

## **De Anza College exhibit follows story of woman detained at San Francisco's Angel Island**

San Jose Mercury News (California)

February 10, 2011 Thursday

Copyright 2011 San Jose Mercury News All Rights Reserved

**Section:** COMMUNITIES; News

**Length:** 461 words

**Byline:** By Matt Wilson , [mwilson@community-newspapers.com](mailto:mwilson@community-newspapers.com)

### **Body**

---

For many Asian immigrants, Angel Island was both a gateway to the American way of life and a place to be feared. A new exhibit at De Anza College's California History Center tells the story of one woman who was trapped between a Chinese and an American life on the island.

"Detained at Liberty's Door: The Story of Liberty Lost on Angel Island, and a Legacy Regained" highlights the story of Mrs. Lee Yoke Suey, the wife of an American-born citizen who was detained for more than 15 months on Angel Island. The exhibit tells of how she gained her freedom through an association with one of California's most powerful and iconic families. The tone is set with background information about the Angel Island Immigration Station and much of the anti-Chinese sentiment and immigration policies from the early 1900s.

Last year marked the centennial of Angel Island Immigration Station, which is often referred to as the Ellis Island of the West. The exhibit remarks on the period from 1882 to 1943, when the Chinese were banned from citizenship and naturalization.

In January 1924, Suey was the widow of an American-born merchant, returning home from China with her American-born children. The exhibit tells the story of how her citizenship was no longer valid since her husband had died. She was separated from her children and would spend the next 15 months in a legal battle for her citizenship.

The story of her quest for freedom is told through eight information panels using photographs and text. The exhibit also features items belonging to Suey, including a traveling trunk, photographs, letters and other memorabilia.

De Anza College is the first institution to host the small exhibit outside of the Chinese Historical Society of America Museum in San Francisco's Chinatown.

"We are very proud to have this come here," said Tom Izu, executive director of the California History Center.

The South Bay premiere of the traveling exhibit also features information from San Jose's original Chinatown, known as Heinlerville. The planned Chinese-American community was established in 1887 near what is today referred to as Japantown. The exhibit features maps, photos and artifacts gathered from recent archeological excavations.

Community historian Connie Young Yu of Los Altos Hills helped develop the exhibit with the Chinese Historical Society of America and with the support of the California History Center at De Anza College. Young Yu is Suey's granddaughter.

De Anza College exhibit follows story of woman detained at San Francisco's Angel Island

The **exhibit** runs until June 24, Tuesday to Thursday from 9:30 a.m. to noon and again from 1 to 4 p.m. Admission is free.

The California History Center is housed in Le Petit Trianon at the **college**, 21250 Stevens Creek Blvd.

For more information, call Tom Izu at 408.864.8986 or visit [www.deanza.fhda.edu/califhistory](http://www.deanza.fhda.edu/califhistory).

## Graphic

---

Tom Izu, executive director of **De Anza College**'s California History Center, looks at items from the Center's new **exhibit** titled, "**Detained** at Liberty's Door: The **Story** of Liberty Lost on **Angel Island**, and a Legacy Regained." This **exhibit** traces the formation of the **Angel Island** Immigration Station through the experiences of Mrs. Lee Yoke Suey, the wife of an American-born citizen who was **detained** on **Angel Island** for over 15 months. Only an association with one of California's most powerful and iconic families secured her freedom. The South Bay premier of this traveling **exhibit** will also feature a look at one of **San** José's Chinatowns. Known as Heinlenville, this planned Chinese American community was established in 1887 near today's Japantown. Using maps and photos, and through the interpretation of artifacts gathered from archeological excavations, this **exhibit** provides a glimpse into the daily life of those immigrants who gained their freedom and settled in the South Bay area. Local community historian Connie Young Yu (Los Altos Hills) helped develop this **exhibit** with the Chinese Historical Society of America with the support of the California History Center at **De Anza College**. Young Yu is the granddaughter of Mrs. Lee Yoke Suey. The **exhibit** will run from January 28, 2011 through June 24, 2011. (photo Jacqueline Ramseyer/SVCN/February 3, 2011)

Items on display at **De Anza College**'s California History Center new **exhibit** titled, "**Detained** at Liberty's Door: The **Story** of Liberty Lost on **Angel Island**, and a Legacy Regained," include these bound foot shoes, circa 1924, worn by Mrs. Lee Yoke Suey. This **exhibit** traces the formation of the **Angel Island** Immigration Station through the experiences of Mrs. Lee Yoke Suey, the wife of an American-born citizen who was **detained** on **Angel Island** for over 15 months. Only an association with one of California's most powerful and iconic families secured her freedom. The South Bay premier of this traveling **exhibit** will also feature a look at one of **San** José's Chinatowns. Known as Heinlenville, this planned Chinese American community was established in 1887 near today's Japantown. Using maps and photos, and through the interpretation of artifacts gathered from archeological excavations, this **exhibit** provides a glimpse into the daily life of those immigrants who gained their freedom and settled in the South Bay area. Local community historian Connie Young Yu (Los Altos Hills) helped develop this **exhibit** with the Chinese Historical Society of America with the support of the California History Center at **De Anza College**. Young Yu is the granddaughter of Mrs. Lee Yoke Suey. The **exhibit** will run from January 28, 2011 through June 24, 2011. (photo Jacqueline Ramseyer/SVCN/February 3, 2011)

## Classification

---

**Language:** ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Subject:** IMMIGRATION (91%); CITIZENSHIP (90%); **EXHIBITIONS** (89%); HISTORY (89%); ASIAN AMERICANS (78%); FAMILY (78%); ARCHAEOLOGY (77%); GRANDCHILDREN (74%); **ISLANDS** & REEFS (73%); ANTHROPOLOGY & ARCHAEOLOGY (67%)

De Anza College exhibit follows story of woman detained at San Francisco's Angel Island

**Industry:** **EXHIBITIONS** (89%); MUSEUMS & GALLERIES (78%)

**Geographic:** **SAN** FRANCISCO, CA, USA (92%); **SAN** FRANCISCO BAY AREA, CA, USA (79%); **SAN** JOSE, CA, USA (73%); CALIFORNIA, USA (94%); CHINA (79%)

**Load-Date:** February 11, 2011

---

End of Document