

Memories of Lucie

Edna Bonacich, Ph.D.

I must have met Lucie in the 1970s. She was the head of the Asian American Studies Center and I was working on the Japanese American Research Project. I wanted to link the work I was doing to the Center, but that didn't exactly happen. Nevertheless Lucie and I became friends and found ways to work together.

Lucie was a dynamo of inspiration. She was deeply affected by the Chinese Revolution, and wanted to implement some of its ideas. I remember the Center as a locus of social experimentation, including an effort to equalize pay among the staff, and to organize a cooperative garment factory in Chinatown.

Lucie was also a great institution builder. My impression is that she created, or helped to create, many of the programs at the AASC that are still in existence. She also played a critical role in the creation of the Pacific Rim program. She would develop a great idea, and then had the capacity to make it into a reality by mobilizing the right people to do the job. It was a real talent. I suspect she brought the same talent to her work on the newspaper and journalism school in Taipei.

I collaborated with Lucie on several projects all of which were her idea. As was typical of her, she would come up with an inspiring, "big picture" idea and then recruit people to make it happen. I was one of her recruits, though she certainly let me run with the ideas in any direction that I found worthwhile. This was another of her many talents: Lucie would bring in capable people to work on her projects, and then give them a lot of room to do their thing.

Apart from working together, and tossing ideas back and forth, Lucie and I became intimate friends. We talked about love and marriage, and feelings about our parents, and early childhood experiences. She spoke of her deep love for her father. I think we were pretty close for a number of years. But then we gradually grew apart as our interests and projects diverged. We both became less engaged in Asian American studies. And, of course, Lucie moved to Taipei.

Sometimes when she came to LA she would look me up and we'd get together, but that became less frequent. The last time I saw her may have been about 5 years ago. As usual, she told me of her exciting plans, and I shared what I was working on. We found some overlap, and talked about possibly collaborating, but we never did.

I feel that Lucie was an important influence in my life. She allowed me to participate in Asian American Studies for a significant period, even though I was an outsider—which was a great privilege. I will miss her tremendous energy and imagination, her efforts to change the world, and her courage in speaking the truth. Her father would have been proud of all that she accomplished.

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