

sent to China by the people of England is saving one soul, her opium, that she so wrongfully and selfishly forced into China, is destroying a thousand.

I never can forget the remark made by the Chinese mandarin to a British minister: "Sir, I wish you would take back with you the opium your country sent us." What a blush went over the face of the British representative! What a great stumbling block to Christianity! Let America regain her good name by repealing the Geary law.

Our sincere thanks are due to all our Christian friends. Their sympathy and prayers have greatly comforted us; and may God overrule all injustice and wrong to His glory, and the final triumph of the right!

SOURCE: *Our Bethany* 3, no. 4 (February 1892): 5.

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Leaves from the Life History of a Chinese Immigrant (1936)

Elizabeth Wong

The Chinese were first recruited to Hawaii as contract laborers to work on the sugar-cane plantations in 1852. Because of the low pay and harsh working conditions, many left upon completion of their contracts and turned to farming, growing rice, or shop-keeping. By the 1880s, Chinese owned a third of the businesses in Honolulu and had become an important part of the growing mercantile class. Unlike most Chinese laborers in Hawaii, they enjoyed the comforts of having wives, families, and servants.

Chinese bond servants, or mui tsai as they were called, either came with the family from China or could be imported from China. Under the mui tsai system, poor parents who sold their daughter into indentured service usually stipulated in the deed of sale that the girl be freed through marriage when she turned eighteen. If the girl was lucky, her master would treat her well and marry her off to a good husband. If unlucky, the girl could be treated like a slave, suffer sexual and physical abuse, or be sold into prostitution. This is the story of one lucky mui tsai who came to Hawaii in 1891.

LIFE IN A CHINESE VILLAGE

"Lucky come Hawaii? Sure, lucky, come Hawaii," said Mrs. Teng,¹ pushing back her black hair with her hands, which showed signs of hard labor. "Before I come to Hawaii I suffer much. Only two kinds of people in China, the too poor and the too rich. I never can forget my days in China," she said, her mouth falling into a smile revealing a pretty good set of teeth. She is proportionally built for her five feet four.

"In a small crowded village, a few miles from Hongkong, fifty-four years

1. Author's note: I am using a fictitious name for the lady who has given me her life account. She has used broken English and Chinese. I shall translate her Chinese accordingly and shall try not to alter her style.

ago I was born. There were four in our family, my mother, my father, my sister,² and me. We lived in a two-room house. One was our sleeping room and the other served as parlor, kitchen, and dining room. We were not rich enough to keep pigs or fowl, otherwise our small house would have been more than overcrowded.

"How can we live on six baskets of rice which were paid twice a year for my father's duty as a night watchman? Sometimes the peasants have a poor crop, then we go hungry. During the day my father would do other small jobs for the peasants or carpenters. My mother worked hard too for she went every day to the forest to gather wood for our stove. . . .

"Sometimes we went hungry for days. My mother and me would go over the harvested rice fields of the peasants to pick the grains they dropped. Once in a while my mother would go near a big pile of grain and take a handful. She would then sit on them until the working men went home. As soon as they go we ran home. She clean and cook the rice for us two. We had only salt and water to eat with the rice. Today when I hear my children grumble about the food I wish they could experience what I went through and what the children in China are doing to relieve their hunger.

"Father was suffering from dysentery so my mother went out to look for herbs. My father told me to take the baby out to play and not to come back until late. Being always afraid of him I gladly took the baby out. We were three houses away watching a man kill a chicken. Pretty soon a man came to call me to go home for my father is dead. I ran with my brother on my back and stopped at the door of our house. I took one look at my father dangling from the ceiling and started to run to where I don't know. . . .

"Poor people are buried in mats, but mother bought a coffin for my father. She had asked the carpenter to give her a few weeks to pay for the coffin and the man agreed. My mother called me to her and put me on her lap.

"Do you want me to remarry or will you be a good girl and go to stay with a certain lady,' she said. I told her that I do not want her to remarry but I will go with the lady so that she will have money to pay for my father's coffin. If she did marry again I would have a hard time looking for her when I came big. I leaned my head against her breast and if I knew that was the last time I would be so near to her I would have let my brother cry alone.

"I heard my mother tell this go-between lady that she wants me put in the hands of a lady or man who would come to Hawaii because she has heard Hawaii is a land of good fortune. All the other people who went to Hawaii sent money home every time. (My mother has never told me that I was being sold as a slave until I came to Hawaii my mistress called me names.)

"My mother took off my mourning robes, dressed me in a colored dress

2. She means brother, as that is all she refers to in the remaining interview.

with a red string on my hair. I went with this lady to the big house of Mr. Chin, two miles from our village. He was to look me over and I seem to be his choice for he took out ninety dollars to give to my mother. Every year in my age was worth ten dollars. I wished I were older than nine so that my mother could get more money.

"Before the actual parting I was happy and glad to go because I knew I was helping mother. When my mother and me went out of the house I took one look behind and did not want to go. I cried and begged and asked to stay at home. For once I had the sympathy of the neighbors. They cried and told me that I must be a good girl and go so that my mother can get the money to pay the coffin. I quickly wiped my eyes and went with my mother. When we got to this place we went to give our offerings to the temple god. It was eleven o'clock when we came to the gate of Mr. Chin's house. We stayed outside until it was twelve. It is said that it is bad luck to enter a master's house when the time is odd, it must be even time. Again the parting was hard. I ran after my mother but my master held me. He gave me a silver spoon, a jade bowl, sweets, and cakes—all that I always longed for. I was glad to stay forever. Next time when my mother came I did not care to go with her. I was so poor for a long time that those sweet and pretty things took a great hold on me.

"A lady in that house told me that Hawaii had big, fat, very sweet sugar cane—it was better than honey. I crazy for cane that I just waited for the day to come to Hawaii. She also told me that there was hardly anything to do but after I came I found out that this was not true.

LEAVING THE ANCESTRAL VILLAGE

"In 1891 my master and me sailed on the 'Billy Jack' to go to my new mistress in Hawaii. We slept on canvas cots and had cheap meat and cabbage for every meal. We could not land in Honolulu because there was a small pox on board ship. We went directly to San Francisco and stayed there for two months. I never saw the shape of the land for I was below the ship. When we came back to Hawaii I was locked in the immigration office for three weeks. How happy I was when my boss came to me. I went to meet my mistress who was never pleasant to me.

"The first thing I asked my master was a piece of sugar cane. He said that there is none around the place where we live. How sad I was for I expected cane to be all around.

"Mr. Chin was the owner of a large carpenter shop on Nuuanu street. He had many workers. They cooked our meals and they ate in the shop. I always took the meals home for the family. We lived behind the shop. I had to wash clothes, clean the house and the basin. I also waited on the table and when the family was served then I took my bowl to my master for food. I always ate separately from the family table. Whenever I go back for a second helping

my mistress would glare at me. Being afraid I used to press the rice in my bowl so that I had my fill and avoided her glance. Although she called me a 'slave girl,' a good for nothing girl, and beat me unmercifully, I was happy to be in Hawaii. At least I had food in my stomach and ate with a silver spoon.

ON THE ROUGH ROAD TO WESTERNIZATION

"Being a 'China Jack' I was tempted by the good taste of the first cookie my mistress gave me. I saw her hang the can on the kitchen wall. As soon as she left the house I helped myself to a cookie and a cup of tea. In my little party she caught me. She took the ruler and beat my fingers to and fro, to and fro. They were all black and blue and she kept on until the ruler broke.

"One day after I had swept the house, washed the clothes, I went out to play with the neighborhood children who wanted to have some fun with the 'China Jack.' I was having a good time when my mistress yelled 'slave girl' at me. I went into the house expecting and prepared for the outcome. Afraid that the children outside would hear she stuffed my mouth with a dirty rag and beat me with a bamboo rod. I struggled but of no use. After her anger or jealousy was satisfied she made me clean the house again.

"Before I was real dumb. I was afraid to go to school on account of my mistress not giving me money to buy tablets and pencils. I didn't know how to explain to the teacher that my mistress would not give me money for books. I used to hide from the teacher. My mistress said that a 'China Jack' like me need not go to school. I sorry I no go before.

"I used to go to a shoe maker's and take needles from him, for my mistress refused to let me use her needles. Behind her back I learned how to sew. When I was sixteen she went to China for four months. I made sure I learned how to sew dresses for myself. Every ten cents that I earned for sewing button holes for the neighboring tailor I saved to buy materials. When my mistress returned from China she wanted me to sew for her. I wasn't very eager because she, herself, wanted to stop me from learning.

"The following year the plague invaded Honolulu. Chinatown was burned down.³ All I can remember is that we went to live at Kalihi, then to Vineyard. We had little to do.

MARRIAGE—A RELEASE FROM RESTRAINTS

"I believe the turning point of my life came when I was eighteen. One morning I overheard my master scold my mistress for wanting to marry me off to

3. On December 12, 1899, a death in Chinatown was diagnosed as caused by the bubonic plague. The Board of Health ordered a sanitary fire, which got out of control; as a result, Chinatown was burnt down in the Great Chinatown Fire of January 20, 1900.

a man not of my same group. He said that long ago my mother made him promise that I be married to someone of my own group—Pun Dee [Punti].⁴ He said that it is only fair to present the recent case [suitor] to me. I hurried away from the door and waited to be called any minute. I went before them. My master who was always nice to me said that my mother would be happy to know that I am married and on my own. He said that a merchant, a Mr. Teng, from Wailuku, Maui, is looking for a bride. He is well-to-do but is forty years old. You are only eighteen. I leave the matter up to you. If he told me that the man was sixty I would have gladly said 'yes.' Here was my chance to escape from the harsh words of my mistress. Better than suffer some more I accepted. How he looks like I did not know but with that thought of freedom in mind I slept peacefully for the first time.

"As a fee for my master's successful matchmaking my future husband sent him one hundred fifty dollars, a roast pig, five hundred cakes, a half dozen bottles of wine, and a half dozen chickens. All day I was buying things to take up to my new home. A lady took me down to the boat and when I landed at Kahului I was met by my brother-in-law who took me home to my husband. I became Mrs. Teng. My husband was almost bald but he was very nice to me.

CONTACTS WITH THE HOME VILLAGE

"Right after my marriage I asked my husband to write back to my village in search of my mother. Lucky he asked my former boss for help. I told him of my hard times and how I came to Hawaii. He sent my mother fifty dollars along with that first letter. I was very happy that I cried when I received my mother's letter telling me that my brother is eleven and is watching cows. I wrote home and sent her money to send my brother to school. I only longed to see my mother again. I think I would fall in her arms and cry for days but I never had that chance. She died a year after my husband's death in 1921.

BETWEEN TWO CULTURES BUT ADJUSTED PHILOSOPHICALLY

"The young people of today are very much changed. I cannot understand my daughter-in-law who never trusts me with her son. I am his grandmother. She is so afraid that I might put germs on him. When I have a slight cold I cannot go near him. How can I put germs on him? If he is healthy he gets no germs. The small children in China don't have enough to eat and no

4. The Punti were the original inhabitants of Guangdong Province, as opposed to the Hakka, who came from northern and central China and settled in the Guangdong area three hundred years later. The two groups differed in speech, customs, and economic interests and had a running feud dating back to the Taiping Rebellion (1850-64).

clothing and yet they don't die. The children in Hawaii have all the good food and clothing so why should they get sick?"

With a wistful smile she went on commenting about her mistress. She said that no matter how rich you are or how much better you are than the other person never look down upon him because some day you may be in that person's position. "Today, my mistress lives in a one-room house on Vineyard Street. Her husband, three sons, and two daughters are dead leaving a son-in-law who told her to get out of his home. Now she know what poor means. She gladly calls me her 'daughter' and even if she was mean to me I let that be forgotten. When I see her in town I give her a dollar or two. If she was nice to me maybe I would have been a little more glad to help her.

"My children call me a 'jew' because I do not spend for clothes or other unnecessary luxuries. It is not that; I shudder at the thought of being poor. I was poor for a long while, that much suffering is enough for me. I can not spend here and there because someday I want to buy new refrigerator, pay for doctor's bills, and pay for any emergency. I must save so that I may have money on hand.

"I am proud of my children. They are very good children and have helped me lots. I am looking forward to the day when I will have my sons, daughters, and in-laws, and grandchildren with me. At present they are scattered on Maui, Kauai, and Oahu. I lucky come Hawaii."

SOURCE: *Social Process in Hawaii* 2 (1936): 39-42.

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Kam Wah Chung Letters (1898-1903)

The following Chinese letters were found in the Kam Wah Chung Company Building in John Day, Oregon. During its heyday in the 1870s and 1880s, John Day had a population of five to six hundred Chinese inhabitants who had come for the gold rush and stayed to work in the mines, ranches, farms, and logging camps. The Kam Wah Chung store, first established by local Chinese in 1871, was sold in 1886 to Ing Hay, better known as Doc Hay for his Chinese medicinal skills, and Lung On, an educated and shrewd businessman. Together, they turned the store into a successful business enterprise, selling general groceries and supplies as well as Chinese foods and goods. The store also served as an employment agency, social center for Chinese bachelors, and post office for the writing, receiving, and sending of mail.

After the deaths of Lung On and Doc Hay, the store was turned over to the city, and in 1967 it was restored to the way it had been in 1940. During the restoration, letters from China and other parts of the Western states were found. Some were addressed to Doc Hay or Lung Ong; others were letters that were either never sent or picked up. Outgoing mail to China generally reported on one's well-being with a sum of money enclosed. Incoming mail from China generally talked about problems at home and asked for money or the sojourner's early return. As the following letters indicate, Doc Hay and Lung On were married men who had left families behind in China. Despite repeated pleas from their families, they wrote infrequently, rarely sent money home, and never returned to China. In contrast, the first letter from an unknown husband to his wife in China is laden with bitterness at his unfruitful sojourn in America and their painful separation. Like the folk songs sung by Gold Mountain wives in China, these letters remind us of the hardships suffered by family members on both sides of the ocean because of Chinese exclusion and financial considerations.



Dr. Ing Hay,
John Day, Oregon.
(Oregon Historical
Society #OrHi 26468)

An unfinished letter to a wife in China.

From an unknown husband, via the Kam Wah Chung Co., John Day, Grant County, Oregon.

Undated.

My Beloved Wife:

It has been several autumns now since your dull husband left you for a far remote alien land. Thanks to my hearty body I am all right. Therefore stop embroidering worries about me.

Yesterday I received another of your letters. I could not keep the tears from running down my cheeks when thinking about the miserable and needy circumstances of our home, and thinking back to the time of our separation.

Because of our destitution I went out, trying to make a living. Who could know that fate is always opposite to man's design? Because I can get no gold, I am detained in this secluded corner of a strange land. Furthermore, my beauty, you are implicated in an endless misfortune. I wish this paper would console you a little. This is all that I can do for now . . .

. . .



Lung On,
Chinese merchant,
John Day, Oregon.
(Oregon Historical
Society #OrHi 53840)

From a mother in China.

To a son at John Day, Grant County, Oregon.
February 2, 1898.

Chin-hsin¹ My Son, Take Notice:

We are all very well at home, so don't worry about us. But your mother worries about you all the time. I cannot sleep and eat well because I am always thinking of you. You have been away from home for years. During that time, your second elder brother died, then your father died, and then your eldest brother died, too. Although I know that fate was the cause of their death, I still cannot but grieve deeply. I am old and weak now and I may die at any moment.

1. The names in these letters were transliterated in Mandarin rather than Cantonese, most likely because the translator, Chia-lin Chen, is Mandarin-speaking.

I hope you will be home and get married while I am alive, so that I might die with my eyes closed without grievance. I also hope that you will take care of Ah Fung, your nephew. Help him get a wife and establish their home, so that both your father and eldest brother might feel relieved under the ground.

You should save some money and should come back at least next year. I know my days are numbered. You won't see me any more; I may already be gone by the time you come back. Would you feel sorry then?

The twenty dollars which you sent me last June was received. So I guess you are all right and that relieves me a little. However, so long as you are not home, I am in suspense. Come back, don't forget your mother, please.

Your Mother.

From Lung On's father in China.

To Lung On, John Day, Oregon.
July, 1899.

Lung On, My Son:

Your business has proved profitless for a long time now. You should get rid of it or sell to some one else. Come home as soon as you can. Don't say "no" to me any more. There are too many gossips in our village; that makes me uneasy. You are my only son. You have no brothers, and your age is near forty but still without a male offspring.² You should think carefully. If you neither make a fortune abroad nor have a son at home, your loss is double. So why not come home before it is too late? Uncle Shang-sui owns many businesses in Canton, you can choose a suitable position for yourself. Under his wing you can settle down and start your own business. A man who does not have any long-range plans should have an immediate goal. Since you cannot make money in one place you should try somewhere else. Be flexible in accordance with circumstances. You have been away from home for seventeen years, you know nothing about our domestic situation. Anyway you should return even only for a visit. Sell the business to someone else, this is the wisest. We need you, and you must come back. I cannot tell you

2. Lung On came from a well-to-do family in Xinhui District, Guangdong Province, and was well educated in the Chinese classics and self-taught in English. Leaving a wife and daughter behind, he emigrated to the United States in 1882 and became a successful businessman in John Day, Oregon. It is not clear why his father thinks he is "profitless," but the rumors about his gambling, womanizing, and Western ways were probably true. Lung On passed away and was buried in John Day in 1940. He left half of his fortune to his daughter in China, but because of the severed diplomatic relations between China and the United States, she was never able to claim it.

all that I have in my mind in this short letter. Come back, let our family get united and enjoy the rest of our lives.

Your Father, Chu-chia.

From Lung On's wife, China.

To Lung On, John Day, Oregon.
Undated.

My Husband-lord:

I have received the two gold rings and ten dollars which you sent me via Mr. Wang. According to Mr. Wang, you are indulging in sex, and have no desire to return home. On hearing this I am shocked and pained. I have been expecting your return day after day. Your mother is completely blind. The housework is oppressing, and I have no one to give me a hand. If you have any conscience, please come back immediately. If you return, all the hardships I have suffered would be nothing as compared to the rejoicing of seeing you on your return. But alas, I don't know what kind of substance your heart is made of . . . Your daughter is now at the age of betrothal and it is your responsibility to arrange her marriage . . .

Your Wife.

From Doc Hay's father, Taishan District, Guangdong, China.

To Doc Hay, John Day, Oregon.
May 28, 1903.

Take Notice, My Son:

You have been away for more than a decade. Men go abroad in order to earn money to support their families, but you have not sent us money or letters since then. Everyone at home is anxious and worried, even in their dreams. I am disturbed and confused. Are you intending to let us starve to death? If you had sent no money back because of your bad business then I would not blame you. But I have been told that your business is booming, and you have made much money. Why don't you send some back? Even if you don't think of your mother and me, you should think of your wife and son. But you think only of yourself and enjoy your life alone without considering us. This is not suitable for a man of high character.³

I remember what you had said when we were both in Gold Mountain. You

3. Ing Hay came from a poor family in Taishan District, Guangdong Province. He emigrated with his father to the state of Washington in 1883, leaving behind a wife, son, and daughter. Trained

said, "Let the old go back home and rest. Let the young seek fortune abroad." You were exactly right when you made that remark. I have been back and you have sent no money.⁴ Prices are sky-rocketing here, everything is expensive. I don't have any income, since I am unemployed. The small amount of money which I had brought back from Gold Mountain is gone. I am planning to borrow but there is no door to knock on. We are in a desperate situation. We cannot get along any more. My grandson—your son—is growing up and needs schooling. The tuition fee is much more than living expenses. Your mother is approaching the age of sixty. Her birthday is in August. Of course you know the date. Are you going to express what a son should for his mother on that day?

Send some money immediately to meet the urgent need at home. Come back whenever you can get a little fortune so that would bring about your family's reunion.

Your Father, Ing Du-hsieh.

SOURCE: Chia-lin Chen, "A Gold Dream in the Blue Mountains: A Study of the Chinese Immigrants in the John Day Area, Oregon, 1870-1910," Master's thesis, Portland State University, 1972, pp. 141-68.

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in traditional Chinese medicine, he became a well-known herbal doctor in John Day, where he settled, died, and was buried in 1952. It is unclear why he chose to neglect his family in China.

4. Doc Hay's father returned to China in 1887.

PART TWO

Life Under Exclusion, 1904-1943

The exclusion years were marked by racial and class strife in the larger society as well as social and political upheavals within the Chinese community. Conditions for the Chinese did not improve until World War II, when China and the United States became allies and Chinese Americans were encouraged to participate in an all-American effort to defend democracy and defeat fascism. Until then, the exclusion acts remained in force, and Chinese in the United States had to endure not only the legal limitations set by discriminatory legislation but also racial prejudice as a daily fact of life. As Chinese immigrants found loopholes in the exclusionary laws by which they could enter the country, efforts were made to enforce the exclusion laws more stringently at the ports of entry and to pass further restrictive immigration laws that barred Chinese wives from joining their husbands in America. Chinese immigration reached its lowest point when only ten persons were admitted in 1887. As one Chinese immigrant remarked in 1904, when Congress extended the Chinese Exclusion Act indefinitely, "They call it exclusion, but it is not exclusion, it is extermination."¹

The Chinese, however, refused to be driven away or become passive victims of racial discrimination. As political and economic conditions in China remained unstable throughout the first half of the twentieth century, some Chinese circumvented the restrictive immigration policies by smuggling themselves across the borders or coming posed as wives or children of U.S. citizens and merchants, who were legally allowed to enter the country. As a result, families began to develop and a small native-born population slowly took root. On the eve of World War II, the Chinese population climbed mod-

1. Chan Kiu Sing, cited in Mary Roberts Coolidge, *Chinese Immigration* (New York: Henry Holt, 1909), p. 302.

estly to 77,504, while the male-female ratio decreased from a high of 27:1 in 1890 to 2.9:1 in 1940. A so-called second generation of Chinese Americans finally emerged, and when combined with the growing numbers of those claiming derivative citizenship, their total population outnumbered the foreign-born population in 1940.

In the mainland and in Hawaii as well, the Chinese principally lived in urban areas where they concentrated in noncompetitive fields, working in ethnic enterprises in Chinatown, domestic service, or operating small laundries, restaurants, and grocery stores. Some men found seasonal employment in agriculture or in canneries, while many women worked in garment factories and food-processing plants. Others moved to the Midwest or the South, where they established small businesses in out-of-the-way places, often serving as the "middleman minority" between the white and black communities. Chinese restaurants that offered such Chinese American dishes as chop suey, chow mein, and fortune cookies could be found in almost every state. A few Chinese entrepreneurs tried their hands at manufacturing, food processing, shipping, and banking, but most of these ventures failed due to insufficient capital, managerial inexperience, and racial discrimination. Although many Chinese in Hawaii became skilled workers, office and retail employees, and professionals before World War II, these same opportunities would not open up for Chinese on the mainland until after the war. In essence, formal segregation and informal discrimination kept the Chinese in marginal areas of the American economy and society.

Those with families here had an economic advantage, since the family could live on the business premises and family members worked without wages, so that overhead remained low. Family and work life was thus closely integrated and marked by strict discipline, long hours of toil, constant frugality, and collective effort. However, compared to the nineteenth century, marital relationships were more interdependent as wives not only bore the responsibilities of running the household, raising the children, and maintaining Chinese cultural practices but also worked alongside their husbands to provide for their families.

Out of a strong sense of familial obligation and Chinese nationalism, many Chinese immigrants continued to keep close economic and political ties to their homeland. They were aware that the racial oppression and humiliation they suffered in America were due in part to China's weak international status and inability to protect its citizens abroad; thus, they focused their political attention and energies on helping China become a stronger and more modern country, even as they worked to change their unfavorable image and treatment in America. Sizable amounts of money were sent to China to support family and relatives, business enterprises, and educational institutions. On the question of how to liberate China from foreign domination, the overseas Chinese were divided in their support of the Zhigongtang, which favored

restoring the Ming emperor; Kang Youwei's Baohuanghui, which advocated a constitutional monarchy; and Sun Yat-sen's Tongmenghui, which finally succeeded in overthrowing the Qing dynasty and establishing a democratic republic in 1911. They were united, however, in their support of China's War of Resistance against Japan from 1931 to 1945, contributing more than \$25 million toward Chinese war bonds and refugee relief.

In retrospect, the exclusion years constituted a period of isolation, economic and political strife, and social transformation in the Chinese community. Discrimination remained virulent on the Pacific Coast, and the Chinese were kept out of the professions and trades, segregated in schools and theaters, refused service in public places, and prohibited from buying land, living in white neighborhoods, and sending for their wives from China. Within the community, merchant associations, trade guilds, and tongs fought over control of the distribution and commercial use of limited space and economic resources, while political factions disagreed over the political future of China. In an effort to establish social order, nurture business, and protect family life, merchants and social reformers established new institutions, including Chinese schools, churches, hospitals, and newspapers, as well as Western-style organizations like the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, Chinese-American Citizens' Alliance (CACA), and the Chinese YMCA and YWCA. They also worked closely with Protestant missionary workers and law enforcers to eradicate prostitution and opium dens, stop the bloody tong wars, educate women and children, and improve the public image of their community.

Although unwelcomed and targeted by the American labor movement earlier, Chinese workers were encouraged to participate in boycotts and strikes in the 1920s and 1930s, earning the right to become members of major unions, such as the National Maritime Union and International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union. In New York City laundry workers organized the Chinese Hand Laundry Alliance and were successful in opposing a local ordinance that discriminated against Chinese laundries. Chinese garment workers in San Francisco stayed on strike for 105 days until they won a better union contract from Joe Shoong's National Dollar Stores. In the political arena, CACA, representing the interests of the second generation, spoke up at congressional hearings and succeeded in protecting the right of Chinese merchants and U.S. citizens to bring their wives into the country, as well as the right of American-born Chinese women to marry Chinese aliens without losing their U.S. citizenship.

Coming of age in the 1920s and 1930s, many second-generation Chinese Americans experienced cultural conflicts in attempting to follow both Chinese and American values and customs. Despite their ability to speak English, their high educational attainment, and their Western outlook, they found themselves confined to living in segregated quarters, working at low-paying jobs, and excluded from participation in mainstream society. Most Chinese

Americans accommodated discrimination by creating their own bicultural identity and lifestyle. At home they continued to speak Chinese and observe Chinese customs, but in their social life outside, they were no different from other Americans in going to the movies, attending parties and picnics, and participating in sports and club activities, albeit in a segregated setting. To circumvent job discrimination, they resorted to working in Chinese-owned businesses or setting up professional practices in Chinatown communities. Encouraged by their parents and by political developments in China, some opted to go to China for better job opportunities and to put their talents to better use in the service of their ancestral homeland. With the advent of war in China, however, most were forced to return to the United States.

World War II proved to be a major turning point for Chinese Americans, providing them with unprecedented opportunities to improve their socioeconomic and political status and become full participants in an all-American war effort. Because of China's allied relationship with the United States, American attitudes toward the Chinese turned favorable. Touted as loyal sons and daughters of Uncle Sam by the mass media, over 12,000 Chinese Americans served in the armed forces, thousands more worked in the shipyards and defense industries, and Chinese women throughout the country did their part on the home front—fundraising, pushing war bonds, and volunteering for Red Cross, USO, and civil defense duties. With the labor shortage, Chinese Americans were able to find jobs for the first time in private companies, civil service, and professional fields outside Chinatowns. In contrast, after Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, Japanese Americans were regarded as "enemy aliens," stripped of their civil rights, and herded into concentration camps, where many remained for the duration of the war. Then, in December 1943, as a goodwill gesture to China and to counter Japanese propaganda in Asia, Congress repealed the Chinese Exclusion Act and assigned the Chinese an annual quota of 105. With repeal came the right for Chinese to become naturalized U.S. citizens. The exclusion era had finally come to an end.

As the Chinese population in the United States became more established, immigrants and the second generation began speaking up for themselves and their community. Many of the documents in this section address issues of racial discrimination and exclusion: Ng Poon Chew and an anonymous Angel Island poet speaking out against the mistreatment of Chinese immigrants; CACA appearing before Congress to argue against a clause in the Immigration Act of 1924 that kept Chinese couples and families apart; the Chinese Hand Laundry Alliance in New York Chinatown declaring war on a local ordinance that unfairly discriminated against Chinese laundries; and political activist Happy Lim extolling revolutionary struggle on behalf of the working class. Joining them are the political voices of Chinese seeking to help develop or defend their homeland: Chin Gee Hee asking for donations to help build a railroad in Taishan; the Chinese Women's Association in New York

drumming up support for the war effort in China; and Lim P. Lee reporting on a community picket at the San Francisco waterfront to protest the shipping of scrap metals to Japan in 1938. Especially heartwarming is Liu Liangmo's story of how he got singer and actor Paul Robeson to introduce the Chinese war song "March of the Volunteers" to the American public.

Unlike Part I on the nineteenth century, here there is no scarcity of voices to describe the work, family, and social lives of Chinese Americans during the exclusion period. Included in this section are the firsthand accounts of two Chinese immigrants who came to the United States in the 1920s: Gong Yuen Tim, who became a successful produce grower in central California, and Helen Hong Wong, who worked alongside her husband in his restaurant and laundry businesses in the Midwest. In addition to their stories, we have an interview with Anna May Wong at the height of her career as an actress; the observations of social worker Pardee Lowe on the aspirations and lifestyles of the second generation; and the unusual experiences of PFC Eddie Fung, the only Chinese American to be captured by the Japanese in World War II. We end this section with journalist Gilbert Woo's sarcastic commentary about the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act, which many considered a major turning point in Chinese American history.

The Treatment of the Exempt Classes of Chinese in the U.S. (1908)

Ng Poon Chew

In 1904 the Chinese Exclusion Act was extended indefinitely; but white labor, business groups, and political demagogues were still not satisfied. As they clamored for more stringent enforcement at the ports of entry, certain classes that had been exempt from exclusion by treaty, namely, officials, teachers, students, merchants, and travelers, fell victim to harsh treatment at the hands of zealous immigration officials. Chinese reaction to this abuse led to the 1905 boycott of American goods in China. A noted Chinese leader and eloquent speaker, Ng Poon Chew, was sent by the Chinese Six Companies on a speaking tour to explain the situation to Americans. Part of his efforts was the publication of the following pamphlet on the unfair treatment of the exempt classes.

A native of Taishan District in Guangdong Province, Ng Poon Chew immigrated to Gold Mountain in 1881 with high hopes of making his fortune. Instead, he converted to Christianity while studying English at a Presbyterian mission in San Jose, California, going on to graduate from the San Francisco Theological Seminary and become an ordained minister in 1892. In 1900, he started the Chung Sai Yat Po daily newspaper.

A popular lecturer on the Chautauqua and Lyceum circuits, Ng Poon Chew was one of the few educated Chinese Americans who could speak out effectively against anti-Chinese legislation and discriminatory practices. Well versed in law and politics, he quoted liberally from leading politicians, including President Theodore Roosevelt, on the discriminatory nature of the Exclusion Act, and argued that its enforcement broke treaty provisions, damaged relations between the United States and China, and caused undue hardships on the exempt classes. Although Ng did not go as far as to demand repeal of the exclusion laws, he did argue persuasively for upholding treaty obligations and putting a stop to the harassment of Chinese immigrants at U.S. borders.



Ng Poon Chew,
1911. (Courtesy of
Philip P. Choy)

After a quarter of a century of Chinese Exclusion, many people take it for granted that Exclusion has become a fixed policy of the Government of the United States, and that the vexed Chinese question is finally and permanently settled, as far as this country is concerned. The exclusion of Chinese laborers may have become a fixed policy with the United States, but the treatment of the exempt classes is not settled and will not be until it is settled aright with justice to all.

The Chinese Exclusion Law, as now enacted and enforced, is in violation of the letter and spirit of the treaty between this country and China, and also in opposition to the original intention of Congress on the subject. As long as this law remains on the statute books in its present shape, and is carried out by methods such as are now in vogue, the Chinese question will continue to be a vexatious one in the United States, as well as a fruitful source of irritation between America and China; and it will continue to hinder the upbuilding of commercial interests between the two great countries.

During twenty-five years the Chinese exclusion policy has steadily increased in stringency; as Senator [George] Hoar said on the floor of Congress, the United States enforced the exclusion laws first with water, then

with vinegar, and then with red pepper, and at last with vitriol. The Exclusion Law has been carried out with such vigor that it has almost become an extermination law. The Chinese population in the United States has been reduced from 150,000 in 1880 to 65,000 at the present time.¹ During these twenty-five years much injustice and wrong have been heaped upon the Chinese people by the United States in the execution of its exclusion policy, and now it is time that this great nation should calmly review the whole question thoroughly and revise the law, so that it may come within the spirit of the treaty, and at the same time fulfill the original intention of Congress, namely: the exclusion of Chinese laborers, and the admission of all other classes. . . .

In the year 1880 China and the United States signed a treaty² by which China agreed to the suspension or limitation for a reasonable period of the emigration to this country of Chinese laborers, both skilled and unskilled; and the United States agreed that all other classes of Chinese should come and go as freely as the subjects of the most favored nation. Article I of the treaty reads as follows:

Whenever in the opinion of the Government of the United States the coming of Chinese laborers to the United States, or their residence therein, affects or threatens to affect the interests of that country, or to endanger the good order of the said country or of any locality within the territory thereof, the Government of China agrees that the Government of the United States may regulate, limit or suspend such coming or residence, but may not absolutely prohibit it. The limitation or suspension shall be reasonable, and shall apply only to Chinese who may go to the United States as laborers, other classes not being included in the limitation. Legislation taken in regard to Chinese laborers will be of such a character only as is necessary to enforce the regulation, limitation or suspension of immigration, and immigrants shall not be subject to personal maltreatment or abuse.

And Article II reads as follows:

Chinese subjects, whether proceeding to the United States as teachers, students, merchants or from curiosity, together with their body and household servants, and Chinese laborers who are now in the United States, shall be allowed to go and come of their own free will and accord, and shall be accorded all the rights and privileges, immunities and exemptions which are accorded to the citizens and subjects of the most favored nation.

1. According to the U.S. census, there were 105,465 Chinese in 1880, 107,488 in 1890, 89,863 in 1900, and 71,531 in 1910.

2. This is in reference to [James] Angell's Treaty of 1880, which marked the end of free migration guaranteed by the Burlingame Treaty of 1868 by giving the United States the exclusive right to regulate Chinese immigration. Soon after, Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.

This treaty is still in force, and yet only a very limited number of Chinese other than laborers are now admitted, and by no means as freely as even the laborers of other nationalities.

The unwarranted limitation of the exempt classes of the Chinese—who have a right to come under both treaties and laws—to a few persons of a very few occupations, has come about chiefly through political agitation to secure the votes of workingmen, and by the strong anti-Chinese prejudice of immigration officers, who were themselves often representatives of labor organizations. All Chinese, except laborers, had a right to come and go freely under the treaty and even under the first restriction law of 1882, and this was acknowledged by both nations for eighteen years, although immigration officials, in some instances, enlarged the definition of laborers as so to include persons not technically of that class.

But in 1898 the Attorney General of the United States decided that the true theory of the law was not that all Chinese who were not laborers could come in, but that only those could come who were expressly named in the law. If this were correct, the law itself was a violation of the treaty; but, in fact, this ruling violated the clear and originally accepted meaning of the treaty and of the laws passed in execution of it. The American immigration officials, however, made it a pretext for excluding all the Chinese they could, even of the five classes named in the treaty. It appeared to be their ambition to deny all Chinese admission, and any one admitted was regarded as a lost case. The phrase "officials, teachers, students, merchants and travelers for curiosity or pleasure," was used in the treaty merely by way of illustration and before 1898 had been generally so interpreted, but the Attorney General's decision gave opportunity for limiting even these classes still further.

From this time on the exempt classes of Chinese were limited by enlarging the definition of laborers to include many who were not laborers, and by narrowing the definitions of teacher, student and merchant so as to exclude many who were certainly of these classes. For instance, it was declared that a teacher was one who teaches the higher branches in a recognized institution of learning; a student was one who pursues the higher branches in a recognized institution of learning, facilities for which are wanting in his own country or in the country from which he came; a merchant was one who carried on business in a fixed place, in buying and selling, in his own name. If a merchant, who does a million dollars worth of business a year, invests one dollar in a hotel or restaurant business or in a manufacturing concern, in a mining venture or railroad enterprise, his status as a merchant is at once vitiated, and he is denied admission, or deported if already admitted. As a result Chinese traders, salesmen, clerks, buyers, bookkeepers, bankers, accountants, managers, storekeepers, agents, cashiers, interpreters, physicians, proprietors of restaurants and laundries, employers, actors, newspaper editors, and even preachers and missionaries of Christianity, are excluded from

the shores of the United States. A Chinese by the name of Wah Sang was admitted to this country as a student in theology, and as long as he was a student he was allowed to remain in the country; but when he completed his course in theological training, and entered into active service in preaching the Gospel to his countrymen under the auspices of the Methodist Church, he was arrested in Texas as a laborer, was tried and ordered deported in February, 1905, the court sustaining the contention of the immigration officials that a preacher is a laborer, and therefore subject to the operation of the Exclusion Law.

This exclusion by regulation, not justified by treaties or laws, has been carried much further so as to harass and inconvenience Chinese merchants, students and others in many ways. The United States demands a certificate of admission, with many personal details, signed by officials of the Chinese Government and of the United States; but when the certificate has been secured in proper form and every requirement has been met, the holder is not sure of being able to enter the United States; for the immigration officials re-examine him and often detain and sometimes deport him on petty technicalities. For the practice with the immigration officials is to regard every Chinese applicant for admission as a cheat, a liar, a rogue and a criminal, and they proceed to examine him with the aim in mind of seeing how he may be excluded, rather than of finding out whether he is legally entitled to land. For many years the certificate has been no guarantee that its holder could be admitted, though he might be a great merchant or a student coming to study at an American university.

In 1904 there arrived at the port of San Francisco a Chinese gentleman from the Straits Settlement,³ with the intention of taking up a post-graduate course at Columbia University, he being a graduate of one of the great American universities in the Eastern States, and having taught English in colleges in Shanghai and Singapore for several years; yet, on account of trifling technical defects in his papers, he was detained for a long time at the detention shed on the Mail docks in San Francisco,⁴ and finally deported.

Among the passengers on board the steamer *Ivernia*, which arrived at Boston on June 1st, 1905, from Liverpool, were four Chinese students, the three King brothers and their sister, Miss T. King, who had completed a three years' course in the University of London. These four students were of high official family in Shanghai, and they were on their way home, intending simply to land at Boston and cross to Canada to take the Canadian train for Vancouver. They were armed with passports signed by the American Ambassador,

3. The colonial name for Malacca, Penang, and Singapore under British rule.

4. Until the Angel Island Immigration Station opened in 1910, Chinese immigrants arriving at San Francisco were detained in a two-story shed at the Pacific Mail Steamship Company wharf to await inspection and clearance to land.

the Honorable Mr. Choate, who was their personal friend, certifying as to their status and intention, yet they were held on board while the very lowest and ignorant classes from southern Europe, that came in the steerage, were freely permitted to land. They would have been shipped back to England had not some local American merchants interested themselves in the case. After they were photographed and bond of five hundred dollars each given, they were permitted to land and cross to Canada. All these inconveniences and humiliation were accorded them, simply because the immigration officials at that port contended that they found some technical defect in their papers.

Furthermore, Chinese residents of the exempt classes are limited and harassed by official regulations in going to and from China, in bringing in their wives and children, and in many ways are treated as the subjects of other nations are never treated by the United States. Ladies of highly respectable families have been asked all sorts of questions in the examinations by the immigration officials which they would not dare to mention in the hearing of American ladies.⁵ A boy of ten years of age, whose father was a prominent merchant, arrived in San Francisco with his parents. After a long investigation the parents were admitted and the boy ordered deported on the ground that he had *trachoma*,⁶ although the American officers at the port of departure had given them a health certificate and although Americans on board the vessel testified that the ship's doctor had examined the eyes of all the second cabin passengers without disinfecting his hands. The Secretary of Commerce and Labor refused to reverse the decision of deportation. There have been a number of instances where Chinese merchants returning from a trip to China with their wives and families have been allowed to land but have had their wives and children deported.

For years the *Bertillon System*, used for the identification of criminals in the United States, has also been used to identify departing Chinese of all classes who wished to return.⁷ The system has only been abandoned during the last few months because the Department at Washington failed to supply the different Bureaus with sufficient men to operate it.

Although the Geary Law of 1893 [1892], which required resident Chinese laborers to obtain a certificate of residence and to be photographed, did not require the exempt classes nor their wives and children to obtain a

5. Because Chinese prostitution was still rampant in San Francisco at the time, immigration officials commonly treated each Chinese woman seeking admission as a potential prostitute.

6. Beginning in 1903, trachoma or conjunctivitis in the eye was considered dangerously contagious and grounds for denying admission.

7. Originally invented by French scientist Alphonse Bertillon in the 1880s, the Bertillon System relied on detailed measurements of different parts of the body to determine the age of a person. It was mainly applied to Chinese returning from a visit abroad.

certificate, the regulations of the immigration bureau require officials to arrest every Chinese found without a certificate. Consequently any Chinese merchant, student or physician who was in this country at the time of registration and did not get a certificate is now liable to arrest and imprisonment.⁸

Under these regulations many of the exempt classes have been held up in various ways, at many places and times, by the immigration officials in their zeal to enforce the Chinese Exclusion Laws. The exempt classes, thus arrested, are put to great expense and inconvenience before they are released by United States Commissioners. Once an attache of the Chinese Legation at Washington was held up while traveling through Arizona on official business, and put to much inconvenience and indignity before he was released by order of the Department at Washington. In order to find some who might be without certificates, the whole Chinese quarter in Denver and in Boston was surrounded, and all Chinese found without certificates, whether merchants or not, were arrested and herded in close confinement, until their status was decided by the court.⁹

In 1904 the United States sent a special minister to China to invite the Provinces to make exhibits at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, and promised their representatives a most cordial welcome. The Viceroys of the Provinces issued proclamations and many exhibits were prepared, but when the merchants and their employees arrived they were treated by the immigration officials as if they were laborers attempting to enter the country unlawfully. Some of them were so much offended that they returned at once to China; others decided not to set out from China; and those who reached St. Louis were treated throughout the Exposition like suspected criminals.

In that year there arrived at the port of San Francisco four Chinese gentlemen from Shanghai, three of whom were exhibitors at the St. Louis Fair, and the other a delegate from the Synod of China to attend the Presbyterian General Assembly at Buffalo, N.Y. Their papers were submitted to the American Consul in Shanghai, who passed upon them as being properly made out, and the gentlemen were assured that they would meet with no difficulties when they arrived in San Francisco. But they were denied landing by the immigration officials on the ground that their papers did not state the length of time the applicants had held their respective professions before they started for America. They were held at the detention shed, while strenuous efforts were made by their friends, both white and Chinese, who

8. The Geary Act of 1892 extended the Chinese Exclusion Act for ten years and required all Chinese laborers to carry a certificate of residence or be subjected to deportation.

9. During the early 1900s, police and immigration officials routinely raided Chinatowns in various cities and jailed offenders without warrant. One of the best-known raids occurred in Boston in 1903. Of the 234 Chinese arrested, 45 were deported.

appealed to the Department at Washington and to the Chinese Legation; orders were finally received by the immigration officials in San Francisco to land these men on bonds. After incurring an expense of more than one hundred and fifty dollars in perfecting their bonds, they were permitted to leave the shed and go on their way "rejoicing" and breathing the "sweet air of liberty." This was the treatment they received when they accepted America's invitation to participate in the World's Fair. . . .

It is well known that the discourteous treatment of merchants and students by immigration officials was the principal cause of the boycott of American products in China in 1905. Although this boycott was shortly suppressed by the Chinese Government, it was an expression of the bad feeling which had arisen between the two countries because of violation of the treaty and had accumulated sense of injustice.¹⁰ Thirty years ago there were nearly 200 Chinese students in the United States pursuing their education; when they returned to China they became leaders of the people and reported that the Americans were a friendly and honorable nation. But since the passage of the Geary law especially, students of all grades except post-graduate have been excluded. They go to other countries, and when they return to China do not speak favorably of the United States; and those who have received indignities in America have also returned home full of resentment, and urge their countrymen to resist the violation of the treaty. . . .

Chinese laborers of all classes have been excluded from the United States by mutual agreement, and the Chinese themselves are not now asking for any change in this arrangement; but they do ask for as fair treatment as other nationalities receive in relation to the exempt classes. Since the first restriction law was passed the United States has received as immigrants more than two million Austro-Hungarians, two million Italians and a million and a half Russians and Finns. Each of these totals is from five to seven times the whole amount of Chinese immigration of all classes during thirty years of free immigration, seventy times the amount of immigration of the Chinese who were not laborers. Even if the number of the exempts under a just interpretation of the treaty should rise to 10,000 in one year, it would still be less than one one-hundredth of the total immigration to the United States in one year. During the fiscal year 1907 there came to the United States from Europe 1,280,000 immigrants; whereas, during the thirty years of free Chinese im-

10. In the summer of 1905, at the urging of overseas Chinese, tens of thousands of people in more than twenty cities and towns in China launched a boycott against American goods to protest the abusive enforcement of the Chinese Exclusion Act. Ng Poon Chew took a strong stand in support of the boycott and did his part to help fundraise among the Chinese in America. Although the boycott was suppressed by the Qing government in 1906, it did succeed in decreasing the volume of American exports to China and influencing President Theodore Roosevelt to issue an executive order to put a stop to the Chinese immigration abuses.

migration, the largest number of Chinese found at any one time in the United States was one hundred and fifty thousand.

The question is not now of the admission of laborers, but whether other Chinese who are entitled to come under both law and treaty shall receive the same courtesies as people of other nations, and shall be relieved from many harassing regulations. They must no longer be detained, photographed and examined as if they were suspected of crime. Americans desire to build up a large trade with the Orient, but they can scarcely expect to succeed if the United States Government continues to sanction the illegal and unfriendly treatment of Chinese subjects. President Roosevelt has said that if the United States expects justice it must do justice to the Chinese, and certainly the Americans cannot expect to obtain the trade of the Orient by treating the Chinese with discourtesy. . . .

SOURCE: Ng Poon Chew, "The Treatment of the Exempt Classes of Chinese in the United States: A Statement from the Chinese in America," pamphlet, San Francisco, *Chung Sai Yat Po*, 1908.

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