and Chinese immigrants are described and their reasons for coming are succinctly explained.

With the exception of one brief moment when a descendent talks of a Montana senator who stood up for the rights of Japanese, there is little emotion. The cuts are too quick to allow us to get to know the interviewees. This is not necessarily a problem but teachers may be frustrated by a lack of parallelism in the statistics. Numbers are offered, but comparison between them is impossible. For example, viewers are told the Chinese made up ten percent of Montana’s population in 1870, but are given no true idea of the extent of their exodus when told only 1,300 remained in 1910.

The relatively short length of the film allows for viewing and debriefing within the same class period. Discussion topics could include labor, immigration, discrimination, and racism, and the role of Japanese and Chinese immigrants. While clearly produced for middle school students, the film is never condescending and has much to offer high school students and even adults who have little or no background in this part of American immigrant history.

The video includes a study guide that details instructional objectives, lists and defines select vocabulary, and suggests questions to ask students prior to and after viewing the film. A study packet with additional resources is available. ■

TRACY BEE is Associate Director of The National Clearinghouse for U.S.-Japan Studies, a joint project of the Social Studies Development Center and the East Asian Studies Center at Indiana University, Bloomington.

Women in Japan
Memories of the Past, Dreams of the Future

T he stereotype of the Asian woman as subservient, selfless, and obedient to her husband has dominated Western thinking for over 150 years. The video, Women in Japan: Memories of the Past, Dreams of the Future, presents quite a different version of the modern woman in Japan. Award-winning filmmaker Joanne Hershfield, Professor of Film and Video Production, and Jan Bardsley, Associate Professor of Japanese Language and Literature Curriculum in Asian Studies, both from the University of North Carolina—Chapel Hill, undertook this film project, funded in part by UNC-CH and in part by the Japan Foundation, to examine the nature (role) of women in modern-day Japan.

The film consists of interviews with an eclectic group of women, some Japanese who have traveled abroad, others non-Japanese, who marry Japanese men and choose to live in Japan. The Japanese interviewees represent leaders in education, international Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), and the arts. A common thread that links the group is their perception of their mothers as classic examples of the selfless Confucian wife and mother, product of a pre-arranged marriage, devoted to husband and family—and their strong-willed independent reaction to that perception. Perhaps the most radical departure from a generation of tradition-bound females is exemplified by the life story of the internationally famous painter Taeko Tomiyama, who not only chooses an unconventional occupation, but also refuses to marry her lover and the father of her children because she does not wish to be subservient to (owned by) his family.

This modern-day willful independence is demonstrated in the non-Japanese interviewees, as well. The trend among young Japanese to move from the rural villages to the ever-expanding urban areas has created a
Women in Japan: Memories of Past, Dreams of the Future seems to imply that freedom of choice is the defining characteristic of the women in modern Japanese society. After generations of stifling subservience, the women of today are free to pursue a more self-fulfilling life. The end of the film touches on the possible consequences of this newly instilled freedom as the interviewers ask members of the next generation about their future plans. Teenage girls, who appear more western in dress and attitude than older Japanese interviewees, may see the struggle for self-fulfillment as being too difficult or costly when they laughingly (?) wish for a future centered on a husband who will take care of them. The next generation of documentary-makers will have to see if this is a generational reaction to the liberation of Asian women, or not.

This video can be a part of a high school class in sociology, world/comparative cultures, or be equally at home in a college sociology, media, or women’s studies class. The subtitles make it easy for viewers to follow the documentary. A Web site that complements the film, http://womeninjapan.com, gives biographical information on the interviewees and a variety of useful resources for research topics related to Japan, its history, and its culture. The lesson plans offered on the Web site are geared toward a media class, but are thought provoking and could be used in any writing or discussion setting.

DAVID H. PARIS, JR. attended the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill as a Morehead Scholar, graduating in 1972, completing a double major in English and History. After twenty-five years in the business world, David returned to the classroom and received his teaching certificate from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga in 1997. David is an alumnus of the National Consortium for Teaching Asia 2001 and the Korea Society Workshop 2002 and has spent the last two summers touring East Asia. He has a dual certification in secondary English and history and currently teaches world literature and serves as the Asian resource person for the 21st Century Academy, a K-12 magnet school in Chattanooga, Tennessee.