

## Constructing Identity in Narratives of Asian America

### **Timeline 1: Major Anti-Asian Legislation in the United States and Canada**

Adapted from Timothy FONG, "The History of Asians in America" (Chapter 1), *The Contemporary Asian American Experience: Beyond the Model Minority*, 10-35. New York: Prentice Hall, 1998.

**1790:** Naturalization Act of 1790 declares that only "free whites" are eligible for United States citizenship.

**Early 1850s:** Chinese immigrants stream into Western Canada in search of gold. At the height of the Canadian gold rush, Chinese are forbidden to prospect, except on abandoned claims; thus, many Chinese enter the service industry.

**1882:** Chinese Exclusion Act suspends the entry of Chinese laborers to the United States for ten years. Subsequent laws bar Chinese laborers and their wives indefinitely.

**1902:** All Asians in Canada are ruled "unfit for full citizenship." Canadian restrictions on immigration begin.

**1903:** A \$500 head tax for Chinese immigrants is instituted in Canada.

**1905:** The Asiatic Exclusion League is founded in San Francisco with the mission of prohibiting Asian immigrants from entering the United States and Canada.

**1906:** Immigration Act of 1906 gives the Canadian government more power to eject unwanted immigrants from the country and establishes harsher requirements for individuals wishing to reside in Canada.

**1907:** A demonstration in Vancouver sponsored by the Asiatic Exclusion League turns into a violent race riot, resulting in the vandalization of many stores and residences owned by Asian immigrants.

**1907:** The "Gentlemen's Agreement," as a concession to Japanese military power, allows Japanese women to immigrate to the United States to join Japanese settlements. Chinese women had long been restricted from immigrating.

**1908:** A "continuous journey regulation" requirement is added to the Canadian Immigration Act, requiring all immigrants from India to take a direct route to Canada.

**1910:** Asian immigration to Canada has now been effectively limited due to head taxes, means tests, and "gentleman's agreements." One such an agreement in 1907 restricted Japanese immigration to 400; this number was lowered to 150 in 1928.

**1913:** Alien Land Law of 1913 prohibits "aliens ineligible for citizenship" in the United States from owning or leasing land for longer than three years.

**1914:** The Komagata Maru incident: a Sikh leader, Gurdit SINGH, challenges the "continuous journey regulation" by chartering a ship to sail directly to Vancouver.

## Constructing Identity in Narratives of Asian America

- Despite having obeyed the letter of the law, all but twenty passengers on the ship are refused entry.
- 1917:** Immigration Act of 1917 bars Asian immigration into the United States, except from the Philippines and Japan.
- 1920:** Alien Land Law of 1920 institutes harsher regulations for “aliens ineligible for citizenship.” Aliens are now also prohibited from holding land in the name of their American-born children.
- 1923:** Chinese Immigration Act suspends Chinese immigration to Canada indefinitely. Only after World War II, in 1947, is this policy lifted.
- 1924:** Immigration Act of 1924 bars entry to those ineligible for citizenship — effectively ending the immigration of all Asians into the United States and undermining the earlier “Gentlemen’s Agreement” with Japan.
- 1941:** On 7 December, the Japanese attack Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. As a result, Japanese immigrants in both Canada and the United States come to be considered “enemy aliens.”
- 1942:** Executive Order 9066, issued on February 19, orders Japanese and Japanese American citizens to be interned under United States custody. Even though most of the 1,000 Korean immigrants on mainland United States soil had left Korea because of anti-Japanese sentiment, the American government considers Korea a Japanese colony and therefore interns Koreans and Korean Americans as potential loyalists to the Japanese cause.
- 1942:** In February, the Canadian Parliament passes legislation requiring all Japanese living within 100 miles of the west coast to be relocated. Over 22,000 Japanese Canadians are relocated to detention camps across Canada.
- 1943:** Chinese Exclusion Act is repealed in the United States
- 1946:** Luce-Cellar Act ends the Asian barred zone in the United States, established by the Immigration Act of 1917.
- 1947:** Chinese Immigration Act is repealed in Canada.
- 1965:** Immigration Reform Act allows 20,000 immigrants annually to the United States from the Eastern Hemisphere instead of prior token figures.