America represents the land of opportunity, enticing immigrants to flock to the nation seeking prosperity and freedom. Yet Chinese immigrants, who first entered the nation in significant numbers following the California Gold rush, found America to be hostile and unwelcoming.¹ As Chinese people sought out low-wage labor opportunities in urban centers in the West, they instantly clashed with organized labor, especially the powerful Knights of Labor.

America’s rapid industrial growth created a swelling workforce, and organized labor offered a sense of camaraderie and security amidst rapid change. With the post-Civil war economy in decline in the 1870s, Chinese immigrants were targeted by organized labor, as Chinese immigrants were often willing to work for lower wages and maintain a lower standard of living. They were accused by the Knights of Labor and other labor organizations of lowering working conditions for all, and of taking away jobs from “normal” workers. Labor unrest paired with racism and Chinese immigrants’ refusal to adopt Westernized cultural values formed a deep sense of otherness and led to the passage of the Chinese exclusion act of 1882, prohibiting all immigration of Chinese laborers. Following the act, Anti-Chinese Americans physically forced Chinese workers to flee to other areas, by threatening and perpetuating acts of violence against the Chinese. The exclusion was the first U.S. act to ban a group of immigrants solely on the basis of race or nationality and changed immigration laws and the sociology of the nation forever.²

The fates were pitted against Chinese immigrants before they had set foot on U.S. soil. Americans first learned of the Chinese from American traders, diplomats, and missionaries in China who described the Chinese race as “heathen, crafty, and dishonest marginal members of the human race,” quickly setting them apart from the dominant white race. The American Orientalist ideology homogenized Asia as one indistinguishable entity, viewed as opposite to the West. Immigrants began arriving soon after the conquest of American Indians and Mexicans in the West, which had formed a strong prejudice against immigrants. The Opium Wars and widespread crop failure in China prompted hundreds to immigrate to the United States, beginning with the California Gold rush of 1848-1855, and continuing with large labor projects such as the First Transcontinental Railroad. Making up 4.3% of all immigrants during this period, they were primarily male laborers sending earnings back to their struggling families. The Washington Post reported that the Chinese came without families and “know none of the attachments of home or domestic surroundings,” and “do not assimilate with our civilization,” reflecting the culture clash.

Chinese immigrants were quickly racially profiled and described as an “unarmed invasion” with drastic social, moral, and political effects due to the perceived danger of the Chinese race. Cultural differences around gender roles reinforced the widespread separation of the Chinese. Chinese men kept their hair in a long ques style “as a symbol of loyalty to the Qing Empire” and “wore loose pants,” both viewed as sexually ambiguous in contrast to the strict gender roles of America in the 1800s. Chinese men did not follow societal norms that divided labor by gender in American, and found a niche in laundries, restaurants, and domestic services, all positions traditionally seen as feminine. The cultural differences strengthened the idea that Chinese people were both unwilling to and incapable of assimilating to Western ways of living, leading to the belief that Chinese immigrants should not be permitted on US soil.

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3 Lee, 33.
4 Lee, 32.
5 Gyory, 21.
7 Lee, 31.
8 Lee, 34.
9 Lee, 34.
The Chinese workers were first tolerated in mining communities, but as gold became scarce in California, animosity and violence brewed between the immigrant and other foreigners. *The New York Daily Times* described how “throughout the whole mining region, there appears to be unanimous opposition to the Chinese,” responding to the building prejudice. Legislation like the Foreign Miners Tax imposed in 1852 targeted the Chinese population imposing a tax of three dollars a month on foreign miners, who were primarily from China. The act did not “deny the right of the Chinaman to occupy and work at mines,” instead discouraging their presence while profiting off the tax, effectively forcing their expulsion from the industry, while benefiting the state. The 1854 Supreme Court case *People v. Hall* ruled that the Chinese, like African Americans and Native Americans, were not allowed to testify in court, making it impossible for Chinese immigrants to seek justice in the face of mounting violence. This racially targeted act objectively disregards the Sixth Amendment that guarantees the rights of criminal defendants. By 1870, Chinese miners had paid $5 million to the state of California via the Foreign Miners Tax, yet they faced continuing discrimination at work and in their camps, clearly showing they were unwelcome. As a result, Chinese workers flocked to urban centers, mainly San Francisco, and settled in city enclaves looking for low-wage jobs in restaurants and laundries.

The declining economy presented limited employment and forced immigrants into unfavorable work environments that relied on cheap labor. Stereotypes like the “Chinese prostitute” and the “enslaved” Chinese coolie were perpetuated, as many immigrated under labor contracts binding them to slave-like conditions, presented as their only option. This contract labor system helped mining and railroad industries import below-market wages through the mid-nineteenth century. Media depicted the Chinese as a demoralized race describing them as inherently inferior, immoral, and lustful, with the power

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12 Gyory, 46.
to subvert the “domestic ideal existing between white heterosexual men and women.”\textsuperscript{14} As this view became the mainstream sentiment, the dominant white culture came view the Chinese population as undeserving of rights of native-born and white individuals.

A combination of economic fear and cultural anxiety set the stage for an ominous fate as immigrants attempted to enter the job market. Massive population growth surged until the 1870s, creating widespread joblessness, yet many Chinese workers who were willing to work for low wages found menial work. By 1871 in San Francisco there were four willing workers for every job, and at one point the low-paid Chinese laborers represented nearly a quarter of all wage-earning workers in the state.\textsuperscript{15} This disproportionate amount of employment fanned the discontent of white workers, especially the unemployed. The \textit{Atlanta Constitution} described how it was necessary to “threaten to overwhelm and starve [the Chinese] out,”\textsuperscript{16} in order to protect the jobs of the white workers.

The Chinese were thought to have a lower standard of living with their “purported diet of ‘rice and rats,’”\textsuperscript{17} with media reporting they “[lived] in holes [and slept] on shelves.”\textsuperscript{18} In 1876, H. N. Clement, a San Francisco lawyer, addressed the California State Senate Committee articulating the growing sentiment of hate toward the Chinese when he said: “the Chinese are upon us. How can we get rid of them?”\textsuperscript{19} A deep hatred toward the Chinese people was forming and the means to eradicate the race was discussed with the “Chinese problem” seen as the “darkest cloud not only on California’s horizon but on the republic’s as well.\textsuperscript{20} The \textit{Daily Constitution} described how California legislation puts the “Chinese question” on solid ground and proposed that Chinese immigration is “more on an invasion than anything else, and which threatens a substitution of alien workers.”\textsuperscript{21} Labor unions ebodied the concerns of the white workers and fueled anti-Chinese movements. The anti-Chinese sentiment became a “building block

\textsuperscript{14} Gyory, 71.
\textsuperscript{15} Lee, 33.
\textsuperscript{17} Lee 33.
\textsuperscript{19} Lee, 31.
\textsuperscript{20} Lee, 9.
of national trade-union politics” that “transposed anti-capitalist feeling with anti-immigrant hostility,” using the popular issue of Chinese exclusion to build their membership.22

Animosity towards the Chinese became politicized when labor leader Denis Kearney founded the Workingmen’s Party of California in 1877 in response to widespread unemployment from the 1873-83 national depression. The union blamed the Chinese for depressing wages and organized to successfully rewrite the State constitution to deny Chinese voting rights, illustrating the unions power within the state government. The party’s rallying cry was “The Chinese Must Go!” and aimed to rid the state of cheap Chinese labor and the Central Pacific Railroad that employed them.23 The Workingman’s Party was met with considerable support among white Californians and employed a combination of cultural prejudice, racism, and economic survival to channel animosity toward the Chinese. The Washington Post described how “union members [were] reduced to want and in many cases beggary by the horde of Chinese,”24 to reflect how white workers were struggling to find jobs due to Chinese competitors. The party became an important factor in California politics and represented the growing demand for action to be taken against the Chinese.25 The labor uprising of 1877 fanned flames of discontent, and numerous strikes broke out in city after city. Although many of the legislative efforts were overturned by the State Supreme Court, many more anti-Chinese bills followed in California and throughout the nation. In 1879 following the action of the Workingman’s Party California state adopted a new constitution which granted the state government authority to decide which individuals were allowed to live in the state, enabling control of employment opportunities for the Chinese, at the institutional level.

The Knights of Labor took a strong position against the Chinese, adding to the force and popularity of movement. The Knights formed as a secret society in 1869, and grew slowly until worker militancy rose, especially after the great railroad strike of 1877.26 After 1878 the union declared itself as a national labor

22 Lee, 33.
23 Schwantes, 4.
25 Gyory, 97.
26 Swantes, 7.
union gaining traction and reaching a peak of 700,000 members in 1886. Terence Vincent Powderly presided over the union during the gilded age, leading the union to become the most ambitious organization during the most critical era of labor injustice. He was immensely popular and legitimized the union’s practices.\(^{27}\) While he said that he supported workers of all races, he was against immigration that would take away jobs for white workers. He stated, “I am an American, and believe that self-preservation is the first law of nations as well as nature,”\(^{28}\) propelling his view that Chinese exclusion was justified if it would protect the white worker. In 1879, the *Boston Daily Globe* summarized the issue, articulating the worker’s fear that the Chinese will "lower the condition of white laborers or drive them away” highlighting the importance of the issue and critiquing how it was “lightly heeded by the Republican president.”\(^{29}\) Workers in the West were facing an economic depression, and demanded action against the Chinese workers, who they saw as a cause of their plight. In the spring of 1882, organized labor rallied behind the bill to ban Chinese immigrants, bringing the strong support of workers, and propelling the bill forward as a labor law.\(^{30}\)

On March 24th, 1882 the Chinese bill was passed in the United States House of Representatives. The *Atlantic Constitution* reported the argument had been framed as the “unadulterated question of labor” stating frankly that “100,000 Chinese laborers in California had taken the place of 100,000 American workers,”\(^{31}\) and calling upon the Representatives to restore justice for American workers. The Federal Government and the Chester A. Arthur administration debated the act in depth, initially objecting the passage due to the extended length of the proposed exclusion. Yet, on May 6, 1882, President Arthur signed the Chinese Exclusion Act into law effectively banning all immigration from China for a period of 10 years.\(^{32}\) *The New York Times* reported the hope that the passage, “will settle the much-vexed Chinese

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\(^{27}\) Schwantes, 9  
\(^{28}\) Schwantes, 4  
\(^{29}\) *Boston Daily Globe*, 11 March 1879. 2.  
\(^{30}\) Gyory, 231.  
\(^{32}\) Gyory, 238.
question for a time at least,” succinctly describing how the bill was met with little enthusiasm, and not perceived as a complete fix. There were no meetings of workers to celebrate, and the labor press barely reported the matter.34

The passage of the act left the Chinese folk in a difficult position; they had to decide if they should stay in the United States or return home to reunite with their families. Over widespread dislike persisted well after the law was passed, yet some industries still resisted their exclusion continuing to employ the Chinese and accept their lower wages. Any Chinese who left the United States had to obtain certifications for reentry, which excluded them from US citizenship making it very difficult for Chinese to leave the nation. An Amendment made in 1884, and the Scott Act in 1888, strengthened and expanded the act, making it illegal to reenter the US after leaving.35 After the act was passed with was accepted, upheld, and strengthened with little question to its legitimacy.

Although the act was passed in the name of labor, many of the struggles of the laborer were left unresolved. While many workers pointed to the Chinese as the cause of labor unrest, the exclusion did little to solve the problem. A period known as the “Driving Out” was born after the act passed where civilian movements were organized to physically force Chinese to relocate. This was supported by labor organizations as well as the Knights of Labor, which took an active role. The Pacific Northwest soon became a center for Anti-Chinese movements, following the expansion of logging and railway construction, which had attracted workers including the Chinese. Washington and Oregon were hit especially hard by the economic downturn in 1884, which occurred at the same time as the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway, effectively leaving hundreds of unskilled and semiskilled workers to flood the job markets. Many of the job seekers were Chinese, and white workers feared that as Chinese people were hired for less, they would be used as pawns to lower the wages for all.36 The Globe described how the Chinese are “accustomed to live on the poorest fare, and in the meanest manner” with a “secret

33 Gyory, 238.
34 Gyory, 238.
35 Gyory, 284.
36 Lee 138.
society which encourages crime amongst themselves,\textsuperscript{37} illustrating the distaste white workers felt toward the Chinese population. In 1885, the \textit{Seattle Post-Intelligencer} described a mass meeting that was held to "formulate a plan of intelligent and concerted action to be taken in the Chinese matter,"\textsuperscript{38} suggesting that the Chinese had been imported mainly by fraud to work on the US Central Pacific Railroad, sending all earnings back to China. The meetings were organized by labor organizations and gathered many prominent people, who declared that issue required action at the Federal level, which had proven ineffective at solving the problem.\textsuperscript{39}

As the Knights expanded their membership they tried to appeal to the Pacific Northwest, yet it was not until the labor unrest and following events of 1885 that they gained wide support. Animosity toward the Chinese people was reaching new heights with the Knights of Labor actively propelling hatred saying it was up to the American people to “rid the nation of Chinese.”\textsuperscript{40} With the extensive national labor turmoil, the Knight’s management was stretched thin in the West, paving the way for Daniel Cronin, who employed strong anti-Chinese rhetoric, to gain wide unchecked impact and support.\textsuperscript{41} Cronin was a working man and was threatened by wage cuts and the rising tide of unemployment after he lost his menial sawmill job.\textsuperscript{42} He had secretly joined the International Workers' Association (IWA), which was dedicated to radical revolutionary unionism.\textsuperscript{43} Using the popular anti-Chinese rhetoric he gained prominence effectively expanding the movement’s strength, bringing the proclaimed Chinese problem to the center of the Knights of Labor in the West.

The American Federation of Labor (AFL) additionally took a strong anti-Chinese position, with the president Samuel Gompers expressing blatant Chinese hatred explicitly by asking, “Meat vs. Rice—

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{37} “Notes From the Capital: Practical Illustration of How the Coal Tax Operates The Anti-Chinese County of York's Claims Against the Chinese.” \textit{The Globe}, 25 Mar. 1885, p. 2.
\item \textsuperscript{39} “Anti-Chinese Congress: A Macready.” \textit{The Seattle Post-Intelligencer}, 29 Sept. 1885.
\item \textsuperscript{40} “The Chinese.” \textit{The Seattle Post-Intelligencer}, 20 Sept. 1885. P. 1.
\item \textsuperscript{41} Schwantes, 3.
\item \textsuperscript{42} Schwantes, 4
\item \textsuperscript{43} Schwantes, 8.
\end{itemize}
American Manhood vs. Asiatic Coolieism. Which Shall Survive?

This sentiment illustrated the popular idea that the Chinese had to be removed whether by force or justly through the law in order for the white worker to be liberated from struggle. By the end of the year, the Seattle Post-Intelligencer described how the Chinese were everywhere along the Pacific Coast. In San Francisco the Chinese were told to leave the city within 60 days. The desire to take action to forcibly remove the Chinese was brewing, and it was clear the Exclusion Act had not satisfied the angry white laborers.

Anti-Chinese movements were reaching the mainstream, gaining power and powerful proponents. Daniel Cronin fanned the violence by suggesting the next step was to organize the anti-Chinese forces. He held a mass meeting sponsored by the Seattle Liberal League where he boasted that he had a plan to rid the land of all of the Chinese in only two weeks. He declared, “I was in Eureka, California when the edict went forth that all Chinese must go.” Many threatened that if Seattle did not successfully rid the land of Chinese a bloody riot was bound to erupt. The movement grew quickly in Seattle, and on October 24th, a procession of more than 2,500 people from the Puget Sound area marched through Seattle behind three brass bands bearing posters projecting hate towards the Chinese such as, “Discharge your Chinamen,” “Down with the Mongolian slave,” and “elevate the masses.” The lively procession painted a clear picture of the anger the white workers felt towards the Chinese. The public was demanding action whether peaceful or forceful. It was clear to the Chinese folk that they were unwelcome, and many of the Tacoma workers fled to Seattle, Portland and San Francisco, where more immigrants resided. Anti-Chinese labor movements sought to force Chinese workers out of industries and organized to eliminate the option for the railway and mining companies hiring an unlimited number of Chinese laborers. In San Francisco the Knights of Labor created a working permit requirements that Chinese workers could not obtain to prevent them from engaging in the laundry business and encouraged all “honorable employers”

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44 Lee 33.
46 Schwantes, 6.
47 Schwantes, 5.
48 Schwantes, 5.
to stop hiring Chinese as cheap labor. In their chapter meetings the Knights declared that workers who support Chinese businesses are depriving white workers from jobs, creating a societal pressure to boycott the Chinese. The Knights advocated for workers to boycott Chinese businesses, the union prompted all citizens to take an active role to “rid the nation of Chinese.” In addition, Chinese at various coal mines in the city had been fired and were being replaced by white workers. News reporting fanned anger toward the Chinese claiming their ways ”are so dark and furtive” and they arrive in the United States “like an army of rats to gnaw,” painting the Chinese in an abhorrent manner. Many claimed incorrectly that Chinese workers were in the U.S. illegally, and therefore had “forfeited the protection of our laws,” justifying lawless action against them. Tensions were coming to a head, seen all around the city with an advertisement for Seattle's Great IXL Clothing Store, read "War! War! The Chinese must go! The IXL says so."

On September 29th in 1885, a mass meeting was held in Seattle where speakers met to “formulate a plan of intelligent and concerted action to be taken in the Chinese matter,” introducing the topic as “the most vital to all the people.” The meeting discussed how as Congress was not taking action, the community was left to take matters into their own hands, leaving the threat of a massacre in the air. Such wars had already been fought a few months earlier in neighboring Tacoma and in Rock Springs, Wyoming, where white residents angry with the lack of action, forcefully expelled the Chinese. On October 25, 1885 in Tacoma, a large torch-lit procession was held in the city, and two-thousand supporters crowded the streets, holding signs that attacked the Chinese and portrayed hatred. Buildings


53 Schwantes, 10.

54 Schwantes, 10.

55 Schwantes, 18.


were lit from top to bottom with the glow representing the "light of a dawning day" for free white labor," after the Chinese were expelled. In response Washington’s Governor Watson Squire telegraphed the secretary stating that the “citizens of Tacoma have successfully expelled about 200 Chinese from the city limits,” asking for government protection, which resulted in approval for him to use all in his power to prevent further action. Courts struggled to maintain order, as the cases mounted over 60, leaving the justice system unsure how to administer repercussions.

In Rock Springs, racial tensions steadily grew as the Union Pacific Railroad resisted the efforts of the Knights of Labor to fire Chinese workers. On September 2, 1885, white miners attacked the Chinese, robbing, shooting and stabbing Chinese successfully driving them out. The Chinese tried to flee, but many were trapped and burned alive leaving 28 dead and 15 others wounded. While the government attempted to intervene, no one was arrested or held accountable for the crimes committed. The events were horrific, yet the Knight’s leader Terence V. Powderly justified violence as the government had failed to respond to the workers grievances, arguing that they were forced to take action on their own. Less than a week later a small group of white workers and Native American allies murdered Chinese hops pickers in the Squak valley East of Seattle. While the men escaped, their belongings were burned. In total 13 Knights of Labor members were indicted by the Grand Jury, and four were arrested for the murder of Chinese at Squak, yet legal systems struggled to control the widespread violence. In the face of mounting violence, The Los Angeles Times reported how lawless action against the Chinese had proven successful, and every town should expect the same action to occur. As the violent acts had effectively ridded the areas of Chinese, a dangerous precedent was set.

58 Schwantes, 11.
61 Schwantes, 11.
64 Schwantes, 11.
In Seattle the coordinated attempts led by Cronin to remove the Chinese continued to escalate, and committee meetings were held to discuss how the Chinese could be removed. Some 150 Chinese fled the city in November, prompting the mayor to telegraph President Cleveland requesting troops to be sent, yet as time passed no action was taken and the troops were sent back. Yet anti-Chinese movements did not end there, and on February 6, 1886 the Knight of Labor organized a six-man committee tasked with telling the Chinese that they must leave Seattle or face removal by force. The next day the “committees” took to the city’s Chinese quarters forcing their way into homes and demanding that all Chinese immediately pack their bags and report to the steamship the *Queen of the Pacific* that same day.\(^{67}\) The men went to one Chinese home after another where one man would distract the family while others loaded all of their belongings into a cart, forcing the family to leave their homes with their belongings.\(^{68}\) Some 350 Chinese from Chinatown went to the pier, as the mayor and law enforcement stood by, unsure how to act. When Governor Squire ordered the dispersal of the mob and demanded the release of the Chinese, the escalated mob ignored him, illustrating the lack of capacity of enforcement. At the dock, the rioters were short of paying the fare needed to transport the Chinese, delaying the trip even though most of the Chinese were willing to leave.\(^{69}\) The mob next unsuccessfully attempted to force the Chinese onto a train bound to Tacoma. With no other plan, the mob left the Chinese to spend the night outside in the pelting rain. In the morning some Chinese men died of exposure. The mob had acted overtly unlawfully, and eight Knights of Labor members were arrested, as local law enforcement attempted to tell the Chinese they had the right to remain in the city. Yet little could be done to stop the motion, and the mob proceeded to raise enough funds to send all the Chinese away, preventing law enforcement from stepping in. In the riot, shots rang out and stopped only after 2 militiamen and 3 rioters lay seriously injured, prompting Governor Squire to issue martial law.

\(^{67}\) Schwantes, 6.
In the aftermath of the violent and confusing event in Seattle, legal repercussions ensued, and some members were charged with conspiracy in violation of the Ku Klux Klan Act, which was passed by Congress on April 20, 1871, to protect Southern blacks from similar white intimidation. Yet despite the evidence showing that the Knights were involved, the judge found Cronin and his co-defendants innocent, exhibiting the trend of the white workers to act unlawfully against the Chinese without legal repercussions. In light of the blatant violence directed by the Knights of Labor, division within the union grew. Released from jail, Cronin attempted to keep the movement alive, next directing his attention to Portland. Yet the party struggled as IWA radicalism created a split pitting President Powderly against Cronin, who was accused of encouraging anarchism and spreading dangerous radical ideas in the Pacific Northwest. Although the Knights was growing in numbers, with the influence of radicals, the union struggled to maximize its impact, giving way to rapidly growing craft unions.\textsuperscript{70} A year after the great Seattle fire of mid 1889, craft unions helped rebuild the city, while the Knights remained political. A year after this, craft unionists expelled the Knights from the central labor council, symbolizing the end of an era.\textsuperscript{71} Daniel Cronin simply dropped from sight, joining a utopian commune in Oregon, as the Knights receded in prominence.\textsuperscript{72}

The Knights left a complicated legacy in the Pacific Northwest. It had accomplished powerful labor change, by providing for the day to day needs of workers in coal camps and had instigated battles that were later continued by the United Mine Workers of America. The group was incredibly progressive in its age and was influential in launching Washington’s populist movement in 1891, which eventually captured the state’s government in 1896.\textsuperscript{73} However the political polarization they perpetuated and violent actions against the Chinese illustrates a troubled history of the Knights.

The passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act is remembered as a dark chapter in American history. Although the Act was passed in 1882, the rigidity and violence it instigated lasted another thirty years,
impacting many races, and greatly damaging the American economy. In 1943 the Chinese Exclusion Act was repealed and replaced by the 1943 Magnuson Act, which allowed a national quota of 105 Chinese immigrants per year. Chinese immigration did not occur on a large scale until the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. The act deeply impacted national policy towards immigration, opening the door for future exclusions and regulations. In California, non-whites could not marry whites until 1948 when the Supreme Court ruled that a ban of interracial marriage within a state was unconstitutional.

Today, Chapter 7 of the Title 8 of the United States Code is headed “Exclusion of Chinese,” standing as the only chapter of 15 that focuses completely on a specific nationality or ethnic group. It was not until June 18, 2012, that the United States House of Representatives passed a resolution that formally expressed the regret of the House of Representatives for the Chinese Exclusion Act, acknowledging how the act stripped Chinese Americans of their basic freedoms based on their nationality. In 2014 the California Legislature took formal action to recognize the accomplishments of Chinese Americans in the state, calling upon Congress to apologize for the adoption of the Chinese Exclusion Act. The resolutions sought to reckon with the dark history and acknowledge the terrible violence and pain the act caused, formally apologizing to the Chinese population in the nation.

In all sense the Chinese exclusion was a political act. The Chinese Exclusion Act responded to the demands of labor movements, becoming one of the few labor issues addressed at the Federal level. Almost all other labor movements had been ignored: the eight-hour workday enforcement, public works, and a federal bureau of labor. In general the nation’s leaders proved inept in responding to the demands of the people, failing to address unemployment, depression, and problems caused by massive industrial upheavals for a decade. Exclusion was a simple and direct action the Federal Government could take to appease labor movements, without much effort or sacrifice of budget or policy. Although labor unions

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74 Gyory, 232.
75 Gyory, 232.
76 Gyory, 232.
77 Gyory, 232.
continued to back the bill through its passing, opposition persisted. The act clearly did not solve labor problems, and cheap labor persisted in other ways.\textsuperscript{78}

As the first law ever passed by the United States to ban a group from entering the nation purely on the basis of race or nationality, the Chinese Exclusion Act introduced gatekeeping ideology altering politics, laws, and culture transforming the ways in which Americans viewed race and immigration.\textsuperscript{79} While the Chinese Exclusion Act did not directly cause any following immigration restrictions, it provided clear legitimacy, making future bans and quotas easier to accept.\textsuperscript{80} The framework of the act was employed to racialize other threatening, excusable, and undesirable aliens.\textsuperscript{81} The exclusion of the Chinese made illegal immigration a criminal case, creating strong ideology that continues to this day.\textsuperscript{82} Following the United States all but closed the door on Europe and Japan for the next 100 years.\textsuperscript{83} The act reveals the tendency of the nation to target minorities during times of hardship, where marginalized communities bear the brunt of crisis.

As the nation reckons with history of exclusion, it is important to understand that when the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed, Americans nationwide could readily accept anti-Chinese legislation.\textsuperscript{84} The tumultuous political climate of the late 1800s, formed an environment where racism and inequality were accepted. In all regards the act was an overtly racist, and passed after the Civil War, symbolizing the transition of the Reconstruction era to the Gilded Age where discrimination was more acceptable and prevalent throughout the nation. Prejudice prevailed, revealing that while equality could be proclaimed as a national value, it was not backed up by legislation or public policy\textsuperscript{85}. The Chinese Exclusion was a tragic event in American history, with anti-Asian sentiment lingering to the present day. When the act was passed no national sentiment arose to prevent the Act or demand change, and the marginalized Chinese

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\item [78] Gyory, 239.
\item [79] Lee, 32.
\item [80] Gyory, 247.
\item [81] Lee, 36.
\item [82] Lee 37.
\item [83] Gyory, 238.
\item [84] Gyory, 238.
\item [85] Gyory, 238.
\end{itemize}
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were at the mercy of the dominant culture. The Chinese Exclusion Act was shaped by politicians under the false label of labor action, without significantly solving the many labor struggles of the time. The Act closed the door on Chinese and reframed how America would see immigration forever.

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86 Gyory, 239.
Additional Sources

