

7 Ways that Studying US History 1877 to Modern Times History Shapes the Way You Think about the Treatment of Immigrants

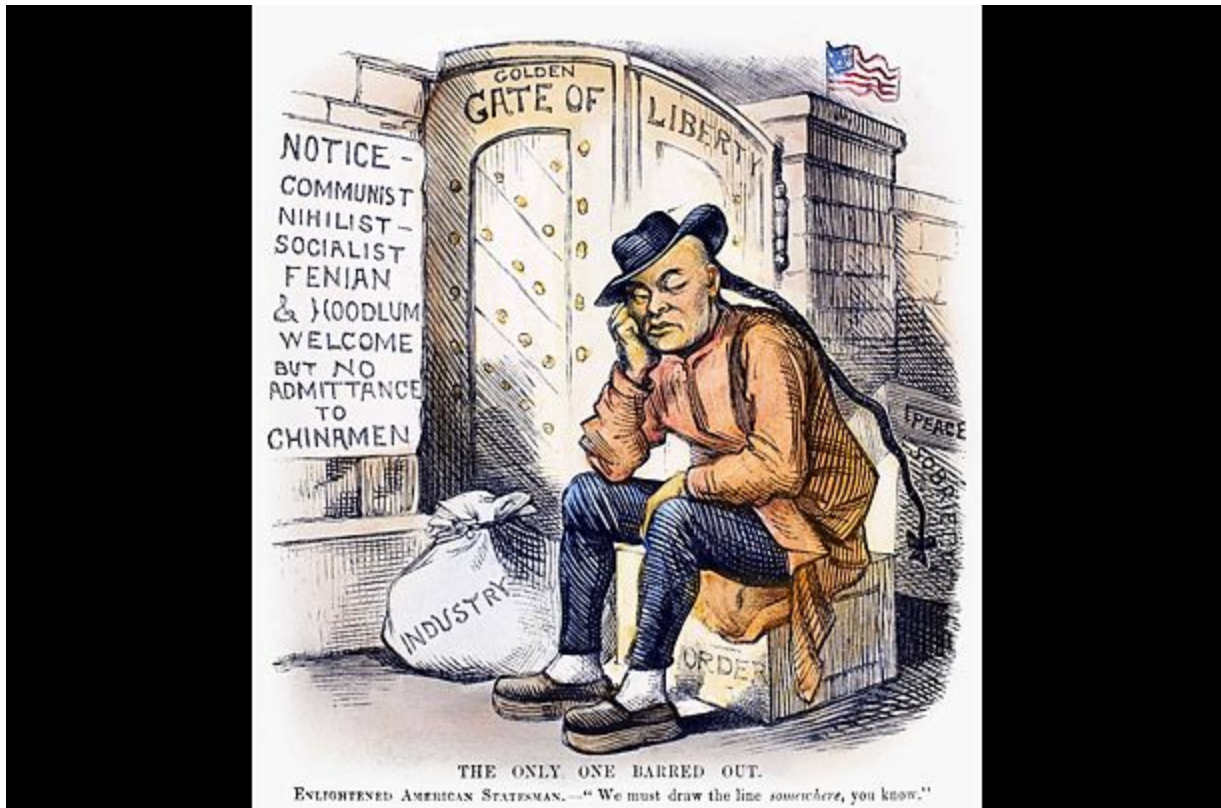
“What your elementary school history teacher didn’t tell you.”



Brooke Dippold, BuzzFeed News Reporter

1. Chinese Immigrants were Excluded from the Country

a. Week 3: A Melting Pot? January 28 - February 1, 2019



[Time Magazine: "The Only One Barred Out"](#)

America is commonly referred to as a melting pot, a welcoming environment for people of many cultures to seek opportunities greater than what was available in their home country. That was not the case for Chinese immigrants coming to the West Coast in search of better employment opportunities during an economic depression in China. They came to work in mines and on railroads for low wages. The Chinese began carrying these American industries on their backs, and in return Americans accused them of stealing American jobs ([Immigration, January 30, 2019](#)). This began the anti-Chinese sentiment that escalated into the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 ([Crash Course #25: Growth, Cities, and Immigration](#)). In [Chew, *Life of a Chinese Immigrant* \(1903\)](#), Chew describes how hard it was for Chinese men working in the United States to bring his wife and family to America. The bureaucratic and proof loopholes were so extreme “the Chinese Ambassador’s family had trouble getting in lately.” The National government took exclusion one step further in 1924 with the National Origins Act ([Immigration, January 30, 2019](#)). The National Origins Act used numbers based on old census data to determine the number of immigrants that were allowed to enter the United States to keep the population proportions equal to what they already were. Since Chinese people were not welcome in the United States at the time of the selected census, their immigration quota was extremely low. The quotas favored Western European immigrants that were very similar in appearance to lawmakers at the time.

As seen in the above image, a Chinese man, whose belongings are labeled “industry” is being locked out of the United States. The sign on the left welcomes, all other people including criminals and people who think there is no meaning to life and thus make choices with no regard to a moral code. The people on this list have the potential to bring great detriment to the nation and the renowned democratic principles that the United States is known for, but the Chinese man that works hard to build America’s infrastructure and therefore economy, is not welcome. This picture shows clearly that the only reason Chinese immigrants were being excluded from the country are racial prejudices. Racial prejudices and exclusion are not practices of a nation that is welcoming and accepting of all immigrants like the United States claims to be at this time.

2. Immigrants Came Seeking Better Lives and Ended up Working in Deplorable Conditions Instead

a. Week 4: Freedom at Home and Abroad? February 4 - 8, 2019



[The Orange County Register: Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire](#)

America's industrialization can be seen as one of necessity. The Western European nations that once had America as a colonial stronghold were industrialized. America was vast and separated from them and the rapid spread of technology by the Atlantic Ocean. Their need to industrialize quickly to keep pace with the rest of the world led to some sloppy consequences. American business tycoons that made their names in the Gilded Age built their empires rapidly without a concern for the people it took down in the process. The immigrants employed in these business, that actually made the products were not well cared for. They were treated like machines, to produce, produce, produce. The conditions created in this mindset were not safe or regulated by anyone. Women and children often worked at these factories because they could be paid less and children could fit into small spaces in the machines (Rodgers, *American Progressivism in the Wider Atlantic World*).

This led to catastrophic accidents that were completely preventable. The women working in the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory that caught fire on March 25, 1911, went on strike in 1909 for better conditions, wages, and increased fire safety precautions. When the fire broke out, conditions were still not up to code and 146 mostly immigrant women were trapped inside (Newman et al., *Conditions at the Triangle Shirtwaist Company, 1911*). It took 146 deaths for lawmakers, Robert F. Wagner Sr. and Al Smith to spearhead a four year investigation into factory conditions to pass laws that protect women and children and increase factory sanitary and safety conditions (*Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire 1911*).

As shown in the image above, the girls all shoved into the same room with very little space between them. The women in the back of the picture on the right seven people in on the bench are so close to each other their heads overlap. For someone that thinks the average office cubicle is small, the space these women were given is substantially less. All while the men in the back bark orders and ensure productivity at all times. With that kind of pressure and hordes of flammable materials all around, accidents are bound to happen. There are countless women in this room some extremely far away from the fire exits. It's unfathomable that all of these women would be able to flee the building at the exact same time and make it out unharmed. These conditions, including things that are not visible in the image like exhaustion from long hours and not making a livable wage, are not things immigrants came to America to embrace. This was the reality they had to face. They were not living their American Dream because the tycoons that owned the company were living their American Dream because of the work of immigrants.

3. Immigrant Women were Discriminated Against on Account of Race, by other Women

a. **Week 5: Social Freedom? February 11 - 15, 2019**



[Library of Congress: Collection "Votes for Women"](#)

The Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution granted the right to vote to all men regardless of race or previous servitude. While discriminatory practices prevented minority men's full participation, they technically had more political rights than women. In some western states, women were given the right to vote before it was formally added to the constitution. This wasn't because they were more "progressive." They wanted white women to be able to counteract the votes of minority races so white people could still have political control. The population was so small the minority population had a greater chance of impacting the vote. White Americans feared they would lose their strong hold in government if immigrants and other minorities had a fair vote. The change of women's roles politically in the United States led

to increased individuality and more social equality between men and women of the same race. It was becoming increasingly normal for married men and women to be friends with each other (Sanger, *Happiness in Marriage* 1926). Voting rights for women decreased the separation of people in the same race, but socioeconomic differences did not allow immigrant and minority women the same consequence. In some regards it was a step back, all women did not have to band together to achieve a common goal. White women continued to hold on to their belief that they were superior to minority women, because they got the right to vote all on their own.

All the women picketing the White House for their right to vote, in the above image, are middle class white women, who do not always believe that minorities should be able to demonstrate with them (Women's Suffrage, February 13, 2019). The Suffragists above actively excluded prominent minority women from participation in their demonstrations such as picketing because they feared their credibility would be lost. If white men did not find their cause credible, then they were unlikely to receive the right they were fighting for because Congress and state legislatures were nearly entirely male if not all male. In *Iron Jawed Angels*, Alice Paul does not allow Ida B. Wells and her group of minority women to participate in their march on Washington because she thought prominent supporters of the amendment would back out if minorities were seen at the march.

4. Immigrants were Collected and Treated like Cattle During Wartime

a. Week 6: More Freedom at Home and Abroad? February 18- 22, 2019



[Time Magazine: Internment Camp](#)

At first glance, the image above looks like it is a World War II Era photo of Jewish people in Nazi Germany being shoved into cattle cars to be shipped like object to what Adolf Hitler hoped to be their demise. The saddest part of this image is that it is American soldiers, on American soil shuffling innocent people into trains to be transported to a “safe place” while the war in Europe raged on. Some of these people are American citizens with no current connections to their homeland of Japan. Did the soldiers even ensure that all these people were from Japan instead of other Asian nations? Were any of them ever found to be a legitimate threat to national security, or did it ease the white man’s fears?

In the days after the December 7, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor America lived in fear. Their happy “isolationist” state, that was sending weapons and monetary aid to Britain, had been ruined ([World War II, February 20, 2019](#)). They would have to join Europe in the Great War. This fear of being attacked on home soil caused racial tension and Americans blames Japanese immigrants, citizens or not, for the Japanese led attack. Franklin D. Roosevelt, issued Executive Order 9066 forcing all Japanese Americans to relocate especially from the west coast ([Crash Course #36 World War 2 Part 2: The Homefront](#)). Ordinary civilians were relocated because

they posed a threat to national security. Citizens of the United States were deemed threats to the safety of the United States based solely on their national origin.

In a newspaper run at an internment camp, there are reminders that “evacuees” are still subject to be drafted in the wars. Japanese Americans were not citizen enough to not be a threat to national security, but they were citizen enough to be drafted into a war. There is a letters from the public section where a Relocation Officer appeals to people to willingly relocate to Ohio by telling them the winters are not that bad, it’s basically California. By making Japanese Americans believe that moving away from their families and their homes was their choice, and inviting them to extend the offer to their friends, it removes the burden of the guilt from the government and white man (“Manzanar Free Press.” *The Library of Congress*, www.loc.gov/item/sn84025948).

5. Asian Americans were Assumed to Want to Assimilate and Reject Their Home Culture until They Started to Fight Back

a. Weeks 9 and 10: Free to be You and Me? and What are Women’s Rights?



[Nancy Wong, Wikimedia Commons, 1977](#)

During World War II, Asian Americans were unjustly thrown into internment camps. In the 1970's they started fighting for restitution and equality among men. The Japanese American Citizens League wished that the federal government pay for the damages they caused and the

unfair conviction of an entire race of people as national security threats with no probable cause. Asian Americans were denied their enumerated rights guaranteed by the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. They requested that Congress admit their wrong doing and apologize for the mistake and compensate every person that was put in an internment camp with \$25,000. This became known as the Redress Movement. Asian Americans gained the attention of the media at this time and used it to their advantage (Yoshino, William, and John Tateishi. "Redress Movement." *Japanese American Citizens League*, jacl.org/redress/).

In the late 1960's Asian Americans were known as the good immigrants. They wished to assimilate into mainstream American society undetected; they were leaving their entire culture behind to embrace the American way of life. White men loved that. They couldn't ask for anything better from an immigrant. Yuji Ichioka and Emma Gee founded the Asian American Political Alliance (AAPA) to dissolve the differences between Asian Americans and unite them to fight stereotypes like the one above together instead of as Chinese, Japanese, and Vietnamese people. In two years, forty grassroots organizations, four newspapers, and ten student and community conferences were created as resources and outlets for Asian Americans. The passive, submissive, assimilating Asian stereotype was being challenged ("Yellow Power: The Origins of Asian America - Densho: Japanese American Incarceration and Japanese Internment." *Densho*, 8 May 2017, densho.org/asian-american-movement/). In 1969, The AAPA released *AAPA Perspectives* in which they coined the term Asian American over the used of oriental. They believe Asian American are hardworking, dedicated people who deserve to be treated justly in the United States. The AAPA also pointed out that the root of most of their grievances the the racism that stems from imperialism in America ([Asian American Political Alliance, *AAPA Perspectives*, 1969](#)). The AAPA fought for the end of the Vietnam War, because they saw the war as Americans making a last ditch effort to imperialize a nation that was far weaker than them to be able to assert their power on a global level during a time when every nation was seemingly racing the be the best ("Yellow Power...").

This image defies the previous stereotype that Asian Americans are quiet immigrants that wish to assimilate into American Society because they are actively, loudly, enthusiastically fighting for their rights as Americans and as human beings.

6. Mexican Americans had to Lead a Produce Boycott to End Labor Discrimination and Walk Out of Class for Their Culture to be Included in the Curriculum.

- a. Weeks 9 and 10: Free to be You and Me? and What are Women's Rights?
March 18 -29, 2019



The Chicano Movement Image

Caesar Chavez did not have the initial intention of starting a movement that would spark revolutionary change for many Mexican American immigrants in the United States. Racial segregation, police brutality, and language barriers were commonalities for Mexican Americans (Social Movements of the Late 20th Century, March 20, 2019). While the conditions were horrible, superior white farm owners did not feel pressure to change their practices. They hired mostly illegal immigrants and understood that due to national laws, their workforce was disposable and easily replenished. Chavez created the United Farm Workers to combat those conditions (Crash Course #40, The 1960's in America). The organization encourages boycotts from farms through the southwest, mostly centered in southern California. In areas like Los Angeles, students led walkouts to draw media attention to the fact that they were treated like second class citizens in their own classrooms. They wanted to be taught their culture by people they could identify with in an environment that did not make them feel inferior even though they were the numerical majority (Social Movements of the Late 20th Century, March 20, 2019).

Mexican Americans, especially college students, were not united in the fight for equality. Men did not see women as equally capable of provoking a positive change as they were. When women like, Jennie V. Chavez, formed their own movements to combat the double oppression of Mexican American women by white man and Mexican man, they found that no one thought they would succeed or wanted them to. Mexican American women had to work twice as hard to fight the same inequalities and Mexican American men (Chavez, *Double Oppression of Mexican-American Women* (1972)).

The Chicano Movement was a united front of Mexican Americans, young and old, working and educated to have their culture and their personal worth recognized by the majority of society. The picture chosen above shows students, women, men, and children fighting for equality. It is inclusive of most people in the movement and does not accidentally highlight one portion as being more important than another.

7. Muslim- Americans are Seen as Threat to National Security and the American Way of Life in Our Post-9/11 World

a. Week 13: Operation Freedom? April 15- 19, 2019



[The Conversation: Muslim American Woman](#)

In what became known as the “Long Telegram,” George Kennan warned pre-Cold War United States that the world they were living in “has fundamentally changed.” That change had already happened, and Americans needed to respond (Friedman and Mandelbaum, *Globalization: America Needs to Rethink Its Game*). The same message could be applied to the moments after 9/11. The world as Americans knew it had changed, and they needed to respond. This response unfortunately happened to be negativity and resentment toward Muslim Americans.

On September 11, 2001 the United States was under attack for the first time since the attack on Pearl Harbor. The country shut down as hijacked planes crashed into both towers of the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and a field in a town outside of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Government buildings were evacuated, embassies around the world were on high alert and high

ranking government officials were moved to secured locations. Osama bin Laden, an Islamic radical, was deemed responsible for organizing the attacks ([“Terror Attack Hits U.S.” CNN, Cable News Network, 11 Sept. 2001, www.cnn.com/2001/US/09/11/worldtrade.crash/index.html.](#)). This sparked an American fear of Muslims. Anyone that practiced Islam was assumed to be a terrorist. Muslim women are easily recognizable in Western society by their traditional burqas or similar religious coverings. Muslim American women became a quick target for hatred and violence fueled by Islamophobia. Many Muslim Americans feared for their lives in the days after the attack, and still do nearly 20 years later. The violence escalated to the point where Muslims were questioning their faith and moving back to their home country (willingly and forced) ([9/11 and the War on Terror, April 17, 2019](#)). Muslim immigrants in America were treated so poorly, some felt the need to leave the nation while others bravely stand up the injustices against them. America, a nation creating an environment where immigrants abandon the American dream and decide the conditions they left are better than what they found here.

The woman in the image's sign reads “we the people are greater than fear.” By quoting the Constitution she shows that she is a devout American. By wearing a hijab proudly at a protest where she knows she will most likely be harassed, she is showing that she is also a proud Muslim. This image demonstrates that Muslim and American are not mutually exclusive. One can exist with the other, and it can be peaceful.