

Where are all of the Women?

# ASIAN AMERICAN IMMIGRATION

# Overview

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- II. Chinese Immigration
- III. Japanese Immigration
- IV. Filipino/Indian/Korean
- V. Where are all of the women?

# General Immigration Context

- ⦿ Everyone except for American Indians, African Americans and some Latinos came to U.S. as “*voluntary*” immigrants
- ⦿ Involuntary Immigration
  - Slavery
- ⦿ United States’ “proud” immigrant history only specifies those who come from Western Europe.
- ⦿ The United States is a nation built by immigrants from many non-Western countries, including: Eastern Europe, Africa, South America, East Asia, and Southeast Asia.

# Why People Migrate

## ⦿ Voluntary Immigration

- Push Factors: Pushing out of current location
  - Political or Religious persecution
  - Refugees
  - War
  - Economic
  - Environmental
- Pull Factors: Pulling toward new location
  - Work
  - Family
  - Education
  - Quality of Life

# Chinese Immigration Experience

- ◎ Chinese immigration begins mid 1800s
  - First to Hawaii, then to California (mostly San Francisco)
- ◎ Pull Factors:
  - Cheap labor and docile work force:
  - Hopes for economic opportunities:
    - 1860s, in China a man might earn \$3-5/month  
United States, he could make \$30/month working for the railroad companies.
- ◎ Push factors:
  - Many were escaping intense conflict in China:
    - British Opium Wars (1839-42 and 1856-60)
    - Peasant rebellions (i.e. Red Turban Rebellion, 1854-64)

# Life in the United States

## ⦿ Work

- Gold Rush – “Gam Saan” (Gold Mountain)
  - 1850 - 4,000 Chinese in U.S.
  - 1852- 11,794 in CA (7 Women); 20,000+
  - 1898 citizenship for American-born Chinese
- Field workers: Agriculture
- “Unskilled” workers
- Railroad Workers
  - 10,000 Chinese help finish the 1st Transcontinental Railroad for Pacific Railroad (90%)
  - Work was difficult and dangerous
  - Decent pay \$30/month







# Chinese Women's Experience

- Fewer than 1,000 women entered the U.S. during initial immigration
- Most Chinese women that immigrated to United States were *enslaved* prostitutes
- Wives of Chinese laborers and merchants
- Arraigned marriages
- Women were expected to maintain “traditional roles”/customs

# Cultural Traditions

- ⦿ Chinese kept their cultural traditions
  - Clothing
  - Food
  - Religion
  - Chinatowns (forced)
- ⦿ Role of Women
  - Very traditional gender roles
  - Family life (gendered hierarchy)
  - Stayed at home: for protection

# Japanese Immigration Experience

- ◎ Japanese first came to Hawaii and the U.S. starting in the 1880s.
- ◎ Between 1885 and 1924, over 200,000 Japanese arrive in Hawaii.
- ◎ By 1920, Japanese represent 40% of entire population of Hawaii.
- ◎ Push factors:
  - Farmers over taxed by Japanese government
    - During the 1880s, over 300,000 farmers lost their land because they couldn't pay the new tax.
    - Economic hardship
- ◎ Pull factors:
  - Economic opportunities:
    - Higher wages - \$1/day (2 yen) vs. .66 yen/day (carpenter)

# Japanese Women's Experience

- ◎ Picture Brides (“photo marriage”)
  - Japanese government (and plantation owners) encourage immigration of women to raise the moral behavior of Japanese men in the U.S.
  - Picture Brides are based on the established custom of arranged marriages
  - 60,000 enter the U.S. as picture brides.
  - By 1920s, women represent 46% of Japanese population in Hawaii.

# Japanese women, 1925







# The Korean Experience

- ◎ By 1888 a small number of Koreans were in America (ginseng merchants, political exiles, and migrant laborers)
- ◎ Unlike Chinese and Japanese, Koreans came from all different social classes
  - Including farmers, common laborers, government clerks, students, policemen, miners, domestic servants and even Buddhist monks (most were from urban areas).



## ◎ Pull factors:

- Like the Japanese and Chinese, Koreans were drawn by the possibility for economic gain.
- Plantation owners wanted to pit Koreans against an increasingly organizing Japanese labor force (strike breakers).

## ◎ Push factors:

- Economic poverty in Korea
- Political motivations
  - Japan colonizes Korea in 1910.
  - Many Koreans came to the U.S. to flee Japanese persecution.
  - Trying to find a way to fight for Korean independence from Japanese colonial rule.

# Korean Women's Experience

- ◎ Early Korean migration already included women
  - Nearly 10% of immigrants between 1903-1906 were women.
  - Many took their wives and children because they were afraid they would not be able to return to a Korea that was ruled by Japan.
  - Picture Brides:
    - Some Korean women migrated as picture brides

# Asian Immigration History: the Japanese Experience

- ◉ Discrimination against Japanese entry into America
  - 1906: Law segregates whites and asians in schools (modeled on “Jim Crow” laws)
  - 1913: denial of right to own land to persons “ineligible for citizenship” (aimed at Japanese farmers)
  - 1924: Immigration Act denies entry to virtually all Asians

# Asian Immigration History: the Chinese Experience



- ⦿ Some white laborers were racist and committed violent acts against Chinese laborers.
- ⦿ Because of the pressures of European laborers, the United States enacted the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882.
  - Severely limited the number of immigrants from China
  - From 1910-1940, Angel Island was used to detain those who were trying to come the U.S. from China.
  - Discrimination Against Koreans
    - Many Koreans faced the same discrimination that all Asian immigrants faced
    - But after 1910, Koreans were technically “citizens of the Imperial Government of Japan” and were discriminated as a Japanese.

# Filipinos & Indians

- ⊙ Spanish- American War, 1898
  - Philippines becomes U.S Territory
- ⊙ Immigration
  - as U.S. territory, Filipinos are allowed to travel freely within the U.S.; no citizenship
  - Hawaii (men, students, sugar)
  - west coast (Stockton, farm workers)
- ⊙ Immigration from India
  - Short lived
  - Mostly male
  - Sikhs
- ⊙ Both Filipinos and Indians used for Cheap Labor
  - Lumber industry
  - Railroads
  - Farm/ field workers (Hawaii, Central CA)

# Where are all of the Women?

- ⊙ Most Asian immigration happens along West Coast
- ⊙ Asian immigration took place without much participation from women.
- ⊙ Those women who did come were relegated to a subordinate “traditional” roles
- ⊙ No citizenship is granted- 1870 Naturalization Law
- ⊙ Asians were seen as outsiders, cheap labor