illustrates the intense disagreements over the strategies and tactics people use to better their position. It also brings into sharp focus the possibilities for, and barriers to, organizing people of color in general for collective self-empowerment.

From a class analysis, the Red Apple dispute is a prime example of how ethnic differences are manipulated by the media and by nationalist rhetoric, to the detriment of common struggles for economic and social justice. Finally, the Red Apple controversy reveals some of the sources and outcomes of conflict between people of color, and how intense disagreements between different factions—business and working classes, older and newer generations of immigrants, individual and collective political strategies — becomes transformed into a "fight between Asians and African-Americans." Some observers do see a way out of the conflict, but communities and organizations will clearly continue to fight over these issues long after Flatbush residents return to getting their fruits and vegetables at Red Apple, or the grocery is forced out of business.

Perhaps the best way to unravel what has become an exceedingly convoluted conflict is to first look at what occurred, and then to examine the goals, strategies and motivations of the various actors.

A Fight Over Fruit?

There is little agreement on what actually happened in the Red Apple grocery store last January. According to the New York City Korean Merchant's Association, Ghiselaine Felissaint, a Haitian woman, took some fruits or vegetables to the register. The clerk, Bong Ok Jang, told her the cost was three dollars, and she gave the clerk two dollars. When the clerk asked for another dollar, she threw her vegetables at him, spat at the cashier, and messed up the register displays. Bong Ok Jang tried to restrain her by grabbing her shoulders. He asked her to leave, and she dropped to the floor screaming. She also accused Bong Jae Jang, Bon Ok's brother, of participating in the assault.

According to the Flatbush Frontline Collective, a community group formed after the incident, Ms. Felissaint entered Red Apple grocery with a shopping bag from another store. She picked up a store basket, put some fruits and vegetables in the basket, saw a long waiting line at the register, put the Red Apple basket down, and started to leave the store. On the way out of Red Apple, Bong Ok Jang stopped her at the door and asked to search her bag. She was insulted, told him to call the cops first, and tried to leave the store. Jang restrained her by grabbing the back of her neck, and slapped her face until she hit the ground.

Frustrated with what they saw as a long history of abuse toward African-American women, African-American and Caribbean organizations immediately launched a boycott of Red Apple Store and Church's Fruits. (Church's Fruits is the Korean-owned green grocery across the street from Red Apple.) Organizers claim that the assault was one in a long string of attacks by merchants against African-American women, and that the boycott is necessary to stop these kinds of racist actions.

Roger Wareham, an organizer with a boycott participant group called the December 12th Movement, says the long term goals of the December 12th Movement are to stimulate "people to be clear about racism, to take a stand in their own lives, and to build a sense of empowerment for themselves." According to Wareham, the boycott organizers are demanding first, that the store be shut down "as a message that violence toward Black women will not be tolerated," and second, that the accused merchant be prosecuted.

The Korean Merchant's Association, on the other hand, feels that the boycott is an attack on Korean merchants' right to own businesses in predominantly African-American neighborhoods. They have been giving $8,000 per month to the Red Apple store and to Church's Fruits store, each, in order to keep them in business. Since the boycott began, the stores have been making a few hundred dollars in sales a week where they each used to make $2,000 a day. As of this writing, the boycott was still in effect.

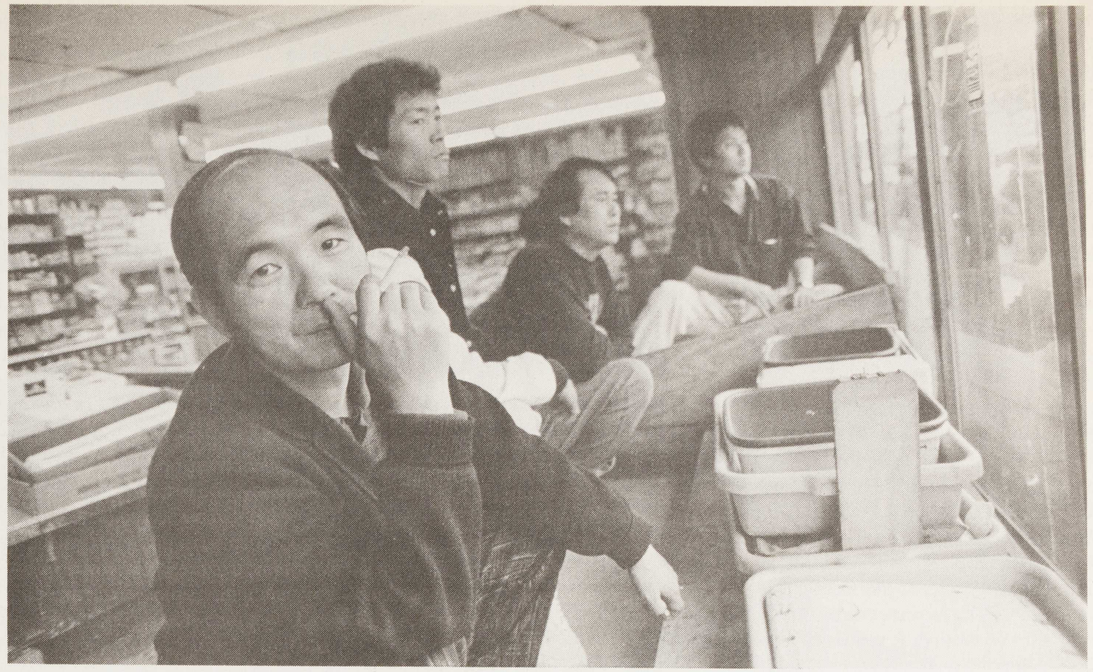
Race or Class (or Something Else)?

In the media, the boycott campaign and associated events are portrayed as "Black versus Asian," with Asians seen as victims in most of the mainstream press accounts and villains in some African-American newspapers. Indeed, there is no denying that interracial tension abounds in this situation. However, the whole story is much more complex. Adding to the fray, for example, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), a predominantly African-American civil rights organization, supports the store owners, and has even helped them sue the December 12th Movement. A closer look past the mainstream media indicates that the dispute actually has as much to do with strong disagreements between generations and classes as it does with interracial antagonism.

There are four main groups of residents currently involved in the boycott, with varying and often contradictory goals, philosophies and strategies:

Koreans: Koreans have been moving into inner-city neighborhoods in large numbers over the past decade or so, and own a large percentage of the grocery stores in New York City. They generally emigrate with at least some financial resources and often college degrees, and can tap into a business and social network that allows them a certain amount of independence from lenders and gives them access to credit and business contacts. As the way to "make it" for working-class people in urban economies has shifted rapidly from industrial employment to a very few high-paying service jobs and small businesses, Korean immigrants have been well-positioned while African-Americans have found themselves shut out.

While most people living and working in Flatbush suffer from restricted access to the city's political and financial machinery, for various reasons some groups have better internal support systems than others. With access to an informal cooperative banking system called *kye*, Korean immigrants have been able to open stores



Andrew Lichtenstein: Impact Visuals

Korean store owners watch a boycott demonstration from inside Big Apple grocery.

immigrants have been able to open stores in predominantly African-American neighborhoods, in places where often the only African-American-owned business are street vendors. The *kye* system is based on a network of Korean friends and family who pool their money together and loan it to one family at a time. Koreans are thus able to beat redlining and other forms of financial discrimination that can retard local entrepreneurship.

In general, observers agree that the Korean shopowners are often somewhat less than sensitive in their dealing with African-American customers. The Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence [CAAV], for example, has gotten involved in the Flatbush case, "because we were concerned about the undertone of the boycott that Asians are the villains," according to Minona Yin, CAAV's co-chairperson. CAAV is concerned about the anti-Asian sentiment expressed by some of the people associated with the boycott, but Yin admits that "there was a lot of outright hostility by Korean merchants against African-Americans, and day to day disrespect of [African-Americans and Caribbeans]. We cannot say that it doesn't happen."

Wareham, of the December 12 Movement, says there are serious problems with the way Korean merchants deal with their customers, and told the *Trendsletter* that "I think that in general the merchants who have set up shop in Black communities have taken on the white racist beliefs against Black people."

African-Americans: Most African-American residents of Flatbush support the boycott, but some older and more conservative members apparently oppose it. The community-based organizations who support the December 12th Movement generally express frustration at being neglected by city and state politicians, and see the boycott as a way to get people "riled up" to fight for social change, according to Margo Okazawa-Rey, who facilitates workshops for Afro-Asian Relations Council in Washington, D.C. December 12th and other boycott supporters often appeal to nationalist sentiment in their efforts to sustain the campaign. For example, a December 12 flyer calls on African-Americans to unite against the "Koreans [who] have learned that they do not have to respect us even in our own communities," and urges the African-American community to "buy black."

African-Americans and immigrants from the Caribbean do not have access to *kye*-like banking cooperatives, and some analysts say that with increasing opportunities outside the community African-Americans with the possibility to move out did so — depriving the neighborhood of its potential business class. Miriam Ching Louie, for example, argues that, "only immigrants with some resources but