

TALKATIVE ANCESTORS

Chris Iijima on Asian American Identity

“I once wrote in a law review article that Asian American identity was originally meant to be a means to an end rather than an end in itself. It was created as an organizing tool to mobilize Asians to participate in the progressive movements of the times. It was as much a mechanism to identify with one another as to identify with the struggles of others whether it was African Americans or Asians overseas, and that it was less a marker of what one was and more a marker of what one believed. That it has now become synonymous with ‘pride in one’s ethnic heritage’ is a complete evisceration of what it was originally and what it was meant to be.”¹

NOTE

1. Chris Iijima, “Pontifications on the Distinction between Grains of Sand and Yellow Pearls,” in *Asian Americans: The Movement and the Moment*, ed. Steve Louie and Glenn Omatsu (Los Angeles: UCLA Asian American Studies Center Press, 2006), 7. Courtesy of UCLA Asian American Studies Center Press.

Kalfou, Volume 1, Issue 1 (Spring 2014). © 2014 by the Regents of the University of California. ISSN 2151-4712 (print). ISSN 2372-0751 (online). <http://dx.doi.org/10.15367/kf.v1i1.13>. All rights reserved.