DESIGN & RESEARCH

LILY GUCFA

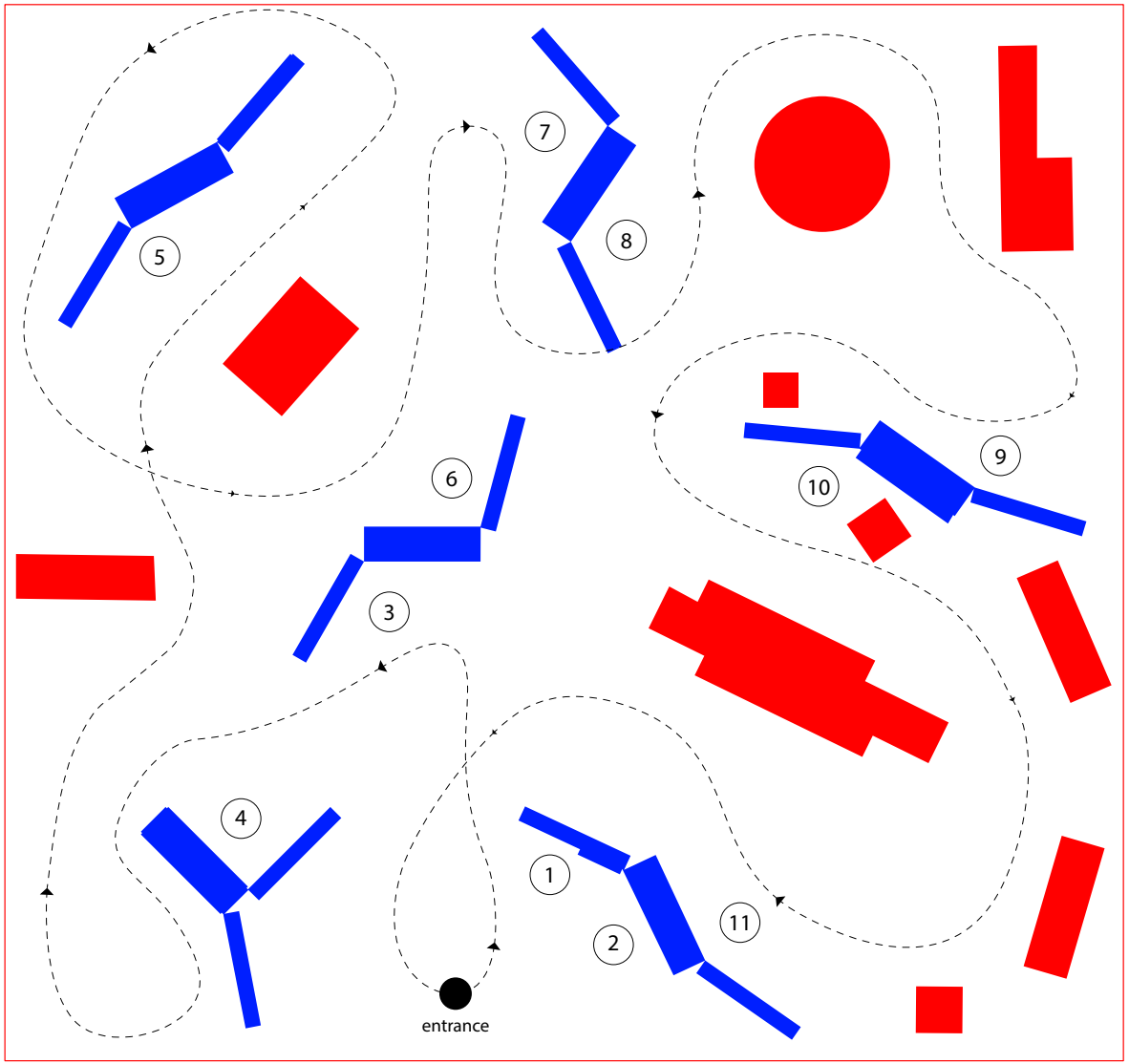
INDIGO MUDBHARY

AAPI MUSEUM PROPOSAL 2023

Chinese American Journey Traveling Exhibit

GUIDEBOOK

Exhibit Circulation Diagram



approx. project area = 4200 sf

FURNITURE (BENCHES, CHAIRS, TABLES, DISPLAY PODIUMS)

EXHIBIT VEHICLES

Contents

Introduction:

Prototyping a Chinese American Traveling Exhibit

An authentic first step towards equity is **representation**. Providence once had a Chinatown in the 1880s. It came to an end in 1914 when homes and businesses were demolished to widen the roadway. According to the artist **Yoo Warren** who curated the exhibit "Seeing Providence Chinatown" in 2022, about 300 Chinese people lived on Empire St between 1906 and 1917. It was a bustling place with Chinese groceries and pharmacies; The Chin, Lee and Quong families lived at 51 and the On Leong Merchants Association served as a community service organization that helped businesses and families. Today, documents, images and objects from these places are stored in archives and the rich histories of the Chinese diaspora in Rhode Island are passed down through oral tradition.

On June 29th, 2022, a bill was signed into law requiring Asian American (AAPI) history and culture to be taught in Rhode Island schools. This was due to the work and dedication of Asian American activists; **AAPI history will no longer be taught as secondary to U.S. history but in fact embedded and entangled within it.**

Beginning with a Chinese American Journey Exhibit, this pilot project is part of a much larger effort to create an AAPI History Museum. The traveling exhibit prototype acts as an opportunity to envision new realities and futures for AAPI groups. It is a joyful and ongoing work that captures moments of transformation, hardship, leadership, resilience, and humanity within the Chinese American experience in the United States. The design makes specific allowances for community research, interactivity, programming, iteration and replication.

Building a public space for AAPI education can do the following things:

- Celebrate Asian-Americans cultural heritage and history of leadership
- Teach a comprehensive timeline of major historical periods in US history with a focus on Asian immigrants and their experience in the United States
- Confront legacies of xenophobia and anti-Asian discrimination
- To prompt an ongoing dialogue about the role Asian Americans played in the formation of the United States and its identity

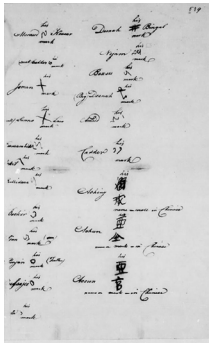
*Some selected images and artifacts serve as placeholders for future acquisitions and donated objects. Blank exhibit areas are reserved for digital components and museum labels.

The First Chinese American

The earliest Chinese to arrive in North America were several crewmen, craftsmen, and domestic servants who arrived in Mexico on Spanish galleons in the sixteenth century. Starting in 1565, these ships sailed annually between Mexico and the Philippines, where there was a small Chinese population. The majority of these people were enslaved under the coolie system.

However, the first documented Chinese people to officially arrive in the U.S. came on August 8, 1785 aboard the Pallas, a merchant ship that had just come from China. Ashing, Achun and Aceun were seamen from Guangzhou and lived in Maryland and Philadelphia under the sponsorship of Levi Hollingsworth, a merchant, for almost a year.

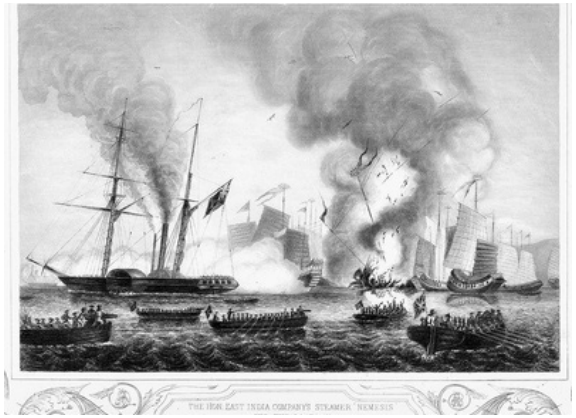
“Enough of Greece and Rome. The exhausted store / Of either nation now can charm no more… / On eagle wings the poet of to-night / Soars for fresh virtues to the source of light, / To China’s eastern realms; and boldly bears / Confucius’s morals to Britannia’s ears.” — Opening lines of The Orphan of China, a popular play in the U.S. in 1759

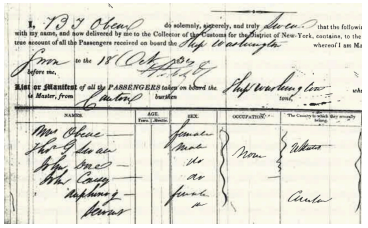


How was Providence involved in the China trade?

Origins of Chinese America

The first wave of Chinese immigration to the US began in 1815 and comprised mainly of men, many of whom were seamen, craftsmen, domestics, students, and merchants. Immigration records indicate that 43 Chinese people were living in the U.S. from 1820 to 1849, though there may have been undocumented Chinese excluded in this count. For example, in 1847, a young student named Yung Wing arrived in the U.S. Wing would become the first Chinese to graduate from a North American university in 1854. He created the Chinese Educational Mission, a secular program that sent 120 Chinese students to schools in the U.S. with the hopes they would use their American education to return to China and lead their homeland. Though the number of Chinese immigrants during this time was relatively low, trade between the U.S. and China was thriving, as the demand for Chinese goods such as porcelain and tea was very high among American consumers. Chinese people would not migrate to the United States in large numbers until the 1850s.





The first known Chinese female immigrant to the United States, Afong Moy, would not arrive until 1834.

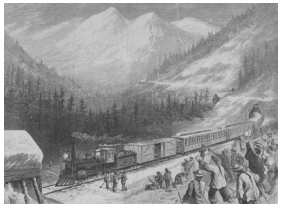
The earliest surviving document produced by a Chinese person in the U.S. was created in Connecticut. This document was a friendship album produced at the Cornwall Foreign Mission School by a student named Wu Lan. Friendship albums were a trend among students in the 1820s; these sturdy, leather-bound books were made expressly for friends to leave emotional tributes to one another, through copying famous poems and creating original drawings.

The Cornwall Foreign Mission School was one of many Christian mission schools that existed across the U.S. during this period.

Who was Afong Moy?

Building America

The 1840s was a time of many crises for China. The country was affected by drought and floods leading to mass starvation and poverty. During this period, the inequality between the ruling class and ordinary people became apparent, leading to the Taiping Rebellion against the Qing Dynasty which led to the death of twenty-five million Chinese people between 1850 and 1864. Due to these rising political and social tensions in China, a massive emigration of Chinese laborers to other countries — including the U.S. — began in the 1850s, seeking economic opportunity. After gold was discovered at John Sutter's Mill in Coloma, California in 1848, the prospect of work and instant wealth became a huge draw for Chinese laborers. The population of California grew from 14,000 to 223,000 between the years of 1848 to 1852. Many sought work in the mines, but also agricultural jobs on plantations, cigar and garment factories or canneries. Chinese immigrants were particularly instrumental in building railroads in the American west, constructing canals in South America, and as Chinese laborers grew successful in the United States, a number of them became entrepreneurs in their own right, opening laundries and restaurants in cities.



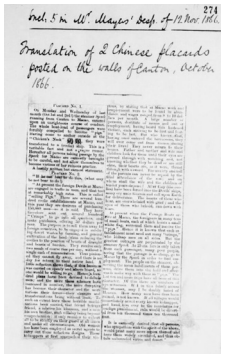
Many Chinese laborers worked on the railroads, with as many as 12,000 workers playing a part in the famous construction of the Transcontinental Railroad.

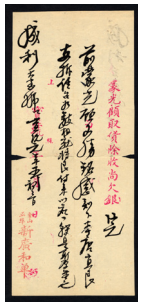
While some were able to mortgage their farms or borrow money from relatives, many used the credit-ticket system to pay for their voyage across the Pacific.

Under the credit-ticket system, the immigrant's journey was paid for by a merchant or company, who would then deduct it from his pay in the ensuing months. Most of these immigrants were men, who sent back money to support their families in China and hoped to return home, not viewing their residence in the U.S. as permanent.

What was the Taiping Rebellion?

What did early Chinese Americans in the U.S. accomplish?





“The Chinese Must Go!”

The Rise of Xenophobia in the 19th Century

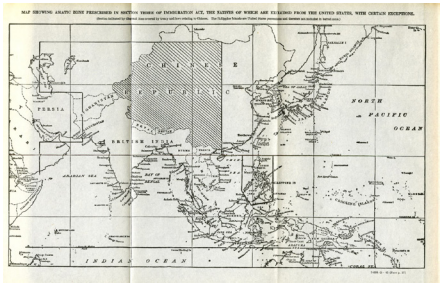
Though Chinese immigrants would not arrive in the U.S. in large numbers until the mid-nineteenth century, anti-Chinese sentiment in the United States has a long history. Western nations have long held a bias towards the East, which scholars have labeled Orientalism. Orientalism characterizes the East as backwards and exotic while the West is its logical, superior opposite. When Chinese immigrants began arriving in significant numbers to the US West Coast, they were quickly exploited as a cheap labor force by White American industrialists. The organized anti-Chinese movement was primarily headed by white labor organizers, who viewed Chinese immigrants as responsible for poor economic conditions.

“Yellow Peril” is a cultural phenomenon marked by the fear that East Asian people posed a social, economic and political threat to the U.S. The belief was steeped in anti-Asian sentiment, was triggered by multiple factors, including the fear of possible military invasion from Asia, perceived competition by Asian workers to the white labor force and potential ethnic contamination as a result of genetic mixing between Asians and white people.

Anti-Chinese violence includes:

The Chinese Massacre of 1871 in Los Angeles
The San Francisco Riot of 1877 in San Francisco
The Tacoma Riot of 1885
The Rock Springs Massacre of 1885 in Wyoming
The Vancouver anti-Chinese Riots of 1886
The Seattle Riot of 1886
The Chinese Massacre Cove of 1887 in Oregon

In Providence, Rhode Island, the Providence Common Council proposed a resolution in 1899 that would prohibit the granting of licenses to prospective Chinese restaurant keepers. Despite there never being a complaint against any of the city's Chinese restaurants, there was a general perception that these restaurants were bad influences due to stereotypes that associated the Chinese with opium and gambling.



What is Orientalism?

Where, when, and why did these massacres and riots happen?

The Exclusion Act of 1882:

Discrimination and Resistance

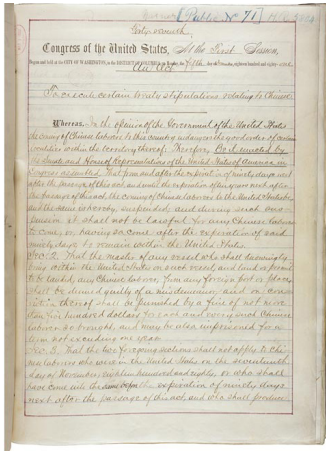
Due to the prevailing anti-Chinese sentiment of the nineteenth century, legislators enacted laws that targeted Chinese Americans. These laws included but were not limited to:

1852 California Immigrant Bonding Law
1855 California Capitation Tax
1858 California Chinese Exclusion Law
Anti-Coolie Act of 1862
1870 Cubic Air Ordinance (San Francisco)
1870 Sidewalk Ordinance (San Francisco)
1870 California Statute 330
1873 Laundry Ordinance (San Francisco)
The Page Act of 1875
1876 Queue Ordinance (San Francisco)

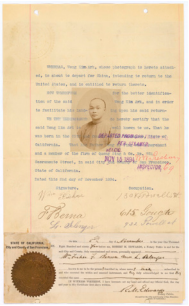
On May 6, 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act — arguably the largest piece of anti-Chinese legislation — was passed. Because the railways had been completed and the use of Chinese people as strikebreakers had negatively impacted their public image, the law passed easily through the House of Representatives and the Senate. Under the Chinese Exclusion Act, the immigration of Chinese laborers was suspended for ten years and Chinese people were denied the right to become naturalized citizens. Only merchants, clergy, diplomats, teachers, students, and children of natives were exempt. It was not until the late 1960s and 1970s that the number of Chinese immigrants to the U.S. began to grow steadily. While the exclusion act was lifted in the 1940s, it took until the 1965 immigration and naturalization act for most restrictions to be abolished.

Before the year of 1885, Chinese Americans had little to no access to public education. Equal access to free public education had to be fought for in court. As a native-born Californian Chinese American, 8 year old Mamie Tape was denied admission to the public school Spring Valley Primary due to her Chinese descent. Mamie's mother, a tax paying Chinese immigrant, found this decision to be unconstitutional and thus sued the principal of the school, Miss Jennie M. Hurley. In the famous Tape. v Hurley court case held in California's superior court, Judge McGuire ruled that the refusal of Mamie's admission was deemed unconstitutional.

In 1892, the Geary Act was passed, a new law that required every Chinese to carry a photo-identification card. It provided for the deportation of Chinese who were caught not carrying a certificate of residence, and it required the testimony of two whites to confirm a Chinese person's immigration status. Thousands of Chinese protested, risking deportation and a year of hard labor.



The discriminatory laws against Chinese people did not stop with the Chinese Exclusion Act. For example, the 1888 Scott Act prohibited Chinese laborers from returning to the United States even if they possessed a valid reentry permit. Similarly, the Geary Act of May 1892 required Chinese people to carry Certificates of Residence and stripped them of legal protection in the courts.



In 1873, Wong Kim Ark, a young man born in the U.S. to Chinese parents, used the courts to challenge the government's refusal to recognize his citizenship. His activism led to the Supreme Court ruling that birthright citizenship applies to the children of immigrants, one of the most important legal decisions in U.S history.

Similarly, Yick Wo used the courts to challenge a San Francisco laundry ordinance for its discriminatory enforcement against Chinese owners in Yick Wo v. Hopkins.

Chinese activism wasn't only confined to the courts; in 1905, Chinese merchants organized a large-scale boycott of U.S. goods in China, which dealt a pretty noticeable blow to U.S. companies. Thus, even in the face of incredible oppression, Chinese people resisted.

What did these anti-Chinese laws and rules say?

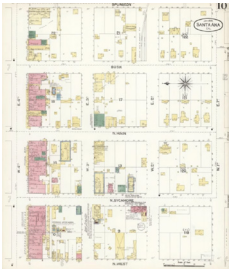
Chinatowns

There is no single story for Chinatowns across the U.S., with some establishing themselves in the 1860s while others formed in the 1970s and even later. Early Chinatowns in San Francisco, San Jose, and Los Angeles date back to the 1850s. Others formed in New York City, Seattle, Boston and Washington, D.C., often in city areas where land wasn't ideal and where work was available. Pushed out of more desirable labor markets, immigrants took on jobs in restaurants, laundromats, and pharmacies. Historic Chinatowns served as a social and economic support network for Chinese laborers, while also serving as a secondary home and cultural hub.

They faced waves of discrimination that increased in ferocity towards the end of the 19th century. Among other restrictions, various laws prohibited Chinese people from owning land, voting, marrying outside their race, working in most industries and from bringing their families to the United States. Later on, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Fair Housing Act of 1968, which banned racial discrimination in housing, public facilities, and employment, helped Chinese Americans and other minorities move outside of Chinatowns. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 lifted the racial quota and gave preferences based on educational status, certain skills or professions, and family reunification.

Today, Chinatowns are home for people across the AAPI diaspora who share in their stories of labor and perseverance, resilience, exclusion and community, and celebration of life. These places tell a story about the role that Chinese communities have played in shaping the American identity for centuries. However, this history and the contributions of these communities is under-told.

By about 1870, there were about 300 laundromats in San Francisco, employing nearly 3,000 employees.



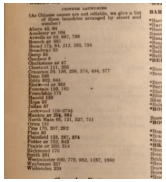
Family associations called huiguan served as a way for Chinese to stay connected in both the U.S. and China. Tongs were another type of organization that were based on brotherhood, but many also partook in illegal activities such as prostitution, gambling, and drug dealing in order to fund their activities.

[redacted]

States like California, Texas, and Wyoming enacted Alien Land Laws which prevented Chinese immigrants and other minorities from purchasing or leasing-long term properties. These laws would be ruled as unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in 1952. The Page Act of 1875 and anti-miscegenation laws prevented Chinese men from establishing families and skewed gender ratios in Chinatowns.

[redacted]

What was Providence's Chinatown like?



*Community members and visitors are invited to donate personal belongings, photographs, and items that illustrate the fabric of Chinatowns; show the vibrancy of Chinese culture and heritage. A monitor displays documentary historical and contemporary footage of Chinese celebrations and daily life in Chinatowns.

Angel Island & Immigration 1910-1940s

The Chinese Exclusion Act (1882) was the only law in American history to deny naturalization in or entry into the United States based upon a specific ethnicity or country of birth, though it was not the only law to deny citizenship based on ethnicity or country of birth. In 1892, this act was renewed for another ten years in the form of the Geary Act. It was eventually made permanent in 1902.

United States v. Wong Kim Ark (1898), was a landmark decision of the U.S. Supreme Court which held that "a child born in the United States, of parents of Chinese descent, who, at the time of his birth, are subjects of the Emperor of China, but have a permanent domicile and residence in the United States, and are there carrying on business, and are not employed in any diplomatic or official capacity under the Emperor of China", automatically became a U.S. citizen at birth.

In 1906, a San Francisco earthquake caused a massive fire that destroyed public birth documents. Suddenly a new opportunity for citizenship arose. Chinese men living in the U.S. could claim that they were born in the U.S. Other Chinese men could travel back to China as U.S. citizens and report that their wives had given birth to a son. Children of U.S. citizens were also citizens, regardless of where they were born, and it was illegal to deny them entry if they could prove their familial relationship. As a result, many Chinese immigrants, mostly males, claimed to be sons of Chinese Americans. They became known as "paper sons" or "paper daughters."

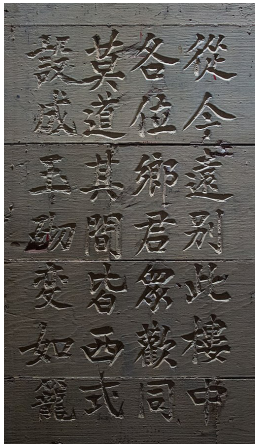
These documents could then be used for their actual sons, or sold to friends, neighbors, and strangers. This was termed as a "slot" and would then be available for purchase to men who had no relatives in the U.S. in order to be eligible to enter the country.

To enforce the Chinese Exclusion Act, the Angel Island Immigration Station in San Francisco Bay established an extensive interrogation process meant to identify and deport those making fraudulent claims. During the 1910-1940s, the island held hundreds of thousands of immigrants coming from 84 countries, the majority from China, Japan, India, Mexico and the Philippines. Chinese immigrants faced increased discrimination due to social status. For example, in Ellis Island, New York, between one and three percent of all arriving immigrants were rejected; Angel Island — which had far more Chinese immigrants — was about eighteen percent.

Immigrants would be subject to prison-like living conditions and interrogated with detailed questions about their family and hometown for days or even months on end. The longest recorded stay was 22 months. Additionally, the length of stay varied depending on which country the individual was coming from.

In 1943, Congress repealed the Chinese Exclusion Act. Today, more than 200 poems written by detainees have been recovered. Of the approximately 1 million immigrants who were processed at the Angel Island Immigration Station, roughly 175,000 were Chinese and 117,000 were Japanese. Between 75 and 82 percent entered America successfully with the rest being turned away and deported.

What was it like for Chinese people on the East Coast during the Chinese Exclusion Act?



[Poem #1 translation] courtesy of Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation

[Poem #2 translation] courtesy of Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation

[Poem #3 translation] courtesy of Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation

*A monitor will display footage of Angel Island poems and translations with interviews from Chinese immigrants recounting their journeys to America. The exhibit will include examples of interrogation questions that visitors can read through and answer.

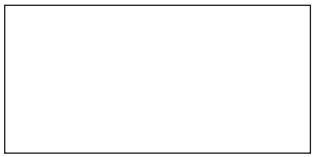
Changing Attitudes: World War II

When the United States entered World War II in 1941, about 29,000 people of Chinese ancestry were living in Hawaii and another 78,000 on the mainland. By war's end, roughly 13,499 Chinese were serving in all branches of the Army Ground Forces and Army Air Forces, which was about 22 percent of all Chinese men in America.

Once China became an ally of the U.S., the racial barriers to Chinese migration were abandoned. Suddenly, Chinese Americans found themselves embraced by America's political establishment. In 1943, the U.S. government repealed the Chinese Exclusion Act. This allowed the Chinese to enter the United States under a quota system and apply for naturalization, something previously denied to them.

The war also had a great impact on the economic status of Chinese Americans. After decades of systematic exclusion from American industries, Chinese Americans were finally called into its ranks. Being able to participate in the war industry on a never-before seen scale, many joined the military or took up white-collar professions.

In response to Japanese aggression in China during the 1930s and Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, Chinese Americans raised money and supported China's war efforts against Japan. By becoming the "good Asians in the good war," Chinese Americans carved out for themselves a small place in American society. In doing so, internalizing the racial discourse of the time and distanced themselves from Japanese Americans throughout the war.



The U.S. military provided a safe haven from deportation for illegal migrants during the war. The Fourteenth Air Service Group consisted of nine units with the highest concentration of Chinese American personnel in the military.

What was it like for the Chinese Americans involved in World War II?

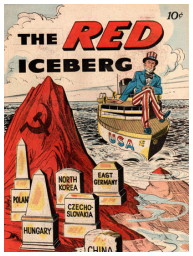
The Red Iceberg:

Second Red Scare & McCarthyism 1947–1957

World War II transformed Chinese America completely, leading to increased opportunities and changing attitudes. However, fears of communism surged with the official establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 and the beginning of the Korean War in 1950. This meant that Asian Americans, especially those of Chinese or Korean descent, came under increasing suspicion by both American civilians and government officials of being Communist conspirators and sympathizers.

At the same time, some American politicians saw the possibility of American-educated Chinese students bringing their knowledge back to "Red China" as a threat to American national security, and laws such as the China Aid Act of 1950 and the Refugee Relief Act of 1953 gave significant assistance to Chinese students who wished to settle in the U.S. Despite being naturalized, however, Chinese immigrants continued to face suspicion of their allegiance. Thus the general effect was to simultaneously demand that Chinese and other Asian students politically support the government yet avoid engaging directly in politics.

The Second Red Scare deeply altered the culture of American society. Numerous accounts in the media contained themes of the infiltration, invasion, and destruction of American society by un–American thought. In 1954, Congress passed the Communist Control Act of 1954 which prevented members of the communist party in America from holding office in labor unions and other labor organizations. The federal "Chinese Confession Program" from 1956 to 1965 encouraged paper sons to confess their status in order to uncover fraud, in return for a possible path to citizenship. However, this program was often used as a way to punish Chinese leftists. Therefore many innocent Chinese Americans found themselves caught in the crossfire of McCarthyism and a national red scare.




New York Tribune
000 Arrested in Nation-Wide Round-Up of 'Reds';
Palmer Directs Raids in 35 Cities; 650 Seized Here

The Palmer Raids was one of the most significant events of the first Red Scare, which was conducted by the US Department of Justice and led by J. Edgar Hoover. Between 3,000 and 10,000 individuals who were suspected of communist, socialist, or anarchist ties were detained or deported.

Pan-ethnic Solidarity

The Asian American Movement

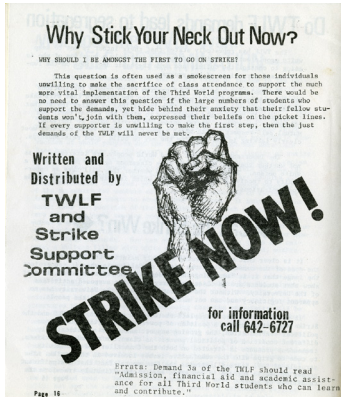
The Vietnam War, which officially began on November 1, 1955 and lasted for nearly twenty years, cost the lives of over 58,000 Americans and more than 3 million Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Lao soldiers and civilians. By 1969, one out of every two Americans personally knew someone who had been killed or wounded in Vietnam. Up to 40,000 men were drafted each month, and casualties—most of them civilians—had reached a million. It was also around this time that the peace movement also reached its peak. The peace movement that gradually turned public opinion against the war is often remembered as being led by white college students, white flower children, white pastors, and white mothers. But Asian Americans and other people of color played a central, and frequently independent, role in the anti-war movement of the 1960s and 1970s.

The post-WWII generation of Asian Americans had grown up against a backdrop of U.S. imperialism in Asia and had come of age as the Vietnam War reached its height. Opposition to the war was a key component of the Asian American Movement, and grew out of the same wave of activism that resulted in the birth of Asian American Studies, the Asian American women's movement, and redress for the WWII incarceration of Japanese Americans. Vietnam globalized the movement and helped to unify different ethnic Asian groups under a common cause. A movement previously divided along the lines of ethnicity, nationality, language, and geography, gained strength as Asian Americans increasingly positioned themselves as members of a "global community of Asians opposed to U.S. imperialism."

Coinciding struggles, like the fight for ethnic studies on college campuses and gentrification of Manilatowns, Little Tokyos, and Chinatowns, were no longer isolated problems but part of a larger campaign against colonization and white supremacy. Like the Black Panthers, the Brown Berets, and other "colony-community" coalitions, Asian Americans recognized that protesting the war in Vietnam meant protesting the war at home. But the mainstream peace movement, dominated by white liberals and colorblind socialists, was reluctant to adopt an explicitly anti-racist platform. Asian American participation was rejected as divisive when they called on white allies to address the disproportionate deaths of black and brown soldiers in Vietnam and the specifically anti-Asian sentiment of the war.
Tired of being tokenized and dismissed, Asian Americans—along with Black, Chicano, and Indigenous activists— began to build an independent movement where they could interrogate the racism and colonialism of the war on their own terms.

Organizing against the war strengthened ties between Japanese, Chinese, Filipino, and Korean Americans redefining their racial and ethnic identities at a time when "Asian America" was still a new concept, and created opportunities for meaningful engagement with other "Third World" communities. These "Third World" coalitions continued to lend support to the broader anti-war movement.

Who was Peter Yew?


Why Stick Your Neck Out Now?

WHY SHOULD I BE AMONGST THE FIRST TO GO ON STRIKE?

This question is often used as a smokescreen for those individuals unwilling to make the sacrifice of class attendance to support the much more vital implementation of the Third World programs. There would be no need to answer this question if the large numbers of students who support the demands, yet hide behind their anxiety that their fellow students won't join with them, expressed their beliefs on the picket lines. If every supporter is unwilling to make the first step, then the just demands of the TWLF will never be met.

Written and Distributed by TWLF and Strike Support Committee

STRIKE NOW!

for information call 642-6727

Errata: Demand 3a of the TWLF should read "Admission, financial aid and academic assistance for all Third World students who can learn and contribute."

Page 16

"The broader movement had a hard time with the Asian movement, in some ways. Because it broadened the issues out beyond where they wanted to go, beyond what a lot of people wanted to deal with: the whole question of U.S. imperialism as a system, at home and abroad." - Activist Steve Louie

The racial slur "gook," initially used against Filipino "natives" during the Philippine-American War before reappearing as a general anti-Asian epithet during the Korean War, made no distinctions between Asians in Vietnam and Asians in America. Asian Americans knew intimately the danger of "gookism," having been on the receiving end of more than a century of anti-Asian exclusion and violence in the United States.

The U.S. military's violently racist propaganda posed an imminent threat not only to the Vietnamese people soldiers encountered overseas but to the Asian Americans they met during and after their training. Incidents of Asian Americans being assaulted by white GIs "back from fighting you communists in Vietnam" were not uncommon. Former soldiers recalled racist abuse from their superior officers throughout basic training, from weathering a constant barrage of slurs to being used to show white recruits " the enemy."

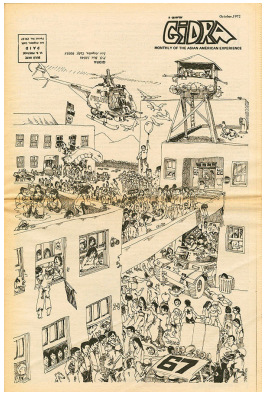
The undeniably gendered nature of the Vietnam War added another layer of complexity to the Asian American anti-war movement. The military machismo that turned GIs into "human killing machines" was doubly dangerous for the women who bore the brunt of violence in Southeast Asia—for they were dehumanized not just as "gooks" but as sexual objects. Many soldiers believed all Vietnamese women were promiscuous, and expected them to show a certain amount of "gratitude" to their American saviors. This casual misogyny fueled a sense of entitlement to women's bodies. Asian American women recognized racist attitudes about Asian women and identified with the women of Southeast Asia not only as Asians fighting Western imperialism, but as women living at the intersections of racism and sexism.

"Oriental was a rug that everyone steps on, so we ain't no Orientals. We were Asian American."

– Richard Aoki, activist involved in the Asian American Movement

Bruce Iwasaki, writing for Gidra in January 1973, explained:

"The U.S. involvement in Vietnamese affairs began around the time we were born; stayed hidden from the national consciousness during our years of innocence; escalated as we matured; and has reached climactic proportions while our generation gains the will and seeks the means to end that involvement. Much as we forget, ignore, or grow numb to it, the war has been a constant shadow in our lives."



Strides in Representation

Stereotypes and Legacies in the Arts and Entertainment

Model Minority: "If Asians can do it, why can't you?"

In 1966 New York Times published an article called "Success Story: Japanese American Style," sociologist William Petersen first used the term "model minority" while praising Japanese Americans for "enduring the most discrimination and worst injustices" and achieving great success in America "by their own almost totally unaided effort." Petersen attributed this success to strong work ethic, family values, and respect for authority and he wrote about the lack of these same traits in African-Americans.

While on the surface these may seem like positive attributes, the model minority myth:

- Ignores the diversity of AAPI cultures.
- Hides the pressures and paradoxes inherent within an Asian American identity.
- Perpetuates that Asian Americans are all the same—and all different from other Americans.
- Implies that Asian Americans are doing well today and must therefore have benefitted from an elevated status among people of color, in spite of centuries of systematic discrimination.
- Denies or downplays the impact of racism and discrimination on people of color in the United States.

Increased Visibility

The Golden Age of Hollywood spanned the decades between 1910 and 1960. On the screen, the anxieties of yellow peril often manifested as typecast, exotic depictions of Asia and Asian people that empowered Western heroes and justified the domination of Asians, according to Gina Marchetti's 1994 book Romance and the "Yellow Peril": Race, Sex, and Discursive Strategies in Hollywood Fiction. Despite these limitations, Asian American actors overcame racism, broke barriers and paved the way for Asian American actors of contemporary Hollywood and independent cinema.

Asian-American playwrights and theater companies began to flourish in the 1960s. In the 1970s, filmmakers including Robert Akira Nakamura, Loni Ding, and Curtis Choy began directing films and slowly but surely, a truly Asian-American cinema emerged in the 1980s. In the 1990s, with the rise of independent cinema, conservative Hollywood grew increasingly irrelevant, artistically if not commercially. In the 2000s, following the increased accessibility of internet sites like YouTube and affordable filmmaking technology, Asian-Americans' involvement in the production of filmmaking has exploded, even if it remains under-recognized within the mainstream. Today, there are more movies, TV shows, books, and other media being produced about the Asian American experience than ever.

However, AAPI diversity in the movie industry, both in front of and behind the camera, is still woefully lacking. According to the Entertainment Diversity Progress released by Luminate in 2022, tv series with at least one Asian series regular increased 2%, from 2021's 36.5% to 2022's 38.4%. Asian main title cast and directors in film increased by 7.7% and 5.9% respectively. Less than 2% of all movies released in 2022 centered on Asian stories, predominantly East Asian. Thus, there's still a long way to go, and if we can learn anything from this history, it's that Asian American representation improves when creatives write their own stories and are given the opportunity to tell their stories.

What is the Model Minority Myth?

How has Chinese representation in popular culture changed over the years?

With a career spanning from 1919 to 1961, Anna May Wong is known as the first Chinese American film star. In 1922 she made her debut at age 17 in The Toll of the Sea, the first color feature in Hollywood. Wong acted in more than 60 movies throughout her career, as well as on television, theater and radio. Her legacy is still remembered today, as she frequently resisted the practice of typecasting. She was a rare case during the early Hollywood era, as most Asian roles during this time went to white actors in yellowface.

"I was so tired of the parts I had to play," she said in a 1933 interview. "Why is it that the screen Chinese is nearly always the villain of the piece, and so cruel a villain—murderous, treacherous, a snake in the grass. We are not like that."

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Media has the power to create the narrative foundation for how people are perceived and treated in the real world. According to the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media, "80 % of media consumed worldwide is made in the United States." Thus, Hollywood has a profound responsibility to acknowledge its global influence on how cultures and communities are portrayed and perceived. Representation is a social justice concern.

[redacted]

[redacted]

In 1993, Amy Tan's book The Joy Luck Club was adapted into a film and became a commercial and critical success. The Joy Luck Club follows the lives of four Chinese mothers and their daughters in San Francisco. Additionally, in 1998 Mulan became the first Disney animated film with the leads predominantly voiced by Asian Americans, with a Chinese American writer being hired for the film.

[redacted]

"The lead is who you empathize with; the lead is the person who holds the emotional content of the story... Because of that, [API characters] are reduced to being information givers, people who progress the plot along, but are never really what the story is about. We are in service of the larger central story, which is usually a white storyline." - Pun Bandhu, an actor and member of the Asian American Performers Action Coalition

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Chinese America Today

No timeline of Chinese America would be complete without exploring what the vibrant, diverse Chinese American population in the U.S. looks like today. The Chinese diaspora is the 9th largest origin group within the U.S. and make up 23% of the Asian American population. The top U.S. metropolitan areas by Chinese population include New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Jose, and Boston, as of 2019.

In addition to the big cities, smaller pockets of Chinese Americans are also dispersed in rural towns, often university-college towns, throughout the U.S. As of 2018, there were 46,903 AAPI people living in Rhode Island, 8,600 of whom identify as Chinese.

As a result of the work of Asian American activists, on June 29th, 2022, a bill was signed into law requiring Asian American history and culture to be taught in Rhode Island schools.

*This exhibit is ongoing and will display a rotation of a collection of Chinese American oral histories

How do you identify within the Asian American Pacific Islander "AAPI" community?

How has your heritage shaped the person you are today?

AAPI Resources

To Get You Started...

Asian Americans have a long history of activism and resistance on the local and national level since their arrival in the U.S. Today, AAPI organizations and individuals continue to organize in order to fight against racism, promote a collective sense of identity through arts and culture, advocate for political empowerment, and much more. **A few Asian American organizations include:**

The Cultural Society
csebri.org

Alliance of Rhode Island Southeast Asians for Education (ARISE)
ariseducation.org

Center for Southeast Asians (CSEA)
cseari.org

Make Us Visible - RI
makeusvisible.org

Providence Youth Student Movement
prysm.us

Massachusetts Asian American Commission
mass.gov/asian-american-pacific-islanders-commission

Asian American Civic Association
aaca-boston.org

Chinese Progressive Association
cpaboston.org

Asian Community Development Corporation
asiancdc.org

Stop AAPI Hate
stopaapihate.org

Asian Mental Health Collective
asianmhc.org

*Locally made works of art and activism displayed and highlighted. Zines are free and publically available.

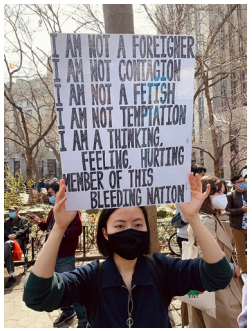
COVID-19 Pandemic & Anti-Asian Hate

Stigmatization and "Othering"

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) emerged in December 2019 when an outbreak of the virus was first identified in Wuhan, China and began rapidly spreading around the globe throughout the spring months of 2020. As COVID-19 proliferated across the U.S., Asian Americans reported a surge in racially motivated hate crimes involving physical violence and harassment. Largely due to misinformation perpetuated by the media and politicians, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders became scapegoats as they were blamed and chastised for the spread of COVID-19.

By August 2021, more than 9,000 anti-Asian incidents had been reported since the beginning of the pandemic, according to Stop AAPI Hate. These incidents included but were not limited to shunning, public harassment, the use of racial slurs, classroom bullying and ridicule, and physical and verbal attacks. COVID-19 enabled the spread of racism and created national insecurity, fear of foreigners, and general xenophobia, which may be related to the increase in anti-Asian hate crimes during the pandemic.

This concept has a long history. Pandemic-related health crises have been associated with the stigmatization and "othering" of marginalized groups, not limited to people of Asian descent.



*This exhibit invites visitors to contribute photos, portraits, written pieces, art, and objects of importance in memory of loved ones who were lost during the pandemic. A monitor will display documentary footage of life during quarantine, frontline workers, and the ways people demonstrated empathy, resiliency, and solidarity in the face of anti-Asian hate and uncertainty and anxiety throughout the pandemic.

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Political Cartoon “Caricature showing Chinese, living in a very crowded opium den, eating rats; and an American man arriving home from work to wife, children and normal household conditions, 1878. Lithograph by J. Keppler.
Drawing of the massacre of the Chinese at Rock Springs, Wyoming, 1885. Drawing by T. de Thulstrup from photographs by Lieutenant C.A. Booth, Seventh United States Infantry. “Chinese immigrant miners working for Union Pacific Coal Company fleeing from armed white miners who blamed the Chinese miners for taking their jobs.” Library of Congress
Photograph of the Tape family, successful plaintiffs in the Tape vs. Hurley case that allowed their daughter into San Francisco’s Spring Valley Elementary School in the 1880s.
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Illustration of a man wearing a hat labeled “Oregon,” holding two handguns, giving Chinese men a “Hobson’s choice” or the option of leaving by jumping off a cliff into the sea below or staying and being shot to death. At his feet is a “Treaty with China” torn in half, 1886.

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Photograph of Pvt. Lui Gain Thyn, standing third from left, served during World War II with a squad of the 20th Armored Infantry Battalion.
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Photograph of protesters marching as part of an Asian Americans for Peace Rally in Little Tokyo. Los Angeles, January 17, 1970. Courtesy of the Gidra Collection.
Poster guidebook for American GIs looking to have a “good time” in Hong Kong. Courtesy of the Gidra Collection.
Photograph of Nick Nakatani and Mike Nakayama testifying at the Winter Soldier Investigation, an event sponsored by Vietnam Veterans Against the War to publicize war crimes committed by the U.S. military in Vietnam. Courtesy of the Gidra Collection.
A guidebook for American GIs looking to have a “good time” in Hong Kong. Courtesy of the Gidra Collection.
Photograph of Asian American, Black, and Chicano activists storming the stage at an anti-war rally where they were denied speaking time by white organizers. Courtesy of the Gidra Collection.
Photograph of Kiku Uno standing at a podium and speaking into a microphone at an anti-war event in Los Angeles in 1971. Courtesy of the Gidra Collection.
Photograph of community organizer Pat Sumi speaking about her experiences in Southeast Asia at a Peace Sunday event in Los Angeles, May 16, 1971. Courtesy of the Gidra Collection.
Photograph of Asian American protesters at a 2014 protest in New York. Marcela McGreal.
Photograph of mural: “We Want Justice” for Vincent Chin, a Chinese American beaten to death in Highland Park in 1982, 2008. Vergara Photograph Collection. Library of Congress.
Photograph of Asian American protesters marching through Little Tokyo in a protest against the Vietnam War, 1970.
Photograph of a young man in the front is holding a sign that reads “Asian Americans for Peace.”

9. Strides in Representation

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Photograph of Bruce Lee
Flower Drum Song Poster
Everything Everywhere All at Once Poster
Photograph of Hiram Fong, 1959
Pacific American Heritage Week, 1979
Photograph of Hayakawa as the Prince of the Island of Desire in silent fantasy film The Beggar Prince, 1920.
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Photograph of Umeki in a publicity photo for Flower Drum Song, 1961.
Photograph of Van Williams and Bruce Lee, 1966.
Photograph of Lihua in Empress Wu scene, Hong Kong Film Archive Cinema, 1963.
Photograph of Frank Chin, one of the pioneers of Asian-American theater in the 1970s.
Photograph from director John Korty’s “Farewell to Manzanar.”
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Photograph of Awkwafina on the red carpet of the 77th Golden Globe Awards, 2020.
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