

Yuri Kochiyama



YURI KOCHIYAMA (Japanese  
American)



Grace Lee Boggs



GRACE LEE BOGGS (Chinese American)



Grace Lee Boggs

Primary Source: interview

Emily Lawsin: Well, welcome to the University of Michigan, Grace. We're very happy to have you here. Could you...we'll start out by asking you a few questions. Could you tell me a little bit about the place where you were born?

Grace Lee Boggs: Well, my father had a little Chinese restaurant in downtown, Providence, Rhode Island. And I was born above the restaurant. And I think that was when I first began to learn about how...the changes that we need to have in this country. Because the waiters in the restaurant, whenever I cried, they would say, "Leave her on the hillside, she's only a girl child." And so I got some idea of the kind of changes that we needed to make [laughs] in this world, and I think that was my first indication that my women's consciousness...as a baby.

Emily: Hmm. That's great. So...

Grace: And I think also I should say that my...my mother came from a little Chinese village in southern China, and she never learned how to read and write.

Emily: Um-hum.

Grace: Because they had no schools for females in that village. And she used to tell us stories about how she was sold as a slave by her uncle. She...her mother was a single mother. And she was sold to the big house and how she had to run away. So that gave me an idea also that these changes had to be made all over the world.

Emily: Hmm! Um-hum. Yeah. And so then how were you raised?

Grace: Well, actually, I was...we lived in an all-Caucasian community. And my father had to buy the land for our house in the name of his Irish contractor, because there were restricted covenants there. So I was raised in a Caucasian community with the idea that education was really important. And my father felt that way about education for girls as well as for boys.

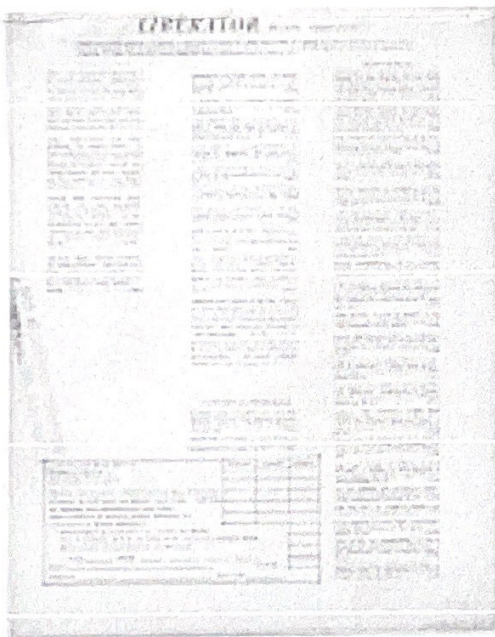
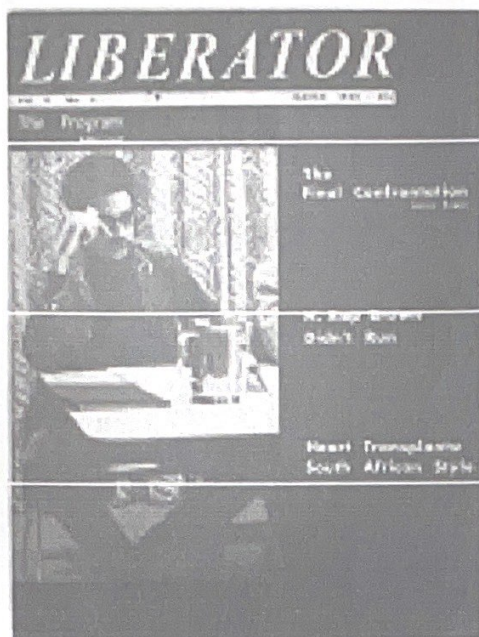
Emily: Hmm!

Grace: And I think that was the...my first attempt at having some sort of independence, was I figured that my mother was so powerless because she had no education, and that I was going to get an education. So I think that was why I really pursued my studies.

Emily: Um-hum. So your mother was very supportive of this, too, then?

Grace: Ah, you know, the...this question of the relationship between mothers and daughters is very complex, as you know. Emily: Yes, I know [laughs]. Grace: I was never quite sure whether . .

Grace Lee  
Boggs



Smithsonian Grace Lee Boggs Collection. Liberator Magazine published by Grace Lee Boggs and James Boggs in March 1968.



# Yuri Kochiyama



**Object number**

NPG.2016.102

**Exhibition Label**

Yuri Kochiyama 1921–2014

Born San Pedro, California

Yuri Kochiyama was a natural community organizer, even under duress. When she was imprisoned with other Japanese Americans in an internment camp in Jerome, Arkansas, she initiated an effort to write letters to Nisei soldiers fighting in the European and Pacific theaters. After the war, she and her husband moved to New York City, where they joined with African American and Puerto Rican groups to demand equal access to education and jobs. After Kochiyama met Malcolm X in 1963, her activism radicalized. This photograph documents Kochiyama's participation in a restaurant workers protest organized by the Chinese Staff and Workers Association in New York City's Chinatown. Born Mary Yuriko Nakahara, she began calling herself Yuri in the late 1960s to identify with her Japanese ancestry, much like black activists who took African or Muslim names. Present when Malcolm X was assassinated in 1965, Kochiyama bravely rushed to his side.

Corky Lee (born 1948)

Gelatin silver print, 1980 (printed 2016)

NPG.2016.102

**Data Source**

National Portrait Gallery

Yuri Kochiyama

**Primary source: Interview/Oral History**

**Densho Digital Archive**

**Densho Visual History Collection**

**Title: Yuri Kochiyama Interview**

**Narrator: Yuri Kochiyama**

**Interviewer: Megan Asaka**

**Location: Oakland, California**

**Date: July 21, 2009**

**Densho ID: denshovh-kyuri-01-0011**

YK: And I got a job as a waitress; I loved that job. And it was the first time I'm working with just black people, mostly the waitresses, so they were women, but there were waiters, too. And I finally, I asked... two of the guys were from the South. And so I mentioned to them that I lived a year and a half in Mississippi, and at a USO which serviced everybody, but no black soldiers came in. And so they said, "What was the address?" I gave the address, I couldn't forget, 222 Pine, he said, "That's the main drag. No black soldiers, even wearing a uniform, can go in anywhere on the main drag." They could not go on Pine Street or Main Street. I was shocked. Then, for the first time, it made me think more what America was about, the segregation. Then I got really interested and wanted to find out everything I could about what black people have gone through. And it made me ashamed when I could think of Asians were just as racist as whites towards blacks, anyway That changed me