

Yuji Ichioka M.A. '68

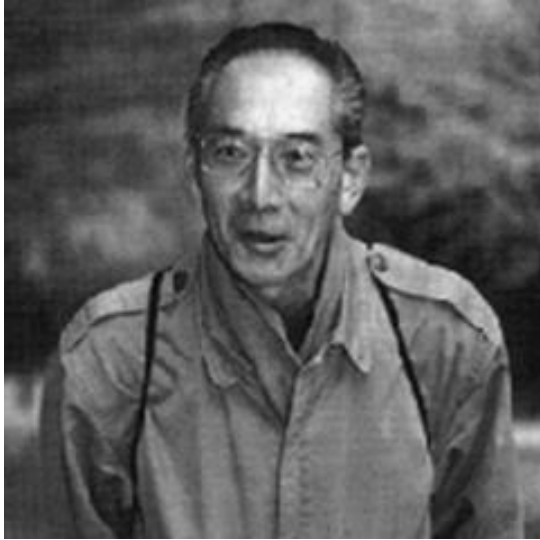


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Coined the term “Asian American” and founded the Asian American Political Alliance

A Bay Area native, Ichioka was born in San Francisco in 1936. During his childhood, Ichioka and his family were incarcerated at the Topaz War Relocation Center after Franklin Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which dictated the forced relocation and internment of thousands of Japanese Americans.

After he was released, Ichioka returned to the Bay Area to finish high school at Berkeley High and joined the US Army for three years. After returning from his army station in Germany, Ichioka relocated to Southern California to attend UCLA and graduated with a bachelor's degree in history in 1962. Though Ichioka attended Columbia University for graduate school, he soon dropped out and started working with incarcerated youth in New York City.

In 1966, Ichioka voyaged to Japan to study its language and culture. Inspired from his experience abroad, Ichioka wanted to learn more about the Japanese immigrant experience in America, so he decided to pursue his master's at Cal in Japanese history.

While attending UC Berkeley in the late 60s, Ichioka became an activist and founded the Asian American Political Alliance, a political organization that strove to unite all Asian Americans in fighting for political and social action. Ichioka is credited with coining the term “Asian American” in an effort to include and unite all Americans of Asian descent.²⁰ After finishing graduate school at UC Berkeley, Ichioka returned to UCLA, where he helped found the Asian American Center, now the nation's largest center for Asian American studies research.²¹ He also taught the first Asian American studies class at UCLA.²²