

Sandy Lydon. *Chinese Gold: The Chinese in the Monterey Bay Region.* (Capitola, CA: Capitola Book Co., 1985) xv, 550 pp., \$29.95.

Lydon's history of the Chinese in the Monterey Bay region is a monument to the Chinese who immigrated to North America everywhere. The title *Chinese Gold* refers to a metaphor Lydon uses throughout his account of how "through their particular form of alchemy (insight plus ingenuity plus energy), the Chinese turned what they found into gold" (p. 504). The Chinese were able to see the resources of the Monterey Bay region where others could not and developed them "to the lasting benefit of the Monterey Bay region." But there are very few Chinese Americans in the region today and there are no historical monuments erected to attest to the central role the Chinese played in its economic development. Lydon hopes that his history will stand as a monument to the Chinese who lived in the Monterey Bay region.

I salute Professor Lydon's effort and admire the breadth and detail that characterize his research. His writing flows smoothly and in places reads like a best-selling novel. The history is well-documented and Lydon's scholarship appears to be sound. Throughout the book are maps and rare photographs which complement the text in such a way that the past becomes alive in the reader's mind. He very convincingly dispels the false stereotypes that have plagued the Chinese in American history texts and popular opinion (i.e. illiterate, exotic, and passive sojourners). Lydon is careful, however, that in dispelling the myths the Chinese do not start to look like every other immigrant group in America. He consistently reminds the reader of the legislation at all levels of government designed to rob the Chinese of their work, rights, and dignity as human beings. Although not the first nor last visible minority group in America to experience intentional and systematic discrimination, the Chinese immigrants had to deal with many situations not found in the history of most American immigrant groups. Lydon also shows how the "true" stereotypes (e.g. Chinese markets and restaurants) came about, but, by describing the diversity among the Chinese pioneers as well as their similarities, he does not create new myths.

The most important part of the book is a postscript to one of chapters describing how the experience of recent Vietnamese immigrants to the Monterey Bay region parallels that of the Chinese fishing pioneers in the 19th century. Based on the same arguments used a century ago, legislation was passed in 1982 to limit the activity of the Vietnamese fishermen. In July, 1983, the situation regressed to where a Vietnamese fishing boat was burned, which echos the timely Point Alones Chinese fishing village fire in 1906. Using visible minorities as scapegoats during economic tough times is alive and well in the Monterey Bay region (and

the rest of America)! Lydon is pointing out that knowing about the injustices that have occurred in America's past does not necessarily mean that they will not occur again. It is a noble thing to construct a monument to the forgotten Chinese immigrants, but if this monument does not enlighten the present then it is nothing more than a nice book for the coffee table. This last statement is not meant as criticism of Lydon's history but as an admonishment to all those who read his book to not romanticize history so it has no relevance to the present, or to relegate discriminatory practices to the past. I hope that Lydon's monument will also be used as support for those trying to ensure that such practices do not continue to occur.

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Paule Marshall. *Praisesong for the Widow*. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1983) 256 pp., \$6.95.

Paule Marshall's *Praisesong for the Widow* is an account of maturation or, put another way, of a black woman's willingness to confront her emergent self. Tastefully groomed, sixty-four year old Avatarra "Avey" Johnson leaves her suburban New York home to vacation with two friends on a West Indies cruise. Her decision to interrupt her plans, shortly after arriving at one of the destinations, is a surprise to everyone. Avey is compelled to discount the material investment she has made in the trip in order to follow a mind that has been haunted by dreams of her great aunt Cuney.

When she had religiously visited the old woman in the South Carolina sea islands during the summers of her youth, Avey received lessons in resistance and courage. The instructions had centered on a legend about a group of Ibos who chose to return to the waters that brought them from Africa in chains rather than approach the land that promised them bondage. A visit to the Ibo Landing was a ritual during those early days; Avey's recent dreams were reminiscent of those times and she was being forced to recall them. But, she was unsure about the meaning of her visions and embarked on side trips before taking a flight back to New York.

It was during her interim excursions that Avey pieced together the significant experiences of her life—the relationship lessons of her youth,