Paraguay, from where they emigrated to California.⁴⁷ Many Mennonites settled in Fresno County, where they established Fresno Pacific College.⁴⁸

Azoreans demonstrate the proclivity to settle not just among Portuguese speakers, but among Portuguese speakers from the same island in the Azores. Portuguese from the Azores Islands settled in the Valley close to other Azoreans and closest to their fellow islanders. The distribution of Portuguese dairy farms illustrates how the establishment of dairies followed the pattern of being near others from the same island.⁴⁹ These patterns reveal how the development of important ethnic networks ties directly to economic development opportunities. These networks also strengthen cultural roles important to maintaining an active ethnic community. Throughout the San Joaquin Valley, Portuguese communities hold annual religious events known as *festas*. In the town of Gustine, for example, people come from as far as Portugal and the Azore Islands to participate in our Lady of Miracle celebrations. Through these and other community events such as Portuguese bullfights (for which there are eight bullrings in California), the Portuguese communities of the Central Valley and elsewhere in California link together.⁵⁰ Like the Azoreans, other ethnic groups display similar patterns of

45. THE GREAT VALLEY CENTER, THE STATE OF THE GREAT CENTRAL VALLEY: ASSESSING THE REGION VIA INDICATORS: THE ECONOMY (2005), available at http://www.greatvalley.org/publications/pub_detail.aspx?pld=192 (last visited Aug. 22, 2007).

46. BERGE BULBULIAN, THE FRESNO ARMENIANS: HISTORY OF A DIASPORA COMMUNITY (2000).

47. California Mennonite Historical Society Bulletin (California Mennonite Historical Society, Fresno, Cal.), No. 23, 1990.

48. See generally http://www.fresno.edu/about/community_relations/church_relations.asp.

49. Graves, *supra* note 9.

50. Carol Ann Gregory, Geography, Perception, and Preservation of Portuguese-American

settlement, focusing where immigrants from a specific village of origin concentrate in a particular Valley community. A study of *Mixtecos* from the state of Oaxaca, Mexico, shows an array of transnational intercommunity connections between *Mixtecos* from the same village in Oaxaca paired with a settlement community in the San Joaquin Valley.⁵¹

Ethnicity and Contribution to Agriculture: From Cultural Capital to Economic Capital

The Central Valleys' cultural diversity has made its social, political, and economic development a vivid mosaic. In particular, ethnic groups have greatly contributed to the agricultural economy of the Central Valley. This is because, for immigrant groups, an important step to transitioning to US society has involved harnessing aspects of their cultural capital to enhance economic footholds important to establishing both livelihoods and community. Social and kinship networks provide a base for harnessing and using financial resources to begin farming enterprises or other kinds of small businesses. This meshing of cultural and social capital to create economic opportunity is illustrated by the accomplishments of various ethnic groups in California agriculture.

Ethnic identities and the ethnic networks established are connected with major agricultural enterprises such as the dairy industry, given the dominance of Portuguese from the Azore Islands as major contributors. The Azores are located in the Atlantic Ocean about 800 miles west of the Iberian Peninsula. The dispersion of dairy farmers around Tulare County and Kings County gives clues as to the interconnections between Azorean communities throughout these counties. Because the Azoreans have tended to settle in areas where they are surrounded by relatives and friends from the same island, what results are communities bound by ties of language and common points of origin. This interconnectedness and solidarity is exemplified in areas that have a high proportion of people from islands such as Terceira, Pico, and San Jorge in the Azores. Farmers from Terceira are prominent in both Kings and Tulare Counties. However within Tulare County there is a pool of dairy farmers predominately from the island of Pico. Further north, on the east side of Merced County, are Azoreans from San Jorge while on the west side of Merced in communities such as Gustine, Newman, and Patterson, farmers tracing their lineage to Terceira are in the majority. The affinities provided by language, common places of origin and relationships suggest a network by which people can support and help each other. Newer immigrants often worked on farms of relatives from the same island or locale before moving on to establish their own farm.

Communities such as these are examples of how cultural capital can help build economic capital by linking the social and kinship networks within a community and harnessing them to make an industry grow. Such a resource may not be visible to those outside the networks who fail to see the cultural commonalities as the essential building blocks to creating economic capital.

Landscapes in California (2005) (unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of California, Davis) (on file with author).

51. See generally DAVID RUSTEN & MICHAEL KEARNEY, A SURVEY OF OAXACAN VILLAGE NETWORKS IN CALIFORNIA AGRICULTURE (1994).

The production of California peaches is another example of how cultural capital is translated by immigrant communities into economic capital. What the public may not realize is that over half of the California cling stone peaches used for canning are produced by immigrants from India. The farmers from India are the Punjabis who settled around Marysville and Yuba City. Punjabi is spoken in Pakistan, Kashmir, and India. The Punjabis could be Muslim, Hindus, or Sikhs. The majority of the Punjabi peach growers in the Sacramento Valley are Sikhs. Sikhs also work and farm in other parts of the Central Valley, which accounts for the Sikh Gurdwaras throughout the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys.

Farmers from the former Yugoslavia have also made their mark on different regions of California, including the Central Valley. Among the ethnic groups from that region of southern Europe to settle in California were the Dalmatians, Serbians, and Croatians. Dalmatians made Watsonville, located along the Central Coast, an apple growing area, and Croatians and Serbians contributed prominently to the production of both table grapes and grapes for wine making.⁵²

Kingsburg in Fresno County is yet another example of a rural California town upon which an immigrant group from Europe has left its mark. Kingsburg was 94 percent Swedish in 1921, and its main commodity was watermelon, which was celebrated through the town's annual Watermelon Festival.⁵³ Today residents of Swedish descent make up only about 25 percent of Kingsburg, yet the character of the town remains decidedly Swedish.⁵⁴ The water tower, visible from Highway 99, is shaped as a tea kettle decorated with flowers, handle, sprout, and cover. The former railroad station is fronted by another Swedish symbol, a large red Dalla horse. Images of these horses are painted before every traffic signal, in lieu of the traditional white painted imprints such as "Pedestrian Crossing or Stop." Metal baskets hang on every street light and numerous buildings in the central part of Kingsburg utilize the "gingerbread" house design reminiscent of Northern Europe. The spread of the design has been enhanced by a sister city relationship between Kingsburg and its sister city partner in Sweden. Swedish royalty have visited Kingsburg and Swedish businesses were encouraged to open their offices in Kingsburg. In the 1980s, five such Swedish companies chose to do so.⁵⁵ The one request imposed by Kingsburg was that Swedish businesses have their offices housed in buildings with the gingerbread design. "We promote ourselves as a Swedish town," says June Hess, generally considered the force behind Little Sweden, "but we're not cutesy. We're a real town with farmers in coffee shops discussing their crops."⁵⁶ Swedish motifs have been incorporated in other venues. The McDonald's leading to Kingsburg has at its entrance the logos of all 26 provinces of Sweden. Kingsburg's festival schedule now includes gatherings that revolve around Swedish food favorites, such as crayfish and the honoring of Sweden's main saints, including St. Lucia.⁵⁷ Building beyond the original

52. Many of the region's large growers of table and wine grapes have names of Yugoslavian and Sicilian origin such as Kovacevich, Guimarra, and de Giorgio.

53. Bicentennial events this week, KINGSBURG RECORDER, July 1, 1976.

54. See generally City of Kingsburg Home Page, <http://www.cityofkingsburg-ca.gov>.

55. Interview with Kingsburg City Manager, in Kingsburg, Cal. (1988).

56. American Profile, Kingsburg, <http://www.americanprofile.com/article/954.html>.

57. Interview with Kingsburg City Manager, in Kingsburg, Cal. (1988).

watermelon festival, Kingsburg is now promoting itself as the city of festivals.⁵⁸ Other Swedish settlements include Merced, but Kingsburg is unique because it has portrayed its city identity as a Swedish settlement.

Barriers and Strategies to Overcoming Them

Taking advantage of cultural capital has not been easy for ethnic minority groups in the Central Valley. Many barriers, both formal and informal, hampered the building of economic and political capital by minorities. However, there have been specific instances when minority groups have developed various forms of financial and cultural capital to overcome these barriers. Substantial barriers included the Alien Land Laws. These laws, passed in 17 states during the first decades of the 20th century, legitimized the practice of prohibiting people who did not qualify for citizenship from leasing or buying land.⁵⁹ In fact, since no immigrant from Asia could become a citizen of this country until the McCarran Act in 1952, this law sought to eliminate the economic competition posed by Japanese immigrants, the predominant Asian group involved in farming.⁶⁰

Despite substantial contributions to California agriculture, farmers of Japanese descent were stymied by major barriers. During the First World War, Asian farmers in America, primarily those of Japanese descent, responded to the call for food on the home front. In California, they produced 90 percent of the celery, asparagus, onions, tomatoes, berries, and cantaloupes, and accounted for 70 percent of all floriculture products.⁶¹

Their prodigious efforts in Southern California made Los Angeles County the number one agricultural area in the state. While today, the county is an urban metropolis with 88 incorporated cities, 80 years ago much of Los Angeles County was rural. Moreover, largely because of the productivity of Japanese immigrant farmers and their families, Los Angeles County became California's premier agricultural center. Today, California's main agricultural centers have shifted to the Central Valley counties of Fresno, Tulare, and Kern, which rank number 1, 2, and 3, in value of agriculture products, not just in California but in the entire United States.⁶²

On the eve of the Second World War, Japanese farmers accounted for half of California's truck crops, which include tomatoes, peas, and carrots.⁶³ For some commodities, such as strawberries, Japanese immigrant farmers accounted for 90-

58. *Id.*

59. See NIKKEI IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST: JAPANESE AMERICANS & JAPANESE CANADIANS IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY (Louis Fiset & Gail M. Nomura eds., 2005).

60. *See id.*

61. A.V. Krebs, *Banishment from the "Gold Mountain,"* in AGRIC. & HUMAN VALUES, 45 (June 1995).

62. CALIFORNIA AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE, SUMMARY OF COUNTY AGRICULTURAL COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS: GROSS VALUES BY COMMODITY GROUPS, CALIFORNIA 2002-2003 (2004).

63. Sandra O. Uyeunten, *Struggle and Survival: The History of Japanese Immigrant Families in California 1907-1945* (1988) (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, San Diego) (on file with Geisel Library, University of California, San Diego).

100 percent of California's production.⁶⁴ All of this was accomplished despite the laws aiming to reduce or remove Japanese from farming.⁶⁵

Indeed, the Alien Land Laws created a difficult environment for the Japanese immigrant farmers. However, the first generations of Japanese farmers were highly motivated, and had the determination and ingenuity to develop strategies to overcome these explicit prejudicial barriers. The Japanese developed specific strategies to overcome the restriction of not being able to own land. These included finding sympathetic townspeople who would rent land for the farmers, or another method was to lease land in the name of their children, who were American by virtue of their birth.

In addition to difficulties in finding land to farm, rental fees for the land presented another barrier to settlement for Japanese farmers. Landowners, knowing the desperation of Japanese immigrant farmers to find land to farm, charged premium prices of up to four times the market rate for leases. Credit was another hurdle; banks would not loan to Japanese farmers who needed funds to purchase seeds, fertilizer, equipment, and hired help.⁶⁶

Such barriers prompted other strategies by Japanese farmers, particularly decisions regarding what to grow and how to maximize production to make the enterprise economically feasible. Being limited to small acreage periods meant choosing crops that would generate cash within the year. Crops such as corn or wheat would not do. Nor would vine or tree crops that require several years of growth before any income could be generated. The strategic choice for immediate returns included production from horticulture, strawberries, and vegetables.

The limitations to smaller acreage also prompted a search for ways to increase production. The solution lay in practices that included fertilizing and irrigation. One hundred years ago, much of California's agriculture was dry land farming. In California, the Japanese farmed on only about 1-2 percent of the total arable land. However, this small amount accounted for about 12 percent of the irrigated land.⁶⁷ Farming practices that included fertilization and irrigation for appropriately chosen marketable crops were important to support successful operations.

In order to overcome the financial barrier posed when banks did not provide loans to Japanese immigrants, the immigrants started their own rotating credit associations.⁶⁸ These associations were formed by groups of people who knew and trusted each other. In many associations the sequence of interest rates involved higher interest for those who were borrowing first. In place of material guarantees such as cars, homes, or other properties, personal honor served as collateral. In a community in which people's trust in each other is paramount, personal honor is invaluable. Violation of such trust would mean more than losing the loan; it would

64. MIRIAM WELLS, *STRAWBERRY FIELDS: POLITICS, CLASS, AND WORK IN CALIFORNIA AGRICULTURE* (1996).

65. MASAKAZU IWATA, *PLANTED IN GOOD SOIL: A HISTORY OF THE ISSEI IN UNITED STATES AGRICULTURE* (1992).

66. NIKKEI IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST, *supra* note 59.

67. IWATA, *supra* note 65.

68. Isao Fujimoto & Larry Shinagawa, *Asian Pacific Americans*, in *ENCYCLOPEDIA OF RURAL AMERICA: THE LAND AND PEOPLE* 75 (Gary A. Goreham ed., 1997).

be tantamount to ostracism from the community. Such rotating credit associations are also used in other Asian immigrant communities. They are called *tanomoshi* by the Japanese, *Hui* by the Chinese, *gae* by the Koreans, *Hulagan* by the Filipinos, and *Bui* by the Vietnamese.⁶⁹ Today, this practice has become institutionalized as micro-lending, in which a similar recognition of personal trust is accepted as collateral.

Marketing is another critical aspect for successful farming, and Japanese farmers' use of direct marketing approaches was another strategy that enabled success.⁷⁰ Direct marketing involves putting the producer in direct contact with the consumer. Selling at the farm gate is a prime example. A fruit and vegetable stand at the farm site is doubly advantageous: the consumers pay a lower price than if they were to go to the supermarket, and the farmer gets the better price than he would have obtained selling to the wholesaler. During the Great Depression, Los Angeles County had some 400 Japanese operated fruit stands. By the time of World War II, there were 1,000 such fruit stands.⁷¹ Today, ideas of direct marketing have expanded to other forms. These include community supported agriculture and farmer's markets, which connect the producer and consumer in a similar manner. This helps cut down distance between producers and consumers. Today these approaches are promoted as viable alternatives to the traditional approach where farm products went from the producers through various middle men.

Another valuable strategy that enabled Japanese American farmers to remain viable economic actors in California's agricultural industry was their development of co-ops. In addition to the advantage of lowered cost of supplies made possible by economies of scale through bulk purchases, co-op arrangements also provided farmers some control of the market. An example of such cooperative arrangements can be seen in the history of the Japanese strawberry farmers. Strawberry producers generally enjoy good profits at the very beginning of the season. But at peak season, when there is an abundance of berries, the price drops. Dependence solely on this approach to marketing puts farmers at the mercy of the market. Agricultural co-ops helped remedy this situation in a number of ways. One Japanese strawberry farmers' cooperative expanded its market opportunities by building a freezer. Instead of having all of its produce sold at whatever price the market was offering, a freezer enabled the production of value added products such as frozen strawberries, and allowed setting aside berries for jam and ice cream. The formation of cooperatives thus enabled Japanese immigrant farmers to retain a certain level of control over the market.⁷² The experience of the Japanese immigrant farmers—from the way they obtained and made the most use of the land, to their choice of crops and figuring out ways to enlarge both production and marketing opportunities—added critical organizational dimensions necessary for successful farming. These lessons from the experience of the Japanese ethnic community allow us to better understand what was involved in building community, and in overcoming barriers to settlement, in the Central Valley and throughout California.

69. *Id.*

70. WELLS, *supra* note 64.

71. Uyeunten, *supra* note 63.

72. WELLS, *supra* note 64.

The Japanese were not the only minority group finding innovative ways to overcome these formal and informal barriers. Many ethnic groups have developed innovative strategies to build financial, cultural, and political capital to overcome barriers. African Americans, Chinese, Southeast Asians, and Mexicans used various strategies to sustain their various forms of capital and establish themselves in spite of barriers.

The example of the Japanese immigrant farmers is a reminder of the important interconnections existing between cultural, social, and economic capital, and the importance of having all forms of capital fully functioning for the successful establishment of a community. However, situations where a community failed to become established can also be instructive. One example of how racial discrimination coupled with a lack of economic capital prevented African Americans from forming a community is the case of the Central Valley town of Allensworth. Allensworth was envisioned as a site for the establishment of a community for Blacks from the South in California. Colonel Allen Allensworth, a former Chaplain in the US Army, envisioned an agriculturally-based community, surrounded by farm sites and containing an agricultural college.⁷³ The original community successfully established a school house, church, and library, and had begun plans to build the agricultural college. They also established various crops, thus providing community members from the South, who brought with them valuable agricultural skills, a source of much needed jobs. Hence, the social and cultural capital was certainly present, but it was not enough to overcome barriers of discrimination, economic hardships, and of lack of appropriate natural resources (for example, the water in the area was contaminated with arsenic). Today, Allensworth still exists, but only as a state park, with a mural on one of the walls in a building in the park serving as the only reminder of Colonel Allensworth's vision of an African American agricultural community.

The Chinese were also important contributors to the development of California – it was their labor that built the levees and railroads, and contributed significantly to the agriculture of the region.⁷⁴ The Chinese were the farm laborers of the 1880s and 1890s, and without their contributions, California would have encountered economic disaster in the agricultural industry. The Chinese contribution toward California's agriculture was not met with appreciation, but with hostility and increased barriers to their adaptation into American society. This included their lack of opportunities to form families due to exclusion of Chinese women from the U.S.⁷⁵

Other ethnic groups from Asia who have contributed to California's agriculture include Punjabis, Filipinos, and Southeast Asians. The role of Punjabis in the peach industry has already been mentioned. Filipinos were a dominant presence in the agricultural labor force as well in farm worker unionization.⁷⁶ The most recent entrants from Asia in Central Valley agriculture are refugees from

73. Colonel Allensworth State Historical Park Home Page, http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=21298 (last visited Sept. 23, 2007).

74. See generally SUCHENG CHAN, THIS BITTERSWEET SOIL: THE CHINESE IN CALIFORNIA AGRICULTURE 1860-1910 (1986).

75. *Id.*

76. JOAN LONDON & HENRY ANDERSON, SO SHALL YOU REAP (1971).

Southeast Asia. Farmers from Laos and Cambodia are doing what the Japanese were doing 80 years ago.⁷⁷ As cited earlier, the Fresno area has hundreds of Laotian farmers who account for most of the strawberries produced there. Berry fruits such as strawberries have enabled families, such as Japanese immigrants in the past and Laotians today, to make a living. With strawberries, a farm family working intensively on a small 4 to 5 acre parcel of land can make a living wage.⁷⁸ The presence of such family-scale operations, which are part of the experience of numerous ethnic groups, has been a crucial ingredient in the development of communities in the Central Valley, and among the most fundamental methods these communities have used to overcome economic barriers.

Transnational connections—the ties between immigrants from common places of origin with their home country and each other—create strong networks that help immigrants overcome many barriers to settlement, especially in the early stages of their establishment in the U.S. In particular, Mexican immigrants to the Central Valley have found strength in their regionally specific transnational connections. As in the case of the Azoreans, immigrants from Mexico have settled all over the Central Valley while maintaining important ethnic, economic, and social networks with their particular places of origin in Mexico. Mapping California's *colonias*, or communities of Latino immigrants, would demonstrate the distribution of Spanish speaking people in both urban areas and in small rural enclaves throughout California. The concentration of Mexican immigrants and migrant workers contributes to the pattern of community building that establishes majorities of people from common places of origin in various communities. This is best exemplified in the creation of hometown associations. These associations, which possess direct links to towns in Mexico, form the bases of transnational communities and help the immigrants maintain strong ties directly to their home areas.⁷⁹

Though they may be described as enclaves of poverty from the outside, *colonias*, or communities of Latino immigrants from the same places of origin, can be seen as vibrant centers for transnational exchanges of capital, communication, and social support where groups of people are connected to others, helping each other, as well as their respective communities. The transfer of money, in the form of remittances from workers in California to their respective families and communities in their home countries, is critical to the survival and well being of the immigrant and migrant worker families.⁸⁰ Remittances are an important factor in the economic development efforts of Mexico.⁸¹ Next to oil and tourism, remittances of workers now represent Mexico's third highest source of revenue.⁸² The value of remittances to the development of immigrants' countries of origin merits attention. More and

77. Fujimoto & Shinagawa, *supra* note 68.

78. WELLS, *supra* note 64.

79. MICHELE LAGUERRE, *THE GLOBAL ETHNOPOLIS: CHINATOWN, JAPANTOWN AND MANILATOWN IN AMERICAN SOCIETY* (2000).

80. REX HONEY & STANLEY OKAFOR, *HOMETOWN ASSOCIATIONS: INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA* (1998).

81. Alejandro Portes, Luis Eduardo Guarnizo & William Haller, *Transnational Entrepreneurs: An Alternative Form of Immigrant Economic Adaptation*, 67 AM. SOC. REV. 278 (2002).

82. Steven Vertovec, *Migrant Transnationalism and Modes of Transformation*, 38 INT'L MIGRATION REV. 970 (2004).

more groups of immigrant workers are now forming associations that send money to their home village for a project, such as improving the water supply, or building a school, clinic, or church.⁸³ These sources of transnational funding now represent a solid contribution to the economic and infrastructural developments in Mexican towns.⁸⁴ Remittances also help immigrants in the U.S. as they gain a greater sense of civic duty by helping out their expatriates in their country of origin. This increase in civic responsibility is a resource which can be nurtured in immigrants and transferred toward increasing civic responsibility and participation in the U.S. Remittances also help immigrant neighborhoods in the U.S. by increasing a sense of vibrancy as many of these remittance businesses are clustered around immigrant neighborhoods and help those neighborhoods remain economically vibrant.⁸⁵

In addition to improving economic capital for their families and communities, immigrant communities are recognizing the importance of activities to enhance their political capital. Hence, some hometown associations actually take part in direct political parties and even fund politicians that share mutual interests, illustrating that immigrants in the U.S. are involved in politics in their country of origin and stay informed through these hometown associations. Comparable engagement in political matters here in the U.S. would be equally important. Many of the challenges facing immigrants and low wage workers revolve around issues of access, discrimination, and civil rights. Building political capital involves learning and acting on the civic affairs of the community, community organizing, and civic participation. The commitment that immigrant and migrant workers demonstrate to the well being of both their communities at home and here suggest a potential for building civic capital here and abroad.

Further Attacks on the Central Valley's Diversity

Unfortunately, the immigrants who give the region its rich diversity suffer from the longstanding problem of confinement to low wage jobs and subjection to discriminatory and predatory practices. One extreme example of the discrimination directed against minorities, with repercussions today for certain segments of the Valley's people, concerns the forced removal of people of Japanese descent during World War II. Of the fifteen temporary assembly centers used to imprison this ethnic group, eight were located in the Central Valley.⁸⁶ These camps were associated with the communities of Marysville, Sacramento, Stockton, Turlock, Merced, Pinedale, Fresno, and Tulare. Talk of revival of such tactics to round up minorities of Middle Eastern descent, whose visibility has heightened in the wake of 9/11, has aroused concern among Sikh, Pakistani, Afghan and other immigrant groups from the Middle East and South Asia.

Dangerous discriminatory reaction occurred when Sikhs and Arabs were erroneously mistaken as associates of Osama bin Laden because of their attire (turbans) or their physical appearance. In the Central Valley town of Reedley, a

83. MANUEL CASTELLS, *THE RISE OF THE NETWORK SOCIETY* (2000).

84. *Id.*

85. LAGUERRE, *supra* note 79.

86. FRANK IRITANI & JOANNE IRITANI, *TEN VISITS: ACCOUNTS OF VISITS TO ALL THE JAPANESE AMERICAN RELOCATION CENTERS* (1999).

Yemeni storekeeper (Abdo Ali Ahmed) was attacked and killed because of his Middle Eastern identity.⁸⁷ Current discriminatory reactions to immigrants have deep historical roots in California, and anti-immigrant sentiment still persists. For example, former Governor Pete Wilson successfully won re-election in California by riding on a wave of anti-immigrant propositions in 1994. One such measure, Proposition 187, denied social services to undocumented immigrants. In response to this type of political opportunism and negative reactions to immigrant settlements, organizations like the Central Valley Partnership emerged to engage immigrant communities to work constructively towards achieving equality and increased political rights.

The experience of Japanese Americans during World War II, when they were treated with suspicion because “they looked like the enemy,” has a parallel in the way Central Valley Muslims and people of South Asian and Middle-Eastern descent have been treated since 9/11.

Towards Multicultural Understanding

Recognizing the contribution of ethnic groups and the cultural capital they bring requires taking the time to get to know people. It is not enough to simply ask individuals where they are from, because people see themselves in ways different from the labels given to them from the outside. Indigenous workers from Mexico, when asked who they are, will say Mixtec or Zapotec, but not Mexican. The same holds for the Hmong from Laos. They identify themselves as Hmong but not Laotian, which is a separate and unique identity for people associated with the Kingdom of Laos. Though both people are from the same country, each retains their own identity.

Important distinctions exist within ethnic groups as well. In the case of Japanese Americans, differences exist between generations, each having its own name. The first generation, called *Issei*, are people who emigrated from Japan; the second generation, known as *Nisei*, refers to the generation born in America; and the third generation, the *Sansei*, are the children of the American born. There are vast differences between the three generations in terms of language use, media sources relied upon (ethnic sources or mainstream English language outlets), social relations, intermarriage, and the dominant values that guide their lives.

The first generation spoke only Japanese, the second generation a mix of Japanese and English, while members of the third generation generally speak only English. The *Issei* relied almost exclusively on Japanese language newspapers as a media source. The *Nisei*, though well versed in English and mainstream sources, still subscribe to ethnic papers, for the papers provide information useful to their social lives and an important way to keep the community connected, with reports from the ethnic sports league, ethnic social events, church activities, conferences, and obituaries. The *Sansei* generally do not bother with the ethnic newspapers. The value that guided the *Issei* generation was to work hard to pave the road for the next generation. The second generation was motivated by the same value to do well, not just to improve oneself but to do so for improving the image and acceptance of the

87. Nation in Brief, WASH. POST, Oct. 3, 2001, at A32.

community. The third generation carries a similar value on work and education but with the benefit accruing to the individual rather than for the sake of the community. The third generation's outlook is a very individualistic one in tune with Western and American values. Generational differences show also in the intermarriage rates as well. In the first generation, interracial marriage did not exist due to cultural choice, as well as by law. California's anti-miscegenation law made marriage between people of different races illegal. In the Nisei generation, intermarriage occurred for about 10 percent among the older Nisei and about 20 percent for the younger second generation. For the Sansei generation, nearly 50 percent are in interracial marriages.

This example from the Japanese immigrant community shows the complexity and ever evolving nature of ethnic identifications, as an ethnic group transitions into U.S. society. Generational differences within the Japanese community and how that community has changed, illustrates the dynamics within an ethnic group. The rich complexities are reminders of the importance of digging beyond surface appearances, to better understand multicultural realities. A multicultural understanding begins by understanding that people and situations cannot be taken at face value.

Political Empowerment

Harnessing the hidden energy in the Central Valley involves opening the political system to active participation by immigrants and people of color. By empowering immigrants and providing the economic and political tools for social change, the Central Valley can begin to take advantage of its rich cultural diversity. Active participation for political empowerment includes participation of ethnic minorities in both formal electoral politics and political participation from a more grassroots organizing perspective. Both are important forms of political participation and both are needed throughout the Valley. A hint of what might be possible can be seen by examining the experience of the Azorean Portuguese in the Central Valley (in terms of electoral politics) and by looking at the work of The Central Valley Partnership for Citizenship (for a grassroots perspective).

As discussed earlier, because of their dominance of the dairy industry, Azoreans have a significant presence in the Valley. The cultural capital of Azorean rural community relationships contributes to the building of economic capital by turning their ethnic, social, and kinship networks into business connections and a dedicated labor pool. This in turn has translated into political capital, judging by how the Central Valley is represented in the Congress of the United States. Congressmen representing various parts of the San Joaquin Valley include Devin Nunes (California's 22nd District), Dennis Cardoza (California's 18th District), and Jim Costa (California's 20th District), who are all of Azorean Portuguese descent. Until his recent defeat, Richard Pombo, who represented California's 11th District, was another Portuguese American congressman representing the Central Valley. Understandably, many factors go into the election of a candidate. But political campaign organizers value the role of outreach, networking, and communication linkages to wherever voters reside. Such a network exists for the Azorean Portuguese community of the Central Valley through the dairy farms, the gatherings for the festivals, bullfights, and the communications channels provided by the Portuguese language radio stations and newspapers. The fact that the Valley's

presence in Congress is heavily represented by men of Azorean Portuguese descent suggests how the building of economic and cultural capital with people in the ethnic community working together, and looking out for each other, has also contributed to building political capital. When the Portuguese first immigrated to the Central Valley, they did not possess a lot of financial capital. However, building on their ethnic ties and solidarity, they successfully supported each other socially and economically, contributing to their economic advancement. This is illustrative of the tie between social and economic capital, which eventually translate to political capital, at least for the Azorean Portuguese community.

Today, more communities are electing officials from diverse ethnic backgrounds. There is now a network of mayors from Spanish speaking backgrounds, a recognizable number from the rural communities of the Central Valley.⁸⁸ However, before celebrating what appears to be a positive sign of the increasing diversity in civic participation some pause for caution is in order.

In California, more Latino leaders are emerging as elected officials. However, it is one thing to celebrate and acknowledge the presence and the visibility of such leaders, and another to ask if these newly elected officials will be able to restore or improve community conditions given the resources they have to work with. The precedent for this concern relates to the experience of African American leaders who emerged in major urban centers such as Detroit and Cleveland. Mayors, such as Carl Stokes of Cleveland, faced immense hurdles after assuming leadership of cities with increasing critical problems and diminished revenues.⁸⁹ This came about as businesses, corporations, and those in power in traditional White American enclaves abandoned central urban communities, moving resources, investments, and a vital city tax base to the periphery.⁹⁰ A similar situation exists in the Central Valley cities, where extremes of wealth and poverty are creating social problems and diminished revenues. This is particularly acute in the smaller, rural cities and towns. These are the places where leaders with Latino backgrounds are assuming leadership responsibility.

Another form of political empowerment comes through community grassroots organizing. A contemporary example of this is the Central Valley Partnership for Citizenship (CVP), a network of 22 community-based organizations working on issues of health care, immigrant rights, economic development, and civic participation throughout the Central Valley. The CVP also works with another grassroots network, the Civic Action Network (CAN), which includes 148 grassroots organizations tied to emerging immigrant groups throughout the Valley. Both of these organizations have a vast network of community organizations which call on each other for help when they organize political events such as marches, protests, news conferences, or other types of grassroots advocacy work. This type of grassroots work has a long history in the Central Valley, with organizations such as Cesar Chavez's United Farmworkers Union, American Friends Service Committee,

88. See generally National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials Home Page, <http://www.naleo.org> (last visited Sept. 23, 2007).

89. FUJIMOTO & CARTER, *supra* note 15.

90. KENNETH T. JACKSON, *CRABGRASS FRONTIER: THE SUBURBANIZATION OF THE UNITED STATES* (1985).

and many other groups raising their voices to place political pressure on mainstream political institutions. This has resulted in a movement towards the attainment of parity and more equitable flow of resources to ethnic communities.

These grassroots organizations function as an important vehicle for both community development and political advocacy of ethnically diverse populations in the Central Valley. They maintain strong networks of communication and work collaboratively to organize political campaigns and mobilizations specifically targeting mainstream government institutions. Many of these strategies build on the ethnic identities of particular groups, as well as multi-cultural understanding and multi-cultural community organizing. For example, during the "245i" campaign the CVP used a multi-ethnic approach toward developing statewide opposition to new legislation proposing immigration provisions that would separate the documented from the undocumented members within immigrant families. They called upon Latino community organizations, Asian organizations, Anglos, and others interested in immigration issues, to help stop the implementation of the proposed changes. This result is an example of how cultural capital can be harnessed to create a distinct and powerful political force in the Central Valley. Other examples include the effort of undocumented youth from low income Spanish speaking families to challenge the attempt by California colleges and universities to treat them as out of state residents subject to higher tuition fees.

These grassroots organizations have recently engaged institutions of higher learning to create learning research collaboratives that would focus on issues of importance to community based organizations. One such emerging effort involves UC Berkeley Boalt Hall's Center for Social Justice, UC Merced, and UC Davis working with Central Valley community organizations. Other educational institutions work closely with institutions, such as The Great Valley Center, which serves as a bridge between grassroots groups and governmental entities. A third type brings together groups to share their cultural capital as vehicles for Valley wide organizing. This would include the Tamejavi Festival organized by the CVP and spearheaded by the Pan Valley Institute. Festivals held in 2004 and 2006 brought together groups such as Otomi, Purapechas, Zapotecs, Mixtec, Hmong, etc. to share stories, plays, music, and food from their respective ethnicities, bringing to light the cultural wealth of the Valley.

This article has focused on the cultural capital that permeates the communities of the Central Valley region and the potential it has in adding to the economic and political capital of ethnic communities. Political capital can develop in ethnic minority communities by building on the social and kinship networks to increase economic and cultural resources. By increasing both cultural and economic capital, opportunities for building political capital can be created. Political capital, whether through the electoral process or through grassroots organizing, can help groups improve the quality of life of immigrants and low-income people in the Valley. This can help establish more parity between the Central Valley and the rest of California. The Central Valley of California is one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse regions in the U.S., and harnessing the cultural capital of this vast area has the potential of changing economic and political dynamics so as to contribute towards building a region with greater understanding, equity, and possibility.