

Asian American History Timeline

This timeline is primarily adapted from Sucheng Chan's book [Asian Americans: An Interpretive History](#) ©1991, Twayne Publishers, Boston. Some elements were adapted from LEAP (Leadership Education for Asian Pacifics). Links are included to the text of selected historical documents.

1600-1799 **1800-1849** **1850-1899** **1900-1949** **1950-**
Present

1600 - 1799

1600s

- Chinese and Filipinos reach Mexico on ships of the Manila galleon.

1763

- First recorded settlement of Filipinos in America. To escape imprisonment aboard Spanish galleons they jump ship in New Orleans and flee into the bayous of Louisiana.

1790

- First recorded arrival of Asian Indians in the United States.

1800 - 1849

1830s

- Chinese "sugar masters" working in Hawaii; Chinese sailors and peddlers in New York.

1844

- U.S. and China sign first treaty.

1848

- Gold discovered in California. Chinese miners begin to arrive.

1842-52

- China is defeated by the British Empire in the first Opium War, resulting in Treaty of Nanjing whereby China is forced to cede the island of Hong Kong and open ports to foreign commerce.
- A series of floods and crop failures in southern China lead to poverty and threat of famine among peasant farmers.

1847

- Three Chinese students arrive in New York City for schooling. One of them, Yung Wing, graduates from Yale in 1854 and becomes the first Chinese to graduate from a U.S. college.
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1850 - 1899

1850

- California imposes Foreign Miner's Tax and enforces it mainly against Chinese miners, who were often forced to pay more than once.

1852

- First group of 195 Chinese contract laborers land in Hawaii.
- Over 20,000 Chinese enter California.
- Chinese first appear in court in California.
- Missionary Willian Speer opens Presbyterian mission for Chinese in San Francisco.

1854

- Chinese in Hawaii establish a funeral society, their first community association in the islands.
- People v. Hall rules that Chinese cannot give testimony in court against whites.

- U.S. and Japan sign first treaty.

1857

- San Francisco opens a school for Chinese children (changed to an evening school two years later).
- Missionary Augustus Loomis arrives to serve the Chinese in San Francisco.

1858

- California passes a law to bar entry of Chinese and "Mongolians."

1859

- Chinese excluded from San Francisco public schools

1860

- Japan sends its first diplomatic mission to U.S.

1862

- Six Chinese district associations in San Francisco form a loose federation.
- California imposes a "police tax" of \$2.50 a month on every Chinese.

1865

- Central Pacific Railroad Co. recruits Chinese workers for the transcontinental railroad.

1867

- Two thousand Chinese railroad workers strike for a week.

1868

- U.S. and China sign Burlingame - Seward Treaty recognizing right of their citizens to emigrate.

- Eugene Van Reed illegally ships 149 Japanese laborers to Hawaii.
- Sam Damon opens Sunday school for Chinese in Hawaii.

1869

- Completion of first transcontinental railroad.
- J.H. Schnell takes Japanese to California to establish the Wakamatsu Tea and Silk Colony.
- Chinese Christian evangelist S.P. Aheong starts preaching in Hawaii.

1870

- California passes law against importation of Chinese, Japanese, & "Mongolian" women for prostitution.
- Chinese railroad workers in Texas sue company for failing to pay wages.

1872

- California's Civil Procedure Code drops law barring Chinese court testimony.

1875

- **Page Law** in Congress bars entry of Chinese, Japanese, and "Mongolian" prostitutes, felons, and contract laborers.

1876

- U.S. and Hawaii sign Reciprocity Treaty, allowing Hawaiian sugar to enter U.S. duty free.

1877

- Anti-Chinese violence in Chico, California.
- Japanese Christians set up Gospel Society in San Francisco, first immigrant association formed by the Japanese.

1878

-*In re Ah Yup* rules Chinese ineligible for naturalized citizenship.

1879

- California's second constitution prevents municipalities and corporations from employing Chinese.
- California state legislature passes law requiring all incorporated towns and cities to remove Chinese outside of city limits, but U.S. circuit court declares the law unconstitutional.

1880

- U.S. and China sign treaty giving the U.S. the right to limit but "not absolutely prohibit" Chinese immigration.
- Section 69 of California's Civil Code prohibits issuing of licenses for marriages between whites and "Mongolians, Negroes, mulattoes and persons of mixed blood."

1881

- Hawaiian King Kalakaua visits Japan during his world tour.
- Sit Moon becomes pastor of the first Chinese Christian church in Hawaii.

1882

- Chinese Exclusion Law suspends U.S. immigration of laborers for ten years.
- Chinese community leaders form Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA or Chinese Six Companies) in San Francisco.
- U.S. and Korea sign first treaty.

1883

- Chinese in New York establish CCBA.

1884

- Joseph and Mary Tape sue San Francisco school board to enroll their Chinese daughter Mamie in a public school.

- Chinese Six Companies sets up Chinese language school in San Francisco.
- United Chinese Society established in Honolulu.
- CCBA established in Vancouver.
- 1882 Chinese Exclusion Law amended to require a certificate as the only permissible evidence for reentry.

1885

- San Francisco builds new segregated "Oriental School" in response to Mamie Tape case.
- Anti-Chinese violence at Rock Springs, Wyoming Territory, results in many Chinese deaths.
- First group of Japanese contract laborers arrives in Hawaii under the Irwin Convention.

1886

- Residents of Tacoma, Seattle, and many places in the American West forcibly expel the Chinese.
- End of Chinese immigration to Hawaii.
- Chinese laundrymen win in Yick Wo v. Hopkins case, which declares that a law with unequal impact on different groups is discriminatory.

1888

- Scott Act renders 20,000 Chinese reentry certificates null and void.

1889

- First Nishi Hongwanji priest from Japan arrives in Hawaii.
- *Chae Chan Ping v. U.S.* upholds constitutionality of Chinese exclusion laws.

1892

- Geary Law renews exclusion of Chinese laborers for another ten years and requires all Chinese to register.

- *Fong Yue Ting v. U.S.* upholds constitutionality of Geary Law.

1893

- Japanese in San Francisco form first trade association, the Japanese Shoemakers' League.
- Attempts are made to expel Chinese from towns in southern California.

1894

- Saito, a Japanese man, applies for U.S. citizenship, but U.S. circuit courts refuse because he is neither white nor black.
- Japanese immigration to Hawaii under Irwin Convention ends and emigration companies take over.
- Sun Yat-sen founds the Xingzhonghui in Honolulu.

1895

- *Lem Moon Sing v. U.S.* rules that district courts can no longer review Chinese habeas corpus petitions for landing in the U.S.
- Hawaii Sugar Plantations' Association (HSPA) formed.

1896

- Shinsei Kaneko, a Japanese Californian, is naturalized.
- Bubonic plague scare in Honolulu - Chinatown burned.

1897

- Nishi Hongwanji includes Hawaii as a mission field.

1898

- *Wong Kim Ark v. U.S.* decides that Chinese born in the U.S. cannot be stripped of their citizenship.
- Japanese in San Francisco set up Young Men's Buddhist Association.
- The Philippine Islands become a protectorate of the United States under the Treaty of Paris ending the Spanish-American War.
- Hawaii is also annexed by the United States.

1899

- Chinese reformers Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao tour North America to recruit members for the Baohuanghui.
 - First Nishi Hongwanji priests arrive in California and set up North American Buddhist Mission.
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1900 - 1949

1900

- Organic Act makes all U.S. laws applicable to Hawaii, thus ending contract labor in the islands;
- Japanese Hawaiian plantation workers begin migrating to the mainland.
- Bubonic plague scare in San Francisco - Chinatown cordoned and quarantined.

1902

- Chinese exclusion extended for another ten years.
- Immigration officials and the police raid Boston's Chinatown and, without search warrants, arrest almost 250 Chinese who allegedly had no registration certificates on their persons.

1903

- First group of 7,000 Korean workers arrives in Hawaii to work as strikebreakers against Japanese workers.
- 1500 Japanese and Mexican sugar beet workers strike in Oxnard, California.
- Koreans in Hawaii form Korean Evangelical Society.

- Filipino students (*pensionados*) arrive in the U.S. for higher education.

1904

- Chinese exclusion made indefinite and applicable to U.S. insular possessions.
- Japanese plantation workers engage in first organized strike in Hawaii.
- Punjabi Sikhs begin to enter British Columbia.

1905

- Chinese in the U.S. and Hawaii support boycott of American products in China.
- Koreans establish Korean Episcopal Church in Hawaii and Korean Methodist Church in California.
- San Francisco School Board attempts to segregate Japanese schoolchildren.
- Korean emigration ends.
- Koreans in San Francisco form Mutual Assistance Society.
- Asiatic Exclusion League formed in San Francisco.
- Section 60 of California's Civil Code amended to forbid marriage between whites and "Mongolians."

1906

- Anti-Asian riot in Vancouver.
- Japanese nurserymen form California Flower Growers' Association.
- Koreans establish Korean Presbyterian Church in Los Angeles.
- Major earthquake in San Francisco destroys all municipal records, including immigration records, so Chinese immigrants are able to claim they are U.S. citizens and have the right to bring wives and children to America.
- Japanese scientists studying the aftermath of the San Francisco earthquake are stoned.

1907

- Japan and the U.S. reach "Gentlemen's Agreement" whereby Japan stops issuing passports to laborers desiring to emigrate to the U.S.
- President Theodore Roosevelt signs Executive Order 589 prohibiting Japanese with passports for Hawaii, Mexico, or Canada to reemigrate to the U.S.
- Koreans form United Korean Society in Hawaii.
- First group of Filipino laborers arrives in Hawaii.
- Asian Indians are driven out of Bellingham, Washington.

1908

- Japanese form Japanese Association of America.
- Canada curbs Asian Indian immigration by denying entry to those who have not come by "continuous journey" from their homelands (there is no direct shipping between Indian and Canadian ports).
- Asian Indians are driven out of Live Oak, California.

1909

- Koreans form Korean Nationalist Association.
- 7,000 Japanese plantation workers strike major plantations on Oahu for four months.

1910

- Administrative measures used to restrict influx of Asian Indians into California.
- Angel Island Immigration Station opens to process and deport Asian immigrants.

1911

- Chinese men in America cut off their queues following revolution in China.
- Pablo Manlapit forms Filipino Higher Wages Association in Hawaii.

- Japanese form Japanese Association of Oregon in Portland.

1912

- Sikhs build *gurdwara* in Stockton and establish Khalsa Diwan.
- Japanese in California hold statewide conference on Nisei education.

1913

- California passes alien land law prohibiting "aliens ineligible to citizenship" from buying land or leasing it for longer than three years.
- Sikhs in Washington and Oregon establish Hindustani Association.
- Asian Indians in California found the revolutionary Ghadar Party and start publishing a newspaper.
- Pablo Manlapit forms Filipino Unemployed Association in Hawaii.
- Japanese form Northwest Japanese Association of America in Seattle.
- Korean farmworkers are driven out of Hemet, California.

1914

- Aspiring Asian Indian immigrants who had chartered a ship to come to Canada by continuous journey are denied landing in Vancouver.

1915

- Japanese form Central Japanese Association of Southern California and the Japanese Chamber of Commerce.

1917

- Arizona passes an alien land law.
- 1917 Immigration Law defines a geographic "barred zone" (including India) from which no immigrants can come.
- Syngman Rhee founds the Korean Christian Church in Hawaii.

1918

- Servicemen of Asian ancestry who had served in World War I receive right of naturalization.
- Asian Indians form the Hindustani Welfare Reform Association in the Imperial and Coachella valleys in southern California.

1919

- Japanese form Federation of Japanese Labor in Hawaii.

1920

- 10,000 Japanese and Filipino plantation workers go on strike.
- Japan stops issuing passports to picture brides due to anti-Japanese sentiments.
- Initiative in California ballot plugs up loopholes in the 1913 alien land law.

1921

- Japanese farm workers driven out of Turlock, California.
- Filipinos establish a branch of the Caballeros Dimas Alang in San Francisco and a branch of the Legionarios del Trabajo in Honolulu.
- Washington and Louisiana pass alien land laws.

1922

- *Takao Ozawa v. U.S.* declares Japanese ineligible for naturalized citizenship.
- New Mexico passes an alien land law.
- Cable Act declares that any American female citizen who marries "an alien ineligible to citizenship" would lose her citizenship.

1923

- *U.S. v. Bhagat Singh Thind* declares Asian Indians ineligible for naturalized citizenship.
- Idaho, Montana, and Oregon pass alien land laws.

- *Terrace v. Thompson* upholds constitutionality of Washington's alien land law.
- *Porterfield v. Webb* upholds constitutionality of California's alien land law.
- *Webb v. O'Brien* rules that sharecropping is illegal because it is a ruse that allows Japanese to possess and use land.
- *Frick v. Webb* forbids aliens "ineligible to citizenship" from owning stocks in corporations formed for farming.

1924

- Immigration Act denies entry to virtually all Asians.
- 1,600 Filipino plantation workers strike for eight months in Hawaii.

1925

- Warring tongs in North America's Chinatowns declare truce.
- Hilario Moncado founds Filipino Federation of America.

1928

- Filipino farm workers are driven out of Yakima Valley, Washington.
- Filipinos in Los Angeles form Filipino American Christian Fellowship.

1930

- Anti-Filipino riot in Watsonville, California.

1931

- Amendment to Cable Act declares that no American-born woman who loses her citizenship (by marrying an alien ineligible to citizenship) can be denied the right of naturalization at a later date.

1934

- Tydings - McDuffie Act spells out procedure for eventual Philippine independence and reduces Filipino immigration to 50 persons a year.
- Filipino lettuce pickers in the Salinas Valley, California, go on strike.

1936

- American Federation of Labor grants charter to a Filipino - Mexican union of fieldworkers.

1937

- Last ethnic strike in Hawaii.

1938

- 150 Chinese women garmentworkers strike for three months against the National Dollar stores (owned by a Chinese).

1940

- AFL charters the Filipino Federated Agricultural Laborers Association.

1941

- December 7 - Japanese planes attack Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. United States enters World War II.
- After declaring war on Japan, 2,000 Japanese community leaders along Pacific Coast states and Hawaii are rounded up and interned in Department of Justice camps.

1942

- President Franklin D. Roosevelt signs [Executive Order 9066](#) authorizing the secretary of war to delegate a military commander to designate military areas "from which any and all persons may be excluded" - primarily enforced against Japanese Americans.
- Congress passes Public Law 503 to impose penal sanctions on anyone disobeying orders to carry out Executive Order 9066.

- Incidents at Poston and Manzanar relocation centers.

1943

- Incident at Topaz Relocation Center. Registration crisis leads to Tule Lake Relocation Center's designation as a segregation center.
- Hawaiian Nisei in the 100th Battalion sent to Africa.
- Congress repeals all Chinese exclusion laws, grants right of naturalization and a very small immigration quota to Chinese (105 per year).

1944

- Tule Lake placed under martial law.
- Draft reinstated for Nisei.
- Draft resistance at Heart Mountain Relocation Center.
- 442nd Regimental Combat Team gains fame.
- Exclusion orders are revoked.

1945

- August 6 - atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima, Japan, ushering in nuclear age.
- August 14 - Japan surrenders, ending World War II.

1946

- Luce- Cellar bill grants right of naturalization and small immigration quotas to Asian Indians and Filipinos.
- Wing F. Ong becomes first Asian American to be elected to state office in the Arizona House of Representatives.
- Philippines become independent. U.S. citizenship offered to all Filipinos living in the United States, not just servicemen.

1947

- Amendment to 1945 War Brides Act allows Chinese American veterans to bring brides into the U.S.

1949

- U.S. breaks off diplomatic ties with newly formed People's Republic of China.
 - 5,000 highly educated Chinese in the U.S. granted refugee status after China institutes a Communist government.
-

1950 - Present

1950-53

- Korean War

1952

- Clause in the McCarran - Walter Act grants the right of naturalization and a small immigration quota to Japanese.

1956

- California repeals its alien land laws.
- Dalip Singh Saund from the Imperial Valley, California, is elected to Congress.

1962

- Daniel K. Inouye becomes U.S. senator and Spark Matsunaga becomes U.S. congressman from Hawaii.

1964

- Patsy Takemoto Mink becomes first Asian American woman to serve in Congress as representative from Hawaii.

1965

- Immigration Law abolishes "national origins" as basis for allocating immigration quotas to various countries -- Asian countries now on an equal footing with others for the first time in U.S. history.

1968

- Students strike at San Francisco State University to demand establishment of ethnic studies programs.

1969

- Students at the University of California, Berkeley, strike for establishment of ethnic studies programs.

1974

- March Fong Eu elected California's secretary of state.
- *Lau v. Nichols* rules that school districts with children who speak little English must provide them with bilingual education.

1975

- More than 130,000 refugees enter the U.S. from Vietnam, Kampuchea, and Laos as Communist governments are established there following the end of the Indochina War.

1976

- President Gerald Ford rescinds Executive Order 9066, 34 years after WWII.

1977

- Eilberg Act restricts immigration of professionals.

1978

- National convention of the Japanese American Citizens League adopts resolution calling for redress and reparations for the internment of Japanese Americans.

- Massive exodus of "boat people" from Vietnam.

1979

- Establishment of diplomatic relations between the People's Republic of China and the U.S. reunites members of long-separated Chinese American families.

1980

- The Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees set up an Orderly Departure Program to enable Vietnamese to emigrate legally.

1981

- Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (set up by Congress) holds hearings across the country and concludes the internment was a "grave injustice" and that Executive Order 9066 resulted from "race prejudice, war hysteria and a failure of political leadership."

1982

- Vincent Chin, a Chinese American draftsman, is clubbed to death with a baseball bat by two Euro-American men.

1983

- Fred Korematsu, Min Yasui, and Gordon Hirabayashi file petitions to overturn their World War II convictions for violating the curfew and evacuation orders.

1986

- Immigration Reform and Control Act imposes civil and criminal penalties on employers who knowingly hire undocumented aliens.

1987

- First formal signing of the Proclamation of Asian Pacific American Heritage Week by the White House.

1987

- The U.S. House of Representatives votes 243 to 141 to make an official apology to Japanese Americans and to pay each surviving internee \$20,000 in reparations.

1988

- The U.S. Senate votes 69 to 27 to support redress for Japanese Americans, creating The Civil Liberties Act of 1988 .
- American Homecoming Act allows children in Vietnam born of American fathers to immigrate to the U.S.

1989

- President George Bush signs into law an entitlement program to pay each surviving Japanese American internee \$20,000.
- U.S. reaches agreement with Vietnam to allow political prisoners to emigrate to the U.S.

1992

Korean businesses looted and burned as a result of riots in Los Angeles due to outrage over Rodney King verdict.

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