Guide to the Visual Communications Photographic Archive

Processed by Visual Communications Staff
Visual Communications
120 Judge John Aiso St.
Los Angeles, California 90012
Phone: (213) 680-4462
Fax: (213) 687-4848
Email: rukshana@vconline.org
URL: http://www.vconline.org/
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Guide to the Visual Communications Photographic Archive

Collection number: N/A

Visual Communications
Los Angeles, California

Encoded by:
Rukshana Singh and Pearl Alexandra Lee
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Descriptive Summary
Title: Visual Communications Photographic Archive
Date (inclusive): 1900-1995
Identifier/Call Number:
Collector: Visual Communications
Collection Size: Binders: 70
Repository: Visual Communications
120 Judge John Aiso St., Los Angeles, California 90012

Abstract: Visual Communications' Photographic Archive is recognized as one of the nation's most comprehensive repositories of 20th Century Asian Pacific American history with unique holdings in historical still and moving images and oral histories. The collection also contains images of Visual Communications since the organization's founding in 1970.

Physical location: Visual Communications
Languages: Languages represented in the collection: English

Access
The Archive is available to the public for research by appointment only.

Publication Rights
All requests for permission to publish photographs must be submitted to the Preservation Manager. Visual Communications holds copyright to approximately one-half of the items in the Photographic Archive. Visual Communications does not hold copyright for material obtained from other archives, libraries, or family collections.

Preferred Citation
Courtesy of Visual Communications Photographic Archive

Acquisition Information
Visual Communications generated the majority of the Photographic Archive from 1970 to the current date. Most of the photos taken by Visual Communications staff documents the organization's history and local community events. The remaining photos were gathered from private collections, family albums, and existing collections at public institutions.

In addition, Visual Communications worked closely in its early years with the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) and the UCLA Asian American Studies Center to collect unique photographs from private collections contributed by the Japanese American community. A recent major addition to the Photographic Archives is the Eddie Oshiro Collection. The Eddie Oshiro Collection was acquired in 2007 from the Little Tokyo Service Center Community Development Corporation and documents people and events in the Little Tokyo community from the 1980's to the early 2000's.

Biography / Administrative History
Visual Communications (VC) is the premier Asian Pacific media arts center in the United States. VC's mission is to promote intercultural understanding through the creation, presentation, preservation, and support of media works by and about Asian Pacific Islanders.

Founded in 1970 amidst the turmoil of the Vietnam War and movements for ethnic studies, the organization began as a collective of concerned filmmakers, graphic designers, artists, parents, students and educators. The founding members of VC set out to collect and preserve a visual record of Asian Pacific American cultural heritage. They responded to the negative representations of Asian and Asian Pacific Americans in media, film and television by creating their own images and producing alternative educational materials, books, articles, films and television programs. VC founders saw alternative media as a tool for reshaping public consciousness, connecting people's experiences, and a means for social change. The original vision has since been expanded to include other Asian American communities and the medium by which those
stories were captured moved into various formats such as books, videos, and film.

**Scope and Content of Collection**

The Photographic Archive contains over 300,000 historical images of Asian Pacific communities in the United States. The Archive also documents the history of Visual Communications; thus, the collection contains photos of the organization's activities and staff. The Photographic Archive spans the time period from the early twentieth century to the current date. Photos taken by VC staff are dated after 1970.

The early collection of over 10,000 photographs depicting Asian settlement in America grew to over 300,000 images covering additional Asian Pacific communities. Photos run the gamut from family photos to portraits; from the farm fields of the Central Valley to the Los Angeles fish market; from the streets of Locke's Chinatown to Little Tokyo; and from internment camp reunions to the first Asian American community picnic organized by anti-war activists. Of particular interest are photos of Little Tokyo in the 1970's and the Asian American student movement.

**Arrangement**

The photos in the Photographic Archive are generally organized by ethnicity/community - Chinese American, Hawaiian American, Japanese American, Korean American, Filipino American, Samoan American, Southeast Asian American, and Thai American. Photos of Visual Communications organizational activities or production stills of VC films are arranged separately. Any current donations to the Photographic Archive are generally arranged by donor name (e.g., Eddie Oshiro Collection).

**Indexing Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.

- Chinese Americans
- Filipino Americans
- Japanese Americans
- Korean Americans
- Samoan Americans
- Southeast Asian Americans
- Thai Americans
- Little Tokyo (Los Angeles, Calif.)
- Visual Communications