

paign to exclude the Chinese. Indeed, their efforts to expel Chinese immigrants earned them a reputation as “Irish Know Nothings.” In this way, xenophobia shifted shape; it found a new target. Now, the enemy was on the West Coast.<sup>67</sup>

## • THREE •

### “THE CHINESE ARE NO MORE”

On April 5, 1876, twenty-five thousand people gathered in San Francisco’s Union Hall for a statewide meeting on Chinese immigration. Five thousand crowded into the vast auditorium. The rest assembled outside on specially built platforms and crowded the blocks surrounding the hall. It was the largest gathering the Pacific Coast had ever seen. No one, it seemed, wanted to miss the opportunity to voice their opinion on “*the* question of the day,” the “Chinese question.”<sup>1</sup>

San Francisco mayor Andrew Jackson Bryant set the tone with his opening speech. Chinese immigration, he gravely declared, was an issue that involved “every man, woman, and child, not only of the Pacific Coast, but also of the entire United States.” Following Bryant was a parade of the state’s leading politicians, who spelled out in great detail the evils of Chinese immigration and the damage it was inflicting on the state. California governor William Irwin even blamed the Chinese for subverting “everything that goes to make up American civilization.” After some additional speeches, several anti-Chinese resolutions were read aloud.<sup>2</sup>

The case made against Chinese immigration recycled many of the same arguments used against Irish Catholics: Chinese immigrants undercut American workers. They were criminals who filled the state’s prisons and asylums. They operated in secret through their own societies; they followed their own laws. The diseases they carried were “infectious and horrible.”<sup>3</sup>

Other arguments were specifically tailored to the Chinese. One was about sex and gender. Anti-Chinese activists claimed that Chinese immigrants posed a sexual danger to the country and its citizens. Chinese female prostitutes caused “moral and racial pollution” through their interracial liaisons, while Chinese men lured pure and innocent white women into their dens of vice and depravity. With many of their wives and children remaining in China, they also lived in so-called bachelor societies that many Americans considered deviant. Moreover, Chinese men were depicted as effeminate because they engaged in “women’s work” of cleaning and cooking.<sup>4</sup>

The greatest condemnation, however, was about race. Although the Know Nothings had claimed that the Irish belonged to the so-called Celtic race, the Irish had always remained white. The Chinese were different. They were unquestionably not white and would never be able to become “American,” anti-Chinese

activists argued. Instead, the Chinese “are of a distinct race, of a different and peculiar civilization,” one anti-Chinese resolution proclaimed at the San Francisco meeting. “They do not speak our language, do not adopt our manners, customs or habits, are Pagan in belief.” Chinese immigration, the organizing committee concluded, was “an evil of great present magnitude.”<sup>5</sup>

Speakers at the San Francisco rally agreed that immediate action was needed. The anti-Chinese organizing committee urged a delegation to go forth to Washington, DC, and lobby for restrictive legislation at the federal level. So enthusiastic was the response to this suggestion that thousands stayed at Union Hall and strategized until eleven o’clock at night. Nearly twenty thousand people signed an anti-Chinese petition bound for Washington, DC. Just a few blocks north, Chinatown was shuttered. No one was on the street. Businesses were closed and protected by iron bars. Inside, anxious Chinese gathered together to wait out the night. They sat on chairs, benches, and counters and watched for angry crowds to descend on their homes and businesses. That night, they were safe. But the anti-Chinese movement was just gaining momentum, and with it, racism and xenophobia became more tightly connected.<sup>6</sup>

Later that same week, San Francisco lawyer H. N. Clement stood before a California state senate committee and sounded the alarm: “The Chinese are upon us. How can we get rid of them? The Chinese are coming. How can we stop them?” Clement’s panicked cries and portrayals of Chinese immigration as an evil, “unarmed invasion” were being shared by several witnesses before the committee, which was charged with investigating the “social, moral, and political effects” of Chinese immigration. From April 11 to June 3, five state senators held fifteen sessions and interviewed sixty individuals in the state capital of Sacramento. All 165 pages of the completed testimony were dutifully recorded and printed in a report that was part of a calculated attempt to politicize anti-Chinese xenophobia and launch a national campaign to restrict Chinese immigration. Multiple state efforts had failed to achieve this goal, and Californians were now setting their sights on the US Congress. As the committee’s “Address to the People of the United States upon the Evils of Chinese Immigration” made clear, the people of California had “but one disposition upon this grave subject... and that is an open and pronounced demand upon the Federal Government for relief.”<sup>7</sup>

The California state senate suggested a plan of action. If Chinese immigration continued unrestricted, the committee members warned, the country would be subjected to a “dangerous unarmed invasion” of foreigners who were completely unassimilable. In twenty years, Chinese would occupy the entire Pacific Coast “to the exclusion of the white population,” and the whole seaboard would become but a “mere colony of China,” it hysterically claimed. “The people of this State have been more than patient,” the committee members insisted. But their patience had worn out. In an attached memorial directed to members of the US Congress, the committee urged national lawmakers to repeal the 1868 Burlingame Treaty, which permitted the free emigration of Chinese to the United States, and restrict Chinese immigration. In an effort to promote its

anti-Chinese platform across the country, the state government also sent the report to all “leading newspapers of the United States,” as well as to every member of the US Congress and the governor of each state. Another two thousand copies were printed up for general distribution.<sup>8</sup>

Anti-Chinese xenophobia relied on many of the political tactics first used by the anti-Catholic Know Nothing Party. Anti-Chinese groups were highly organized, specialized in appealing to the masses, and were politically astute. Like the Know Nothings, anti-Chinese leaders also promoted a new kind of American national identity that further distinguished “Americans” from new and dangerous immigrants invading the United States. This nativist identity similarly rested on the erasure of indigenous peoples begun by the Know Nothings.

But what was significantly different in anti-Chinese rhetoric was the explicit grouping of *all* European immigrants as full Americans. Immigrants from across the Atlantic were no longer the “scum of Europe” sent by the pope to control the United States, as the Know Nothings had claimed a generation before. As California lawmakers and anti-Chinese spokespeople—many of whom were Irish or Irish American themselves—argued, Chinese were a threat to “our own people,” whom they defined as the “original settlers of California, along with their children” and “recent immigrants from the East and Europe.”<sup>9</sup>

By using this definition, anti-Chinese politicians conveniently ignored African Americans, Mexican Americans, and the hundreds of indigenous nations who were already present in California before white settlement, just as the Know Nothings had done on the East Coast decades before. But they also unambiguously included all European immigrants as “our own people.” To some extent, these sentiments reflected the racial dynamics in the West, where claims to and privileges of whiteness were central to sustaining the West as a “white man’s frontier.” The anti-Chinese and later anti-Japanese movements would consistently distinguish between the need to welcome all European immigrants and to close the doors to all Asians. “We want *all good people from all parts of Europe*,” Italian American A. Sbarboro passionately claimed at a California anti-Asian meeting in 1901. Arguing that distinctions should be made *between* European and Asian immigrants rather than *among* European immigrants, xenophobes like Sbarboro continued to expand the boundaries of whiteness while advocating for Asian exclusion.<sup>10</sup>

This emphasis on whiteness also revealed how American xenophobia came to focus more on race rather than on religion during the anti-Chinese movement. European immigrants, especially Catholics and Jews from southern and eastern Europe, would still be targeted by xenophobia, religious intolerance, and immigration restriction, but Asian and Mexican immigrants would face even more discriminatory policies in the twentieth century.

The anti-Chinese campaign also went much further than what even the most extreme Know Nothing politicians had envisioned. Anti-Chinese leaders not only successfully politicized the issue of Chinese immigration; they garnered

the support of both major political parties and the full weight of the US government. The US Congress eventually heeded the call of Californians and other Westerners to protect them from the so-called Chinese invasion with the passage of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act. The first law to establish significant federal control over immigration, the Chinese Exclusion Act legalized xenophobia on an unprecedented scale. It not only singled out a specific group for exclusion; it also helped shape the modern system of immigration regulation that would be used around the world.

THE WOMEN SANG songs of loss, grief, and anger. So many of their husbands, fathers, and brothers had left their villages in South China's Pearl River Delta for Gum Saan ("Gold Mountain") and had never returned. "I beg of you, after you depart, to come back soon," they sang. "Also, I beg of you that your heart won't change / That you keep your heart and mind on taking care of your family." Known as *gam saan haak*, or Gold Mountain men, Chinese had first gone to the United States in search of gold during the California gold rush. Only a few struck it rich, but most stayed to work in the mines or in the booming gold rush economy. There were plenty of jobs. American labor recruiters began heading to China and bombarded prospective immigrants with the message that, as one advertisement proclaimed, "Americans are very rich people. They want the Chinaman to come... Money is in great plenty and to spare in America." By 1870, there were sixty-three thousand Chinese in the United States, over three-quarters of them in California.<sup>11</sup>

Over the decades, the demand for Chinese labor increased. In 1865, the first Chinese were hired by the Central Pacific Railroad to clear trees, blast through mountains, and lay tracks on the great transcontinental railroad heading east from Sacramento. Making up 90 percent of the workforce, they worked long hours in the heat and snow but were paid less than white workers. Company president Leland Stanford praised the Chinese as "quiet, peaceable, industrious, [and] economical" and admitted that the railroad could not have been built without them. But when Stanford and the other railroad barons gathered at Promontory Point, Utah, to celebrate the completion of the railroad on May 10, 1869, Chinese workers were excluded from all official photographs commemorating the occasion.<sup>12</sup>

Despite the mistreatment and discrimination they faced in the United States, Chinese immigrants kept coming. There were few reasons to remain in China. War, foreign imperialism, high taxes, and population growth all made it harder and harder for rural families to support themselves, especially in the southeastern province of Guangdong. A seemingly endless stream of natural disasters, plagues, and famines battered the countryside while the Qing Empire faltered and China underwent a revolution in 1911. The Chinese increasingly began to leave their home villages and head to larger cities in search of work. Soon, they began leaving China altogether for new homes around the world. Migrant letters, newspapers, and folk songs fueled migration. "Try to leave the village," Wong Sing Look's brother (already in the United States) advised him in a letter.

“You can never make a living there.”<sup>13</sup> Chinese immigrants also kept coming to the United States, because they had become indispensable in the mines, factories, and fields of the West. They were hired again and again for jobs that were believed to be too dirty, dangerous, or degrading for white men and were paid on a separate and lower wage scale from whites.

The nearly 139,000 Chinese who entered the United States between 1870 and 1880 were only a small fraction of the total number of immigrants (nearly 3.2 million, mostly from Europe) who also arrived in the country during the same decade. Nevertheless, their presence sparked some of the most violent and racist campaigns in US history.<sup>14</sup>

At first seen as exotic curiosities from the Orient, Chinese immigrants came to be viewed as threats, especially as their numbers grew throughout the Gold Rush period and as the United States grappled with issues of slavery and freedom, conquest and colonization. These were all racial issues: Native American wars, struggles over African slavery, and the conquest of the West were tied to race-based ideas of who belonged in the United States and where they fit in the country’s racial hierarchy. The Chinese were the largest group of nonwhite immigrants to come to the United States and were not considered immigrants like those from Europe. Instead, Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans were treated more like African Americans and Native Americans as race problems to be stringently controlled (as in Jim Crow segregation) or expelled and driven off (as in the ongoing war against Native Americans.) As a result, they were denied similar rights and freedoms, such as the right to become naturalized citizens.<sup>15</sup>

An economic recession in the 1870s added some materiality to these debates. With California’s economy devastated, demagogues such as California Workingmen’s Party leader Denis Kearney (an Irish immigrant himself) capitalized on the deep sense of economic insecurity among the working classes in San Francisco and blamed Chinese workers for unfavorable wages and the scarcity of jobs. Other labor leaders joined the debate and charged that Chinese were imported slaves, or *coolies*, engaged in a new system of slavery that degraded US labor. Samuel Gompers, president of the American Federation of Labor, framed this issue explicitly by asking the question: “Meat vs. Rice—American Manhood vs. Asiatic Coolieism. Which Shall Survive?”<sup>16</sup>

Promoted by labor leaders like Kearney and Gompers, anti-Chinese sentiment proved to be popular. It also turned out to be profitable. Just as anti-Catholic xenophobia inspired the publication of numerous best-selling books, the anti-Chinese movement also helped sell many newspapers, journals, and magazines. One illustrated magazine dominated the American public’s understanding of the Chinese “immigration problem.” First printed in 1876, the *San Francisco Illustrated Wasp* became a successful weekly magazine focusing on social and political satire. San Francisco had a dozen or so weekly magazines, but the *Wasp* rose above its competitors with its vibrant and politically astute illustrations that were the first mass-produced large-scale colored cartoons in the United States. A political dissident forced to flee from his home in Czechoslo-

vakia, *Wasp* owner Francis Korbrel relished in exposing political corruption and growing government and corporate power. But it was his devotion to the anti-Chinese movement—and his realization that the anti-Chinese cartoons he published would attract readers and maximize profits—that motivated the *Wasp* to take a leading role in animating anti-Chinese racist hysteria. The publication consistently depicted Chinese immigration as an infestation destroying the United States, Chinese laborers as ruthless competitors, and the Chinese “way of life” as inherently immoral. In many illustrations, Chinese were completely dehumanized and portrayed as vermin.

George Frederick Keller, another immigrant from Prussia who began his career by creating cigar labels for Korbrel, was the talented artist behind many of the *Wasp*'s high-quality political cartoons. Combining attention to detail with new color printing technology, Keller masterfully captured white Californians' fears about Chinese immigration in the 1881 illustration “A Statue for *Our* Harbor.” A statue of a grotesque Chinese male coolie in San Francisco Bay mocks New York's Statue of Liberty, then under construction. Instead of wearing graceful flowing robes like his New York counterpart, he wears disheveled rags. Instead of a torch, he holds an opium pipe. His slanted eyes, gaunt features, and rat-tail-like braid mark him as menacing and racially inferior. He stands as a triumphant victor over a defeated California, represented by the skull under his foot, the rats scurrying around the pedestal, capsized ships, and crumbling foundation. A slant-eyed moon looks on in approval as the statue spreads filth, immorality, diseases, and ruin to white labor across the land.



“A Statue for Our Harbor.” By George Frederick Keller, *The Wasp*, November 11, 1881. San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.

The *Wasp*'s racist campaign against the Chinese paid off handsomely. While many of its rivals were forced to shut down operations within a few years, the *Wasp*'s circulation grew to five thousand within months of its first issue, reaching seven thousand by 1879. It quickly became the most widely read magazine on the West Coast.<sup>17</sup>

By the time the anti-Chinese citizens' committee gathered supporters together in San Francisco in 1876, Chinese immigrants had already been singled out for discriminatory treatment in California for over two decades. As early as 1852, California's Foreign Miners' License Tax targeted Chinese immigrants with expensive monthly license fees. Although the law was aimed at all foreigners, it was primarily enforced against the Chinese, and over the years, the state collected millions of dollars from them. In 1854, the California Supreme Court ruled that Chinese immigrants, along with African Americans and Native Americans, were prohibited from giving testimony in cases involving a white person. In support of its decision, the court argued that Chinese immigrants were a "distinct people... whom nature has marked as inferior." Animosity and state-sanctioned discrimination against the Chinese reached a new level by the 1860s and 1870s. A Chinese Police Tax was levied on all Chinese people living in the state in 1862, and over the next decade, various laws barred Chinese people from testifying in criminal or civil cases, attending public school, working on county irrigation projects, and owning property.<sup>18</sup>

San Francisco inaugurated its own special campaign against the Chinese through a series of municipal ordinances designed to single out Chinese people for harassment. There was the Lodging House Ordinance, or Cubic Air Ordinance, which required every lodging house to provide at least five hundred cubic feet of air space for each lodger—a direct shot at the Chinese who, out of necessity, tended to live in crowded rooming houses. There was also the Queue Ordinance, which required every male prisoner sentenced to jail to have his hair cut to within one inch of his scalp. As the name suggests, this bill targeted Chinese men who wore their hair in a queue, a long braid down their back with the forehead shaved, as required by the Chinese empire.

In 1870, the state legislature passed a law forbidding the landing of any "Mongolian, Chinese, or Japanese female for criminal or demoralizing purposes," a law that the state commission of immigration used to deny entry to all Chinese women. Many of these laws were found unconstitutional or rarely enforced. The 1870 law, for example, was declared unconstitutional by the US Supreme Court on the grounds that it exceeded the police power of the state, violated the United States' Burlingame Treaty with China, the Fourteenth Amendment, and the 1866 Civil Rights Act.<sup>19</sup>

But far from deterring California's anti-Chinese leaders, these defeats convinced them that the only course of action was to take their case to Washington, DC. Some limited federal restrictions were already in place. The Coolie Trade Act of 1862 outlawed "coolie labor" and US involvement in the so-called coolie trade that brought over 250,000 Chinese and 420,000 South Asian immigrants to the Caribbean and Latin America as indentured laborers. The 1875 Page Act barred Asian women suspected of prostitution, as well as Asian laborers transported to the country as contract laborers. This law was broadly used to deny entry to all Chinese immigrants, especially women. Both the 1862 and 1875 laws would become important blueprints in the eventual exclusion of all Chinese laborers

in 1882, especially in how they identified Chinese immigrants as unfree (and racially inferior) peoples like African Americans. But they fell far short of the goal of total exclusion that many anti-Chinese leaders pushed for.<sup>20</sup>

Although Chinese immigration was a central issue for California, it was not yet a national one. Beyond the Rockies, opinions varied. Some people believed the problem was just a West Coast problem—a regional one that didn't concern them. Or they dismissed the idea that Chinese immigrants were dangerous. Some Americans were even in favor of it, seeing their own financial benefit. Southern plantation owners and northeastern shoe factory owners, for example, tried to recruit Chinese laborers. And many were unfazed when the United States and China signed the 1868 Burlingame Treaty, which recognized the “inherent and inalienable right of man to change his home and allegiance” and underscored the principle that both the United States and China benefited from unrestricted migration between the two countries.

California politicians, joined by others up and down the Pacific Coast, grew increasingly frustrated. Beginning in 1875, they vowed to bring their message to the rest of the country. Their timing was excellent.<sup>21</sup>

The year 1876 became a major turning point in the anti-Chinese movement, pushing it out past the Rockies to make it an American issue. Rising Chinese immigration was one factor. More Chinese immigrants (60,505) had come through San Francisco's Custom House in the preceding three years than at any other time since 1852. Labor unions and anti-Chinese organizations also mobilized xenophobia, turning it into a mass movement. Membership in anti-Chinese organizations grew across the state throughout the 1870s, and all of the anti-Chinese clubs in the state unified under the umbrella of the Anti-Chinese Union in order to advance their twin goals of Chinese exclusion and Chinese expulsion. They vowed to “discourage and stop any further Chinese immigration” and to “compel the Chinese living in the United States to withdraw from the country.” With labor leaders as well as US senators, congressmen, and almost every prominent politician in the state active in the organization, the union's membership marked how anti-Chinese xenophobia had become a mainstream political issue.<sup>22</sup>

And, most crucially, 1876 was an important presidential election year; both the Republican and the Democratic parties were locked in a highly competitive race for the White House. For the first time, the electoral votes from the West Coast could tip the balance of power in Washington. Both parties were eager to demonstrate to Western voters that they understood their issues and would protect their interests. What voters in California and other Pacific Coast states unequivocally wanted—what was their issue, what they thought would protect their interests—was an end to Chinese immigration.

California's anti-Chinese leaders played their cards well. In March 1876, San Francisco mayor Andrew Jackson Bryant called for a committee to be sent to Washington, DC, to lobby for exclusion. “This is the best time to go to Wash-

ington,” he told the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. “We are on the eve of a presidential election and both parties are looking toward the coast for aid.” In return, they demanded action on Chinese immigration. Their efforts were strategically timed to impact the national nominating conventions that summer. Both parties responded by seriously examining the Chinese immigration issue on a national level. In July, the US Congress tasked a joint commission to travel to the Pacific Coast to “investigate” Chinese immigration. Hearings began in October in San Francisco’s Palace Hotel.<sup>23</sup>

ENCOMPASSING AN ENTIRE city block on the corner of Market and New Montgomery Streets in downtown San Francisco, the Palace Hotel was considered America’s first luxury hotel and was marketed as “the world’s grandest” when it opened in 1875. At seven stories high, the hotel was the largest built in the West and was an architectural and technological marvel. It was made with the finest materials available and built by artisans imported for their talent and skill. Five state-of-the-art hydraulic elevators whisked guests to their destinations in luxurious comfort. The grand court had seven tiers of galleries that rose to a beautiful leaded-glass dome. There was a marble-flagged office, a ballroom, separate ladies’ and men’s reception rooms, a billiard room, a barbershop, a bar, and a 150-foot-long dining room. The huge public rooms were adorned with gracious woven rugs commissioned in France, two grand pianos, and landscape paintings celebrating the beauty of California: Lake Tahoe, Yosemite, and the Golden Gate.<sup>24</sup>

On Wednesday, October 18, 1876, the US senators and congressmen of the Joint Special Committee to Investigate Chinese Immigration gathered in rooms A and B of the Palace Hotel to begin their work. The chair of the committee, Senator Oliver Hazard Perry Throckmorton, had traveled from Indiana. Representative Edwin R. Meade came from New York. Senator Aaron A. Sargent from Nevada City, California, and Representative William A. Piper from San Francisco probably had the shortest journeys. Two other committee members, Senator Henry Cooper from Tennessee and Representative Benjamin Wilson from West Virginia were absent the first few days but joined the committee’s work in later meetings. A stenographer was also present.

The committee got to work right away. What was billed as a fair-minded “investigation,” however, was, in reality, stacked against the Chinese from the beginning. It called several witnesses to the hotel on Thursday, October 19. Over the next thirty days, the committee met seventeen times and heard testimony from 130 witnesses, almost all of whom gave testimony against the Chinese. Among the first to do so were Frank M. Pixley, “representing the people of San Francisco”; former San Francisco mayor Frank McCoppin, and Cameron H. King, president of the Anti-Chinese Union.

The three were eminently qualified witnesses. McCoppin had served as San Francisco’s mayor from 1867 to 1869 and was the first Irish-born American mayor in the entire United States. Pixley was a former California forty-niner who had arrived during the Gold Rush. He served one term as the state attorney

general in 1862 and was the founder of the influential publication *Argonaut*. His opposition to Chinese immigration stemmed from a general brand of racism (before the Civil War, he stated his opposition to the spread of slavery, but not to slavery itself; he also opposed the migration of African Americans into the West) as well as a distinct racism directed at the Chinese. The Chinese were, he told Senator Charles Sumner in 1870, “thoroughly antagonistic in every particular, in race, color, language, religion, civilization, and habits of life altogether from our people.” Should Chinese immigration continue unchecked, he dramatically claimed, they would simply “overrun our land.” Cameron King, originally from New York, was a lawyer with political connections and a leader of the influential anti-Chinese organization.<sup>25</sup>

McCoppin, Pixley, and King established the main arguments against Chinese immigration that would be elaborated on by most other witnesses appearing before the special committee. McCoppin described Chinese immigration as an invasion. China had an enormous population of four hundred million, he explained, making up one-third of the world’s population. And it was increasing rapidly. As a result, the pressure to emigrate from that “crowded hive” was great. The introduction and improvement of steamship travel made passage around the globe easier, faster, and cheaper. Already, the Chinese could be found “in every part of the civilized world,” he pointed out. The Pacific Coast of North America was particularly vulnerable; a mere forty-dollar ticket put the Chinese just four weeks’ sail from San Francisco. He also declared that the Chinese as a race were unassimilable, that no amount of time or schooling could ever change the Chinese into Americans. Unlike other immigrants who came to the United States, McCoppin explained, “the Chinaman, though *in* this country, *is not of it*.”<sup>26</sup>

Pixley picked up on these points during his turn before the committee. The Chinese, as a race, were “as immoral to the very last degree,” he explained. They were not Christian, but were atheists, heathens, and polygamists. They totally disregarded oaths. Some of that immorality was evidenced in the frightful prevalence of prostitution in the Chinese quarter, he continued. The Chinese were also considered a massive public health menace. Leprosy was common among them, Pixley argued, and some of the “most fearsome, loathsome, and terrible diseases with which civilization has been infected” thrived and spread in Chinatown.<sup>27</sup>

All three emphasized how the Chinese competed unfairly with white labor, preying on white men. “Many of them are most excellent and good laborers,” Pixley conceded. They could perform light labor but were far inferior to white workers and were “not as strong or as brave” as them. Their willingness to work for lower wages also allowed them to monopolize significant parts of the labor force: cigar making, wool manufacturing, domestic service, agriculture, mining, and railroad building. This competition drove the white worker, the “true American hero,” Pixley argued, to starvation.<sup>28</sup>

Anti-Chinese Union president Cameron King added his own staunch prediction:

if Chinese immigration continued, white labor, through no fault of its own, would be “driven from our State.” The Chinese—the people who would replace white laborers—were “filthy, vicious, ignorant, depraved, and criminal.” They were a “standing menace to our free institutions, and an ever-threatening danger to our republican form of government.” Pixley and King spent little to no time considering the fact that it was the white factory owners, railroad barons, and farmers who set the wage scale—not the Chinese. Instead, anti-Chinese witnesses pounded away at their argument that the low wages paid to and accepted by Chinese immigrants was evidence of Chinese racial inferiority, not of capitalistic competition. The only solution, the witnesses argued, was federal legislation targeting Chinese immigration and a modification of existing international treaties. After the joint congressional committee concluded its work at the Palace Hotel, Senator Aaron A. Sargent wrote the final committee report.<sup>29</sup>

AARON SARGENT HAD a “punishing hatred of the Chinese.” A former cabinetmaker, printer, and California forty-niner, Sargent became the nation’s foremost leader of the anti-Chinese movement in the 1870s. A Radical Republican who entered Congress in 1861, he supported the use of federal military force in the South and voting rights for African Americans. But beyond that, he showed little tolerance for any group that was not white, of English descent, and Protestant: Sargent supported the segregation of African Americans. He had a “low regard” for Mexicans. He tried to cut federal appropriations to Native Americans and declared the need to remove them by “whiskey or by war or by emigration” in order to secure their land for the transcontinental railroad. He also didn’t like Catholics. But Sargent reserved a special hatred for Chinese immigrants. He was an honorary vice president of the Anti-Chinese Union of San Francisco, and when he became a US congressman, Chinese immigration became a special area of his expertise and influence. As his biographer explained, Sargent had a simple solution for the problem of the Chinese in the United States: “He wanted them out of California, and out of the United States.” Sargent would work tirelessly toward the goals of Chinese exclusion and expulsion throughout his long career.<sup>30</sup>

As early as 1862, Sargent declared on the floor of Congress that Chinese immigrants were a great menace to the state of California. They were “slaves and criminals of strange tongue, vile habits, impossible of assimilation, and with customs difficult to penetrate [who] swarm by the thousands to our shores like the frogs of Egypt.” When Congress debated a naturalization bill in 1870, Sargent enthusiastically backed a measure that would prevent any person of Chinese or Japanese origin from being naturalized. In his remarks to Congress, Sargent explained that the “Chinaman, as a race” was in every sense of the word the opposite of an American citizen. They lived “upon a lower plane, entirely different from that occupied by our thriving, healthy, prosperous, happy population... They live as Americans cannot.”<sup>31</sup>

Sargent would continue to rail against the Chinese on the floor of the House and the Senate over the next several years. A few weeks after the April 1876

anti-Chinese meeting in San Francisco, Sargent called on the president to renegotiate the US treaty with the Chinese government to restrict “the great influx” of Chinese into the United States. He then dramatically presented two large bound volumes containing the signatures of twenty thousand citizens supporting the anti-Chinese resolution. Having captured the attention of his colleagues, he gave one of the most virulent anti-Chinese speeches the Senate had ever heard. Months later, when it came time to summarize the findings of the joint congressional commission, Sargent did not mince words. The Pacific Coast was in the midst of a crisis, he argued. Chinese immigration was a terrible evil and the country was at a crossroads. In time, it “must become either American or Mongolian,” he insisted. California and the other Pacific Coast states could remain states of the Union, or, if “given over to a race alien in all its tendencies,” become “provinces of China.” It was up to Congress to decide.<sup>32</sup>



In this July 14, 1880, cover illustration of *Puck* magazine, Republican presidential candidate James Garfield (left) and Democratic presidential candidate Winfield Hancock (right) nail a Chinese man in between the anti-Chinese platforms of both parties. Illustrator J. A. Wales bluntly identified one of the reasons why the anti-Chinese movement enjoyed bipartisan support in the illustration’s title: “Where Both Platforms Agree—No Vote—No Use to Either Party.” *Puck*, July 14, 1880. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

On February 28, 1882, Senator John F. Miller of California introduced a bill in the US Congress to exclude Chinese immigrant laborers from the country. The California Republican spelled out the imminent danger that Chinese immigration posed. There were too many in the country, not to mention the untold millions who could take a boat to American shores, like a naval invasion—they were a “degraded and inferior race” and a threat to national security. With their “machine-like” ways and their “muscles of iron,” they stole jobs from white workers in every field of industry: the farm, the shoe bench, and the factory. Miller proclaimed that a vote for Chinese exclusion was thus a vote both for labor and for the “public good” of the country.<sup>33</sup>

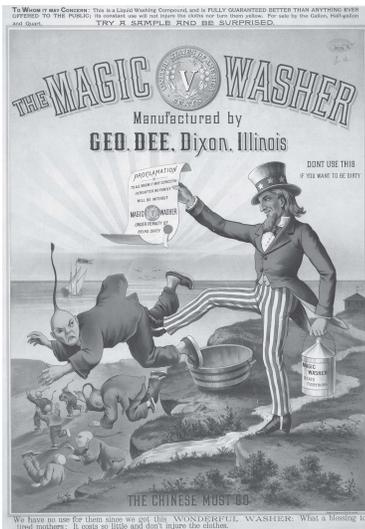
A few members of Congress opposed the bill. Former Radical Republicans, such as Massachusetts senator George Frisbie Hoar, called the discriminatory Chinese Exclusion Act “old race prejudice,” a crime committed against the Declaration of Independence. But on the whole, politicians in both the Senate and House, from both political parties, and from across the United States, quickly agreed with Senator Miller. “The gate... must be closed,” Representative Edward

Valentine of Nebraska implored.<sup>34</sup>

The Chinese Exclusion Act marked one of the most important turning points in America's long history of xenophobia. First, it established the United States' sovereign right to regulate foreigners into and within the nation and legalized the restriction, exclusion, and deportation of immigrants considered to be threats to the United States. In 1889, the US Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the Chinese Exclusion Act, and more broadly, the right of the United States to exclude foreign immigrants, stating that the power to exclude foreigners was one of the sovereign rights of the US government as delegated by the Constitution. This right also included barring returning American residents of Chinese descent who had previously been legally admitted in order to protect US "peace and security." In doing so, Chinese exclusion set in motion the transformation of the United States into a "gatekeeping nation," one that began using federal immigration laws to exclude, restrict, and control allegedly dangerous foreigners, often on the basis of race, national origin, ethnicity, class, and sexuality. In the 1880s, the United States was the first gatekeeping nation. Today, of course, every nation is.<sup>35</sup>

The Chinese Exclusion Act also justified immigration restriction in the name of national security, a rationale that would later be used to close the gate to more immigrants, especially in times of war. The first lines of the law specifically stated that it was the "opinion of the Government of the United States [that] the coming of Chinese laborers to this country endangers the *good order* of certain localities within the territory thereof."<sup>36</sup>

And the act also established Chinese immigrants—categorized by their race, class, and gender relations as the ultimate example of the dangerous, degraded alien—as the yardstick by which to measure the desirability (and "whiteness") of other immigrant groups. No other group had been officially singled out for immigration exclusion or banned from naturalized citizenship based on their race and national origin before. Moreover, the only other immigrants to be similarly banned from the country in 1882 were convicts, lunatics, idiots, or any people considered to be public charges. Because it specifically barred Chinese laborers, the Exclusion Act also discriminated on the basis of class. Laborers were barred for a period of ten years, but certain professional and elite classes were exempt from exclusion: students, teachers, travelers, merchants, and diplomats. These migrants benefited cross-national interests, maintaining friendly and profitable economic, diplomatic, cultural, and educational ties between the United States and China. By creating a two-tiered system of exclusion (laborers) and entry (elites) among Chinese immigrants, the Exclusion Act thus also created a hierarchy and paradigm of "good" versus "bad" immigrants that would shape both xenophobia and immigration policy in later decades.<sup>37</sup>



Xenophobia sells. In 1886, the Geo. Dee Dixon company used the Chinese Exclusion Act to sell its laundry detergent. Uncle Sam, holding a proclamation and a can of detergent, forcibly kicks Chinese immigrants out of the United States. “We have no use for them since we got this WONDERFUL WASHER,” he proclaims. Shober & Carqueville Lithograph Company, c. 1886. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

With Chinese exclusion, the United States also became a global leader in the enactment of racist immigration restriction laws. Its Chinese exclusion regime became a template or reference point for immigration policy around the world—and an American export. Canada, for example, shared not only a border with the United States but also a growing Chinese immigrant population in the nineteenth century. Many Canadians believed that Americans’ problems with Chinese immigration mirrored their own. As one Canadian labor journal explained, “change the word American to Canadian and it applies to this side of the line as well as the other.” Eastern Canadian labor organizations even adopted San Francisco labor leader Denis Kearney’s war cry of “The Chinese Must Go.”<sup>38</sup>

Canada also followed the US method of establishing government commissions to investigate the “problem” of Chinese immigration and relied on US intelligence to do so. In 1879, the Canadian Select Committee on Chinese Labor and Immigration began its work in the Dominion by first familiarizing itself with the significant evidence gathered by the US government in San Francisco. The committee noted that the American investigations had already demonstrated the “undesirableness of encouraging Chinese labor and immigration” and implied that the need to come to their own independent conclusion was unnecessary. Five years later, another Canadian commission began its investigation by also starting in the United States. Commissioners from Canada’s 1884 Royal Com-

mission on Chinese Immigration were instructed to go to San Francisco, where they interviewed many of the witnesses who had participated in the US joint congressional investigation in 1876. When the Canadian commission completed its work, it offered a sobering conclusion: “The Chinaman seems to be the same everywhere.” Chinese immigration was not just a local or even national threat, the commissioners implied. It was a global one.<sup>39</sup>

The response to this perceived threat would have global implications. But the US style of Chinese exclusion was not always followed directly. Canada, for example, chose to impose hefty head taxes on all Chinese laborers as a way to deter immigration in 1885. The hope was to achieve exclusion without offending China, a British (and therefore Canadian) ally. When the initial \$50 head tax was not enough of a deterrent (and the Chinese kept on coming), Canada raised it to \$100 and then \$500. From 1885 to 1923, Chinese immigrants paid \$22.5 million to the Canadian government for the privilege of entering and leaving the country. In 1923, Canada abandoned the head tax system altogether in favor of its own American-style Exclusion Act, which prohibited all people of Chinese origin or descent from entering the country. Consular officials, children born in Canada, merchants, and students were the only exemptions.<sup>40</sup>

In Mexico, where Chinese immigration was described in catastrophic terms as *peste amarilla* and *invasión mongólica* (“yellow wave” and “Mongol invasion”), local harassment and racial violence were the most common responses to Chinese immigration. There was an anti-Chinese riot in Mazatlán in 1886, and several unprovoked attacks on Chinese occurred in Mexico City beginning in the same year. Then came the massacre of Chinese in Torreón on May 5, 1911. The “two-day orgy of unbelievable brutality” resulted in the deaths of 303 Chinese (out of an estimated 600 to 700) and \$850,000 worth of property damage to Chinese businesses and homes. In 1927, the treaty between Mexico and China was canceled.<sup>41</sup>

By the 1930s, most countries in Latin America had restricted Chinese immigration in one way or another, varying from total exclusion to various regulations that limited the number of Chinese immigrants allowed in each year. The global debates over Chinese immigration had far-reaching consequences for the regulation of immigration around the world and led to what historians have called the first “restrictive international migration regime.”<sup>42</sup> As other Asian immigrants followed in the footsteps of the Chinese, they would feel the aftershocks.

The Chinese Exclusion Act also transformed how immigration restrictions were enforced in the United States. Written into the act itself were several major changes. All would become standard means of inspecting, processing, admitting, tracking, punishing, and deporting immigrants in the United States. First, the Exclusion Act laid the foundation for the establishment of the country’s first federal immigrant inspectors. Although the Bureau of Immigration was not established until 1894 and did not gain jurisdiction over the Chinese exclusion laws until 1903, the inspectors for Chinese immigrants (under the auspices of the US Customs Service) were the first to be authorized to act as immigration

officials on behalf of the federal government under the terms of the Exclusion Act.<sup>43</sup>

Second, the enforcement of the Chinese exclusion laws set in motion the federal government's first attempts to establish a system of surveillance and control over a specific immigrant population in the United States. Because the Chinese were considered such a threat, a population that required massive amounts of regulation, US officials painstakingly identified and recorded all of the movements, occupations, and familial relationships of Chinese immigrants, returning residents, and US-born citizens of Chinese descent. Government officials on both sides of the Pacific Ocean achieved this through registration documents, records of entry and reentry, certificates of identity, and voluminous interviews with individuals and their families. Section 4 of the Exclusion Act, for example, required that all departing Chinese laborers apply for and possess "certificates of registration" that contained their name, age, occupation, last place of residence, and personal description. This information was recorded in Chinese registry books kept in the customs house. The certificate entitled the holder to "return and reenter the United States upon producing and delivering the [document] to the collector of customs." This laborer's return certificate was the first reentry document issued to an immigrant group by the federal government, and it served as an equivalent passport facilitating reentry into the country. The Chinese remained the only immigrant group required to hold such reentry permits (or passports) until 1924, when the new Immigration Act of that year issued—but did not require—reentry permits for other aliens.<sup>44</sup>

In 1893, all Chinese people in the United States were also required to register with the federal government to obtain "certificates of residence" and "certificates of identity" that served as proof of their legal entry and lawful right to remain in the country. These documents contained the name, age, local residence, and occupation of the applicant (or "Chinaman," as the law noted), as well as a photograph. Any Chinese laborer found within the jurisdiction of the United States without a certificate of residence was to be "deemed and adjudged to be unlawfully in the United States" and vulnerable to arrest and deportation. No other immigrants were required to hold documents proving their lawful residence or be subjected to what would later be called "show me your papers" practices, until 1928, when immigrant identification cards were first issued to new immigrants arriving for permanent residence. These were eventually replaced by "alien registration receipt cards" (i.e., green cards) after 1940.<sup>45</sup>

The Chinese Exclusion Act set another precedent by defining "illegal immigration" as a crime. With no federal restrictions on immigration prior to the Chinese Exclusion Act, there were no "illegal immigrants"; after the law, there were. Chinese immigrants became the first to be classified as illegal and the first to be charged with the new crime of illegal immigration. The act declared that any person who secured certificates of identity fraudulently or through impersonation to be guilty of a misdemeanor, fined them \$1,000, and imprisoned them

for up to five years. Any person who knowingly aided and abetted the landing of “any Chinese person not lawfully entitled to enter the United States” could also be charged with a misdemeanor, fined, and imprisoned for up to one year. Defining and punishing undocumented immigration directly led to the establishment of the country’s first federal deportation system, and one of the final sections of the act declared that “any Chinese person found unlawfully within the United States shall be caused to be removed therefrom to the country from whence he came.” These initial forays into federal immigration regulation would be further codified for all immigrants in the Immigration Act of 1891, helping to turn the United States into a “deportation nation.”<sup>46</sup>



The Chinese exclusion laws required all Chinese immigrants to register with the US government and initiated an extensive system of surveillance that involved both local and federal officials. John T. Mason, a justice of the peace in Downieville, California, carefully recorded the personal details of local Chinese in an 1894 album he used to identify them and track their movements in and out of the United States. On these pages, the mug shots of three women and one man appear next to Mason’s careful cursive notes indicating names, occupations, ages, places of residence, height, and physical characteristics. A fifty-five-year-old woman identified as housekeeper Ung Gook, or “China Susie,” appears in the upper right-hand page. Mason found “no marks” on her face. An additional note was added in 1900 noting that she had “Gone to China for good.” Photographs of Chinese men and women in Sierra County, 1894 (here), Vault 184, California Historical Society.

AS HARSH AS the actual exclusion act was, it represented only one aspect of the larger anti-Chinese campaign. Xenophobia directed against the Chinese was not only about preventing new Chinese immigrants from entering the country; it was also about getting rid of the ones who were already here. Cities and states passed a range of laws that discriminated against the Chinese, barred them from certain jobs and neighborhoods, and curtailed their freedoms and rights in the United States. These were the so-called legal means of harassing the Chinese into leaving the country. When that didn’t work, xenophobes tried physical harassment and removal. Entire Chinese communities were forcibly expelled from their homes, and deportation and violent expulsion became another new

tool in America's war against immigrants.<sup>47</sup>

Some of the worst anti-Chinese violence took place in the Pacific Northwest. In 1870, there were only 234 Chinese people in Washington territory, just 1.0 percent of the population—not exactly a threat overrunning the territory or a significant enough number to legislate against. But they had already been banned from voting as early as 1853. In 1863, they were barred from testifying in court cases involving whites. The next year, a poll tax was enacted for Chinese people under the title “An Act to Protect Free White Labor Against Competition with Chinese Coolie Labor and to Discourage the Immigration of Chinese in the Territory.”<sup>48</sup> To marshal the resources and energy to disenfranchise less than 1 percent of a population can only be attributed, we might assume, to deep-rooted malice and to racial resentment.

A devastating national economic recession left scores of white and Chinese laborers unemployed in the 1880s. Anger toward Chinese immigrants reached a peak. The exclusion of new Chinese immigrants under the Chinese Exclusion Act, many felt, was not enough. The white citizens of Seattle did not want *any* Chinese people in the city at all. It was not a question of *whether* the Chinese should go, it was a matter of *how*, and *how soon*.

In the fall of 1885, the Knights of Labor and white vigilante groups began shouting that “the Chinese must go.” White workers made up a core part of the movement, but a broad range of citizens (including lawyers, judges, politicians, businessmen, and property owners—in other words, people who had less to fear, in terms of job security, from Chinese labor) were also involved. The Liberal League, an organization whose sole mission was to purge Washington Territory of its Chinese people, was formed. Although they all agreed on the pressing need to expel the Chinese from the city, Seattle residents could not agree on a single course of action. Proposals to extend a “general invitation. . . to the Chinamen to leave” were floated at first. Others put forward a boycott. “Let us not give them employment; let us not give them our washing to do; let us not allow them in our kitchen, in our mills, mines, or workshops,” suggested Judge Cann to an overcrowded anti-Chinese meeting in Seattle on September 21. “If they do not earn anything, they will leave,” he reasoned. A special women's committee was established to “visite [*sic*] the women of Seattle and induce them to discharge their Chinese” cooks and servants.<sup>49</sup>

These supposedly mild proposals were met with angry and passionate calls for direct and immediate action. The anti-Chinese feeling was so intense in the city in late September 1885 that Washington territorial governor Watson C. Squire made a special trip to Seattle to push for calm and peaceful adherence to the law.<sup>50</sup>

Seattle was not the only city organizing against the Chinese. In the years since the Exclusion Act was passed in 1882, many cities and towns throughout the West had expelled Chinese residents from their jurisdictions. In February 1885, the Chinese in Eureka, California, had been given a mere twenty-four hours

to leave the city before they were forced onto two steamships and Chinatown was destroyed. More than one hundred Chinese families lost their belongings in Tulare, California, when the Chinese quarter was burned down. On September 2, twenty-eight Chinese people were massacred at Rock Springs, Wyoming, and the homes and bunkhouses of seventy-nine Chinese workers were torched. The bodies of the dead were thrown into the fire; the wounded, unable to run, were also tossed onto the pyre.<sup>51</sup>

By the fall of 1885, expulsion fever spread to Washington territory. In September, Chinese people had been murdered in Squak Valley (Issaquah) and driven out of Coal Creek and Black Diamond. The Port Townsend Mill Company bowed to threats from the Knights of Labor and fired every one of its Chinese workers. Amid all this violence, anti-Chinese meetings continued. Governor Squire reported to the US secretary of the interior that “violent and incendiary” threats to “rid the country of the Chinese” were being made at numerous meetings organized by the Knights of Labor.<sup>52</sup>

The governor was particularly concerned about the cities of Tacoma and Seattle, where both city politicians and labor leaders were encouraging the use of force to rid their localities of the hated Chinese. In late September, Seattle Knights of Labor leader Daniel Cronin objected to “taffy” plans like economic boycotts. He also dismissed the work of diplomats and lawyers who were taking too long to solve the problem, he argued. Instead, he advocated for bold action. “If the Chinamen are not removed,” he ominously warned, “there will be riot and bloodshed this winter.”<sup>53</sup>

At the September 28 Anti-Chinese Congress, delegations from across Washington Territory gathered to advocate for expulsion. One speaker shouted out to the crowd: “This Chinese question has been debated for a long time. The question is, shall they go or stay?” “Go! Go! Go!” the audience shouted back enthusiastically. “How?” the speaker asked. “By force!” the crowd responded. A resolution to expel all Chinese by November 1 was unanimously approved. Couched in the language of self-protection and civic duty, the congress declared that citizens must organize themselves “for the expulsion of, and protection against the invasion and the presence of elements foreign to the principles of the laws of existence, of self-protection, of mutual good government.” A committee was to report on the progress of Chinese expulsion on November 6. At the conclusion of the meeting, labor leader Cronin ominously stated, “If the Chinamen are here on the 6th of November, I would not like to be in this town.”<sup>54</sup>

The supporters of Chinese expulsion were deadly serious in accomplishing their mission. Seattle mayor Henry L. Yesler received an anonymous letter promising destruction of the city if he interfered with the expulsion. “I Got 25# OF Dinemite [*sic*] within ONE Mile OFF SEATTLE to Dispose of ANEY [*sic*] time AFTER Nov 1st,” the letter writer informed the mayor. Governor Squire took the threats seriously enough to warn the city’s Chinese residents to “quietly withdraw.” He pledged that he would do all he could to prevent acts of violence toward the Chinese residents in Washington Territory, but he conceded that

given the “excited state of public feeling,” an “outrage might be committed before the authorities could prevent it.” It was “best. . . to scatter,” the governor suggested.<sup>55</sup>

Two October incidents added to Chinese immigrants’ anxiety. On Saturday, October 10, anti-Chinese leaders descended into Chinatown—near Washington Street, between Second and Third Avenues—to notify Chinese residents that the majority of the people of Seattle wanted them to leave the city. They also left printed materials with the same message throughout the quarter. Two weeks later, a “monster [anti-Chinese] demonstration and parade” of nearly 2,500 people took place in the city. Three bands played during the march and participants carried banners that read: “White laundries are good enough,” “Down with the Mongolian Slave,” “Discharge your Chinaman,” and “John, Go.” Later that night, several buildings in Chinatown were torched.<sup>56</sup>

Fear was palpable among the Chinese residents in Washington. Chinese residents were expelled from Bellingham on November 1; five hundred fled their homes and businesses in Tacoma during the first week of November. The forced expulsion of the rest of the city’s Chinese residents (around two hundred) began on the morning of November 3. At nine o’clock, a mob of five hundred armed white men, brandishing their weapons, descended into the Chinese quarters downtown and along the wharf. Going from house to house, they shouted that the Chinese had four hours to leave.<sup>57</sup>

By midday, the Tacoma mob was restless; they wanted the roundup to be finished. Men began to kick down doors, drag Chinese from their homes, pillage their businesses and laundries, and throw furniture into the streets. Women were forcibly pulled out of doors. Pistols were aimed at the Chinese. Two hundred Chinese were marched through the pouring rain to a railroad station located miles from town. Two died from exposure. Those who had enough cash bought tickets on an overnight passenger train out of town. Others climbed onto freight trains. Some were even forced to walk a hundred miles to Portland.

On Thursday, November 6, the white residents of Tacoma set fire to the houses and businesses that the Chinese had just vacated. A large crowd gathered to watch Chinatown burn to the ground. Throughout this entire ordeal, Governor Squire failed to fulfill his promise to use the power of the law to protect Chinese residents. The city’s police and political leaders were no help to the Chinese either. The police stood by, and Mayor Robert Jacob Weisbach reportedly participated in forcing Chinese residents out of their homes and businesses. He later proudly posed for a photograph with a group of leaders responsible for “causing the Chinese exodus.”<sup>58</sup>



Many public officials actively promoted and participated in anti-Chinese violence during the 1880s. In 1885, Mayor Robert Jacob Weisbach helped organize the expulsion of Chinese residents from Tacoma. WSHS 1903.1.4, Washington State Historical Society, Tacoma.

By November 4, the whites in Tacoma were giddy with their success. John Arthur wrote to Governor Squire the day after the expulsion. “The Chinese are no more in Tacoma,” he began. There were a few Chinese residents still packing up their stores, but they were to be gone by the next day, and then Tacoma would be “*sans* Chinese, *sans* pigtails, *sans* moon-eye, *sans* wash-house, *sans* joss-house, *sans* everything Mongolian,” he gleefully reported. Twenty-seven whites were arrested for their part in the expulsion and charged with conspiring to insurrection and riot, depriving Chinese subjects of equal protection under the law, and breaking into houses and driving out Chinese occupants. But all charges were later dropped, and Tacoma’s strategy of dealing with the Chinese became later known as the Tacoma Method and was used to round up and purge Chinese people from throughout the West during the 1880s.<sup>59</sup>

The same week that Tacoma was expelling its Chinese, labor leaders and anti-Chinese activists in Seattle organized in advance of their November 1 deadline to rid the city of “Chinese slave labor.” One hundred fifty distressed and terrified Chinese decided to follow the governor’s advice to “scatter themselves” and fled Seattle by boat and train before the deadline. The governor instructed Sheriff John H. McGraw to organize protection for the city against mob violence. McGraw assembled a force of about four hundred citizens, many of whom had advocated for legal, diplomatic, and peaceful removal of the Chinese (as opposed to violent and unlawful removal), and swore them in as deputies. Calling themselves the Home Guard, they trained and developed plans to defend the city in case of an emergency. Federal troops descended on Seattle to quell any rioting or expulsion.<sup>60</sup>

November, December, and January passed, and the Chinese remained in Seattle.

But anti-Chinese meetings continued through January 1886. Both the Seattle city council and the territorial legislature attempted to legislate against the Chinese. The city council passed a so-called cubic air ordinance, modeled after the San Francisco law. This required each resident of Seattle to sleep in an area that was at least eight by eight by eight feet, specifically targeting Seattle's crowded rooming houses where the Chinese often lived. It went into effect in December. In February 1886, the city council passed additional ordinances intended to harass the Chinese into leaving. One banned the operation of wash houses in wooden buildings; another prohibited the sale of goods in the streets. The council also began to require a license fee for fruit vendors. The territorial legislature added its own anti-Chinese legislation and introduced a series of petitions and bills to bar aliens incapable of becoming citizens (a status that applied only to Asian immigrants at the time—drawn out in this way because of their supposed inassimilability) from owning land, gaining licenses to operate laundries (again, a specific shot at Chinese businesses), and working on public works. Another measure made it illegal for any private industry or quasi-public corporation to employ Chinese workers.<sup>61</sup>

On February 6, 1886, the Knights of Labor met at the Bijou Theatre. Speaker after speaker argued that the time for peaceful measures had passed. The group passed new resolutions. One denounced “Chinese slave labor” and proposed naming those who employed Chinese as “enemies of the public.” Another appointed a committee to patrol Chinatown to determine whether the city's new cubic air ordinance was being enforced and to take a census of the Chinese still remaining in Seattle and the names of their employers, a list that the committee threatened to publish. Lastly, the group promised a boycott of the Seattle residents they determined were pro-Chinese.<sup>62</sup>

The next morning at daybreak on February 7, anti-Chinese “committees” got to work. The gangs entered Chinatown and began ordering the Chinese to leave the city or “take the consequence.” They forced open doors to homes and businesses and ordered the Chinese to report to the wharf to board a steamship that would take them out of town. Enforcers stayed behind to make sure the orders were followed, while others marched on to the next house or business. Other “committees” visited private homes that employed Chinese servants and rounded them up as well. By late morning, wagons appeared in Chinese neighborhoods. With the aid of a growing crowd of around 1,500 supporters, the “Chinese were piled in and hauled” to the dock at the foot of Main Street, where some 350 were placed under guard. The scene was pitiable, according to Ida Remington Squire, the governor's wife, who was sequestered in a downtown hotel. The Chinese prisoners were “trembling and crying,” while the crowd of whites were “running, yelling, and hooting at their heels.”<sup>63</sup>

The sheriff's Home Guard assembled to face off the mob. A scuffle ensued, and five rioters were shot, one fatally. Only the arrival of federal troops and the establishment of martial law calmed the city. But it was too late for the Chinese. Those who had not already been forced out by the mob left on their

own by February 14, 1886. Like Tacoma, the Chinese were “no more” in Seattle.

CHINESE IMMIGRATION PLUMMETED as a result of the Exclusion Act and the violent expulsion campaigns that followed. In 1882, before the Chinese Exclusion Act went into effect, 39,579 Chinese people had entered the United States. Thereafter, the numbers fell to an all-time low in 1887—the year immediately after the Seattle expulsions—when immigration officials admitted only ten Chinese immigrants into the United States. The Chinese in America referred to the Chinese exclusion laws as a “hundred kinds of oppressive laws.” They affected every aspect of Chinese immigration to the United States, determining who would be able to immigrate and casting a long shadow on Chinese immigrant lives in the United States.<sup>64</sup>

But the Chinese did not passively accept injustice. They protested and engaged in fierce battles to challenge the legality of the laws and the ways they were enforced. “Why do they not legislate against Swedes, Germans, Italians, Turks, and others?” Yung Hen, a Chinese poultry dealer in San Francisco, asked a newspaper in 1892. “There are no strings on those people... For some reason, you people persist in pestering the Chinamen.”<sup>65</sup> When the constitutionality of Chinese exclusion was upheld, attention turned to opening up additional immigration categories within the confines of the laws. The Chinese in America hired lawyers and used the courts to affirm the rights of merchant families, returning laborers, US citizens of Chinese descent, and their families to enter and reenter the country. The efforts centered in San Francisco, the main port of entry for Asians entering the United States.

The Exclusion Act required all Chinese passengers to be inspected and approved for admission. At first, these inspections took place on arriving steamships, but as inspections became lengthier and more complex, they required some maneuvering. Chinese passengers were kept on board the boat they had arrived on, and then transferred to another vessel docked in the harbor when that ship had to return across the ocean. Steamship detention continued like this for almost twenty years, causing immigration officials to complain of the “large floating Chinese alien population in the Bay.”<sup>66</sup>

To help solve this problem, the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, one of the largest shipping lines on the Pacific Ocean, built a detention facility for Chinese passengers near its offices on Pier 40 in San Francisco. The “detention shed” provided a place to hold Chinese, but it was crowded, unsanitary, and dangerous. Immigrants complained that it was an “iron cage” or a “Chinese jail.” Inspectors admitted that it was a “fire trap” and did not provide proper security. What was needed, immigration officials insisted, was an isolated and secure facility where Chinese (and other immigrant) detainees could be separated from US citizens while they were examined for contagious diseases, interrogated to ensure that they were eligible to enter the country, and detained until they were either admitted into the country or denied entry and returned to their country of origin. Angel Island—the largest island in the San Francisco Bay—seemed to offer the perfect solution.

On January 22, 1910, the Angel Island Immigration Station opened its doors. Over the next thirty years, it processed, admitted, detained, and rejected immigrants from Europe, Asia, Australasia, and Latin America—and was one of the most important immigrant gateways to America. From 1910 to 1940, one million people were processed through the port of San Francisco on their way into or out of the country.<sup>67</sup>

Some 178,000 Chinese men and women were admitted into the country through Angel Island. Both new immigrants and returning residents and citizens faced ever-tightening exclusion laws and strict enforcement procedures at the immigration station. They filled out form after form, arranged for witnesses to testify on their behalf (if they were entering as merchants, these witnesses had to be white), and subjected themselves to humiliating and invasive medical examinations and hostile interrogations. Most were forced to hire attorneys who guided them through the growing complexity of government rules regulating Chinese immigration. Over the years, it became harder and harder for Chinese immigrants to enter the United States.

As a result, some resorted to evading or circumventing the laws. “We didn’t want to come in illegally, but we were forced to because of the immigration laws,” explained immigrant Ted Chan. “They particularly picked on the Chinese. If we told the truth, it didn’t work. So we had to take the crooked path.” Some falsely claimed membership in one of the classes that were exempt from the exclusion laws, such as Chinese merchants or native-born citizens of the United States. The 1906 earthquake and fire in San Francisco destroyed all of the city’s birth records, and the number of Chinese people claiming to have been born in the United States (most likely fraudulently) significantly increased in the years afterward. If they were successful in their gambit, they could make it official, and their immigration status allowed them to enter and reenter the United States and to bring in their wives and children.<sup>68</sup>

A multinational business in immigration documents and papers documenting fraudulent relationships, or “paper sons,” sprang up to help people get to America. Chinese immigrants or returning residents started by exaggerating the number of children they had when they first testified before immigration officials. Some claimed to have three or four children, when in fact they had only one or two. These family members would be recorded in the individual’s record with the government, and because centralized birth records in China did not exist and thus could not be used to corroborate such claims, these lists opened up legal pathways for immigrants to enter the United States. Often, Chinese immigrant men sponsored their own children. But they also commonly sold an immigration slot to a relative, a neighbor—or a complete stranger. Because there was no other way for a working-class Chinese immigrant to come into the country, buying fake papers was an extremely common and often effective way of circumventing the exclusion laws.

Once US immigration officials caught on to the “paper son” system, though, they responded with harsher enforcement measures designed to uncover any

fraud or deception. Sometimes their own biases as well as the institutionalized discrimination built into the laws made enforcement practices overly harsh. Immigrant inspectors were known to have “extreme anti-Chinese prejudices” that resulted in “a sort of reign of terror” against the Chinese. As a result, Chinese applicants for admission—including those who had a legal right to enter and those who were trying to enter under false pretenses—were subjected to longer and longer interrogations, cross-examinations, detentions, and legal bills.<sup>69</sup>

Arriving Chinese immigrants were first subjected to invasive and humiliating medical examinations. Doctors and nurses pored over applicants’ bodies searching for physical defects and even measured body parts to determine age. They also looked for parasitic “Oriental” diseases that were not contagious but were grounds for exclusion if untreated after arrival. Chinese immigrants then had to make their case for admission into the country. They were questioned for hours and days about their status, family relationships, and home villages. Typical questions included the following: What are the marriage and birth dates of all of your family members? Where are your paternal grandparents buried? How many steps lead up to your house? How many rows of houses are in your village? Who lives in the third row? Name all occupants, ages, and whereabouts of the family in the third row, fourth house. When did you last see your alleged father? What did you do together? Some applicants were even required to draw extensive maps of their villages, compete with the location of major landmarks, houses, and detailed notes on the residents of each dwelling.

The same questions were then asked of the applicants’ relatives and witnesses. If there were major discrepancies, immigrant inspectors concluded that the claimed relationship did not exist and that the basis for admission was in jeopardy.

These intensive interrogations led to lengthy detentions. One hundred thousand Chinese were detained on Angel Island. They made up 70 percent of all detainees, and their average stay was for two to three weeks—the longest of all the immigrant groups coming through Angel Island. The lengthiest recorded detention was that of Kong Din Quong, who spent 756 days imprisoned on the island in 1938. (Across the country, only 20 percent of immigrant arrivals to Ellis Island were detained. Detentions typically lasted one to two days, and 98 percent of immigrants were admitted.)<sup>70</sup>

Chinese immigrants bitterly resented their long detentions on Angel Island. Many expressed their frustration, anger, and despair by writing poems on the wooden walls of the immigration station. More than two hundred poems, most of them written anonymously, can still be found in almost every corner of the men’s detention barracks on Angel Island (now preserved as a National Historic Landmark). They bear witness to the trauma of xenophobia.

*I clasped my hands in parting with my brothers and classmates.*

*Because of the mouth, I hastened to cross the American ocean.*

*How was I to know that the western barbarians had lost their hearts and reason?*

*With a hundred kinds of oppressive laws, they mistreat us Chinese.*<sup>71</sup>

THE CHINESE EXCLUSION Act was supposed to be a temporary measure, but it ended up lasting for sixty-one years. In 1888, a second law, known as the Scott Act, placed further restrictions on Chinese laborers and affirmed the principle of immigration exclusion for the Chinese. Laborers who had returned to China were forbidden to reenter the United States unless they had wives, children, parents, or property or debts in excess of \$1,000 there. In 1892, the exclusion laws were extended for another ten years under the Geary Act. The Chinese Exclusion Act was renewed again in 1902 and made permanent in 1904. It would not be repealed until 1943, and generations of Chinese Americans would wear the scars inflicted by its violence and inequality.<sup>72</sup>

But anti-Chinese xenophobia and its campaign to both exclude new Chinese immigrants and expel resident Chinese Americans from the United States would ripple far beyond Chinese America. The anti-Chinese movement and its effective use of racism and xenophobia was weaponized to further racialize other threatening, excludable, and undesirable aliens. Following the exclusion of Chinese immigrants, for example, xenophobes became increasingly alarmed about new immigration from Asia, particularly from Japan, Korea, South Asia, and the Philippines—all condemned as more “Oriental invasions.” San Francisco newspapers urged citizens to “step to the front once more and battle to hold the Pacific Coast for the white race,” and by the 1930s, these groups were barred as well.<sup>73</sup>

Claims that the growing numbers of southern and eastern European immigrants similarly threatened the United States grew increasingly common by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Because distinctive physical differences between “native” white Americans and European immigrants were not readily apparent, xenophobes became adept at manufacturing racial difference. Intellectuals, lawmakers, and scientists promoted an elaborate set of racial ideas that identified southern and eastern Europeans as racially inferior and dangerous. In 1894, they formed a new anti-immigrant organization in Boston. It was called the Immigration Restriction League.

## • FOUR •

### THE “INFERIOR RACES” OF EUROPE

At 4:31 p.m. on Thursday, May 31, 1894, a small group of Boston’s political, academic, and literary elite gathered in a State Street law office. Among those present were Robert DeCourcy Ward, an American climatologist and future Harvard professor whose family dated back to the *Mayflower*; lawyer Charles Warren, another *Mayflower* descendant and future Pulitzer Prize winner; and lawyer Prescott Farnsworth Hall, a legal expert whose English ancestors had also