



*Remarks by Major General Phillip R. Anderson,
Commander, Mississippi Valley Division,
at the Kickoff for Asian Pacific American History
Month, Vicksburg District, 15 May 2000*

Greetings and amenities . . .

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Good morning. I'm delighted to have this opportunity to speak to you on this occasion celebrating Asian Pacific Americans.

Let me first confess that I have had limited opportunities to work closely with and really getting to know an Asian Pacific American until I was assigned as the Director of Military Programs at HQSUSACE in Washington. But it was there that I came to know one of our greatest SES leaders, the now retired, Mr. Charlie Kisuk Cheung.

I have to begin with a funny story about Charlie. Charlie is an inspirational leader who loved to communicate his thoughts almost daily with the senior leadership of the Corps.

He would come in the office very early and craft an e-mail conveying his thoughts of the day and always end it with "Essayons."

Well, one day while using spell check after crafting one of his e-mails, Charlie clicked on the change button instead of the ignore button when he reached the word Essayons and sent the e-mail out.

Unfortunately, the spell check suggested change for Essayons was Asians.

When we received his e-mail we all realized something inadvertent had happened and within 15 minutes Charlie offered an apology and explanation of what had happened.

But it was so uncharacteristic of Charlie to do anything like that and although Charlie was horribly embarrassed, many of us found it humorous.

Charlie continues to share his thoughts with senior members of the Corps and today I'd like to read some excerpts from a speech he has been asked to give at a Pentagon celebration of Asian Pacific Heritage Month on Tuesday, 23 May.

Celebrating Asian Pacific Heritage Month
May 23(Tuesday), 2000
At Pentagon, Education Activity, DoD
By: Kisuk Cheung

After spending my initial formative years in Korea, my parents sent me to a small high school in New Hampshire to learn English and the virtues of the New World. I also attended Dartmouth College and Thayer School of Engineering at Dartmouth.

After graduating from Thayer School, I was drafted into the U.S. Army. I gained valuable experience with soldiers and draftees from all corners of America.

I observed, learned, and experienced the true meaning of diversity, the importance of military leadership which is embedded in training, learning, adaptability, flexibility, commitment, sacrifice, selfless service, and loyalty.

My professional career and professional service began in 1957 with the Army Corps of Engineers. I was told by several Asian Americans that as an Asian I should not expect to reach any grade higher than GS-12. It was unthinkable to become a supervisory engineer or chief of engineering.

Well, it did not work out that way. I became chief of an engineering discipline after 5 years.

Soon after, I was given a most challenging and exciting position as the head of engineering in Alaska, Hawaii and eventually at the headquarters in Washington DC.

The recent high energy in pursuit of diversity in America is encouraging and inspirational. Today minorities and women represent an invaluable talent pool. Together they contribute well over \$1.5 trillion annually to US economy.

No society can afford to waste these priceless resources: that talent, dedication, tenacity, and drive of minorities and women.

Frank Rhodes, the President of Cornell University told us that we live not only in a global village of bewildering allegiances, but in a multicultural nation.

While we shall never outgrow the teachings of Jesus and Moses, we need to learn from, Buddha, Mohammed and Gandhi because the values for which they stood contribute to motivate and inspire millions.

Proud as we should be of our differences in heritage and commitment as a source of individual identity, there remains a level in which we need to function as a community if we are to survive. That may be the toughest challenge facing our generation.

I also agree with George Washington University's Professor Henry Nau's comment that America is the world's continuing test case for a tolerant, multicultural democracy.

The world tends to trust America's leadership, over the more homogeneous societies, because America copes daily with ethnic, racial and diversity issues within its own society. Thus, America attracts the brightest and hardest workers from all corners of the world.

For the last 43 years of my public service evolved around the Army Corps of Engineers. I have been challenged and given opportunities by my military and civilian bosses, mentors, co-workers and most importantly the customers for whom we served.

I served for the Army soldiers, Navy sailors, Marines, Air Force Men and Women, and also countless civilian members , managers and leaders in pursuit of military and civilian water resource infrastructures in America, Japan, Korea, China, India and hundreds of islands in the South Pacific as well as many other parts of the world.

My family and I are eternally grateful for your acceptance of my service and your encouragement.

I am most thankful to my co-workers of many different races, gender, color, religion, and ethnic background. They inspired me and allowed me to grow and learn.

I'm sorry Charlie couldn't be here in person today but I'm proud to have shared with you a little bit of why I think he is truly a great American.

Thank you!