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Chinese Immigration, Exclusion and the Chinese-American Experience

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Rationale

I teach in an urban city school system, and my students are predominately African Americans. They are acutely aware of any prejudice that may be aimed their way. They also possess an understanding, at least at a cursory level, of the horrific history of prejudice and discrimination toward blacks in this nation. Yet my students remain woefully ill informed about the horrendous acts of injustice that have been aimed at people of other ethnic origins. My purpose will be to expand that knowledge base; to produce an empathy for Asian Americans; to create an interest in reading the novel; to provide background information that will assist my students in their understanding of the characters in the novels we will be reading; if possible, to reduce racial prejudice against Asian Americans as we see that fundamentally, we share similar struggles and goals no matter what our race.

Chinese immigration to this nation is a shameful chapter in our history. Knowledge of this history of discrimination against the Chinese and changes resulting from Supreme Court decisions will serve as an important basis for better understanding two novels that I plan to teach: *Bone* by Fae Myenne Ng and *Joy Luck Club* by Amy Tan. Chinese men flocked to our western coast in search of gold in the 1840s and in search of work on the railroads later in the century. Many were lured under false pretenses, and streets paved with gold and opportunity were not to be found as expected. Again in the 1940s another wave of immigration occurred, prompted by the coming of communism in China. Discrimination was awful and intense. Many of the injustices were addressed by the courts. For example, is it acceptable for a law to be applied arbitrarily to one group while another group continues to defy the law with impunity? Also, do aliens have equal protection under our constitution? Such was the basis for a case that eventually made it to the Supreme Court late in the nineteenth century of *Yick Wo vs. Hopkins*.

In both *Bone* and *Joy Luck Club*, we meet young women attempting to bridge the expectations of their elders to continue traditional ways of life and the desire to be more completely assimilated in modern American culture. The backgrounds and history of their ancestors is key in both works to the emotional development of the four daughters in *Joy Luck Club* and in Leila in *Bone*. Just as the young women gradually come to better understand the lives of their parents and grandparents, so too will my students better understand the history at play and the constitutional struggles of one of our important ethnic groups in this nation. They will be able

to see how these issues are still of great concern today. We will also examine the Fourteenth Amendment and its implications for all groups in our society. For example, how willing are my students post 9/11 to afford these same rights and privileges to Arab Americans or other immigrants coming to our shores today?

As we trace the United States in the nineteenth century, we find a progression from a nation that welcomed outsiders to work and settle its land to that of a "gatekeeping" nation. We became a nation that used many excuses to practice exclusion, including that of national security, but in fact practiced a form of racism aimed particularly at the Chinese and Mexicans. In the early twentieth century, we extended the definition of "race" to include people of Southern and Eastern Europe as well. And in the mid-twentieth century we even went so far as to intern our own citizens of Japanese descent. Through a system of laws, a bureaucracy was created that continues to this day. Yet in the last 150 years, has this system ever accomplished its stated or even its non-stated goals? Some of the questions we will consider include the following: Aren't employers looking the other way, and in that sense encouraging this migration to America because they want cheap labor? Aren't thousands of immigrants risking their lives every year to this day to come to America, and living lives as aliens, illegals, and undesirables? What rights are we willing to grant to minorities in our midst? Is our attitude toward immigrants any different today than it was over 150 years ago?

Background

Causes of Chinese Immigration

A series of events that ran almost concurrently in China and the United States prompted large-scale Chinese immigration to our shores. The conditions on the Chinese coastal regions were far from ideal. There was such overcrowding that population "averaged more than a thousand people per square mile" (Olsen 69). Food was often not able to meet demand given inferior farming methods, flooding and crop failures. The Chinese were still under British rule at this time, and conditions were difficult. The Taiping Rebellion of the 1850s "devastated southern China...It was a social catastrophe; the rebellion and its suppression completely destroyed the rural economy and killed more than twenty million people." (Olsen 69-70). Meanwhile, gold was discovered in California in 1848. Plans were hatched among Chinese communities and extended families: the males would go to the "Golden Mountain," as they named California, work "until they were fifty or sixty years old. Then they would return home bringing wealth and respect"(Olsen 70). The immigrants arrived in America from a society in which the needs of the one were sublimated for the needs of the many, where pride was paramount, where ancestors were respected, and where loyalty to the family was all-important. They were not there to get rich quick, but to sacrifice, visit as often as possible, and provide for those back home.

Chinese immigration exploded as news of the discovery of gold spread worldwide. Nor was California gold the only call to come here. American industry actively solicited workers from China. Chinese "worked gold mines in Oregon, Idaho, and Montana; silver mines in Nevada and Arizona; and coal mines in Utah and Wyoming" (Olsen 72). The Railroad industry was crying out for workers. Others were employed as domestic servants, laundry workers, and restaurant owners as well as the wool, shoe, and metal industries. They did agricultural work and worked in fishing villages on the Pacific Coast. As a result, "between the Gold Rush of 1849 and the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, nearly 300,000, most from ...southeastern China, arrived in the United States" (Olsen 69).

Methods of Immigration

In a system similar to indentured servitude of an earlier era, Californian businessmen used the "Credit Ticket System" in which an employer paid a worker's travel expenses in exchange for future work. The worker then needed to repay his debt, including the cost of his food, making it very difficult for the worker to ever be free of his contract. The first Chinese Contract Laborers, also known as coolies, left China in 1854. Recruiters used unscrupulous methods including force to make men sign the contracts, or when these did not work, they resorted to kidnapping. The latter was frequent enough that to be "shanghaied" has entered our lexicon.

The conditions on the ill-fated ships used to transport these workers were very reminiscent of the horrific slave ships. The ships were unsanitary, overcrowded, and workers were beaten, starved, and generally treated so poorly that often one fourth of the men did not survive the trip. Those conditions were reported in the San Francisco Examiner on August 28th, 1888 as follows:

The space assigned to each Chinaman is about as much as is usually occupied by one of the flat boxes in a milliner's store. It would be a strange sight to one not accustomed to it to see a framework of shelves, not eighteen inches apart, filled with Chinese. If a few barrels of oil were poured into the steerage hold, its occupants would enjoy the distinction so often objected to, of being literally 'packed like sardines.' (McCunn 22)

Early forms of Discrimination

When we look at the woeful history of prejudice, abuse, and discrimination suffered by the Chinese in the Nineteenth Century, it is interesting to note that this was once not the case. California celebrated becoming a state in 1850, and the Chinese immigrants were part of that celebration. One state judge who spoke at the festivities "happily acknowledg[ed] the presence of the Chinese and other foreigners in California" (Takaki 23) Included in his comments on that occasion were statements such as "we ... meet here to-day as brothers" and "You stand among us in all respects as equals"(Takaki 23). In 1852 the governor of California "praised the Chinese as 'one the most worthy classes of our newly adopted citizens'"(Takaki 23). That very same year it became clear to all concerned that the welcome mat was removed.

One of the first attempts to reserve the riches for Americans, meaning white Americans, was the Miners' Tax of 1852. This tax was aimed primarily at Mexicans and Chinese since only "foreigners" were required to pay. The Mexicans generally had more experience at mining than the newly arrived "Americans." The Chinese were also successful due to their willingness to work as a team.

The ability of the Chinese to work these mines through large-scale projects surprised the American miners. Teams of workers used pine trees to build wing dams of up to two hundred yards across streams. They also developed a chain pump, which was turned by a man on each side working a treadmill of four spokes on the same axle. Through this kind of teamwork, the Chinese miners were able to make a living where individual American miners could not (McCunn 27-28).

They complained that the "foreigners" had an unfair advantage, and the California legislatures listened with sympathetic ears, imposing the 1850 California Foreign Miners' Tax. Nor was this treatment exclusive to California. Chinese miners were also subject to similar discriminatory tax laws and harsh treatment in Oregon, Idaho and Montana as the search for gold and other valuable ores spread to those regions.

To further discourage immigration, California imposed a tax of fifty dollars per passenger "for each passenger who was not eligible to become a citizen - in other words, for each nonwhite passenger. This law was intended to discourage ship masters from accepting Chinese passengers"(Takaki 25).

Legislators also feared a continuation of violence against the Chinese. Here is an example of the sort of violence reported in a California newspaper against the Chinese miners:

An American yesterday attacked a Chinaman, beating him shamefully. The Chinamen in the neighborhood were afraid to interfere and the Americans, of whom there was a large crowd, stood by and saw the poor Chinaman abused. The assailant held the unfortunate Celestial by the queue and kicked and beat him until he was tired, and when the poor fellow got loose and was going off a policeman came up, saw by his bloody face that he had been in a fight and arrested him.
(McCunn 27)

Working the Rails

The United States in the mid-nineteen the century saw a strong need for laborers in another arena beyond mining - namely the railroad industry. The race was on to join the east and west coasts, with substantial financial rewards to the railroad barons for doing so as quickly as possible. Chinese laborers were found to be an asset, so recruiters sought them from the mines. When that was not sufficient, recruiters went back to China itself, until as many as 80% of the workers on the rails were Chinese.

Railroad work was not easy. Entire mountain ranges were in the way requiring dangerous explosives. One method was to lower the Chinamen in baskets where they "drilled holes for the explosives, lit the fuses and then swung out as far as they could to avoid the blast. Other workers quickly pulled up the ropes, but sometimes the baskets were not hauled up quickly enough, and the men were killed by the explosions. Sometimes the ropes broke, and the workers fell to their deaths" (McCunn 32). Snow and its accompanying avalanches, and heat of summer in the desert provided other dangers.

Once again, the "foreign" workers were treated unfairly. Leaving the dangerous and unfair working conditions was not an option for many who were held as virtual slaves. White workers were paid substantially more, were given shorter working hours and less dangerous jobs. 2,000 Chinese workers attempted an unsuccessful strike in 1867. They were forced back to work due to the withholding of food and water to the strikers.

The Chinese and the Courts

Though it may appear from the previous descriptions that the Chinese accepted their mistreatment with passivity, this was far from the case. From the beginning, they organized and in used the courts whenever possible, and in some cases with a great deal of success. It was only when the federal laws themselves turned against the Chinese did they fail to be able to redress the wrongs done to them.

Several laws passed in the nineteenth century made access to the courts available to the Chinese immigrants. First was the Fourteenth Amendment which gave all persons of the United States, be they born here, nationalized, or merely residents "equal protection of the laws." In addition, "in 1870, Congress passed a civil-rights act, intended primarily to protect the rights of newly emancipated black in the southern states, but containing as well a provision that was aimed specifically at removing Chinese civil disabilities" (McClain 8). Also, the provisions of the Burlingame Treaty between the United States and China protected the Chinese. Had the Chinese abrogated this treaty, all Americans in China and all Chinese in America would have been

forced to return to their countries of origin. Clearly it was more profitable for our nation to prevent this.

With these federal protections available to them, the Chinese were able to address numerous discriminatory actions at the state and local levels aimed at the Chinese community. Some were based in a fear of economic competition and attempted to maintain or create a Caucasian monopoly, while others were more malignant based in racial hatred. In a series of precedent-setting decisions, the Courts struck down attempts to apply punitive laws aimed solely at the Chinese.

Lin Sing v Washburn

The first such case addressed the clearly discriminatory Miner's Tax that imposed taxes and fees only on "foreigners," meaning non-whites in practice. The first such tax was passed in 1854. This was followed by an even more inclusive version in 1862 imposing taxes on all forms of work. The tax was known as the Capitation or Chinese Police Tax.

Here was the issue facing the Court: Could a state impose laws that interfere with foreign commerce? Doesn't the Constitution preserve this prerogative for the federal government? In addition, did an imposition of a tax on a foreigner working and living in the United States denote interference in foreign commerce? The California Supreme Court decided that such laws as the Capitation Tax did in fact encroach on powers reserved strictly for use by the federal government.

Lin Sing was groundbreaking. It was the first time that a Chinese immigrant challenged a state's right to pass ordinances on the grounds that it violated the Constitution (McClain 7).

Ah Wing and Ho Ah Kow v Nunan

In 1870, the San Francisco board passed an ordinance that sounded generalized enough on face value, but was in fact, as proven by its pattern of enforcement, aimed strictly at the Chinese. It required "every lodging house to provide at least five hundred cubic feet of air per inhabitant"(McClain 9). The penalty for failing to provide sufficient "air" was a choice of jail time or a fine. Most Chinese immigrants naturally chose jail time. They could reduce the fine by \$2.00 for each day in jail.

Local legislatures became frustrated. It was an expense to house all of those

prisoners. In response, the ordinance was changed. Now it would be a requirement for all who were convicted and who chose jail to submit to a rather unusual punishment. All male Chinese citizens at that time were required to wear their hair in a particular style: shave in the front with a long braid down the back called a queue. If they chose jail, they would also have their queue cut off. As a result, the law became known as the Queue-Cutting Ordinance. The mayor of San Francisco signed this into law in 1876.

On February 26, 1878, Ah Wing and twenty-eight other Chinamen were arrested for violating the cubic-air regulation. Both the Burlingame Treaty of 1868 and the

Civil Rights Act of 1870 were cited in Ah Wing's defense. Ah Wing was not successful. "The federal court decided that the state law on its face was a constitutional exercise of the state's power to promote the public health and safety..."(McClain 10). The judge did, however, leave the door open to question the cutting of the queue in its unfair treatment of one particular group.

A month later, another case was presented. Ho Ah Kow was similarly arrested and his queue was cut off. This

time the result was more kind to the Chinese. Justice Stephen Field "was no great friend of the Chinese...but he was offended by the pettiness and mean-spiritedness" (McClain 11) of this ordinance. The legislators, the judge found, had indeed gone too far in singling out one particular group, and was therefore in violation of the Constitution, which provided for "equal protection of the laws."

A precedent was thereby set. Now the Court made clear citizenship of the United States was not a requirement to be protected by its Constitution - in particular, by the Fourteenth Amendment. "It also conferment that a court, in evaluating a law, did not have to restrict itself to the face of the measure but could also legitimately look at the motivation for enacting it. This principle was affirmed and elaborated upon eight years later in the great United States Supreme Court decision *Yick Wo v. Hopkins*" (McClain 12).

Yick Wo v. Hopkins

The Chinese were primarily employed in particular businesses during the late

1800s. Those were cigar making, boot and shoe making, garment manufacturing, and laundry workers. These men did not come here with those careers in mind.

They were concentrated in these industries because so many restrictions lay elsewhere. One area of great success was the Chinese laundry. As many as three-fourths of laundries in San Francisco in the late nineteenth century were owned and operated by the Chinese. As in the area of mining a few years earlier, Caucasians felt economically threatened by the resourcefulness of the Chinese. Therefore, "Chinese laundries became natural and highly vulnerable targets of attack" (McClain 12). In a series of incidents reminiscent of Kristallnacht in Nazi Germany,

On three successive nights in July 1877 mobs swept through neighborhoods in San Francisco attacking Chinese laundries - smashing windows, pelting their interiors with rocks, and looting their contents - leaving rows of decimated buildings in their path (McClain 12).

Once again the legislators of San Francisco devised a plan to deal with these troublesome Chinese. Their targets were laundries in wooden structures. Safety issues were cited. After all, weren't wooden buildings more susceptible to fire? Wasn't this an on-going threat to large cities, especially San Francisco? It just so happened that nearly all of the Chinese laundries were in wooden structures while those owned by Caucasians were primarily brick. Wasn't this just a coincidence?

The ordinance worked this way: everyone operating a laundry in a wooden building in the city of San Francisco was required to apply to the city and obtain a license, and failure to do so would result in hefty fines (up to \$1,000) and/or six months in jail. The problem was that not one Chinese laundry was granted said license while all but one Caucasian laundry received theirs.

Yick Wo had operated his laundry for twenty-two years. In addition, he had never violated any city regulations in all of that time. Yet, as with all other Chinese applicants, his license was denied. In defiance of the new ordinance, Yick Wo continued to operate his laundry, and he was subsequently arrested.

The Supreme Court heard the case of *Yick Wo v Hopkins* in 1886, and the opinion of the Court written by Justice Matthews clearly sided with Yick Wo. Here is some of that opinion:

The court considered these ordinances as vesting the board of supervisors a not unusual discretion...with a view to the protection of the public against the dangers of fires. We are not

able to concur in that interpretation...The ordinances...seem intended to confer...a naked and arbitrary power to give or withhold consent, not only as to places, but as to persons...The power given to them is not confided to their discretion in the legal sense of that term, but is granted to their mere will. It is purely arbitrary...Though the law itself be fair on its face and impartial in appearance, yet, if it is applied and administered by public authority with an evil eye and an unequal hand...the denial of equal justice is still within the prohibition of the Constitution... (*Yick Wo*)

Another precedent was set. A law which seems fair but is applied unfairly is deemed unconstitutional! Also, the decision reiterated the finding in *Ah Kow* that the "equal protection" of the fourteenth amendment applies to citizens and non-citizens alike.

Fong Yue Ting v United States

So far we have examined a series of successful claims of Chinese immigrants against local authorities. Amendments to the Burlingame Treaty in the 1880s and the infamous Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 brought with them a more formidable opponent - the federal government itself. No longer would the government of the United States turn a blind eye to the comings and the goings of the Chinese, almost exclusively men, who often returned home to visit family that they were supporting with the money earned in America.

Originally, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 was approved for a ten-year period, but Congress easily renewed the Act not once but twice. Once only manual laborers had been restricted. Soon, however, all laborers, professional and otherwise, were excluded from entry to the United States. But what of those already here? Would they be allowed back following a visit to China? This had been an acceptable without incident under the 1868 version of the Burlingame Treaty.

The first new restriction required that the Chinese residing in the United

States possess a certificate declaring their right to return should they want to visit China and return again. This was not the end point, however. Between 1882 and 1892, restrictions greatly stiffened, with the government strengthening its prerogative to exclude whomever they wanted, including long-time residents returning home. The most onerous was known as the Geary Act.

[T]he aspect of the 1892 Act that provoked the greatest controversy pertained not to illegal entrants but to those Chinese who were lawfully resident in the United States at the time. A system of internal controls was established for them that paralleled the pass system of antebellum America, which required all slaves traveling off their plantations to carry passes (Fiss 303).

A lack of certificate after one year would leave any Chinese immigrant open to immediate deportation unless he could produce a "white witness" to testify to his lawful residency prior to November 17, 1880. For a community as insular as the Chinese, this was no easy task.

Fong Yue Ting had resided and worked in the United States for fourteen years when he was arrested and prepared for deportation for not possessing the required certificate. He was only able to produce a Chinese witness to prove his residency. The unfairness of this did not move the Court. Justice Gray, speaking for the majority, supported the stand of the government: they had total control over deportation of all immigrants and thus the present system of registration facing Fong Yue Ting was constitutional.

In *Fong Yue Ting*, Justice Gray ignored any possible difference between the long-term Chinese resident with deportation and the immigrant seeking admission for the first time...Since Congress could entrust admissions determinations totally to executive officers, Gray reasoned, the Chinese laborer should be grateful for whatever procedure Congress was gracious enough to confer. It did not matter that the Chinese petitioners were not claiming a right to enter, but only the right to remain in a country they claimed they had lawfully entered and in which they had resided for many years. They were still aliens, and they always would be (Fiss 305).

Despite the sympathetic rulings in *Lin Sing*, *Ho Ah Kow* and *Yick Wo*, the Court had determined that it need not apply the same concerns of injustice when applied to the federal government itself. The Court could not see that it too had an "evil eye and an unequal hand" when it came to dealings with the Chinese.

Wong Wing v. United States

The case of *Wong Wing v. United States* concerned a particular provision of the Geary Act. We have seen in *Fong Yue Ting* that the lack of proper papers could mean deportation to China unless a Caucasian could certify his residency. However, the penalty did not end there. "To strengthen this bar with respect to illegal entrants, Congress provided for punishment of up to one year's hard labor followed by deportation..."(Fiss 303). Wong Wing was arrested for violating the Geary Act. He was also arrested and sent to Detroit to serve his year of hard labor. Here the Court drew the line. Since citizens and non-citizens alike are protected by the fourteenth amendment, the Court opined, they could not be sentenced to prison or hard labor without the same due process awarded any criminal of the United States.

United States v. Wong Kim Ark

Wong Kim's parents were Chinese immigrants. Wong Kim, however, was born in the United States in 1873. Was he a citizen? He went to China for a brief visit and was refused re-entry because authorities said that he was not a citizen. The Supreme Court, however, disagreed. They found that the fourteenth amendment, which includes the phrase, "All persons born or naturalized in the United States...are citizens of the United States." Therefore, Wong Kim Ark was determined to indeed be a citizen of the United States. "That possibility of citizenship, created by Wong Kim Ark, altered the status of the Chinese in the Constitutional community and circumscribed the power of the government over them" (Fiss 313).

Life After Exclusion

Angel Island

Following the introduction of the first version of the Chinese Exclusion Law in 1882, some immigration still existed, though greatly reduced. Nonetheless, procedures and policies were enacted to further discourage the Chinese from entering our nation. These included checking for papers, doctor examinations, and waits for interrogations could be for weeks, months, and when decisions ended up in the courts, even years.

In 1909, due to poor conditions under which the immigrants were housed, a new location was established in the bay off the coast of San Francisco called Angel Island. Now the problems facing new arrivals included a "forty-five minute boat ride [that] was dangerous in foggy and stormy weather"(McCunn 91). Witnesses were less available than before, and while the new arrivals waited, while they might have family and friends across the bay, they were entirely isolated from them. Had this been the worst of it, however, Angel Island would not possess the infamy it now owns.

A mere thirteen years after its opening, the Commissioner General called the residences on Angel Island "filthy firetraps unfit for human beings"(McCunn 96). Bathrooms were unsanitary, inadequate, and had no privacy, so embarrassing that "some women protected each other's privacy by covering their faces with paper bags before going up the stairs to the bathroom"(McCunn 92). Doctors continued their examinations.

Chinese immigrants were believed to be contaminated with parasitic diseases and other ailments considered dangerous and contagious...Grandfather was subjected to a particularly humiliating physical examination as part of government authorities' attempts to prove or disprove that he was indeed the age he claimed to be. He was stripped naked, and physicians meticulously examined his teeth, skin, hair, sexual organs, and bones and noted their findings in his immigration file. (Lee 4)

People were asked to wait together in the same room without clothes, and the women, not used to undressing even in front of their own doctors in China, found this particularly humiliating.

Detailed questioning by investigators that were sometimes as minute as asking, "How many steps did you have in front of your home in China?" and when the witness's answer did not corroborate with the applicant, the immigrant could be immediately deported. Here is an example in point. Lau Dai Moy, the wife of a U.S. Citizen, applied for admission on June 12, 1917. Keep in mind that most of the Chinese immigrants residing in the United States were men. Therefore, a wife applying for entry would not have been unusual. However, because she was much younger than her husband, Fong Dai Sing, she was treated with suspicion. To prove that she was indeed the wife of the man to whom she said she was married, here were some of the questions she was required to answer correctly:

- Q: What presents or ornaments has your husband given you?
- Q: When did your husband give you the hair ornament?
- Q: Did he buy that hair ornament in his home village?
- Q: Did you really wear the gay head-dress and the bead[ed] veil at your wedding?
- Q: Just when did you wear the head-dress?
- Q: How long did you wear the head-dress?
- Q: Did you wear it while you served tea?
- Q: Who were the guests that you poured for? (Lee 95-96)

Lau Dai Moy and her husband naturally did have minor discrepancies in their answers. As a result, Lau was kept for further questioning for a period of six weeks.

Misery describes both the conditions and state of mind of the inmates of Angel Island. One detainee told of his experience in a 1939 interview:

I had nothing to do [at Angel Island]. During the day, we stared at the scenery beyond the barbed wires - the sea and sky and clouds that were separated from us. Besides listening to the birds outside the fence, we could listen to records and talk to old-timers in the barracks. Some, due to faulty responses during the interrogation and lengthy appeal procedures, had been there for years. They poured out their sorrow unceasingly...A few committed suicide in the detention barracks...It was indeed a most humiliating imprisonment. (Wei 18)

Other carved out their expressions of despair on the walls of the barracks using "forks and spoons smuggled

out of the dining hall. The walls of the barracks are still covered with poems like this one"(McCunn 95).

- Why do I have to sit in jail?
- It is only because my country is weak and my family is poor.
- My parents wait at the door in vain for news;
- My wife and child wrap themselves in their quilt, sighing with loneliness.
- Even should I be allowed to enter this country,
- When can I make enough to return to China with wealth? (McCunn 95)

Here is a translation of another:

- Several scores of days detained in this wood house
- All because of some inked rules which involved me.
- Pity it is that a hero has no way of exercising his power.
- He can only wait for the word to whip his horse on a homeward journey(McCunn 95).

"Angel Island served as a physical manifestation of the Chinese Exclusion Laws" (Lee 76).

The Paper Son

Those who qualified for immigration needed to belong to certain exempt classes of people. These included teachers, ministers, students, missionaries, government officials, and merchants, but not laborers. Those who did not qualify sought to find ways around the many onerous rules, including illegal entry. The life of an illegal immigrant is one fraught with danger, and those "who lacked the necessary government documentation proving their status as legal residents...were forced to hide in the shadows" (Lee 194). A practice that was commonly used was to claim membership in a family that belonged to one of the exempt groups. Once one immigrant was legally admitted, he could sponsor his children and other family members. It was common practice for any unused sponsorships to be sold to those awaiting entry to America.

Those who chose this route were known as "paper sons." They were so named for the papers they were required to produce to prove their familial ties. As explained above, the interrogation process was detailed, requiring these "sons" to commit massive bits of information to memory, and, should they succeed, to maintain these identities in the new country as well. The fear of discovery was always there. This false identity needed to be maintained. Legals and illegals alike were affected as lines between them blurred. Nor did this end with the first generation. If the paper son wanted to marry, his false identity had to become a part of the new family, forcing all relatives to continue the lies. A tremendous number of immigrants entered in just this way. Rather than excluding the Chinese, tougher laws and procedures merely challenged those desperate enough to enter to find ways around them.

This was not without psychological consequences, however, as more and more lived a "shadowed" existence. "In the 1930s, sociologist Paul Siu found that Chinese immigrants and Chinese American citizens suffered from a deep-rooted sense of insecurity, a 'psychology of fear'"(Lee 237). "The secrecy involved in maintaining double identities could be damaging. Charles Choy Wong, whose father had entered as a paper son during the exclusion era, found that the need for secret names created a 'split personality of fractured identity' in himself that he never quite reconciled" (Lee 240-241).

Continued Desperation and Misery

Up to this point, I have focused on the 19th and early 20th Century. However, Chinese immigrants continue to risk life and limb to come to this country. In fact, tens of thousands have arrived in the last few decades(Chin). As recently as 1993, a ship called the Golden Venture ran aground off the coast of New York. Ten of the 260 Chinese immigrants drowned, but more importantly, the incident highlighted the thriving human smuggling trade that continues to this very day. On April 5, 2006, 22 Chinese immigrants were found in a 40-foot steel cargo container at the Port of Seattle. This followed a painful two-week journey from Shanghai. And at no small cost. "Unlike Mexican illegal immigrants who enter the United States at relatively little financial cost..., illegal Chinese immigrants reportedly must pay smugglers about \$30,000 for their services ... The thousands of Chinese smuggled out of their country each year make human trafficking a very lucrative business ..."(Chin). Ko-lin Chin has written a book entitled *Smuggled Chinese* in which he has interviewed over 300 of the survivors of the misery of arriving here. He has found that "for many who survive the hunger, filthy and crowded conditions, physical and sexual abuse, and other perils of the arduous journey, life in the United States...is a disappointment if not a curse. Few will return to China, though, because their families depend on the money and status gained by having a relative in the States"(Smuggled).

As it was over 150 years ago, conditions of deprivation drive the Chinese to our shores, and once here, they must endure horrible suffering. However, when the survival of the family at home, and the loss of face that the individual and the entire family must suffer, they remain to endure what they must. And so the beat goes on.

Teaching Strategies and Lesson Plans

Objectives

1. Students will have an understanding of the difficulties faced by Chinese immigrants.
2. Students will be familiar with the discriminatory laws facing the Chinese immigrants.
3. Students will examine key court cases and consider justice of the decisions of the Supreme Court when compared to the Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution.
4. Students will interpret relevant political cartoons and recognize the political issues being addressed as well as their elements of satire and irony.
5. Students will be interested in reading the novels *Bone* and or *The Joy Luck Club* as a result of this unit.
6. Students will connect their understanding of the Chinese American experience to the characters in the novels we will read.

Classroom Activities

Lesson Plan One

Present the following scenario: If you lived in an overcrowded, war-torn country, where there was no way to earn enough to feed your family and food was scarce even if you could, where neighbors were selling children into slavery just to be able to feed those who were left, what would you do? What if, at the same time, you heard that across the sea there was a place where gold lay right in the ground, and all you had to do was to dig it out? If once you arrived you faced a constant threat of violence, discrimination, prejudice, lack of police protection, unfair taxes, laws intended to make you want to go back home, would you leave? What would happen to your family if you did?

Lesson Plan Two

Present one of the poems that had been carved on the walls of Angel Island on chart paper or on an overhead (see the background section of this unit), followed by questions such as:

1. How did the author feel about immigrating to the United States?
2. What do you imagine his life must have been like?
3. What about his homeland might he have been missing?
4. If your family was starving and your father went off to another country to send you money for food, what might he be feeling?

Lesson Plan Three

Present a copy of the MINING LAWS, RULES AND REGULATIONS OF VALLECITO CAMP, CALABERAS COUNTY, CALIFORNIA (1858), Serial # 9250 from the *American Passages Archives* found at http://www.learner.org/amerpass/slideshow/archive_search.php. Ask students to examine it carefully, looking for anything unusual or striking. Ask for possible motivations and concerns by the authors of this document.

Lesson Plan Four

Conduct a role play. Assign the following roles:

1. Chinese immigrant applying for entry into the United States.
2. American Interrogator
3. Witnesses for the Applicant

Ask students to form small groups and to devise a set of questions to pose to the applicant and his witnesses. Remind students that the purpose of the list of questions, like those that they might have had to answer by an interrogator on Angel Island) were intended to discourage immigration. One example of such a question could be, "How many steps are there leading up to your house?"

Then ask the "witness" to answer the same questions. Did the answers match? Would the applicant have been deported given the way their interrogation went?

Lesson Plan Five

List a series of 19th century San Francisco ordinances on chart paper or on an overhead projector:

1. *The Sidewalk Ordinance of 1870*: Those who used poles to carry merchandise could not walk on sidewalks.
2. *The Cubic Air Ordinance of 1871*: Each adult required 500 cubic feet of living space.
3. *The Queue Ordinance of 1873*: Those who chose jail instead of fine for violating the cubic air ordinance must have their queue cut off.
4. *The Laundry Ordinance of 1873*: Anyone found carrying laundry with horse-drawn wagons would have pay

for a license.

5. *The Wooden Laundry Ordinance of 1886*: Anyone operating a laundry in a wooden building must have a license.

Ask students how they might feel if these laws had been aimed at them and at no other group. Next, have students look at the text of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution and to consider which if any were in fact constitutional. If not, what part of the Constitution was being violated.

Lesson Plan Six

Hold mock trials. Ask students to research each of the following Supreme Court cases: *Lin Sing v Washburn*, *Ah Wing* and *Ho Ah Kow v Nunan*, *Yick Wo v Hopkins*, *Wong Wing v. United States*, and *United States v. Wong Kim Ark*. Once they have gathered their information on each case, have students form teams of prosecuting attorneys, defense attorneys and judges for each of the cases.

Next have students pretend to be the attorneys arguing in front of the Supreme Court. Then those playing the role as justices could render opinions as if they were court justices. Finally, compare our decisions with those of the actual Court.

Lesson Plan Seven

In groups of two or three, students will conduct an on-line search in which they visit websites, such as HarpWeek, and will select political cartoons related to Chinese immigration. Then they will analyze and present to the class the political issue being illustrated as well as the point of view being expressed.

Assessment

Following the reading of *Bone* by Fae Myenne Ng and/or *The Joy Luck Club* by Amy Tan, students will write an essay of a minimum of five paragraphs in which they discuss the experiences of the characters and how they were each affected by the history of Chinese immigration in the United States.

Applicable Academic Content Standards for the State of Pennsylvania

Content Standards for English

1.2.A Read and understand essential content of informational texts and documents in all academic areas: Distinguish between essential and nonessential information across a variety of sources, identifying the use of proper references or authorities and propaganda techniques where present.

1.3.11.A Read and understand works of literature.

1.4.11.B Write complex informational pieces (e.g., research papers, analyses, evaluations, essays).

1.6.11.D Contribute to discussions.

1.6.11.E Participate in small and large group discussions and presentations.

1.8.11.B Locate information using appropriate sources and strategies.

Content Standards for History

8.1.12.B Synthesize and evaluate historical sources.

8.3.12.A Identify and evaluate primary documents, material artifacts and historic sites important in United States history from 1890 to Present.

8.3.12.D Identify and evaluate conflict and cooperation among social groups and organizations in United States history from 1890 to the Present

8.4.12.A Evaluate the significance of individuals and groups who made major political and cultural contributions to world history since 1450.

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