

# **An Epidemic of Hate**

## ***A brief historical overview of anti-Asian racism in the U.S.***

**By Teresa Turner Chang**

### **Introduction**

For the past ten years, I've been facilitating One Human Race workshops using the PBS documentary [Race: The Power of an Illusion](#). In three hours, it provides an overview of racism in the U.S. from the beginning through urban renewal. It's a powerful experience. I've found that when people see how the parts fit into the big picture, they truly understand the intentional and systemic nature of racial inequity.

When the COVID-19 crisis hit and hate incidents against Americans of Asian descent increased, I began to construct a short overview of anti-Asian racism. I know a bit about anti-Asian bias through my husband and his family. I've seen the look of dissatisfaction on the face of someone who asked where he was from when he gave the correct answer (Colorado), and I've heard the exasperation when the person asked again, "No, where are you *really* from?" People who are more politically correct but still insist on knowing ask, "Where are your people from?" (When I say I'm from Texas, no one bats an eye although it's clear from my complexion that my ancestors were from Europe. No one cares what part of Europe they came from.) I knew something about the history of Asians in the U.S., but I was surprised and heartbroken by what I learned. I've only scratched the surface; I hope this article will make you curious to learn more.

### **Reflection Questions**

- What were you most surprised to learn about the history of Asian people in the U.S.?
- What anti-Asian stereotypes are you familiar with? Are they similar to stereotypes that are applied to other groups?
- Who benefitted from anti-Asian rhetoric and how? Does anyone still benefit?
- What did it mean to look like an American in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century? What does it mean now?
- What steps can you take to become more comfortable with people who look different from you?



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The scapegoating of Asian people for COVID-19 and the many incidents of hatred and violence that have followed—3,795 reported to Stop AAPI Hate from March 2020 through Feb. 2021<sup>1</sup>—are a continuation of a long history of anti-Asian racism in the U.S., a history that most of us know only in fragments: Chinese railroad workers in the 1800s, the internment of Japanese Americans in World War II, Vietnamese people arriving on our shores in boats in the 1970s. These fragments are like the island peaks of a submerged mountain. If we are to understand how they are all connected, we must dive beneath the surface.

### **The Gold Rush and the Chinese**



Head of Auburn Ravine, 1852, Collection of California State Library  
<http://explore.museumca.org/goldrush/fever13-ch.html>

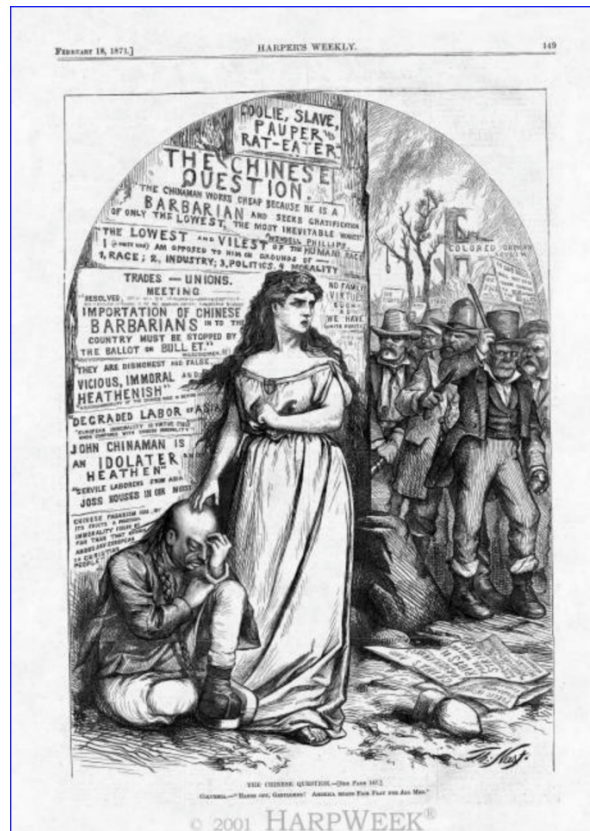
The first large wave of immigrants to the U.S. from Asia were the Chinese men who came to California in the 1850s to mine for gold. Most of the immigrants were men from Guangdong, a province that was experiencing devastating unemployment. Most of these immigrants intended to earn money for their families in China and then return home. Many whites, including recent immigrants from European countries, considered the Chinese aliens and resented them for working for lower wages. This resentment spurred California to pass anti-Chinese laws.

The Foreign Miner's License Tax, passed in 1852, levied a tax on foreign miners "not desiring to become citizens," a designation tailored to refer to Chinese immigrants who were made ineligible for citizenship by the Naturalization Act of 1790, which restricted naturalized citizenship to "free white people."

In 1855 "An Act to Discourage the Immigration to This State of Persons Who Cannot Become Citizens Thereof" attempted to curb Chinese immigration to California by taxing ship owners \$50 "for each passenger ineligible for naturalized citizenship."<sup>2</sup>

The Anti-Coolie Act of 1862 levied a \$2.50 tax on anyone "of the Mongolian race" who applied for licenses "to work in the mines, or to prosecute some kind of business. . . ."<sup>3</sup>

All of these laws intentionally disadvantaged immigrants from China and advantaged European immigrants.



Feb. 18, 1871, Thomas Nast, Harper's Weekly

By the 1870s, Chinese immigrants on the Pacific Coast were being blamed for epidemics such as the San Francisco smallpox epidemic of 1875-76. The city health officer, J. L. Meares, stated, “I unhesitatingly declare my belief that the cause is the presence in our midst of 30,000 (as a class) of unscrupulous, lying, and treacherous Chinamen, who have disregarded our sanitary laws, concealed and are concealing their cases of smallpox.”<sup>4</sup>

In 1880, San Francisco’s Board of Health issued a resolution declaring Chinatown a “nuisance.”

“The Chinese cancer must be cut out of the heart of our city, root and branch, if we have any regard for its future sanitary welfare. . . . We, therefore, recommend that the portion of the city here described be condemned as a nuisance; and we call upon the proper authorities to take the necessary steps for its abatement without delay.”<sup>5</sup>



The Wasp, May 26, 1882, George Frederick Keller

Hatred of Chinese immigrants sometimes exploded into violence.



Massacre of the Chinese at Rock Springs, Library of Congress  
<https://www.wyohistory.org/encyclopedia/rock-springs-massacre>

On Sept. 2, 1885, white immigrant coal miners rioted in Rock Springs, Wyoming, killing 28 Chinese immigrant miners and injuring 15. They also burned 78 Chinese homes. After the riot, U.S. Army troops had to be sent to Rock Springs to escort the surviving Chinese miners back to Rock Springs.<sup>6</sup>

In 1887, up to thirty-four Chinese gold miners were massacred on the Snake River by a gang of white men. The crime was only discovered when the miners' mutilated bodies were found 65 miles downstream at Lewiston, Idaho.<sup>7</sup> In 2005, the site was named Chinese Massacre Cove, and in 2012 a memorial to the slain miners was placed there.<sup>8</sup>



Front row (left to right): Fred Wong, Oregon CCBA boardmember; Stephen Ying, Oregon CCBA president; Rebecca Liu; Candise Nokes; Helen Ying. Back row (left to right) CCBA boardmembers Tim Wan and Marcus Lee, Greg Nokes, author of *Massacred for Gold: The Chinese in Hells Canyon*. (Photo by Deston Nokes)

<http://nwasianweekly.com/2012/07/supporters-attend-dedication-of-memorial-at-chinese-massacre-cove/>

Some Chinese immigrants earned enough money to return to China. A few struck it rich. Wong Kee became a well-known mine owner employing 900 men.<sup>9</sup> But when he met a white man, Walter E. Scott, for lunch, the restaurant refused to serve Wong because he was Chinese. Scott bought his lunch and the two men sat in the middle of the main street to protest this treatment.<sup>10</sup>



Most immigrants were not as lucky as Wong Kee. As the Gold Rush ended, many were recruited both from the U.S. and from China to work on the Central Pacific Railroad. They were paid less than whites and given the most dangerous jobs, most notably handling dynamite to blast through rock. Many died. Again, whites blamed Chinese immigrants for depressing wages rather than Central Pacific for exploiting them.<sup>11</sup>



<https://www.ncry.org/blog/author/ncry/>

Some Chinese railroad workers protested their treatment. In June 1867, Chinese workers constructing the Summit Tunnel went on an eight-day strike for shorter workdays and equal payment to whites. The Central Pacific cut off all their food and supplies, forcing them back to work.<sup>12</sup>

After the end of the Gold Rush and the completion of the railroad, out-of-work Chinese immigrants sought work in cities. While many sought to avoid racial conflict by opening small businesses, others competed with white workers for jobs in factories and mines. Again, the Chinese were paid less, and again many whites blamed the Chinese for driving down wages and taking jobs.

In Los Angeles, tensions exploded in The Chinese Massacre of 1871. A gunfight broke out between Chinese residents, and police, along with a civilian, responded. A police officer was

wounded and the civilian was killed. A mob of around 500 men gathered. They killed 18 Chinese men, most by hanging.<sup>13</sup>



Los Angeles Public Library, <https://www.lapl.org/collections-resources/blogs/lapl/chinese-massacre-1871>

Anti-Chinese sentiment was also strong in the Northwest. This hatred was typified by Tacoma Mayor Jacob Robert Weisbach, who called the Chinese “a curse” and “a filthy horde.” On Nov. 3, 1885, this rhetoric led to violence when an armed mob forced the entire population of 700 Chinese from their homes and packed them into box cars.<sup>14</sup>



Poster calling for expulsion of Chinese residents, Tacoma, 1885, Washington State Historical Society



In Seattle, an anti-Chinese riot broke out on Feb. 7, 1886. The mob herded virtually all of Seattle's Chinese residents to Ocean Dock, where they were met by police and members of the Home Guard. The next morning, nearly 200 Chinese were put on a ship bound for San Francisco.

The ship was not able to take all of the Chinese residents, so the mob decided to put the remainder on another ship which was due in a few days. When police and deputies escorted them back to what remained of their homes to wait, the mob rioted and the guards fired into the crowd, killing one person. Governor Squire and President Grover Cleveland declared martial law, and on Feb 9, President Cleveland ordered U.S. troops to Seattle. On Feb. 14, another 110 Chinese were forced to depart.<sup>15</sup>

The Federal government responded to anti-Chinese feeling by passing the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. "Whereas, in the opinion of the Government of the United States the coming of Chinese laborers to this country endangers the good order of certain localities thereof: Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That . . . the coming of Chinese laborers to the United States be . . . suspended; and during such suspension it shall not be lawful for any Chinese laborer to come, or, having so come . . . to remain within the United States."<sup>16</sup>

In 1892 the Chinese Exclusion Act was extended by the Geary Act. Under the Geary Act, people of Chinese ancestry could be deported if they did not carry identification certificates. In 1904, the Chinese Exclusion Act was extended indefinitely. It was not repealed until 1943.<sup>17</sup>

No. 41042 ORIGINAL.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.  
Certificate of Residence.

Issued to Chinese Laborer, under the Provisions of the Act of May 5, 1892.

This is to Certify THAT Wong Kin Hay, a Chinese Laborer, now residing at Mountain View Cal. has made application No. 2772 to me for a Certificate of Residence, under the provisions of the Act of Congress approved May 5, 1892, and I certify that it appears from the affidavits of witnesses submitted with said application that said Wong Kin Hay was within the limits of the United States at the time of the passage of said Act, and was then residing at Mountain View Cal. and that he was at that time lawfully entitled to remain in the United States, and that the following is a descriptive list of said Chinese:

NAME: Wong Kin Hay AGE: 37 yrs  
 LOCAL RESIDENCE: Mountain View Cal.  
 OCCUPATION: Laborer HEIGHT: 5.5 x 6.5 in. COLOR OF EYES: Brown  
 COMPLEXION: Dark PHYSICAL MARKS OR PECULIARITIES FOR IDENTIFICATION: Scar on upper left arm 3 Blg marks on right

And as a further means of identification I have affixed hereto a photographic likeness of said Wong Kin Hay

GIVEN UNDER MY HAND AND SEAL this 16th day of March, 1894, at Mountain View State of California

O. M. Wilbur  
Collector of Internal Revenue,  
District of California

W. M. Purcell Deputy

Certificate of residence for Wong Kin Hay, 1894 March 16, Certificates of residence for Chinese laborers, MS 3642; California Historical Society, <http://sfarchivescrawl.blogspot.com/2018/09/certificates-of-residence-for-chinese.html>

## The Rise of Japan and The Yellow Peril

At the turn of the century, racist stereotypes of Asians adapted to new realities. Japanese victories in the Sino-Japanese War and Russo-Japanese War and its occupation of Korea caused many in the U.S. to see Japan as a threat to U.S. interests in Guam, Samoa, Cuba, Hawaii, and the Philippines. Many Americans feared that Japan intended to conquer the world. These fears were inflamed by an influx of Korean refugees and out-of-work Japanese soldiers to the U.S. As a result, Asians who had recently been considered subhuman were now seen as calculating and power-hungry.

The threat thought to be posed by Asians was popularly referred to as “The Yellow Peril,” a term coined by Russian sociologist Jacques Novikov.<sup>18</sup>



*The Yellow Terror in All His Glory, 1899*

Perhaps the most influential embodiment of The Yellow Peril was the character Fu Manchu from the 1913 novel *The Insidious Dr. Fu Manchu*, the first in a long series of Fu Manchu novels. Fu Manchu was a member of a criminal organization who plotted to take over the world and restore China to glory. Fu Manchu was depicted in many movies, such as the 1965 release *The Face of Fu Manchu*.<sup>19</sup>



Theatrical release poster by Mitchell Hooks

Another aspect of The Yellow Peril was the focus of eugenicist Lothrop Stoddard's 1920 book *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy*. Stoddard claimed that white blood was superior and at risk of contamination by the "rising tide" of non-white people. Intermarriage, he feared, would result in "racial suicide." This view resulted in laws discouraging or preventing marriage between people of different ethnic groups. The Cable Act of 1922 revoked the citizenship of any American woman who married an "alien ineligible for citizenship."<sup>20</sup>

Other laws inflicted economic punishment on Japanese immigrants who had become part of California's farming economy.

California's Alien Land Law, passed in 1913, prevented aliens who could not become naturalized citizens from owning land. To circumvent the law, some Issei (first generation Japanese immigrants) registered their property under the names of their American-born Nisei (second-generation) children.

In response, California passed the 1920 Alien Land Law. This law outlawed registering property in the names of American-born children. It also barred Japanese from leasing land. By 1920, the amount of California land owned by Japanese people was reduced 44% and land leased by Japanese people by 60%.

California's land laws were a vivid illustration of the dependence of civil rights on citizenship. Under the Naturalization Act of 1790, only "free white people" could become citizens, so some Japanese and Asian Indians (though not the Chinese, who were barred from citizenship by the Chinese Exclusion Act) campaigned to be declared white.<sup>21</sup>

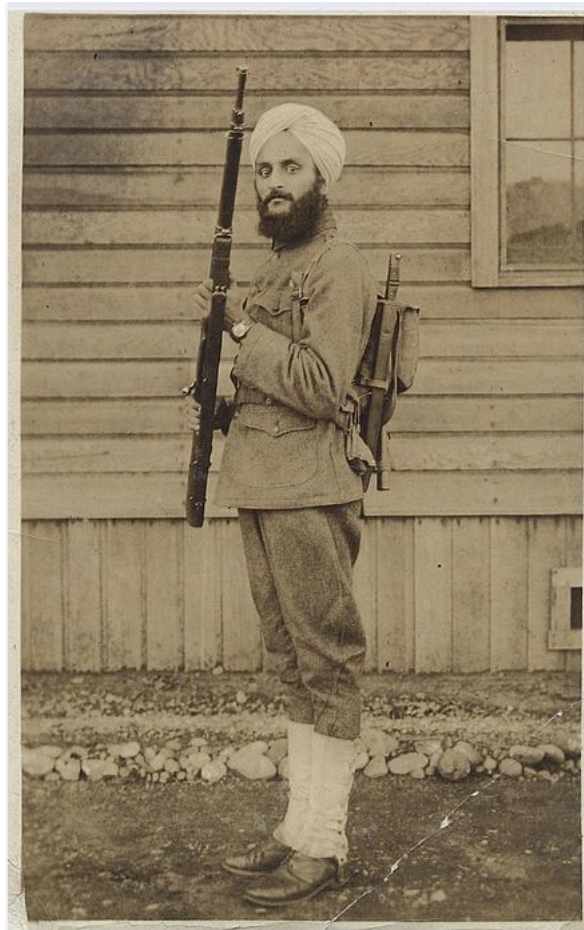
### **Ozawa v. United States**



Takao Ozawa

Takao Ozawa immigrated from Japan at the age of 19 and attended Berkeley High School and the University of California. He spoke English fluently, and he and his family went to a Christian church. He did not teach his children Japanese language, religion, or culture. In 1914, after his application for citizenship was turned down, Mr. Ozawa continued his battle, eventually taking his case to the Supreme Court. He pointed out in his brief that his skin was as white or whiter than most Caucasian people. “My honesty and industriousness are well known among my Japanese and American friends,” he wrote. “In name Benedict Arnold was an American, but at heart he was a traitor. In name I am not an American, but at heart I am a true American.” In 1922 the Supreme Court ruled that Ozawa was ineligible for citizenship. The court explained in its opinion that Japanese people were “clearly of a race that is not Caucasian” and therefore could not be white.<sup>22</sup>

### **United States v. Bhagat Singh Thind**



Bhagat Singh Thind

Bhagat Singh Thind immigrated to the United States from India after receiving his bachelor's degree. He enlisted in the army, rose to the rank of Sergeant, and served in World War I. In July 1918, Thind was granted citizenship in Washington state, but four days later his citizenship was rescinded. Like Ozawa, Thind did not give up. In 1920 he was granted citizenship in Oregon, and the United States sued to have it rescinded. Thind argued that according to the science of the day

he was Caucasian. Refuting its own reasoning in *Ozawa*, the Supreme Court ruled that Thind was not white. In its opinion the Court stated, “What we now hold is that the words ‘free white persons’ are words of common speech, to be interpreted in accordance with the understanding of the common man ... It is a matter of familiar observation and knowledge that the physical group characteristics of the Hindus render them readily distinguishable from the various groups of persons in the country commonly recognized as white.”<sup>23</sup> Not only did Thind lose his citizenship, so did about fifty other Indian Americans who had previously been nationalized.<sup>24</sup>

### **The Immigration Act of 1924 and Filipino Migration**

Faced with a likely influx of Eastern and Southern European refugees at the end of World War II, Congress passed the Immigration Act of 1924. Its author, Representative Albert Johnson of Washington, explained, “It has become necessary that the United States cease to become an asylum.”<sup>25</sup>

Under the Act, the number of immigrants admitted from each nation would be equal to two percent of the population of United States residents from that nation according to the census of 1890 (before most Slavic and Italian immigrants arrived). The Act also barred immigrants from Japan.<sup>26</sup>

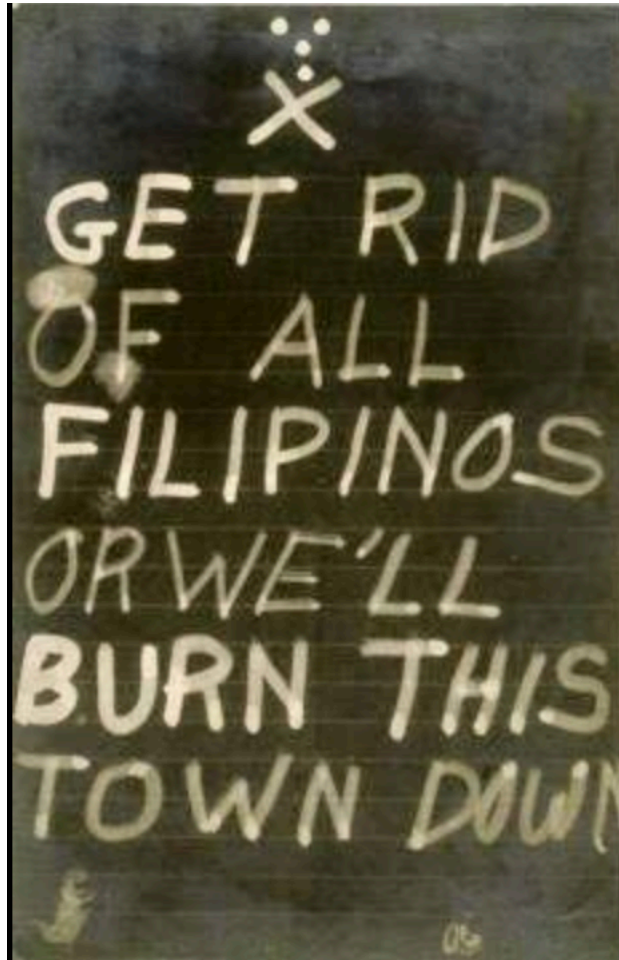
The Immigration Act of 1924, along with previous laws, cut off the supply of laborers from Asian countries. However, it did not prevent immigration from the Philippines, a U.S. colony acquired as part of the 1898 treaty ending the Spanish-American War and retained after great loss of human life when the U.S. won the war for Philippine independence.<sup>27</sup>

The continued need for labor in the U.S. encouraged the migration of large numbers of Filipino men to California and Alaska. Many of these workers socialized in “taxi dancehalls” where they paid to dance with women, most of them white. Unlike other Asians, Filipinos were not at first prohibited by law from marrying whites, and many did.<sup>28</sup>



A bachelors' club dinner party, FANHA Stockton, Pangasinan Association of Los Angeles

Filipino men dating and marrying white women angered many whites. From Jan. 19 through Jan. 22 1930, a demonstration against a dance hall in Watsonville, California devolved into a riot in which mobs beat Filipinos and destroyed their property. Filipino migrant Fermin Tobera was shot through the heart.



Sign from California in the 1930s, BANC PIC 1945.010.64/The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley

On April 21, 1933 the California legislature amended the Civil Code to prohibit intermarriage between whites and Filipinos.<sup>29</sup>

The Great Depression further inflamed white hatred of Filipinos, who were blamed for undermining wages and taking jobs that whites felt belonged to them. Legislators began seeking ways to exclude Filipinos from the U.S. Some advocated giving the Phillipines its independence so that it could be included in the Asiatic Barred Zone. Others wanted to keep the Phillipines as U.S. territory.

The Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1934 was a compromise. It promised Phillipine independence in ten years, reclassified Filipinos as aliens, and set an immigration quota of fifty Filipinos per year. For Filipinos, the Act meant that they were ineligible for government relief programs created to

mitigate the effects of the Great Depression. They owed allegiance to the U.S., but they were considered aliens.<sup>30</sup>

## World War II and Japanese Internment



<https://www.historyonthenet.com/authentichistory/1939-1945/2-homefront/3-anti-jap/index.html>

After the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the beginning of World War II, many Americans feared further Japanese attacks of sabotage, especially on the vulnerable West Coast. These fears were projected onto Americans of Japanese ancestry, and many demanded their removal to "relocation centers." On Feb. 19, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which authorized the creation of detention centers and the removal to them of people with 1/16 or more of Japanese heritage.





Japanese Americans at Santa Anita, <https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/japanese-american-relocation>

120,000 persons of Japanese ancestry, two-thirds of them American citizens, were held in concentration camps for the duration of the war. When they were released, they often returned home to find hostile neighbors and stolen, vandalized, or neglected property.<sup>31</sup>

Despite this atrocious treatment, when the U.S. Department of War announced in 1943 that Japanese Americans could serve in combat duty in Europe, many answered the call. Most were from Hawaii, but some enlisted from within concentration camps.

These volunteers were placed in a segregated Japanese American unit, the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. This unit became the most decorated in U.S. history for its size and length of service.



A Japanese-American unit moves out of old command post. The unit—Company F, 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn, 442<sup>nd</sup> Regiment (Combat Team)—is holding a section of the front lines. 13 November 1944. Signal Corps Photo # ETO-HQ-44-25762 (Musser). SC 341438, St. Die Area, France. <http://www.the442.org/photos.html>

Stories of the 442<sup>nd</sup>'s valor inspired tens of thousands of Asian Americans to enlist, and military units for Chinese, Filipino, and Korean Americans were created.

### **Civil Rights Progress and the “Model Minority”**

Gratitude for the war service of Asian Americans, Japan's weakened position after the war, and the light cast by the horror of the Holocaust on American racism combined to ease anti-Asian prejudice and legislation after World War II.

In 1945, the War Brides Act exempted the foreign wives and children of military personnel from immigration quotas. The Act was later amended to allow immigrants from Japan and Korea. In 1946 the GI Fiancées Act eliminated barriers for Filipino and Indian war brides. Nearly 45,000 foreign-born women entered the U.S. under these acts.<sup>32</sup>



Ayako Wakabayashi and Ron Cameron on their wedding day in 1954  
[http://www.diggerhistory.info/pages-conflicts-periods/ww2/war\\_brides.htm](http://www.diggerhistory.info/pages-conflicts-periods/ww2/war_brides.htm)

In 1946, the Luce-Cellar Bill allowed Filipinos and Asian Indians to become naturalized citizens, a right that had been gained by Chinese immigrants in 1943 when the Chinese Exclusion Act was repealed to appease America's World War II ally China.<sup>33</sup>

In 1948, the California Supreme Court struck down the state's anti-miscegenation law in the 1948 case *Perez v. Sharp*. This was the first time that an anti-miscegenation law had been found unconstitutional.<sup>34</sup>

The Cold War focused American fears of world domination on the Soviet Union. In 1950, Soviet-backed Communist North Korea invaded South Korea, and the U.S. began a war of containment. The war ended in a stalemate, and many Koreans immigrated to the U.S., most of them women and orphans covered by the War Brides Act.



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As the U.S. assumed an international role as the champion of democracy, its leaders began to realize that racism at home undermined the image of the U.S. abroad, and there was a movement to liberalize immigration and citizenship laws.

The *Brown v. Board of Education* amicus brief stated: “The existence of discrimination against minority groups in the U.S. has an adverse effect upon our relations with other countries.”

The Walter-McCarran Act of 1952 allowed all legal immigrants to the U.S. to become naturalized citizens. However, it maintained a quota system biased against Asians, allowing only 2,000 visas per year from the eastern hemisphere. It also established a preference system that rewarded professional and technical skills.<sup>35</sup>

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 ended de jure segregation in public places and outlawed employment discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.<sup>36</sup>

The Hart-Celler Reform Act of 1965 abolished the national origins quota system and adopted a hemisphere quota system that did away with racial preferences.<sup>37</sup> After its passage, millions of Asians immigrated to the U.S. From a population of less than a million in 1965, Asian Americans grew to a population of 19.5 million in 2013.<sup>38</sup>

In the late 1960s, the success of some Asian immigrants gave rise to a new stereotype.

In his 1966 article, “Success Story: Japanese-American Style,” sociologist William Peterson compares Japanese Americans with other “problem minorities” and speculates on the reasons that the Japanese were able to “climb over the highest barriers our racists were able to fashion.” This influential article helped give rise to the idea of Asians as the “model minority.”<sup>39</sup>

## The Vietnamese



PH2 Phil Eggman,

<http://www.defenseimagery.mil/imagery.html#a=search&s=vietnamese&n=90&guid=a45d0e57024cd2956364804b61f4e30a02c8042e>

35 Vietnamese refugees wait to be taken aboard the amphibious command ship USS BLUE RIDGE (LCC-19). They are being rescued from a 35 foot fishing boat 350 miles northeast of Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam, after spending eight days at sea.

In 1975, the withdrawal of the U.S. from the Vietnam War and the resulting surrender of the South Vietnamese government led to an exodus of refugees. During the Fall of Saigon, U.S. Marine and Air Force helicopters rescued nearly 7,000 Vietnamese refugees, most of whom had ties to the U.S. government. Hundreds of thousands of refugees from Vietnam and other Southeast Asian Communist countries followed. Many of them fled in boats, most seeking asylum in the U.S. In 1977, the U.S. began accepting “boat people” under a preference visa. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees estimates that between 200,000 and 400,000 people lost their lives on the journey.<sup>40</sup>

In 1980, Congress passed the Refugee Act, which helped more 1.1 million Southeast Asians to become permanent residents of the U.S.<sup>41</sup>

In 1987, the Amerasian Homecoming Act allowed foreign-born children of American soldiers, many of them orphans, to immigrate.<sup>42</sup>

Like other Asian immigrants, Southeast Asians faced racist hostility. In 1981 on Galveston Bay, white fishermen who feared Vietnamese competition called in the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, who burned boats and threatened lives until the Southern Poverty Law Center filed a lawsuit against them.<sup>43</sup>



Louis Beam, Grand Dragon of the Texas Realm of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, puts a torch to a boat labeled “USS Viet-Cong” at a rally supporting white Texas Gulf fishermen in Santa Fe, Texas on February 14, 1981. (AP/Ed Kolenovsky)

<https://timeline.com/kkk-vietnamese-fishermen-beam-43730353df06>

## **The Auto Industry and Fears of Economic Domination**

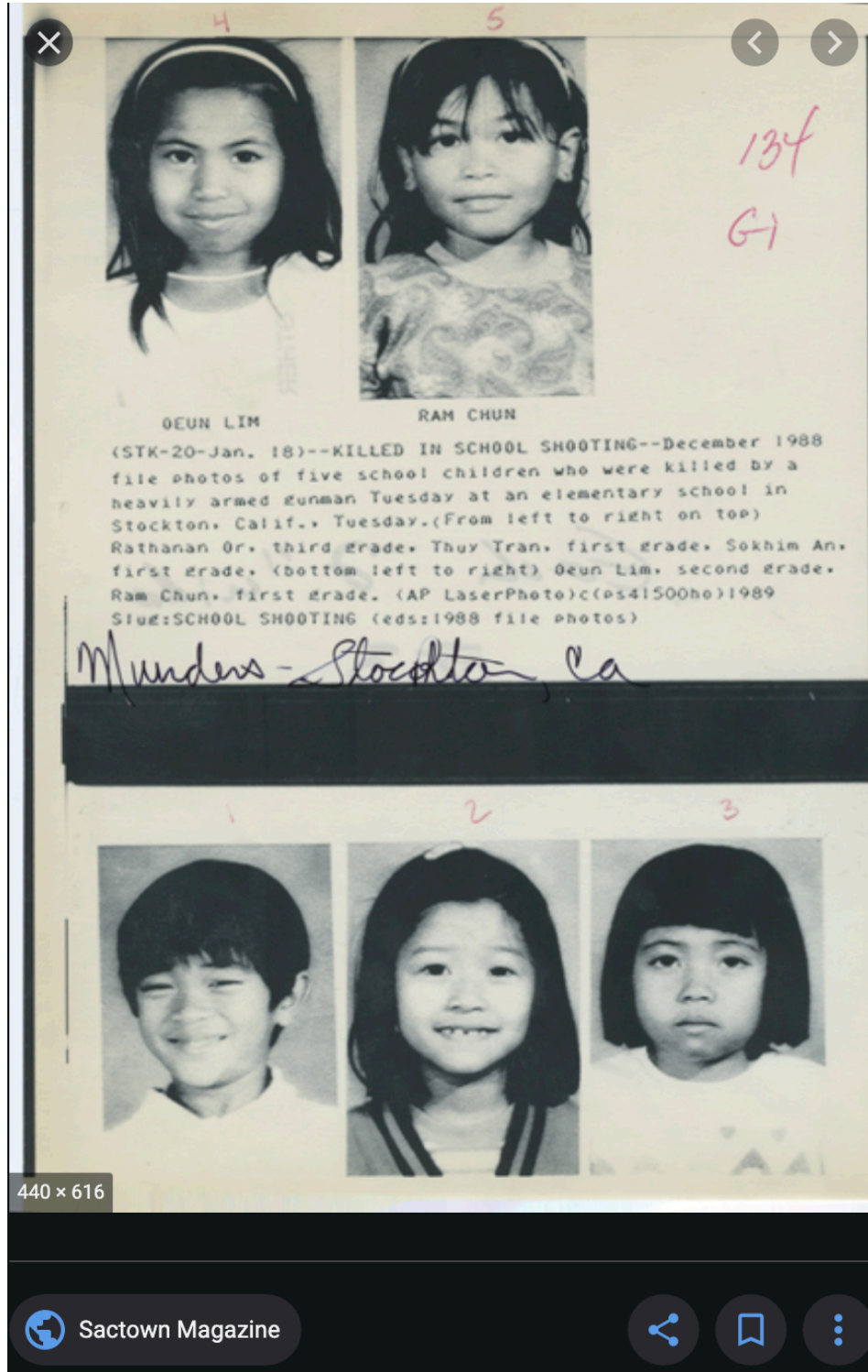
In the 1980s, the success of Japanese car manufacturers touched off the fear of Japanese economic domination and a new wave of anti-Japanese sentiment. These fears were reflected in “Buy American” campaigns and in an increase in hate crimes against people of Asian ancestry.

On June 19 1982 in Detroit, two auto workers spotted Vincent Chin, a 27-year-old American of Chinese descent, in a bar where he was celebrating his upcoming wedding with friends. A friend who was with Chin that evening remembers one of the men saying, “Because of little motherf\*\*\*ers like you, a lot of Americans are losing their jobs.” That evening the two men beat Chin to death with a baseball bat. His killers were sentenced to three years’ probation and fined \$3,000.<sup>44</sup>



Vincent Chin

In 1989, Patrick Purdy opened fire on a playground full of mostly Asian children at his old school, Cleveland Elementary in Stockton, California. He killed five children and wounded 29 children and one adult.<sup>45</sup>



Victims of the Cleveland School shooting



In July 1999, white supremacist Benjamin Smith went on a shooting spree in Illinois and Indiana targeting Jews, African-Americans, and Asians. He wounded nine people and killed two, Ricky Byrdsong, the former head basketball coach at Northwestern University, and Won-Joon Yoon, a doctoral student at the University of Indiana.<sup>46</sup>



Student employees Merwin Siu, left and Won-Joon Yoon count ballots for the IU Alumni Trustee Election in the Main Library lobby in the summer of 1999. Library personnel and volunteers validated a majority of the 31,919 ballots received from IU graduates. **IDS FILE PHOTO**  
[jacl.org/asian-american-history/4/10/20](http://jacl.org/asian-american-history/4/10/20)

## The 2000s

In 2003, more than 100 years after the Chinese were blamed for the San Francisco smallpox epidemic of 1875-76, people of Asian ancestry were scapegoated for the SARS epidemic both in the U.S. and in Canada. As The Washington Post reported, “The Canadian and American general public adopted their own informal avoidance measures that led to acute stigmatization of Chinese Americans, Filipino Americans and other Asian Americans, seemingly overnight. Subway riders refused to sit next to Asian passengers. Businesses turned away Asian customers. Asian workers found their hours scaled back. Shoppers avoided Asian-owned restaurants and small businesses, or steered clear of Chinatowns altogether. Some Asian-facing organizations received a deluge of racist hate mail blaming them for SARS.”<sup>47</sup>

In 2020, Americans of Asian ancestry were again scapegoated, this time for the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in a wave of anti-Asian hatred and violence.

This latest outbreak of hatred will subside, but people of Asian ancestry will still face bias, discrimination, and violence. They will still struggle to be seen as Americans.

If you want to learn more about the history of immigrants from all the countries of the world's largest continent, I recommend these books.

- America for Americans: A History of Xenophobia in the United States, Erika Lee
- The Asian American Movement, William Wei
- Asian Americans: An Interpretive History, Sucheng Chan
- The Chinese in America, Iris Chang
- The Color of Success: Asian Americans and the Origins of the Model Minority, Ellen D. Wu
- Everything You Need to Know About Asian-American History, Himilce Novas and Lan Cao with Rosemary Silva
- Farewell to Manzanar, Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston
- Ghosts of Gold Mountain: The Epic Story of the Chinese Who Built the Transcontinental Railroad, Gordon H. Chang
- The Making of Asian America, Erika Lee
- Strangers from a Different Shore, Ronald Takaki
- Yellow Peril!: An Archive of Anti-Asian Fear, John Kuo Wei Tchen

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<sup>1</sup> <https://stopaapihate.org/2020-2021-national-report/>

<sup>2</sup> (all of above Japanese American Citizens League, JAACL Curriculum Guide, [jacl.org/asian-american-history/](http://jacl.org/asian-american-history/) 4/10/20)

<sup>3</sup> <https://loveman.sdsu.edu/docs/1862Californiaanticoolieact.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.foundsf.org/index.php?title=Chinese\\_as\\_Medical\\_Scapegoats,\\_1870-1905](http://www.foundsf.org/index.php?title=Chinese_as_Medical_Scapegoats,_1870-1905)

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.foundsf.org/index.php?title=Chinese\\_as\\_Medical\\_Scapegoats,\\_1870-1905](http://www.foundsf.org/index.php?title=Chinese_as_Medical_Scapegoats,_1870-1905)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/whites-massacre-chinese-in-wyoming-territory>

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