

workers and taxi drivers work. Both industries are structured by postindustrial transformations of the U.S. state and economy, which have relied on cheapened immigrant labor to solve the fallout from weakened welfare state commitments to labor and families. In this environment, they are deprived of the right to unionize and they are exposed to various state-sponsored disciplinary mechanisms in the name of their employers' and riders' consumer rights. Their organizing strategies for economic justice emerge from the specific ways in which their restructured workplaces construct their rights. While Andolan fights the conversion of a proposed standard contract aimed at protecting domestic workers into a consumer rights bill, the NYTWA contests the city's multifaceted efforts through consumer rights campaigns to criminalize drivers and represent them as racists. The two organizations consciously depart from the hierarchical bureaucratic practices of labor unions to bring back labor militancy and, in the case of NYTWA, mass-based organizing. Flying in the face of their legal definitions, the organizations invent domestic workers and taxi drivers as subjects of rights. Andolan draws on local, state, national, and international statutes to do this work, while the NYTWA fights various "local" policies, which in fact manifest and consolidate global economic restructuring.

In analyzing the work of South Asian organizations oriented toward social change, I have framed their struggles as a transnational process through which they search for rights that are *not* contingent on citizenship. These struggles are specific to the social location of those who wage them. The struggles emerge in the cusp of simultaneous and multiple encounters produced by what is being increasingly recognized as the contradictory process of globalization. As the needs of capital make borders of labor-hungry states more and more permeable, the same states redouble their efforts to socially and legally seal the pores. As soon as efforts are made to free rights from confining notions of citizenship, a resurgence of patriotism and nationalism resanctifies the citizen. Neither states nor national ideologies are in decline; they are transformed. Liberatory movements are not crushed; they change their shape, form, membership, and tactics. The struggles for immigrant rights, then, are best understood as constant, versatile encounters with these co-constituted contradictions rather than their resolution. Alive to the ever-shifting terrain of power relations, even when those relations seem oppressively settled, the organizations anticipate, straddle, and work within the contradictions, knowing that efforts to stifle their struggles will introduce new issues and therefore new sites of contestation.

Unruly Immigrants. by Monisha
Das Gupta. Duke Univ Press, 2006

CHAPTER 1

Terms of Belonging

In October 1994 at Boston's Northeastern University a group of South Asian students organized a forum titled "Shades of Brown." An organization to which I belonged, South Asian Women for Action (SAWA), had been invited to the forum, and I volunteered to attend along with another SAWA member. We arrived at the event expecting to discuss our gendered experiences of the value placed on skin color by our families and communities. As feminists, we were eager to hear from other South Asian women, especially those who, like my SAWA friend, had grown up in the United States.

To our surprise, the forum generated a heated debate about the image in the United States of South Asians as model minorities—that is, people of color who had been portrayed as being successful in the United States because of their cultural values and their determination to work hard. The image seemed to appeal to many participants, most of whom were from the area's elite universities. Most followed in the footsteps of their professional parents, preparing for careers in medicine, law, or the sciences. These students saw a number of merits in being stereotyped "positively." Wasn't it better to be a model minority than a demonized one? One student confessed that she liked being complimented on her long dark hair and burnished skin. Emboldened, another participant explained that the model minority image

could and did inspire South Asian youths to be better than their white peers. The image provided him with an incentive to preserve South Asian values, which he felt fueled the group's success in the United States.

A few of us in the room strenuously disagreed. Buying into the model minority image, we argued, erased those South Asian immigrant experiences that deviate from this myth of success. A Northeastern University student pointed out that some South Asian students on that very campus were the children of motel owners. For them, the model minority image had been elusive. My friend and I, as community representatives, talked about how the image pitted South Asians against African Americans and Latina/os, thereby impairing our chances to build alliances with them when doing progressive issue based work.

At one point, a dark-skinned Harvard medical student burst out: "I'd rather be a model minority than have a white woman passing me clutch her purse." For a minute, we all sat there speechless. Pulsing in the room was his desire to deracinate himself; to distance himself from a loaded history of racialized, sexualized, and gendered constructions of criminality; to somehow escape the treatment meted out routinely to young black men and sometimes to inner-city South Asian youth—as SAWA members knew from their brothers' brushes with the criminal justice system. My friend and I glanced at each other across the room. We had to intervene. But confronting South Asian racism toward other minority groups, couched in such pleas as this young man's, was not easy. The conversation petered out. Walking out into the dusk on Huntington Avenue, I wondered how we South Asians had come to be wedged between blacks and whites. And what enabled some of us in that room to resist the model minority image and others to hide behind it?

At this time as part of my research I was looking at a 1976 testimony to the U.S. Congress by a representative of the Association of Indians in America (AIA) who requested the addition of a separate category in the census for immigrants of Indian ancestry. The document struck me as extraordinary in that it represented these immigrants' ungainly wrestling with U.S. racial categories. As such, it disturbed me greatly; in those pages I heard the echoes of the Harvard student's simultaneous awareness of and retreat from race. In my role as an activist in the 1990s in the process of reconceptualizing my identity as a woman of color and collectively framing anti-racist South Asian politics, I wanted to connect the two moments to understand the processes that racialized

South Asians. Thus began an excavation. I pored over government documents—congressional hearings, censuses, interagency and Civil Rights Commission reports, notices in the Federal Register, and circulars from the Office of Management and Budget. I tracked down the AIA testifier, Manoranjan Dutta, and conducted multiple phone interviews with him to grasp the urgencies that informed the AIA's framing of race and rights.

Between 1975 and 1979 the AIA, committed to fostering habits of good citizenship among newly arrived immigrants, mobilized certain sections to confront race- and nationality-based discrimination in their new home. Many immigrants were both puzzled and outraged at their first encounter with discrimination. In India, they had been the beneficiaries of full citizenship on account of their class, caste, and, in some cases, male privilege. Their unequal treatment in the United States, they felt, relegated them to second-class citizenship. For them, full citizenship meant equality in the political sphere and in the realm of rights. Their treatment in their new homeland as abstract liberal citizens would mean that particularities of race, color, gender, and national origin could not interfere with their enjoyment of rights.¹ Consequently, the immigrants embarked on a campaign to demand protection against their mistreatment.

Safeguards against the forms of discrimination they faced were ensured by the civil rights legislation of the 1960s, the implementation of which explicitly tied group rights to racial categorization. On finding out that U.S. residents from the "Indian subcontinent" had been classified as white in the 1970 census, some immigrants campaigned to see themselves as a separate group in the 1980 census and thus officially be recognized as a minority. At no time before the 1970 census were immigrants of Indian descent in the United States categorized as white.

The AIA-driven redesignation of these immigrants as nonwhites in the 1980 census has been mischaracterized as a moment when they were converted into "instant ethnics" who gained access to minority rights (Espiritu 1992, 126); or as a case of mistaken identity (Fisher 1980, 129); or as an example of the political expediency of this new group, which quickly learned to manipulate group rights (Helweg and Helweg 1990, 155). In this chapter, I offer a rereading of the legal-bureaucratic minoritization through the lens of race, rights, and citizenship—three historically shaped and tightly intertwined categories (see Glenn 2002; Kerber 1997; Lowe 1996). What emerges from my analysis of congressional

hearings, census categories, and government documents on racial and ethnic classification in the 1970s reveals a messy process, which paradoxically interfered with rather than enhanced the immigrants' claims to full citizenship. The black and white paradigm of race, race relations, and civil rights in the United States—unfamiliar to the new immigrants—was largely responsible for the complications. In the United States, black and white histories and experiences continue to provide the yardstick against which all experiences of racial oppression and privilege are measured, thereby obscuring the many modes through which groups entering the United States are in fact racialized (Aguilar-San Juan 1994; Martinez 1998; Moran 1998; Okihito 1994; Omi and Takagi 1998; Ong 2000; Shah 1994).

The paradigm demanded that the new immigrants of Indian descent establish their rights claims through examining their closeness to or distance from the two dominant categories, white and black. The immigrants had to consider whether they were *actually* white, since they were contesting their assignment to that category. Entrapped in the incoherence that underlies racial thinking and the racial classification system itself, as well as their own ambivalence about racialization, the immigrants, despite their efforts to take control of the process, accepted their liminal place in the racial order.

The AIA's participation in the black-white racial logic of the state, as well as its belief in liberal democracy as elite postcolonials who had been served well by its principles in India, limited the political possibilities of that moment to place taking. The acceptance of racially ambiguous terms of belonging to the U.S. national body led to a troubling indeterminacy about the status of South Asians as minorities and their entitlement to civil rights protection. Racial ambiguity meant that the immigrants' admission to full citizenship rested on *not* being reliant on group rights (such as affirmative action) or welfare protections for which they had fought. Such a paradox interfered with recognizing the racism directed at South Asians, the legitimacy of South Asian rights claims, and the ability of South Asian immigrants to form alliances with other U.S. minorities on the basis of their day-to-day experiences of discrimination.

Historical Context: Of Race and Rights

In order to establish the relationship between race, rights, and citizenship, I begin by connecting two seemingly disparate periods—the pre–World War II

era when immigrants from the British colony of India were excluded from U.S. citizenship and the post-1965 chapter when immigrants from partitioned and independent nations in South Asia were eligible to enter the United States and, in due course, apply for naturalization. In both periods, race was salient in determining what rights the immigrants could enjoy. Early-twentieth-century Indian immigrants, like other Asian immigrants before them, found their rights greatly curtailed when they were denied citizenship on the grounds that they were not white. In the post-1965 period, a new wave of immigrants, though eligible for formal citizenship, had to establish their minority racial status to become entitled to group rights that would protect them from institutional discrimination.

Until 1923, Indian immigrants seeking to naturalize as U.S. citizens argued that they were Caucasian and, therefore, white. This claim to whiteness was a way for them to access rights, and most U.S. courts accepted the argument. By relying on a combination of ethnological arguments and interpretations of the legislative intent of the 1790 law that restricted naturalization to a "free white person," the courts ruled that South Asians were white because they were Caucasians and, therefore, naturalizable (Haney-López 1996; Jensen 1988). In 1922, the U.S. Supreme Court in a landmark case denied a Japanese national, Takao Ozawa, American citizenship by arguing that the court understood that "white" was synonymous with "Caucasian" (Haney-López 1996, 85). But in 1923, the court reversed its understanding in Bhagat Singh Thind's case when it decreed that not all Caucasians were white, thereby disqualifying Indians from whiteness and citizenship. Now classified as aliens ineligible for citizenship, Indians joined Chinese and Japanese immigrants. The ruling came amid the escalating xenophobia that had already succeeded in putting in place an Asiatic barred zone in the 1917 Pacific Immigration Act that excluded immigrants from British India. The *Thind* ruling had immediate effects on the immigrants' rights. California lost no time in applying to South Asians its alien land law (which was passed in 1913, amended in 1920, and already governing Japanese immigrants) and began to deny South Asians licenses to marry white women under its anti-miscegenation law (Chan 1991, 47, 95; Jensen 1988, 259; Leonard 1985). Between 1923 and 1927, sixty-five South Asians were denaturalized—among whom were men who had won their citizenship after years of litigation (Jensen 1988, 264).

While the court ruled that Indians, regardless of whether they were Cauca-

sian, did not enter popular understandings of "white," it did not specify what sort of nonwhites they were. They could not be deemed black. Legally, that category referred to native-born persons of African descent who were citizens under the fourteenth amendment.² Within the black-white framework, then, early Indian immigrants were racialized as a group that was neither white nor black so that they could be deprived of rights enjoyed by whites and formally granted to blacks—who could not, however, exercise them in practice in the Jim Crow South. These race-based denials of rights continued until 1946. That year, despite some opposition, residents of Indian descent in the United States were made eligible for citizenship in recognition of British India's efforts in World War II.

In the four decades following *Thind*, the census consistently categorized Indians as nonwhite but kept changing the group's nomenclature. Tracking the changes in the categories specified in the census race question reveals how this legal-bureaucratic process reconstructed race.³ Indians appeared in the census of both 1920 and 1930 as "Hindu" and were counted under "All other" races (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1921, 29, table 1 n.1; 1933, 32, table 4 n.1). Rather than referring to religion, "Hindu" in public discourse was a racialized term that implied that these immigrants were backward and unassimilable—in short, the irreducible racial other (Haney-López 1996, 87–88, 93; Leonard 1992, 24). The 1940 census listed "Hindu" separately along with Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1943, 5, table 1). After 1940, the term "Hindu" lost its currency until 1960. The 1950 U.S. census summary (1953) made no reference to Indian immigrants. But the 1950 California census, in its definition of "race and color," replaced "Hindu" with "Asiatic Indians" and counted them among "all other" races (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1952).⁴ The U.S. 1960 summary (1964, xlii) in its definition of terms called immigrants of Indian descent "Asian Indians," and stated that they would fall under the residual category of "all other" races. The term "Hindu" reappeared in the Census Bureau's instruction to enumerators in an attempt to distinguish "Asian Indians" from Native Americans. The instructions read: "*Indians*—For persons originating in India (except those of European stock), mark 'Other' and specify as 'Hindu.' If there is an entry of 'Indian' on the Advanced Census Report be sure you know whether the person is an American Indian or an Asian Indian" (1964, cxiii). In 1965 Congress lifted racial quotas imposed on immigration.

TABLE 1. Racial designation of South Asians in the U.S. Census, 1920–2000

1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
"Other" if Hindu	"Other" if Hindu	"Hindu"	"Other" if Asiatic Indian	"Other" if Asian Indian or Hindu	"White" if Indo-European	"Asian Indian"	"Asian Indian" under APIs	"Asian Indian" under Asian

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census 1921, 29, table 1 n.1; 1933, 32, table 4 n.1; 1943, 5, table 1; 1952, xvi; 1964, xlii and cxiii; 1973, app. 15; 1983, 21; 1992, B-12; and the census form distributed to households for 2000.

This event inaugurated a new period of inflow that overwhelmingly came from Asia, with India being a top sending country.

The 1970 census departed from all previous censuses by counting immigrants of Indian descent under "white." This reassignment from nonwhite to white at a moment when the state was installing measures to protect minoritized groups from the discrimination they historically faced blocked the new immigrants' access to new civil rights provisions like affirmative action. The definition of terms in the 1970 U.S. census summary specified that "persons who did not classify themselves in one of the specific race categories on the questionnaire but entered Mexican, Puerto Rican or a response suggesting Indo-European stock" (1973, app. 15; emphasis mine) were to be reassigned to the category "white." This recategorization erased the decades-long history of race-based discrimination against Indian immigrants, galvanizing the AIA into action. By 1970, immigrants from India and other South Asian countries formed a critical mass for self-advocacy. The number of "Asian Indians" admitted to the United States had jumped from 1,973 between 1951 and 1960 to 27,189 between 1961 and 1970 in the wake of the 1965 immigration amendments (Gall and Gall 1993, 411, table 515).

The state in the post-1965 period tried to bridge several contradictions. Its racialism and renewed labor importation (overwhelmingly, this time, with skilled workers from Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean) sat uncomfortably with its recommitment to welfare and racial equality based on group rights in the domestic sphere. In fact, the 1965 reform of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) was a piece of civil rights legislation that eliminated race-based exclusions that governed immigration. The reform was clearly informed by the double imperatives of the cold war in the international arena and a

welfare state in the domestic arena charged with correcting racial injustice toward minorities. Starting in the 1950s, those who favored immigration reform framed the racial quotas controlling immigration as a dimension of legalized racial discrimination and argued that this gravely undercut the image of the United States as a leader of democracy in a cold war world (Tichenor 2002, 203–18).

The amended INA reintroduced large-scale labor importation after a forty-year hiatus to materially address the cold war–welfare state imperatives.⁵ The new immigration policy was geared toward recruiting highly skilled foreign labor that could, on the one hand, help the United States outstrip the Soviet Union's aerospace and weapons development and, on the other hand, supply health practitioners for Medicaid and Medicare programs established under the Lyndon Johnson's "Great Society" plans (Hing 1993, 38–39; Khandelwal 1995, 92; Prashad 2000, 72–75). Nonwhite immigrants dominated the labor flow. Though nonwhite, the process of state selection for skilled labor had already set them up to be relatively successful. Would these nonwhite entrants have access to the benefits of the welfare state and civil rights protections? And if so, on what grounds?

The state answered these questions in part by ideologically constructing the new entrants as minoritized migrants who had no need for welfare and civil rights protections. Even though it did not legislate differential access to social entitlements for noncitizens as it would do in 1996, it achieved some of the same effects through ideological work.⁶ It defined as anti-citizens those who relied on welfare or group rights for social mobility.⁷ It achieved this through the racialized image of model minorities. In 1966, a year after the INA was reformed, the *New York Times Magazine* and the *U.S. News & World Report* popularized sociologist William Petersen's discussions of Japanese and Chinese Americans as "model minorities" who were the antithesis of state-reliant African Americans (Chang 1999, 54–55). South Asian professionals migrating mostly from India were quickly absorbed into this construct (Prashad 2000, 168). This hegemonic image enabled the state to actively produce a racially ambiguous identity for South Asians who were amenable to be represented as nonblack, though also definitely not white.

Although most new immigrants at this time were professionals, many were underemployed, underpaid, and hit the glass ceiling (Dutta 1980, 469–83; 1982;

Elkhanaly and Nicholas 1976b, 48). Their "alien" and "nonwhite, nonblack" appearance, their nonnative dialect of English, and their lack of professional networks blocked their upward mobility (Dutta 1982, 80). A mid-1970s survey conducted on behalf of the India League of America (ILA), a Chicago-based pan-Indian organization, revealed that 44 percent of those polled reported that they had been either denied jobs for which they were qualified or were overlooked for promotion (Elkhanaly and Nicholas 1976b, 47). Indian women, despite their high rates of labor force participation, were considerably underpaid (Kanta Marwah's 1978 study, cited in Dutta 1982, 82). The predicament of these immigrants paralleled that of other newly arrived Asian Americans who were facing similar barriers (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights 1980). Clearly, they were confronting what the legal theorist Robert Chang (1999) calls nativistic racism, a potent combination of xenophobia and racism directed specifically at immigrants, and thus began their search for rights.

Enacting Citizenship

In 1974, the AIA decided to intervene in the system that federal agencies used to classify the U.S. population by race, because the organization's members felt that none of the existing official categories matched the immigrant group's geopolitical and cultural identities. At that time, the AIA was one of a handful of civically oriented Indian immigrant organizations that operated at the national level. To execute the project of gaining visibility for immigrants of Indian descent, the AIA had to get its members involved in addressing their reality in the United States, which was marred by the unequal treatment that many of them faced. The organization appealed to immigrants by urging them to start acting like citizens or to prepare themselves for citizenship by taking an interest in processes such as the census and the congressional debates on it. At the same time, the AIA approached various government agencies in charge of racial classification to persuade them to recategorize immigrants of Indian descent as nonwhite. An effort to recover the scope of the AIA's double task shows that it cannot be reduced to a convenient cashing in on civil rights "benefits."⁸

Formed in 1967, the AIA was the oldest national-level organization with chapters across the country. In the 1970s, along with the National Federation of Indian Associations in America and the National Association of Americans of

Asian Indian Descent, the AIA stood out among the array of regional, linguistic, and religious immigrant organizations because it focused on political issues that immigrants, as residents and citizens, confronted as a result of being in the United States (Leonard 1997, 89–90). The AIA's membership included post-1965 immigrants as well as earlier immigrants. Some of its members were U.S. citizens, while others were permanent residents. The AIA's Web site states that its goal since the founding of the organization has been to help its members "become part of the mainstream of American life" through fostering their "Indian heritage" and "American commitment." This means that the AIA has urged immigrants to imagine themselves as politically active American citizens.

The AIA's campaign to change the official designation of the immigrant group and to secure a separate category was in keeping with its larger mission of encouraging political participation. In describing the connection between the AIA's founding mission and the reclassification campaign, Manoranjan Dutta, the AIA president during the campaign, told me that "the most important idea was that this organization was set up on the basis of their [AIA members] being in America. Their concerns were, therefore, the American government, the American Census: . . . [that is,] how they could interact with America and American establishment. Other associations did not see that. This was a new initiative on part of the AIA."⁹

The task of getting new and would-be citizens to shift their allegiance, interest, and involvement to the United States was not an easy one. In explaining the difficulties of mobilizing immigrants who were preoccupied with homeland politics, Dutta gave me the example of an eminent Indian immigrant who mistook the AIA's meeting with the U.S. Bureau of the Census for a meeting with the Indian Census Bureau chief, who he assumed was visiting the United States. Challenging this indifference to U.S. institutions and practices, the AIA argued that these immigrants needed to exercise their right to be counted because they lived in and paid taxes to the United States.

The AIA brought this sense of civic duty to the congressional hearings in 1976 on the 1980 census. Testifying to the House of Representatives, Dutta connected the need for all U.S. residents to participate in the census with the need for accurate data, which in turn would lead to a fair redistribution of resources. As he declared: "The political and economic future of thousands of people rests on the [Census] Bureau's demographic data. For the administration of many

Federal and local governmental programs involving affirmative action, and allocation of funds in the areas of employment, education and health services, accurate census enumeration of all minority groups is mandatory. We all have a stake in proper enumeration of the census" (U.S. House of Representatives 1976, 34–35). The AIA understood how, in the post-civil rights era, inaccurate census data on minority groups interfered with their ability to receive a proportional share of federal revenues and to benefit from federal antidiscrimination programs. But the organization also stressed the importance of participating in the census as a civic duty. The "stake" that Dutta alluded to in his testimony was a bid for full citizenship and its concomitant rights and responsibilities.

Along with encouraging immigrants to transfer their habits of democratic citizenship to the United States, the AIA also began expressing its concern to various government agencies about job market discrimination. Its first battle on this score was with the Federal Interagency on Culture and Education (FICE) ad hoc committee, which in 1974 was standardizing racial and ethnic categories that would be adopted by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). These categories would then be used to collect data to track civil rights compliance. The FICE committee, chaired by a Census Bureau official, became the architect of the five racial and ethnic categories enshrined in what is commonly known as the 1977 "Directive 15." This ethno-racial pentagon (Hollinger 1995) has been credited with "inordinately shap[ing] the very discourse of race in the United States" (Espiritu and Omi 2000, 45).

The FICE in its deliberations classified people from South Asia as white (Federal Interagency Committee on Education 1975, 3–5). In coming to this conclusion it was faced with many of the same quandaries as were the early-twentieth-century courts. Were immigrants from South Asia white because they were "Caucasians"? Or were they "Asian" because "they came from Asia and some are victims of discrimination in this country" (4)? After much debate, the FICE limited the minority category "Asian" to "peoples with origins formerly called 'Oriental' and to natives of the Pacific Islands." People from the "Indian subcontinent," it decided, were "Caucasian/White," not Asian (3–4) on the grounds that "while evidence of discrimination against Asian Indians exists, it appears to be concentrated in specific geographical and occupational areas" (5). Thus the FICE chose to go along with long-discredited ethnological claims that people from South Asia were "Caucasian" and therefore "White." In dismissing

"geographical" and "occupational" discrimination as valid reasons to claim minority status, it returned to biological notions of race. By stating what it did, the FICE suggested that minority status rested on typologies of "race" rather than on a group's experience of racism.

In its efforts to place immigrants of Indian descent in the ethno-racial pentagon, the FICE came up against the limits of a black-white formulation of civil rights (Ancheta 1998; Chang 1999; Moran 1998; Perea 2000). This framework treats minoritized groups that are not African American as "whites-in-waiting," an association that raises suspicions about their claims to minority rights (Perea 2000, 347). Because the pseudobiological category "Caucasian" had contingently absorbed Indians and not East Asians at certain points in history, the former group's claim to minority status was suspect. The legal scholar Rachel Moran (1998) has shown how the civil rights model, rooted in historically specific white-on-black relations of oppression, does not translate easily to other groups. These groups have different histories of racialization and they need civil rights to protect them against distinct forms of discrimination such as nativistic racism.

In January 1975, the AIA protested the FICE's decision by submitting to it a statement on discrimination faced by immigrants of Indian descent in order to prevent the OMB from adopting the committee's recommendations. It identified affirmative action in white-collar jobs, protection against social discrimination, and access to federal contracts and loans for immigrant-owned small businesses as priorities for the community. In the statement, the AIA clearly asserted that "Indians are disadvantaged, we believe, for reasons of racial discrimination" (quoted in Fisher 1980, 129). It placed the disadvantage squarely in the racial coding of Indians as nonwhites who faced skin-color and phenotype-based discrimination. It voiced its concerns about family members who were entering the United States in the midst of the economic recession in the 1970s under family reunification preferences (Koshy 1998, 304). Unlike their sponsoring family members, these immigrants were not coming in to fill a labor market shortage. They, the AIA argued in its statement to the FICE, would be competing "with other ethnic groups for the kinds of jobs [to] which affirmative action programs are particularly applicable" (quoted in Fisher 1980, 131). Without affirmative action, these family-sponsored immigrants would be at a disadvantage in a market skewed in favor of white, middle-class, American-born men.

The AIA succeeded in convincing the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) of the FICE's folly. The EEOC filed a notice on government-wide standard racial and ethnic categories in the *Federal Register* on 4 April 1977, to announce the addition of "the Indian subcontinent" under "Asian or Pacific Islander" (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission 1977, 17900). On 12 May 1977, the OMB followed suit in its "Directive 15" (Office of Management and Budget 1977).

The negotiations among the AIA and the various state agencies demonstrate the contradictory ways in which access to rights for immigrants from Asia have been thoroughly mediated in all periods of immigration by "institutionalized, legal definitions of race and national origins" (Lowe 1996, 10). These definitions have determined the state's decision to withhold or grant citizenship rights as it saw fit at different times to different groups racialized as "Asian." It is not surprising that for the AIA, claims to full citizenship and equal rights became tied to questions of racial classification and discrimination on the basis of racialized alienness, the quintessential racial formation to which Asian Americans are subjected. Far from exploiting affirmative action policies set up for established minority groups (Fisher 1980, 117, 129; Helweg and Helweg 1990), the AIA was attempting to locate immigrants of Indian descent in the U.S. racial landscape on the basis of their treatment and to articulate the stakes they should have as U.S. citizens.

In Search of a Name

While the federal recognition of people from the "Indian subcontinent" as "Asian" was a major victory, the AIA still had to get them removed from the category "white" in the census. The organization still needed to argue for a separate census label. In order to fit into the post-1965 relationship between race and rights, immigrants of Indian descent needed to transform their national, regional, cultural, religious, and linguistic identities into a racial one. The search for a name highlights the artificiality of racial labels for immigrants who have multiple systems of making sense of their identities. At the same time, the labels start to define the parameters, in this case for legal-bureaucratic purposes of distributive justice, within which immigrants have to articulate themselves.

The AIA's aim was to secure a separate category in the race question of the

short form, which is distributed to all U.S. households, so that the Census Bureau could gather a 100 percent count of the community. The organization thus approached the larger Indian community beyond its membership to ascertain how the community would prefer to appear in the census. To do so the AIA used ethnic radio, ethnic newspapers, and meetings with other Indian organizations to generate a debate about an appropriate census descriptor for the community. Ethnic newspapers provided an active forum for community members to discuss the merits of minority status that the naming would achieve (Fisher 1980, 127, 131).

The AIA in its outreach reinforced the point that, historically, immigrants of Indian descent had not been treated as white. It invoked the 1917 Asiatic barred zone to remind the immigrants that they had been treated as "Asians." Indeed, that law itself was preceded by such measures as renaming the Japanese and Korean Exclusion League as "Asiatic" so as to include immigrants from British India who were just as unwanted (Song 1998, 90–91). Despite this treatment, as Dutta observed, Indians had suddenly appeared in the 1970 census as "a footnote to whites."

During the 1970s internal debate over an appropriate label, community members proposed regional (Tamil, Gujarati, Punjabi etc.), religious (Hindu), and nationalist (Indian or Bharatiya) identities in lieu of the racial terms used by the Census Bureau. According to Dutta, the AIA recommended "Indian," a term that it eventually based on cultural heritage rather than on national origin, and it expanded the term to diasporic Indians. Caribbean and British Indian immigrants approached the AIA on reading its memorandum and self-identified as Indians. Ugandan refugees of Indian origin also agreed to identify as "Indian" as a gesture of appreciation for the AIA's role in petitioning the Congress to accept fifteen hundred refugees in 1972. The ILA of Chicago proposed the term "Indic," based on its discussions and survey, at an October 1976 symposium to which it invited the Census Bureau and the BBOC (Elkhanaly and Nicholas 1976a, 7). It asked the Census Bureau to list in brackets "the countries of the Indian subcontinent" (7) so that those not familiar with "Indic" could check the right box.

Immigrants participating in the community-wide debate rejected the labels "White" or "Black" because they felt that in their case skin color did not line up with those racial categories (Fisher 1980, 119–20, 127–28).¹⁰ The protests against a test run of the Chicago-based ILA's survey that asked participants to

identify themselves racially as white or black indicate the immigrants' refusal to submit to U.S. terms (Elkhanaly and Nicholas 1976b, 45). The mismatch between official designations and self-perception is exactly what opens up a contested terrain allowing communities to act on their own behalf and intervene in their racialization. In the final ILA survey, the categories that the participants themselves proposed for the census were "Oriental, Asian, Indian, Asian Indian, Indo-Asian, Indo-Aryan, Indo-American, Aryan, Dravidian, Mongol, Dravido-Aryan, Hindu, Hindustani," and so forth (47). This range reflects their perceptions and interpretations of "race" and ethnicity. Thus, the rejection of U.S. racial categories, on the one hand, could be read as resistance on the part of South Asian immigrants and an assertion of their ethnic identities (Koshy 1998, 301). On the other hand, their refusal to engage with those categories promoted their racial ambiguity within the dominant ways of understanding race in the United States (Kibria 1998, 71–72).

The ILA strongly supported a separate census category that would allow an autonomous identity to Indian immigrants who saw themselves "as racially different from White, Black and Oriental Americans" (Elkhanaly and Nicholas 1976a, 6). However, the group was conflicted about the demand for minority status, even though its own survey showed that three-fourths of the respondents supported the initiative (1976b, 49). While the ILA president at the time, Chandra Jha, was careful not to dismiss reports of discrimination, he did raise doubts about the extent and seriousness of such practices (1976a, vi–viii). The ILA felt that minority status was probably unnecessary given the blanket protection afforded by Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. According to the organization, raising immigrants' awareness of such legal safeguards would be a more effective strategy. The ILA's report underlined its willingness to support minority status if, after informed debate, immigrants and their representative organizations favored such a move. But in an *India Abroad* interview several months after the symposium, the ILA again expressed its reservations when its president argued that such a status for South Asians could alienate "truly disadvantaged minorities" if employers were to comply with civil rights requirements by hiring relatively privileged Indian immigrants (quoted in Fisher 1980, 132; Fornaro 1984, 30).

Other sections in the Indian community also opposed minority status. Some rejected the effort because they did not want to embrace a minority identity that

in their minds was stigmatized. Minority status for them was associated with disadvantage. Commenting on this association, the sociologists Yen Espiritu and Michael Omi point out how minority status is often seen as giving up on principles of individual achievement instead of being understood as "group demands for recognition and collective empowerment" (2000, 57). Those who held this position, which was similar to that of the ILA, were afraid that "preferential treatment" accorded to Indians, whose mean and unadjusted incomes were higher than those of whites, would provoke a backlash against them (Fisher 1980, 131–32). The Asian Americanist Susan Koshy (1998, 304) suggests that the support and opposition to minority status were class based. More secure and higher-ranking professionals—doctors and engineers—were invested in a colorblind approach that would promote the "model" image of the community. A minority status would, according to this section, damage that image. In contrast, those who were locked into technical jobs and were having difficulty advancing in their positions felt that eligibility for affirmative action programs would help them get out of the rut.

Undeterred by the multiplicity of positions among immigrants, the AIA carried its proposal to the Census Bureau. In March 1976 the AIA's insistence on the inappropriateness of the category Caucasian/White for South Asians and its alignment with other Asians were rewarded. The Census Bureau invited the AIA to a conference aimed at ascertaining Asian American concerns about the proposed categories for the 1980 census. The invitation suggested that the Census Bureau considered immigrants of Indian descent to be a part of "Asians." The Asian American advisory committee that emerged from this meeting made space for the AIA thereby opening up a category associated with East Asians to Indians. This merger is significant because it marked the beginning of a strategic alignment of Indians, and more broadly South Asians, with Asians. Thus, according to Dutta, when the Native American advisory committee requested that the qualifier "Asian" be added to the label "Indian" to "end Columbus' confusion," the AIA readily agreed to this modification as it got ready for its congressional testimony.

Immigrants and immigrant groups continued to challenge the AIA and its position well into 1977. This occurred even as the AIA was speaking for them in its meetings with federal agencies. Curious about why the other Indian organizations were not present at the federal-level debates, I asked Dutta to explain

how the AIA emerged as the voice of the community. Dutta claimed that the AIA was the only group with a formal petition to the Census Bureau and with a clear set of strategies. This explanation is plausible given that state practices favor and reward professionalism in minority leadership (Espiritu 1992, 11). It is likely that one reason for the AIA speaking for all immigrants was the endorsement it received from federal agencies as a result of its willingness to follow bureaucratic procedures methodically. Petitioning, letter writing, and caucusing were class-based skills that the AIA brought to its campaign.

"Not All Caucasians Are White"

The AIA was invited on 1 and 2 June 1976 to present its case to the U.S. House of Representatives' Subcommittee on Census and Population, which had been convened to address the problem of undercounting in minority communities. The buildup to the 1980 census represented an intensely contested moment since racial categories had become institutionally relevant (Espiritu 1992, 9–14). Mexican Americans, African Americans, and Korean Americans, like the AIA, wanted to address their concerns about category construction, undercounting in minority communities, and the resultant impact on distributive justice. The AIA was part of the Asian American delegation, and it appeared with the chairs of the Advisory Committee on the Spanish Origin Population and the Advisory Committee on the Black Population. The AIA in its testimony demanded that, instead of treating "people of Asian Indian heritage" as white, the Census Bureau should create a separate category for them under "Asian American" in the form distributed to every household.

The AIA's 1976 testimony before Congress shows how the black-white paradigm operated to frustrate its efforts to complicate existing racial identities (U.S. House of Representatives 1976). The bipolar frame actively produced racial ambiguity. The AIA had hoped to challenge the existing system and still be able to make a case that would underline the ethnic group's eligibility for protections granted to minoritized groups. In the process of navigating the black-white framework that only permits groups to ask whether they resemble blacks or whites, the AIA shifted among essentialist, power-evasive, and power-cognizant discourses on race that Ruth Frankenberg (1993, 137–42) identifies as the dominant repertoires of thinking and talking about race. The AIA, con-

founded by the black-white terms of belonging, was unable to consistently provide historically and experientially grounded reasons for minority status. At certain points, it attempted to deracinate Indians by evading power relations. Unable to fully disrupt the terms of racial classification, the AIA lost the opportunity to establish the specific forces that had worked to racialize immigrants of Indian descent. This lack of articulation interfered with the AIA's ability to relate meaningfully the immigrants' experiences to the minoritization of other groups, even though they all had common concerns.

Convincing the subcommittee that the Census Bureau's conflation of Caucasian ("race") and white ("color") was erroneous became the AIA's biggest task. It placed the severe undercounting of immigrants of Indian descent in the 1970 census squarely in the Census Bureau's merger of race and color. The AIA's inquiries into the 1970 census had revealed that the Census Bureau had added to the category "Whites" those who had written in "Indian" for the "Other" races category (see figure 2). Some respondents, on not finding an appropriate identity, had checked "Indian (American)" because it was the one category where the word "Indian" appeared. Others had checked the category "Black." According to the AIA, the Census Bureau's construction of the race questions and its method of handling these responses led to a paltry count of 78,000 Indians in 1970 (U.S. House of Representatives 1976, 33–35).

In confronting the problem of undercounting, the AIA parted ways with the other undercounted groups. At the testimony, black, Latino, and some Asian American community leaders had cited as barriers to data collection such factors as illiteracy, language problems, isolation in inner cities, lack of census enumerators from the community, and immigration status (U.S. House of Representatives 1976). These problems, the AIA claimed, did not affect the (highly educated and relatively well-to-do) Indian immigrants. Instead, the problem lay in the group's miscategorization. This discursive move distanced Indians from other minoritized groups that had been ghettoized and not fully counted as a result of the Census Bureau's inability to respond to their needs. The breach in the AIA's otherwise-used language of solidarity with minority groups could have been avoided had the AIA related the departures in the profiles of recent South Asian immigrants to immigration provisions and connected its concern about racial categorization to similar legal-bureaucratic impositions suffered by all the other groups with which it was testifying.

4. COLOR OR RACE

☐ Fill one circle.

☐ If "Indian (American)," also give tribe.

☐ If "Other," also give race.

☐ White

☐ Japanese

☐ Hawaiian

☐ Negro or Black

☐ Chinese

☐ Korean

☐ Other -

☐ Indian (Amer.)

☐ Filipino

☐ Other Race

☐ Prior tribe

FIGURE 2. In the 1970 census, immigrants of Indian descent had no separate category of their own. Their choices on the question on race included the following: "White," "Negro or Black," "Indian (Amer.)," or "Other." This image was reproduced from the census form. (Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census 1973, app. 53)

At first the AIA used historical precedent in insisting that immigrants of Indian descent were not white and fit best as Asians. Using this power-cognizant strategy, it went over the early-twentieth-century legal history to emphasize the way in which the *Thin* ruling used "race" to exclude immigrants from the Indian subcontinent. The AIA's use of these precedents to talk about a group's "race" points to its understanding of race as a product of history and an exercise of power rather than objectively observable physical characteristics. In tying the treatment of Indians in California to the 1917 legislation of an Asiatic barred zone, the AIA underscored the history of exclusion and discrimination that Indians shared with other Asians in the United States. Given this history, the AIA argued, "It is important to note that exclusion of immigrants of Asian Indian heritage from the category Asian American is arbitrary" (U.S. House of Representatives 1976, 35). What made immigrants of Indian descent "Asians" in the United States, then, was a common history and not biology. This formulation of race closely paralleled Santa Pian's testimony on behalf of the Chinese community advocating a panethnic "Asian and Pacific Islander" category based on a shared history of "discrimination," and "ethnic stereotyping" (U.S. House of Representatives 1976, 41).¹¹ This discursive move attempted to shift the attention of the Congress and the Census Bureau from phenotype as a basis of group definition to that of the group's treatment. By prying apart race and color to argue that color often has little to do with racial assignment in the United States, the AIA could have shown that white and black are not transparent references to phenotype (Davis 1991; Lyons 1997; Nobles 2000). Rather, the two racial categories structure unequal relations between two groups.

Yet, in picking its way through "race" in an effort to separate "white" from "Caucasian" (termed "Indo-European stock" in the Census Bureau's 1970 instructions), the AIA ended up treating "Caucasian" in essentialist terms: as a biological reality, draining whiteness of its history of domination. By casting the problem with the category as one of inaccuracy, the AIA's argument shifted from history to pseudobiology, sapping the interventionary power of its position. To convince the Census Bureau of its error, the AIA reverted to the ethnological terms that had played such a major role in the court cases of the early twentieth century. "Caucasian" appeared in its narrative as a race to which some "Indians" belonged and others did not, thus authorizing the category as a scientific reality instead of an ideological construct to justify colonialism and slavery. At one point the testimony claimed: "The fact is that some Indians are Caucasian, and others are not. In addition, we wish to emphasize that not all Caucasians are white. It is erroneous and misleading to equate the two terms, 'caucasian' and 'white,' as if they are synonymous, and use the term Caucasian to describe all Asian Indians" (U.S. House of Representatives 1976, 35).

If race were not considered the same thing as color, according to the AIA, then where did immigrants of Indian descent fit in the U.S. racial schema? The tensions between understanding race as a social construct and race as a phenotypical descriptor coursed through the AIA's testimony as it argued that "the misspecification of the census model in relation to the race/color question must be corrected so that Asian Indians are able to identify themselves accurately. The present category of race/color is an unscientific amalgam of race and color questions. Physiognomic criteria of race classifications remain controversial among the leading authorities in the field of anthropology. Cultural anthropologists rightly emphasize the importance of self-perception in any classification of race. The AIA submits that race and color are not coterminous. The category of color, if it must be included, should be a separate one. It must include not only black and white, but also brown, copper and others as well" (36). The AIA, in this excerpt, first rejected biological race by invoking self-definition or subjective understandings of one's racial identity. It then treated color, which has had a long history in organizing racial hierarchy in the United States, literally as a reference to skin color and proposed other color categories such as "brown" and "copper."

By trying to separate race and color in this way, the AIA lost sight of the

power relations that the color categories configure and shifted to presenting Indians as having no race. As Frankenberg points out, reference to variations in color, a power-evasive repertoire, is "a euphemism or strategy to avoid race: it shifts attention away from color differences that make a political difference [in this case black and white] by embedding meaningful differences in nonmeaningful ones" (1993, 38). The insertion of "copper" turns racial categories such as white into benign signifiers of skin color, thereby converting the AIA's power-cognizant argument into a deracinated power-evasive one. Unable to keep the politics of race at the center of its challenge as a result of the obscuring effects of the black-white paradigm, the AIA continued to miss the opportunity of naming the distinctive ways in which Indians were racialized and of laying the grounds on which they could ally themselves with black and Latino struggles. Nearly two decades later, this willful indeterminacy haunted another generation as the participants in the Boston forum described above floundered with the language of race and its implications for race relations.

The AIA's discussion of color and its use of discredited ethnological terms like Caucasian, Mongoloid, and Negroid in proposing an alternative to the Census Bureau's categories (U.S. House of Representatives 1976) demonstrates the collision between the arcane history of race in the United States and the understandings of race that these postcolonial immigrants brought with them. This encounter between South Asian and U.S. ways of articulating identity can be read as the process of racialization at work. In postcolonial South Asia, notions of race, though not as relevant as in the West, are filtered through a colonial lens.

The AIA's notions of race are continuous with nineteenth-century colonial constructions of the Aryan theory of race (Koshy 1998), modern Indian history, and postcolonial immigrant ideas about race (Mazumdar 1989b). The Aryan theory floated by European orientalist and Indologists proposed a common Aryan stock for people of Indian and European origins. High-caste Hindu nationalists appropriated this theory in the pre-independence and postcolonial eras, as did non-Brahmins in South India to challenge Brahmin hegemony (Koshy 1998, 294–301). The South Asian studies scholars Sucheta Mazumdar (1989b) and Susan Koshy (1998) both note the grip that these now-defunct theories have on predominantly Hindu post-1965 immigrants. This could explain the facility of these immigrants with terms such as "Caucasian," "Aryan," "Dravidian," and

"Mongol" and their treatment of these terms as objectively valid. Furthermore, for these immigrants not only was color not the same as race, but also "unlike racial identity in the West, color does not constitute a primary social or political identity in the subcontinent the way that caste, religion, language, region, gender, and class do (although it may be loosely configured within some of these categories)" (Koshy 1998, 295). Thus, the AIA's awareness of the racism directed at early-twentieth-century and post-1965 South Asian immigrants; its refusal to accept U.S. racial categories as universal; and its solidarity with U.S. minorities existed throughout in severe tension with its uncritical acceptance of race as a classificatory tool that existed outside social relations.

"Where Does Race Stop?"

Contentions within the Establishment

Confusion about what exactly constituted race for the Census Bureau plagued not only the AIA but also Congress. The state's race work unfolded in the exchanges between the congressional subcommittees on the census and the Census Bureau. Indians figured as a group whose lack of fit with existing racial categories called into question the utility of the census race item. The arguments against the Census Bureau's categorization system, however, restored the salience of black-white ways of making sense of race, because Indians did not fit only in reference to that bipolarity. Once again, power-evasive understandings of race—this time focused on how racial categories violate individual self-identifications—shifted attention away from the power-laden, and in that sense political, processes of constructing race. From the Census Bureau's defense of its practices it becomes clear that its attempts to implement the post-1965 relationship between race and rights through standard racial categories were embedded in the production of indeterminacy for groups like South Asians and other Asians, thereby compromising their rights-claims as minorities.

In 1977, a year after the AIA's testimony, the Census Bureau was cross-examined at a congressional hearing by Rep. William Lehman, the presiding member, about how it defined race (U.S. House of Representatives 1977, 153–68). Lehman repeatedly challenged Census Bureau officials to justify the collection of data by race and ethnicity. He questioned the reliability of data collected under boxes that might not match people's self-perceptions (153). To highlight

the limits of the Census Bureau's racial categories given the diversity in self-identification, Lehman used the example of an exchange student from India whom his family had hosted. This student had insisted that his correct "racial" identification was "wheat." In trying to make sense of such a self-description, Lehman actively implemented the black-white framework, creating a racially ambiguous body. His remark that the Indian student "didn't think he was brown; he didn't think he was black; he didn't think he was white" (165) did not lead to an examination of the dissonance the black-white system creates for those who do not fit and are not socialized in it. Lehman's understanding that "wheat" is a common racial distinction in India and his recommendation to the Census Bureau that it include a plethora of skin color variations in its race item to accommodate such responses stabilized the bipolar system by absorbing the challenge historically posed to it by Indian immigrants.

In responding to the congressman's doubts, the Census Bureau used its adoption of self-definition as a method to defend itself against criticisms about the narrowness of the race categories, their homogenizing function, and their confusing intersection with ethnicity. When Lehman asked the census officials, "Where does race stop and ethnicity stop, or vice versa?" they argued that the Census Bureau was "not attempting to make either an anthropological or physiological determination" (160–61). The Census Bureau clarified that census takers allowed "the respondent to indicate and to answer or to check whichever one of the specific categories" (161) because it recognized that racial identification was subjective. If the specified category did not describe the respondents, then they could write down the race to which they thought they belonged. This method, according to the Census Bureau, gave "the maximum latitude to the respondent to decide both on race and ethnic origin" (161).

In the census officials' testimonies, identifying oneself racially appears as a benign and routine process that allows for ample individual choice. It is important to note that self-identification, rather than being a routine technique, was established as a valid method for data collection through political struggle. In documenting the "Hispanic" community's protracted encounter with the Census Bureau over better data, the sociologist Harvey Choldin (1986, 406–7, 409–10) notes that census staff resisted self-identification because it feared introducing a subjective element into an objective process. Not until 1960 could respondents choose their racial category. The enumerator still reserved the

right to classify the respondent in case of confusion. In 1980, enumerators for the first time could no longer decide the race of a respondent by observation (Lee 1993, 78–79). All that self-identification comes to mean is that those filling out the census forms have the agency to identify with the categories already provided by the Census Bureau instead of having an enumerator decide the appropriate category.

The Census Bureau's answer about using self-identification did not satisfy Lehman. This time, the Census Bureau's construction of the label "Asian and Pacific Islanders" (API) was brought up as a perfect example of how this racial category collapsed "substantial differences between these people" (U.S. House of Representatives 1977, 161). In this case, API was cited as a prime example of how standardized racial categories imposed homogeneity. The Census Bureau's response to why it constructed such a category exposed its implemented understanding of race. While the Census Bureau argued that it clustered groups such as Japanese, Chinese, Filipino, Asian Indian, and Samoan under APIs to respond to those communities' demands for inclusion in that category and to conform to Directive 15, the following exchange shows that the Census Bureau had clear ideas about which groups were properly Asian or Pacific Islander when Lehman asked whether an Iranian would be considered "Asian." To this, the Census Bureau's chief of the ethnic and racial statistics staff, Mrs. McKenney, rebutted, "Generally, for the Asian and Pacific Islanders, we have used guidelines which have been prepared by the Office of Management and Budget to determine which groups come under this specific category, and the category would not include all persons from Asia. It primarily would include Japanese, Chinese, Filipino, Korean, Guamanians, Samoans, Hawaiian, and persons from the Indian subcontinent" (162; emphasis mine).

Lehman's attempt to clarify the liminality of Iranians under the existing classifications and the Census Bureau's categorical exclusion of Iranians from what it understood to be "Asian" gestures to the ways in which "race has always been an inescapably geographical concept" with regions being associated with "racial" types (Lewis and Wigen 1997, 120). Also, the history of U.S. military intervention in and occupation of the Philippines, Hawai'i, Guam, Samoa, Korea, and Japan has informed how Asia is demarcated in the United States. McKenney's reply was an attempt to fill in "Asia" which in and of itself is "an empty and arbitrary signifier" (Bahri 1998, 27). It intimates the Census Bureau's

underlying ideas about cartography and racial classification, thereby contradicting its earlier assertion that it did not attempt "anthropological or physiological determination" (U.S. House of Representatives 1977, 160–61). In reality, the Census Bureau's implicit understanding of who belongs to what race circumscribes the "maximum latitude" that a respondent has to specify his or her race.

Doubts about the Census Bureau's conception of who can be deemed Asian did not stop with this presentation. In 1979, Ratnam Swami, a representative of the Concerned Asian-American and Pacific-American People's Task Force and a self-identified "South Asian" testifying at a House of Representatives oversight hearing in Los Angeles, demanded to know if the Census Bureau would consider Afghanistan (which was included in the 1917 Immigration Act's demarcation of an Asiatic barred zone) and Iran as part of Asia (U.S. House of Representatives 1979, 69). Exasperated with the Census Bureau, he exclaimed, "I am willing to take a bet that no two people in this room will come up with the same definition of Asian-Pacific. I have tried it. The Census Bureau cannot give me a definition. . . . Just what is Asian-Pacific?" (69).

The question "Just what is Asian-Pacific?" underlines the indeterminacy that results from the state's race work—its reinscription of ethnicity, class, map making, and U.S. foreign relations as race within a black and white framework. The implications of this racial indeterminacy are troublesome because the group's race-based rights claims are consequently clouded with confusion. As Robert Chang, in commenting on the ambiguous racialization of Asian Americans, observes, "When we try to make our problems known, our complaints of discrimination and calls for remedial action are seen as unwarranted and inappropriate and may spark resentment" (1999, 55). South Asians in the United States suffer from the same paradoxical delegitimation.

At the end of these debates, the 1980 census form printed "Asian Indian" as a separate category (see figure 3). Unlike the BEOC and the OMB, it did not specify a summary category "Asian or Pacific Islander." The term "Asian Indian," with little currency outside of scholarly and bureaucratic usage, thus emerged. Unlike such subcategories as "Chinese" or "Korean," which referred to national identity, "Asian Indian" was supposed to allude to immigrants from all South Asian nations and the diaspora. It has failed to operate successfully as a transnational term because it repeats India's geopolitical hegemony in the region. Many South Asians such as Pakistanis or Bangladeshis or Sri Lankans do not

4. To this point -
 100 000 0000

<input type="radio"/> White	<input type="radio"/> Asian Indian
<input type="radio"/> Black or Negro	<input type="radio"/> Hawaiian
<input type="radio"/> Japanese	<input type="radio"/> Guamanian
<input type="radio"/> Chinese	<input type="radio"/> Samoan
<input type="radio"/> Filipino	<input type="radio"/> Eskimo
<input type="radio"/> Korean	<input type="radio"/> Aleut
<input type="radio"/> Vietnamese	<input type="radio"/> Other - Specify
<input type="radio"/> Indian (Amer.)	

Print
 tribe

FIGURE 1. In the 1980 census "Asian Indian" appears as a separate category. None of the Asian and Pacific Islander categories are grouped. This image was reproduced from the census form. (Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census 1982, 21)

identify as "Asian Indians" and do not check that category. This means that the South Asians in the United States continue to be undercounted in the census.

In hindsight, what did the AIA win for immigrants of Indian descent after its six-year struggle with government agencies? By the AIA's own admission the utilization of the direct gains from the group's reclassification as a minority were modest. South Asian academics and professionals filed court and EEOC cases to challenge promotion and tenure denials and rejections from medical residency programs (Chopra 1995, 1332-35; Leonard 1997, 90; Motihar 1996, 19). Business owners benefited to some degree from their eligibility as minorities to federal funds and contracts. However, in 1980, a U.S. Supreme Court judge, affirming the second circuit court's determination in *Fullilove v. Klutznick* that a 10 percent set-aside for minority businesses in public works projects in New York was constitutional, skeptically asked, "The inclusion of Orientals troubles me—what discrimination can be shown against them?" (Chopra 1995, 1338). This statement is emblematic of the invisibility from which South Asians and Asian Americans suffer within white-on-black understandings of racism. Such erasure renders as mere formality state recognition of those groups as minorities. To contest the erosion of rights, the National Association of Americans of Indian Descent persuaded the Small Business Administration in 1982 to recognize the eligibility of Asian Indian business owners for its minority programs by showing they had suffered from "the effects of discriminatory practices," "prejudice or bias" and "economic deprivation" (Small Business Administration 1982). Again, these efforts had limited success. That "Asian Indians" could be systematically discriminated against continues to be questioned (Omi 1996, 181).

Conclusion

The focus of this chapter has been on the relationship between state practices and Indian immigrants' engagements with them to reveal the terms on which the first post-1965 wave of immigrants could belong to the United States. Rather than accepting the AIA's bid for minority status as sheer opportunism, I have argued that the AIA was attempting to articulate the post-1965 immigrants as racialized Americans in need of full citizenship with the promise of equality that came with that role. Consequently, the organization was caught in the central contradiction of a racist state—that is, between sameness and difference. The state reinscribed several distinctions that were on the point of being destabilized by its new immigration, civil rights, and welfare policies when it demanded that Indians make their identity (difference) decipherable within the hegemonic terms of black and white to become eligible for sameness (equality guaranteed by civil rights). Their racialization as ambiguous entities stabilized U.S. national identity by drawing the distinction between model self-reliant Asians and troublesome state-reliant blacks and between citizen-workers and noncontributing anticitizens. Thus, the newly named "Asian Indians" were granted a slippery toehold in the United States as long as their belonging was contingent on their willingness to assimilate and contribute economically without demanding anything in return. In other words, the state was ready to offer citizenship with its responsibilities of economic contribution and political participation (see Marshall 1950 for the three stages of citizenship) but without the substantive right to protection against marketplace discrimination that would ensure the group's social and economic security.

Further, the AIA was willing to accept these assimilative terms charting what I call place-taking politics. The AIA's acceptance of these terms of belonging brought the community important victories. These gains could be secured because of its ability to act effectively in national political processes by utilizing the discourse of engaged citizenship that assumed an abstract subject equivalent to all other citizens. The AIA's elite membership's cultural and political capital, such as facility in English, familiarity with democratic methods of lobbying, and ease with media publicity, were central to its success. The immigrants transferred skills learned in independent India to their new environment, a transnational process used in this case to promote a sense of belonging to the United

States. Even though they faced discrimination in the United States, this did not shake their faith in abstract liberal citizenship. In India, they were its primary beneficiaries. Having never had to examine their class, gender, and caste privilege, they represented themselves as the universal. On coming to the United States where they were confronted with their racial and national difference, the immigrants sought to restore their habitual power to name everything while remaining unnamed themselves—a practice that Sakhi cofounder and feminist activist Annanya Bhattacharjee (1992) correctly diagnoses as the habit of ex-nomination. This desire facilitated the state's production of racial ambiguity and made these immigrants perfect candidates for place-taking politics.

The AIA in many ways modeled assimilative politics—participation in U.S. democratic structures through democratic methods. These modes of participation were being hailed by ethnicity theorists such as Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan (1970) as ways for immigrant groups to become American without abandoning their distinctive cultural practices. For South Asians, the AIA blazed the path that made cultural pluralism compatible with U.S. nationalism. It struck the accommodating medium between the reinfusion of U.S. society with culturally different immigrant workers and their (tentative) absorption in the national body through their participation in conventional politics. The place-taking politics of the AIA set the tone for the South Asian mainstream's political involvement.

At the same time it left another legacy: unmet community needs and a lack of fluency among South Asians about U.S. race relations. The rise of South Asian social change-oriented organizations such as Manavi in New Jersey and TriKone in San Francisco by 1985 testifies to the severe limitations of place-taking politics. Such politics could not meet the needs of noncitizen immigrants, immigrant women, sexual minorities, and low-wage workers. The rhetoric of citizenship that the AIA used constructed race and gender inequality as a mere impediment to full citizenship rather than being central to it. The AIA uncritically accepted that citizens are the privileged subjects of rights, and to earn that standing South Asians needed to contribute to their new homeland and become politically active. The same limiting valorization of the nation-state and its promise of full citizenship with social and political equality can be found in the civil rights model (Lee 2000, 99) within which the AIA worked.

The feminist philosopher Uma Narayan's (1997) critique of hinging citizenship on the criteria of contribution and political participation—a critique shared

by many of the activists in South Asian social change organizations—offers a way of understanding the inadequacies and dangers of the AIA's position. To predicate rights on conventional modes of political participation for which citizenship is a prerequisite leaves out those who neither have nor want citizenship (55–64). While the United States no longer excludes resident aliens from citizenship on the basis of race, not everybody can become an American citizen. Years of residence, immigration status, income, fluency in English, political history, criminal record, and family members' ability to sponsor new immigrants determine a person's eligibility for citizenship. Many immigrants do not meet these criteria and are therefore excluded from the circle of citizenship rights.

The notion of citizenship as requiring a contribution, even when expanded beyond labor force participation to such work as raising future citizens, is fraught with danger because, as Narayan notes, it "locate[s] individual dignity and worth in capacities to be 'autonomous, self governing and self-supporting,' a view which suggests that the only rights such citizens need are 'negative rights'" (53). The image of contributing self-sufficient citizens pathologizes the actual relations of dependency that suffuse society. Recognizing these dependencies is the basis of positive rights that can respond to social needs (for Narayan's positive rights, see 52–53). From the analysis I offer, we can see that the notion of the contributing citizen fits snugly with the independent, self-supporting image of the model minority. It has the deleterious effect of delegitimizing certain immigrant and native-born minorities' need for state-led antipoverty and antidiscrimination programs.

The departure of space-making politics from place-taking politics in South Asian communities comes with the recognition on the part of social change organizations that gender, class, sexual, and racial inequalities constitute citizenship, which in turn organizes those axes of difference (for a historical analysis of this relationship, see Glenn 2002). Space makers understand citizenship as a social and cultural institution created by the nation-state. They do not rely on it to address the multiple and intersecting systems of oppression, which, in part, that institution creates. Through their engagements with oppressive systems, they take up the project of succinctly naming their communities' racial formation, the project at which the AIA not only failed but also created the painful legacy of ambivalence that I witnessed during that fall afternoon in Boston.