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## Speakers focus on perspective at WCC

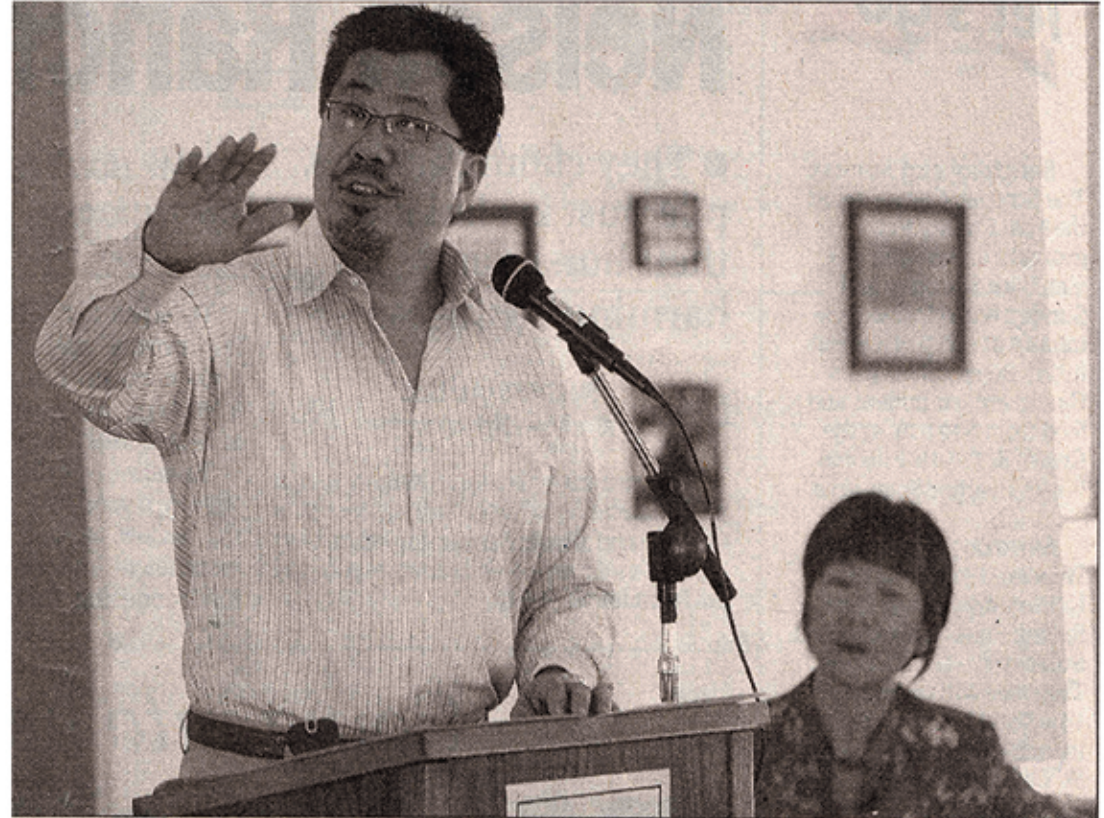
JAKE DORSEY

County residents experienced Friday some of the future of Asian-American heritage at Woodland Community College's final multicultural forum of the school year. Steve Yee, a board member of the Yee Fow Center for History, Culture and Trade in Sacramento, told about 60 people that Asian American culture in the valley is returning to prominence after years where there was little about it. "We have come full circle," he said. "We feel we are fulfilling the legacy of our Chinese pioneers in this great state."

Yee focused on the future Yee Fow Center, which came from a years-old proposal to build a museum honoring Chinese immigrants for their role in building the West. The center, which would take up at least one entire block of downtown Sacramento, near the old railyard. The center is gaining national and international attention, Yee said, referring to a recent opinion piece in The Sacramento Bee as well as other news coverage at the center's Web site. Yee said the center, as well as forums such as WCC's, are important in reminding people how Asian Americans contributed to the U.S.

"We live in a society plagued by amnesia," he said. "The truth must bubble through, and that time is now."

Mariko Yamada, Yolo County's District 4 supervisor, also spoke. She spoke from a Japanese



Deo Ferrer / Democrat

**Steve Yee speaks to attendees of Woodland Community College's Asian American multicultural forum on Friday. Assembly candidate Mariko Yamada, right, also spoke.**

American perspective; her family, who lived in Los Angeles prior to World War II, was put in the Manzanar Internment Camp in Inyo County after the war began. Yamada, who was born after her family was released from Manzanar, said that she has a unique perspective on the Asian American experience. She said she was described as "the only lemon drop in a sea of chocolate" after moving to the Five Points neighborhood in Colorado. As a young girl, she grew up the predominantly black neighborhood with mostly black friends, yet also worked

with Latinos, as her father hired many of them for his landscaping business.

Her work as an employee as the U.S. Census Bureau before 1980 also helped her perspective, she said, because it allowed her to realize that broad categorization of people has advantages and disadvantages. The advantages included being able to give people a sense of belonging, of inclusion, but at the cost of individual identity.

Yamada is giving up her supervisor's seat and is running for the 8th District Assembly seat being given up by Lois

Wolk. She largely stayed away from politics, but did say that she thought the recent rise of "immigrant bashing" when it came to Latinos was a by-product of the Iraq War.

Frequently, she said, people reach for a darker side of themselves when things are down.

The speakers were followed by a three-person panel who spoke on their personal perspectives of the Asian American community, and took questions from the audience. The forum was the fourth in WCC's multicultural forum series, and is the last for the year.