Where are all of the Women?

ASIAN AMERICAN IMMIGRATION
Overview

I. General Immigration Context
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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
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

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- 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