



GARY FRIEDMAN / Los Angeles Times

Stewart Kwoh, center, president of the Asian Pacific American Legal Center of Southern California, listens to Thomas Chan of Chinese Americans United for Self-Empowerment at news conference.

## Asian Gifts Coverage Called Stereotyping

By K. CONNIE KANG  
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In the wake of the controversy linking a Democratic Party fundraiser to illicit foreign donations, Asian American leaders in Los Angeles and other cities across the country on Tuesday accused several influential newspapers of "perpetuating the stereotype" by failing to distinguish Americans of Asian ancestry from Asians.

"There is an unprecedented attack on Asian Americans in the United States today," said Stewart Kwoh, president of the Asian Pacific American Legal Center of Southern California.

Organizers of the Los Angeles event displayed a large, blown-up letter, which Kwoh said was sent Tuesday to the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal and the Washington Post on behalf of Concerned Members of the Asian Pacific American Community in Southern California.

Similar events were held in Washington, Boston and Chicago.

"Your stories questioning the motives behind campaign contributions made by non-American entities, including Indonesian and South Korean companies, have irresponsibly linked these non-American interests to the political agenda of the Asian Pacific American community," the letter states.

It states the stories failed to

provide "critical context to the alleged wrongdoings of non-American entities," and "casts suspicion and personal ridicule on individuals who have helped us become a political force" in America.

"That's all nonsense," responded Paul Steiger, managing editor of the Wall Street Journal. "Our coverage has carefully distinguished legal and illegal contributions," he said. "When the DNC [Democratic National Committee] returns a \$250,000 contribution, when the true donors slip cash to others who write checks . . . there is strong evidence that law has been violated."

Still, Kwoh declared that, "some reporters have even called Americans [of Asian ancestry] and the first questions [they asked] were: 'What country are you from? Where were you born? How long have you been here?'" He did not name any reporters.

The New York Times declined to comment and a Washington Post spokesperson was unavailable to respond.

Thomas T. Chan, chairman of Chinese Americans United for Self-Empowerment, said he was troubled the controversy is dampening Asian American participation in politics.

"The only way for this melting pot to succeed is for everyone to

participate," Chan said. "The media should encourage Asian Americans to participate."

"It would be a real tragedy if this had a chilling effect on the participation of Asian Pacific Americans," said Mike Woo, a former Los Angeles city councilman.

The controversy over Asian campaign donations began earlier this month with news reports about contributions from James Riady, a member of an Indonesian banking family. The reports dealt with John Huang, a fund-raiser for the DNC who arranged hundreds of thousands of dollars in campaign donations from an Indonesian couple, as well as an illegal \$250,000 donation from a South Korean company that the committee returned.

On Friday, the DNC relieved Huang of his duties and reimbursed a Buddhist temple in California \$15,000 for a fund-raising event Huang organized there last April.

Kwoh suggested Asian Americans not be intimidated by the current controversy.

Attorney Angela Oh, a member of the Los Angeles County Human Relations Commission, said the controversy "only reinforces our resolve to continue" to be involved in the political process. "We aren't doing this as a hobby," she said. "We aren't going to be deterred."