

LOS ANGELES

# Daily Journal

THURSDAY,  
APRIL 13, 2006  
Vol. 119. No. 46

— SINCE 1888 —

OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER OF THE LOS ANGELES SUPERIOR COURT AND UNITED STATES SOUTHERN DISTRICT COURT

## Teaching Law Students About the 1992 Riots

Event at USC Will Include  
Discussion Of Impact,  
Première Of Documentary

**By Tamadhur Al-Aqeel**  
Daily Journal Staff Writer

Today's law students would have been 10 years old when Los Angeles erupted in flames following the Rodney King verdict in 1992.

The unrest brought to the forefront the tension between Korean-American business owners and their African-American clientele in South Los Angeles. Recently, a number of young Korean-American lawyers contacted the Korean American Bar Association of Southern California, wanting to know more about what happened on "Sa-I-Gu," or "4-2-9" — April 29, 1992, the date the riots began.

Attorneys John S.C. Lim and Angela Oh, then the president and president-elect of the organization, respectively, rose to national prominence during that time. Lim was recognized for his pro bono work on behalf of the community, and Oh for her outspoken analysis of race relations.

Both will discuss the impact of the riots at an event Monday night at USC Gould School of Law, which also will première a documentary titled "A Share in the Deal."

"I remember standing in John's office on the 28th floor," Oh said. "I was looking out the window and could count 19 open flames across the city."

Oh remembers Lim was on the telephone with the president of the John Langston Bar Association, a historically black bar association in Los Angeles. Then a friend called and said they should get down to the Korean Plaza, which is at 9th Street and San Marino in Koreatown. Lim and Oh got in the car and drove around the city, taking in the unfolding events and deciding on a plan of action.

One was to deal with the news media about political issues that would surface over the riots.

"Angela spoke very eloquently on behalf of Korean-Americans," Lim said. "And Korean-Americans felt they were well-represented by



ROBERT LEVINS / Daily Journal

Attorney John S.C. Lim looks west from the 28th floor of his downtown L.A. office, as he did April 29, 1992. That day, he and attorney Angela Oh were able to count 19 open flames across the city.

Angela's appearance on 'Nightline' [and other media outlets]."

The other issue was the relief effort. Lim started an intake center in a parking lot to provide legal services to Korean-Americans, "because many spoke little English," he said. There were many legal matters to deal with: lease issues, insurance, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, debt restructuring and more.

For about a year, 40 lawyers volunteered regularly.

"They gave their most precious thing, time," Lim said. "It didn't take that much persuading. They just stepped up and helped."

Oh said she thinks organizations in Koreatown and South Los Angeles have integrated the lessons learned in the aftermath of the riots.

"[People realize] it's no longer about black and white," she said. "It's multifaceted and ... playing out predictably in public life."

After 1992, Oh said Korean organizations began building collaborative partnerships with non-Asian organizations. Concerned Citizens of

South Central was a fledgling group in 1992 but has since started a bank and is well-established in the community. Lim said Korean-American banks started focusing on the redevelopment area.

"The level of collaboration was absolutely amazing," Lim said.

Remembering the past can empower the current generation, said Ellen J. Shin, the immediate past president of the Korean American Bar Association, who was in high school during the riots.

"It's important for us to go through it through their eyes," Shin said.

"Those law students," Lim adds, "they don't know, they can't make the connection, which is why we're being asked to speak. So they know this going forward."

The event is sponsored by the bar group, USC Asian Pacific American Law Students Association, and Southern California Asian Pacific American Law Students Association. It is free and open to the public. For more information, visit [www.kabasocal.org](http://www.kabasocal.org)