

Adapting to Change:
Collective Journals of American Stories in a Shifting World

Jai Vang
HIS-131-800: American History I
Professor Brooks-Livingston
9/27/21 – 11/27/21

Primary Source Journey #1

1. How would you describe the changes in the American West after Reconstruction?

After the Reconstruction, many African Americans migrated to the west. This was the first general migration of African Americans since the civil war (Chapter 17 Class Lecture, The West, Part 1, 1:30). They migrated to escape violence from groups such as the Ku Klux Klan, the White League, and the Jim Crow laws which made them second-class citizens (Chapter 17 Slideshow). An estimation of forty thousand African Americans left the South and settled in the state of Kansas, Oklahoma, and Colorado (Chapter 17 Slideshow).

Those who could not previously afford land due to lack of money are not able to. The poor people finally had the opportunity to be self-sufficient. In a way, the Government encouraged settlement in the West if one obeyed the Homestead Act of 1862. The Act was not limited to men only. Women can become landowners also, which was something rare to see in those days.

The Great Plains of the West went through a dramatic transformation as the buffalo population depleted. Human settlement played a large role in the change. William T. Hornady described it this way, “The primary cause of the buffalo’s extermination, and the one which embraced all others, was the descent of civilization, with all its elements of destructiveness, upon the whole of the country inhabited by that animal” (*Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1889*). With the decrease of the buffalo population, cattle are being farmed on ranches. As a result, much of the natural grass was destroyed. The landscape changed because, unlike buffalo, cattle did not graze freely but are placed into one area. Over time, the cattle caused damage to the soil.

2. What obstacles confronted independent Native Americans when the West was being rapidly settled?

The independent Native Americans faced many obstacles as the West was being rapidly settled. One of the obstacles the Native American tribes met was dependent on the federal reservation system for food and substances (Chapter 17 Class Lecture, The West, Part 2, 16:00). With the decline in buffalo's population from thirty million in the 1800s to five thousand by the 1880s, because of hunting sports and overharvesting, the natural food source for the Natives was at stake. Meat that could have been easily harvested are more difficult to find. The shortage of buffalos also meant the scarcity of clothing. The skin of the animals was utilized for many things. The Native Americans made clothing, shoes, furniture, blankets, and many other things with the skins. The deteriorating of the buffalos meant that the Native Americans had to turn to the federal reservation system (Chapter 17 Slideshow).

Another obstacle the Native American tribes encountered was the relocation from their homeland to a reservation. The unending conflicts between the U.S military, American settlers, and the Native nations forced General James Carleton to search for a reservation where he could move the Navajo and end their hostility towards to U.S expansion (Yawp). The conditions at the reservation were awful. Yawp describes it this way, "Conditions at Bosque Redondo were horrible. Provision provided by the U.S Army were not only inadequate but often spoiled; disease was rampant, and thousands of Navajos died" (Yawp). Those that refused were shot and killed, and those that tried to flee were pursued and forced into the reservation.

Primary Source Journey #2

1. Read the text of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. Give an overview of what this document says, and be sure to include quotes from it. What are your thoughts?

The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 suspended any Chinese laborers' admission into the United States of America. Not only was entry denied, but it was unlawful for any Chinese personnel to enter the United States. After the Chinese Exclusion Act was established, all laborers cannot set a single foot on America's soil. The following is from the Chinese Exclusion Act, "The coming of Chinese laborers to the United States be, and the same is hereby, suspended; and during such suspension it shall not be lawful for any Chinese laborer to come, or having so come after the expiration of said ninety days to remain within the United States" (www.ourdocument.gov, 2021). The fear that Chinese laborers could endanger the good and order of certain localities within the country forced United States Congress to assemble the Act (www.ourdocument.gov, 2021).

The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 made things difficult for shipmasters as well. The Act prohibited shipmasters to transport any Chinese laborers to the United States. Any shipmasters who knowingly violated this Act were subjected to punishment. Shipmasters can be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, be fined five hundred dollars for each laborer, and be imprisoned for a year (www.ourdocument.gov, 2021). After the Act was established, a ship that carried any Chinese laborers must have a proper paper of their identity, which was called certificates. Shipmasters are required to possess the certificates of all Chinese personnel onboard and make certain they are accredited officers of the Chinese Government traveling on business

trips or servants of the officers. All certificates are to be delivered and report to the collector of customs of the district in which the vessel will arrive at. Just as important as having the correct documents for cargos, accurate unalter certificates must be provided as well. Any refusal from the masters will be met with punishment.

In my opinion, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 seems to be punitive. I do not believe the Chinese people had in mind to cause any harm to the American people nor their country. They were looking for employment and a better life in the United States. Creating a law that illegalized immigrants' admission into the country did not seem fair and just. The idea that Chinese immigrants economically and morally corrupts American society with cheap labor and immoral practices was incorrect as well (Yawp). Chinese families that had been established in America will not be able to see other family members who planned to travel to the United States for years to come. All communication will be cut off for the next ten years. This to me seems more like a punishment than a Law that will help the country flourishes.

2. Explain what you see in this political cartoon. Be specific - everything and everyone in any political cartoon is there for a reason. Explain what you think this cartoon means. Make sure you incorporate other primary sources to back up your explanation. There are several that can be used here.

The Chinese man in this political cartoon seems to be disappointed. After a long voyage over at sea in hope of a better life, he is not welcome but turned away. It is as though the United States lied about the peace and freedom they promised. Lee Chew made this statement, "I heard about the American foreign devils, that they were false, having made a treaty by which it was agreed that they could freely come to China, and the Chinese as freely go to their country. After his treaty was made China opened its doors to them and then they broke the treaty that they had

asked for by shutting the Chinese out of country” (Chew). A nation that speaks highly and proudly of its liberty is now closing its doors to one of the poorest countries in the world, China. Mary Tape wrote this to the San Francisco Board of Education after her daughter was segregated from public school, “What right have you to bar my children out of the school because she is a Chinese Descend... What justice there is When it is govern by the Race prejudice men” (Chinese Mother’s Letter). This could be the reason why the Chinese man in the political cartoon seems disappointed.

The word “industry” in the political cartoon seems to stand out. The U.S economy was growing fast and needed people to work in its factories and mills. The Chinese immigrant fitted well in this flourishing economy; however, some view them as disgust. Phelan described the immigrants this way, “The Chinese may be good laborers, but they are not good citizens. They may in small numbers benefit individual employers, but they breed the germs of a national disease, which spreads as they spread, and grows as they grow” (Phelan). At an interstate conference of charity, Franklin Benjamin Sanborn stated that immigration might bring some benefits, as well as introduces disease, ignorance, crime, pauperism, and idleness (Yawp). Though the United States economy is growing, many people view those that can contribute to the growth as despicable people and scum.

Primary Source Journey #3

1. Why did the United States enter World War I?

The United States did not want to enter World War 1 at first. The country was divided on the situation. When the war broke out in 1914, President Wilson proclaimed that Americans were neutral on the matter (Chapter 21 Slideshow). In May 1915, a German submarine sank the Lusitania off the coast of Ireland, which killed 1,198 passengers, and along with them were 124 Americans (Slideshow). This outraged the American people; however, they still did not enter the war yet. President Wilson began the process of strengthening the American army and navy (Slideshow). In March 1917, British spies intercepted a telegram by foreign secretary Arthur Zimmerman in which he asked Mexico to join in the upcoming war against the United States (Slideshow). He promised to offer support to the Mexican government in reobtaining Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona (Yawp). After discovering this, on April 2, 1917, President Wilson went to Congress and asked for the approval of declaring war against Germany. In his speech to Congress, he declared, "The world must be made safe for democracy. Its peace must be planted upon the tested foundations of political liberty. We have no selfish ends to serve. We desire no conquest, no dominion.... We are but one of the champions of the rights of mankind. We shall be satisfied when those rights have been made as secure as the faith and the freedom of nations can make them" (Wilson). He further stated, "Our object now, as then, is to vindicate the principles of peace and justice in the life of the world as against selfish and autocratic power and to set up among the really free and self-governed people of the world" (Wilson). To stop evil from prevailing and corrupting the entire world, the United States must get involved and help its allies. With this, the United States of America entered World War 1.

2. What were some of the conflicting views of American patriotism?

Some believe that true patriotism means to fully support the United States Government fully in all areas of the war. Professor Brooks Livingstone puts it this way, “For local and federal government, patriotism equals support for the war. Anti-war sentiment, or labor radicalism, sympathy for the other side, this is unamerican” (Chapter 21 Class Lecture, Part 3). In May 1918, the Sedition Act was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Woodrow Wilson. In this act, it stated that when the United States is at war and anyone who makes any false reports or statements, whether through word of mouth or writing, with the purpose of interfering with the operation or success of the military or naval force, or anyone who promotes the enemy in any way will be punishable by fines up to ten thousand dollars or imprisonment for no more than twenty years (The Sedition Act of 1918). Those who willfully oppose the country are deemed unpatriotic.

Other people like Emma Goldman had a different view on patriotism. She believed true patriotism was those that love America but are not blind to the country’s fault and shortcoming (Goldman). For her, true patriotism meant fixing the social problems within your own country first before getting involved in a war with other countries and trying to fix their problems. How can a country give democracy to the world when true democracy had not existed within that country itself? She remarked, “Democracy must first be safe for America before it can be safe for the world” (Goldman). In a real way, it is like the blind leading the blind. It is like teaching someone else to be a good person when you are not a good person. For Goldman, true patriotism is not one that supported the war and government in giving out democracy to the world;

however, true patriotism was one who loves their country and fix the social issue at hand for the purpose of the country's democracy.

3. How did World War I transform American culture?

After the war, racial tension escalated. In the Red summer of 1919, violence filled the streets of twenty-five cities. Riots broke out because of wartime racial tension (Yawp). With the loss of five million men due to armed force service, the northern industry needed people to fill in the positions that were unfulfilled (Chapter 21 Slideshow). As a result, Blacks migrated up North and claimed employment. Some parts of the economy had such a shortage of workers that they paid for Blacks to migrate north (Slideshow). Black Americans returning from the war set in motion a change in the Black communities within the nation. W.E.B DuBois, a returning soldier from the war wrote, "We return. We return from fighting. We return fighting. Make way for Democracy! We saved it in France, and by the Great Jehovah, we will save it in the United States of America" (DuBois). Returning white northerners did not desire this status for the Black people, and consequently, the tension broke out. White rioters broke out against the Black communities as well, but the Black Americans fought and defended their families and homes (Yawp). James Weldon Johnson wrote in the riots' aftermath, "Can't they understand that the more Negroes they outrage, the more determined the whole race becomes to secure the full rights and privileges of freemen?" (Yawp). American society forever changed after World War I.

Primary Source Journey #5

1. How did Americans react to the Holocaust? Why? Give examples and be specific.

Initially, American officials had little concern for the Nazi persecutions. President Roosevelt publicly spoke out against the persecution and withdrew the U.S ambassador to Germany (Yawp). There were plans for the 1938 Evian Conference in France, in which the international leaders would discuss the Jewish refugee issues and find a solution to expand Jewish immigration quotas; however, the conference never transpired, and the United States turned away many Jewish refugees who were seeking asylum in the United States (Yawb). In 1939, the German ship called St. Louis that carried over nine hundred Jewish refugees was denied access to the United States and forced to return to Europe, which led to the death of hundreds of passengers who would perish in the Holocaust in the years to come (Yawp).

By the end of 1943, the mass murder of the Jews reached public awareness, and the U.S Senate and the House of Representatives issued the Rescue Resolution, thus calling for a US government agency designed for the relief and rescue of Jews and other persecuted minorities (Confronting the Holocaust, 6:40). With this, a conflict took place between the State Department and the Treasury Department. The Treasury Department realized that the State Department was delaying assistance to some of the Jewish aid establishments. In a composed report to President Roosevelt, the Treasury Department stated, “Officials in our State Department, who have been charged with carrying out this policy, have been guilty not only of gross procrastination and willful failure to act, but even of willful attempts to prevent action from being taken to rescue Jews from Hitler” (7:20). Soon to follow, President Roosevelt created the War Refugee Board. The staff of the War Refugee Board came from the Treasury Department, and they

worked with sending money overseas (7:30). By 1944, at the request of the Germans, Hungarian authorities commenced the deportation of Jews to Auschwitz-Birkenau. The Hungarian government had negotiated secretly to leave the Axis (9:25). After hearing of this, President Roosevelt held a news conference in which he warned the Hungarian government that war criminals who sided with Germany in the mass killing would face prosecution after the war (9:50). Sadly, the Hungarian government ignored the warning.

Others besides the American official reacted to the Holocaust differently. Private Hilbert Margol of the 42nd Infantry Division describes how he and his twin brother, Howard, came across a train filled with dead people at Dachau. In his account, he mentioned how they were ordered to pull over. As they did, a very strong distinct odor came on them. At first, they thought it was a chemical factory on the other side of the woods. One of them compared the odor to freshly killed chicken burning over the gas flame. Out of curiosity, they went over to look and came upon a line of railroad boxcars. As they climbed over the railroad cars, they saw dead bodies in grotesque positions. Everyone in the railroad cars was dead (American Witnesses).

Lieutenant Marie Knowles Ellifritz of the 130th Evacuation Hospital tended to the survivors of the Mauthausen concentration camps. In her recollection, she stated, “The emotional trauma caused by our medical participation in the liberation of the European concentration camps was beyond belief. As American and as women we never had been subjected to such inhumanity to man... To take in 1,500 patients into a 400-bed hospital had to be madness. That fact became our madness. And it proved to become a tremendous overwhelming job. Clinically, it was a matter of sorting the dead from the living, deciding who would live for at least three days or more, and to make all those we found comfortable and to begin the process of treatment. A tent to keep the patient dry, an air mattress to give them a place

to lie down, a blanket to help them keep warm, pajamas to give them some dignity, a small amount of food to nourish them, and plasma to preserve the remaining life and begin them on a road back to living... It seemed to take one to three days for us to convince some of them that they were truly free at last. And when that reality came they simply closed their eyes and died in peace and freedom” (American Witnesses). What Ellifritz witnessed that day was horrific.

Work Cited

- “American Witnesses Audio Testimony Transcript.” United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, <https://www.ushmm.org/teach/poster-sets/american-witnesses/audio-testimony-transcripts>.
- Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1889).*
- Brooks-Livingston, Ethan. Chapter 17 Lecture Slideshow.
- Brooks-Livingston, Ethan. Chapter 17 Class Lecture, The West, Part 1.
- Brooks-Livingston, Ethan. Chapter 17 Class Lecture, The West, Part 2.
- Brooks-Livingston, Ethan. Chapter 21 Lecture Slideshow.
- Brooks-Livingston, Ethan. Chapter 21 Class Lecture, World War 1 & Its Aftermath, Part 3.
- “Chapter 17: The West.” Edited by Joseph Locke and Ben Wright, The America Yawp, Stanford University Press, 11 Feb 2021, www.americanyawp.com/.
- “Chapter 19: American Empire.” Edited by Joseph Locke and Ben Wright, The America Yawp, Stanford University Press, 11 Feb 2021, www.americanyawp.com/.
- “Chapter 21: World War 1 & Its Aftermath.” Edited by Joseph Locke and Ben Wright, The America Yawp, Stanford University Press, 11 Feb 2021, www.americanyawp.com/.
- “Chapter 27: World War II.” Edited by Joseph Locke and Ben Wright, The America Yawp, Stanford University Press, 11 Feb 2021, www.americanyawp.com/.
- “Chinese Mother’s Letter,” Daily Alta California, April 16, 1885, 1. Available online via California Digital Newspaper Collection (<https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=DAC18850416.2.3>).

“Confronting the Holocaust: American Responses.” United States Holocaust Memorial Museum,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EMTPAE53PqE>.

Emma Goldman, “Trial and Speech,” *Mother Earth*, July, 1917.

James D. Phelan, “Why The Chinese Should Be Excluded,” *The North American Review* 173
(November, 1901).

Lee Chew, “The Biography of a Chinaman,” *The Independent*, 15 (19 February 1903), 417–423
United States Statutes at Large, Volume 40, April 1917-March 1919 (Washington D.C.:
Government Printing Office, 1919) 553-554.

W.E.B. DuBois, “Returning Soldiers,” *The Crisis*, XVIII (May, 1919), p. 13.

Woodrow Wilson, *Americanism: Woodrow Wilson’s Speeches on the War—Why He Made
Them—and—What They Have Done*, edited by Oliver Marble Gale (Chicago: Baldwin,
1918) 36-44.

www.ourdocuments.gov. (2021, 10 02). Transcript of Chinese Exclusion Act (1882). Retrieved
from
[https://www.ourdocuments.gov/print_friendly.php?flash=false&page=transcript&doc=47
&title=Transcript+of+Chinese+Exclusion+Act+%281882%29](https://www.ourdocuments.gov/print_friendly.php?flash=false&page=transcript&doc=47&title=Transcript+of+Chinese+Exclusion+Act+%281882%29)