

## Lecture 2.2: Chinese Immigration and Exclusion

### Naturalization Act of 1790:

- Right after constitutional convention
- Most govs did not regulate immigration at all at this time
- about becoming a citizen
- Language used is “free white persons” can become citizens (that too after 2 years) → if you don’t fit this category, there is already a limit on whether you can become a citizen
  - Didn’t really matter at the time because there weren’t other minority groups at the time
- Later becomes a big element in barring people from gaining citizenship
- Racial component of this not ended until 1952
- There were some exceptions to this
- Yung Wing became first Chinese/Asian person to graduate from a North American University
  - Graduated from Yale in 1854
  - Gained citizenship
  - Married a white woman
  - Shows that this act is not consistent
  - Integrated into White society
  - Created an educational exchange with China where people could get some education in the US and these people actually became Chinese leaders

### Push and Pull Factors:

- Why would Chinese people still keep coming here?
  - Lots of various reasons
  - Most of the time, fleeing war and poverty
  - Between 1840-60s, the dynasty that ruled over China (Qing dynasty) lost the 1<sup>st</sup> Opium War against Britain, had a Civil War, and the lost a 2<sup>nd</sup> Opium War
  - Lots of chaos because of this
- 1849 gold rush
  - Thousands of people from all over the world are coming, including thousands of people from China
  - Gam Saan/Gold Mountain → idea that this is a place where they will gain wealth/succeed
  - Most of these people weren’t able to stay in gold mining, but some did gain wealth
  - Then they started moving into laundry, restaurants, etc, which actually made decent money (gold could be in the dust on miners’ clothes)
  - Long term communities for Chinese established
- Most people intended to return to China
  - Mostly single men coming to the country who had left their families behind
  - Would gain enough money through gold mining, then go back
  - Start of cultural exchanges because the Chinese still want foods and cloth from home

### Transcontinental Railroad:

- Why do we need one?
  - West coast is getting rapidly settled (Oregon fever mex-am war, GR), while leaving large chunks of the country not settled by the US
  - Gov wants to ensure they can move people and goods and maintain strong connection between coasts (especially once Civil War breaks out)
  - Faster to travel from China to Cali rather than go coast to coast because the ship route would have to go all the way around south America or through Panama canal where you could die
- In 1862 (during Civil War), Congress passes Pacific RR Acts
  - Authorize construction of the transcontinental RR, setting aside money and resources
  - Around 1500 miles of RR
  - Lets start at both ends and meet in the middle
    - Union Pacific started in Omaha and working west
    - Central Pacific started in Sacramento and worked east
  - In the middle of the war, Lincoln has to print money to take care of things, and he's still putting time into this. Shows how important this was to the US.

### Chinese RR Workers:

- Labor is scarce, middle of the CV, everyone who can is working in the war
- CPR needs labor, so they sent people to China to recruit Chinese people to work on the RR
  - US actively brought them here (ironic considering how they were trying to get rid of them later on)
- Work lasts on RR from 1863-1869
- When it was finally done, there were RR and telegraph lines both being built, met in Promontory Point, Utah
  - Gave easier access coast to coast for people
  - Economically, now connecting places wealthy in natural resources
  - Easier to access trade with Asia
  - Huge economic boost for the US
    - Helping it settle, helping US economy (even though it doesn't always look like that)
- 10-20k workers on the CPR were Chinese
  - 150-2k deaths → pretty large percentage
  - Weren't valued as individuals, instead thought of as a resource and machine they needed to keep working
  - Dynamite blasting on the side of mountains is extremely dangerous
  - A lot of the people that survived (who are now experts and easier to exploit) go on to connect the rest of America with the railroad (using their expertise to fill in the rest of the empty space)
    - With new cities being connected to railroad lines, they also became "bigger cities"
  - Reason why this isn't talked about anymore is because nobody kept any written records. The Chinese didn't keep journals or anything either.

- Forgotten history, essentially

#### Agricultural Contributions:

- Agricultural knowledge is huge → Chinese immigrants' agricultural knowledge was one of the key things they brought to the US
- Their expertise in dredging and draining helps transform CA Central valley into usable farmland
  - 50% of US fruits, nuts, and veggies come from this area
  - Chinese laborers are willing to work for less because it was still better than wages in China, so businesses aren't struggling either
- Lue Gim Gong
  - "the citrus wizard"
  - Ends up in Florida, responsible for developing frost resistant oranges → now a key symbol of Florida

#### The Burlingame Treaty, 1868:

- Period of positive Chinese-US relations, marked by this treaty
- Eased limitation on Chinese immigration into the US
- Promised Chinese immigrants equal protections with other groups
- Doesn't last very long

#### In 1870s: start having issues with Labor Competition:

- Resentment with Chinese laborers for that reason
- Factory owners would bring Chinese laborers from CA as "strikebreakers" to replace strikers because they would work for less
- If you went on strike, factory would just replace them with Chinese labor
  - Strengthens perspectives of Nativists that immigrants are stealing jobs
- Panic of 1873 → another economic recession like Panic of 1837
  - If there is this massive panic + fear of economic competition
    - Even more insecure, even more resentful
  - Worse in CA
    - 70% of Chinese people still live here
    - People constantly pushing US gov to make more restrictions on immigration
  - CA becomes a center of anti-Chinese sentiment

#### The Treaty is freely allowing Chinese immigration, these are Steps toward Chinese Exclusion

- Before this, they still had the Burlingame Treaty. This was the first step toward Chinese exclusion
- 1875 Page Act
  - To bar unfree labor and women for "immoral purposes" (prostitution)
  - Used exclusively to target Chinese women because people assumed/stereotyped that they were coming to the US as prostitutes because only a small amount were coming in the first place
  - Very racist, sexualized

- Lots of men living as bachelors, but now there are significantly more men than women immigrating. The men are now sending money home to their family
- In 1880, they sign a treaty with China called the Angell Treaty:
  - Allows US to place *some* immigration restrictions on China
  - Allows US to get foot in the door for anti-Chinese legislations
- Chinese dynasty is losing power

#### Chinese Exclusion act, 1882:

- Not a blanket ban, Angell Treaty ensures it
- First passed for 10 years
- Restricts immigration to 6 exempt classes (categories)
  - Students
  - Merchants and their families
  - Diplomats
  - Tourists
  - Certified returning laborers (already in the US as a laborer, can travel to China and come back as long as you have a pass)
- Anybody who does fit these requirements could not enter → not a lot of people entering
- In 1888 they get rid of certified laborer category
  - They wanted richer people + people there for a reason
- In 1892, the act was renewed with one extra component
  - Now if you are Chinese living in the US, you need certificate of residence that you could have to show at any time
  - Have to register in a gov office
  - You could be walking down the street and anybody could ask
  - Random checks could be done at any time
  - Starting to create a class that has to be registered by race, or else deported
- In 1904 → this is passed in perpetuity (planning this law to be a law forever)

#### Impacts of Chinese Exclusion:

- First time using race to restrict immigration
- Not country of origin, they are talking about race
  - Doesn't matter where you are from as long as you are Chinese
- Also used to set precedent for later laws such as the 1924 Origins act and others
- Meant there were more wealthy, educated Chinese immigrants
- Existing Chinese communities in the US are being limited (less access to education, less access to job opportunities) → laws are passed to restrict Chinese people from these things
- Essentially segregation

#### Paper Sons:

- How do Chinese immigrants work around the exclusion act?
- They still came to the US (overland routes) → more common is the paper son system
- Two ways that this works

- Either you if you claimed citizenship in the US and had it confirmed by two witnesses (your parents took you home, but you were born here)
- Other option is to claim relation to previous immigrant
  - One category of this is merchant families
  - If you are related to a person already here, you are more likely to be admitted
- Start of having convos about restricting immigrations globally
- Carrying a passport is a new thing in this era
- You would claim relation to previous immigrant
  - Earlier Chinese immigrants would facilitate by claiming to have more sons back in China, and this worked, let those people fill in those spaces
  - Immigration officials know this is always not true, but they have no way of preventing/disproving it
- In 1906 → there is a San Francisco earthquake followed by a fire
  - All the birth certificates, marriage licenses, etc there is no way of proving somebody who claims to be born in the US wrong
  - 85-90% of Chinese people entered during this period (1882-1943)
    - A lot of people did this because their family came the same way

#### Angel Island Immigration Station:

- Immigration officers are not stupid
- They know there can't be this many sons, but they don't have a way to prove it
- So they create Angel Island Immigration Station in SF Bay from 1910-1940
  - With a goal of weeding out those false paper sons
  - Unlike Ellis island, this is a detention center
    - Being held and questioned, interrogated
    - Their goal is to prove you aren't a paper son, your goal is to prove that you are
    - Sometimes people were held for weeks, months, years
    - Average stay of 2-3 weeks
    - People were asked really detailed questions → tell us about your village and home and families back in China
    - This would be confirmed by people you claimed to be related to
    - If it didn't match, they would deport you
- 33% of immigrants from Angel Island were sent back, compared to the 6% from Ellis Island
- Closes at the start of WW2
- People found hundreds of Chinese poetry carved into the walls

#### WW2 and the end of exclusion:

- Wealthy Chinese still coming to the US to study
- By 1939 about 1/3 of China's influential people were educated in the US, despite exclusion
- Creates some level of rapport → better perceptions of Chinese people
- In 1934, Japanese invade China which creates sympathy for China

- And then in 1941 Japanese bomb pearl harbor and the US really don't like Japan → creates more friendliness with China "enemy of my enemy is my friend"
- Chinese immigrants had the opportunity to join the military to gain citizenships
- Were allowed to fight alongside White soldiers, even while the rest of the military is segregated
- This combines to the Repeal of Exclusion Act, 1943
  - Allows Chinese to immigrate more freely to the US