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Civil Rights and Immigration: The Case of Chinese immigrants

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Master in Literature and Civilization.

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16/06/2025

Signature

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my dear father, whose spirit will always reside in my heart, the man who taught me to pursue and achieve my dreams. I hope this academic achievement makes you proud of me in Heaven.

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First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. Mostefaoui for his guidance, feedback and support throughout the whole year, his ideas and regular updates helped me to do my research without complexities and stress. I also extend my gratitude to the jury members Prof. Rahmani and prof. Raouti for their careful reading and evaluation of my research paper, which contributed to the success of this academic work.

Abstract

The United States has a long history with immigrants who came for good life. However, this dream was not real for all the immigrants there. The research paper aims at examining the reasons that led Chinese to migrate to the United States in the 19th century, shedding light on the policies that restricted them and those that supported their quest, focusing on their negative and positive impact. The objective of the study is to explore the evolution of Chinese community struggles in the American society and whether they really obtained their civil rights. The research paper employs qualitative approach to analyse historical documents, legislative laws, reports and scholarly articles in order to evaluate and understand the reasons behind their ongoing challenges in modern America and their protests against cruel practices that continue to violate their civil rights like the lack of legal protection.

Key words: American society, Chinese community, civil rights, policies, struggles.

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List of Acronyms

U.S	United States of America
C C B A	Chinese Consolidation Benevolent Association
CACA	Chinese American Citizens Alliance
AAM	Asian American Movement
CPA	Chinese Progressive Association
EEOA	Educational Opportunity Act
ILGWU	International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union
ACLU	American Civil Liberties Union
OCA	Organization of Chinese Americans
AACL	Asian Americans Leadership Council
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation

General Introduction

Introduction

The United States has long been described as a "nation of immigrants" due to its long history of immigration from the colonial era to the present day. The opportunities available there have attracted immigrants from all around the world. During the 19th century mass waves of immigrants entered the U.S, each group received different forms of hospitality, and their experiences varied depending on their ethnicity.

Chinese immigrants, among those who moved to the U.S, came to the country for many reasons, including the pursuit of a better life and escaping the poor economic situation in China along with social and geographical conflicts that occurred during the Qing dynasty. However, even in the U.S they faced multiple experiences mixed with both racist restrictions and legal reforms that impacted them since they arrived, leading to the raising of questions about their status there. To understand the current view of the American society towards them, an in-depth analysis of historical events was conducted, raising the question about whether they still suffer from civil rights violations in modern America.

Western researchers point out that Chinese immigrants experienced harsh conditions since they arrived until 1965, when they were granted full civil rights thanks to tolerant laws that accepted all ethnicities. In this concern, the research paper focuses on exploring the economic, social and political events experienced by the early Chinese immigrants and their descendants to fully understand whether their status has improved in American society or not by addressing three research questions:

1. What factors contribute to the widespread of hostility towards the Chinese immigrants?
2. How do Chinese immigrants react to the repressive practices?
3. Has the COVID-19 pandemic revive the anti-Chinese sentiment?

To achieve the objectives, this study uses a qualitative research method to enable a nuanced examination of legislative laws, cases, government speeches, historical books, scholarly articles and civil rights reports to assess the Chinese Americans experiences across different historical periods. Through this analysis, the thesis aims to examine how political, economic, and social attitudes continue to influence Chinese Americans in the contemporary United States. The study is guided by the hypothesis that Chinese immigrants obtained their full civil rights after 1965 thanks to the reform policies created at that time.

The research paper consists of three chapters. The first chapter examines the reasons that prompt Chinese people to flee China and migrate to the U.S in the 19th century, focusing on

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explaining the social and economic situation in China and the opportunities that United States enjoy in various fields. The study also addresses the policies that contribute to the discrimination of Chinese immigrants, while also considering the policies that reform their conditions, and analyses their broader impact on them.

The second chapter deeply explains the Chinese immigrants' responses to the long standing restrictions against them in the American society, through engaging several organizations and movements to stop the racial discrimination. As their efforts to eradicate these prejudices increase, anti-Chinese sentiments grow and new barriers emerge. The research paper will explore the practices that target Chinese individuals, such as educational restrictions and detentions, along with their success to establish small businesses and the use of Chinatowns as identity survival.

The third chapter aims to understand intergenerational conflicts related to adaptation and integration, examining how past and contemporary events shape their self-understanding and how their political engagement create a sense of solidarity among them. This chapter will focus more on how Chinese Americans are portrayed in the American media and how they confront the complexities of identity, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, which exposes many perceptions about them within American society.

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1. Introduction

The traumatic events that China witnessed in the 19th century including, the decline of the Qing Dynasty, economic exploitation and social disorder due to wars, natural disasters and rebellions encouraged the migration of its citizens to the United States of America, where opportunities were available to achieve a better life. However, the increase in immigration led to the establishment of immigration policies that mostly consisted of discriminatory laws, with few that exhibited tolerance. The primary interests of this chapter are an in-depth analysis of the reasons behind Chinese immigration, focusing on the conditions of both countries during the nineteenth century, and it will delve into historical narratives to explore the four major policies that affected the Chinese community in the United States.

2. Chinese Immigration to the United States

The 19th century was a pivotal period marked by global changes and mass movements of people across continents. As immigration surged during this period, it became a complex phenomenon and sensitive issue that is hard to understand it, shaped by a wide range of factors that drive individuals to leave their homelands. The reasons behind this action vary depending on each person's conditions and can be classified into several types: forced, internal, external, voluntary and irregular migration all are based on the surrounding circumstances of people and their desires to pursuit better job opportunities, escaping wars, natural disasters, persecution, massive rebellions and foreign exploitation of China's privileges (Kaufman, A, 2011 p. 02)

The dynamics of immigration from China to the United States were shaped by complicated interaction of historical context. Although certain sources indicate that the Chinese first arrived in the United States as early as the 18th century, the beginnings of their presence date back to the mid-19th century in the final century of the Qing Dynasty. The Qing, who were in power from 1644 to 1911, began their reign as effective rulers. They brought about a long period of peace, and raised the standard of living for millions of people. But by the mid-1800s, they were struggling to resolve problems from within China and from international actors and force, in addition to trade imbalance between Britain and China (Harris, 2025). Some of the biggest factors that shaped the 19th century. Questions have been raised regarding the reasons behind their mass migration, prompting inquiries into whether it is driven by a single factor or multiple causes.

2. 1. Leading Causes of These Waves of Immigration as Push Factors

Since ancient times, when various crises and tensions occur in countries, their citizens resort to immigration. Chinese community made their way to the United States due to the instability in China. This movement was driven by many reasons that varied from one individual to another, some were forced to go because of economic struggles, widespread of poverty, political instability, and environmental factors that negatively affected the lives of the Chinese. Harrison-Hall, J (2023) stated that the increase in the Chinese population and the difficulty of achieving wealth led to migration, especially from major cities like Shanghai. Others chose to immigrate to the U.S because of the attractive opportunities and economic prosperity that attract people from all over the world, not just the Chinese.

The last Qing Dynasty ruled China from 1644 to 1911, was one of the richest empires in the world characterized by powerful leaders who sought to elevate China's standing and succeeded in greatly expanding its territory, improving shipbuilding technology and encouraged agriculture by developing innovative methods that helped revitalize the soil and make it arable which led to nutrition improved (Long, L, n.d). The dynasty also made advances in the arts and successful conquests. These satisfactory achievements turned into collapse in its last decades, facing conflicts, wars and crisis that weakened the dynasty power and reduced his sovereignty which led to the departure of the Chinese from their homeland looking for a better life and opportunities.

2. 1. 1 Social, Political and Economic Unease 19th century China

China was considered the world economic leader due to its resources, investments and productivity, it possessed great agricultural wealth and silver was viewed as one of its most important economic strengths, all of these made other powerful countries put it under their sights. Scholars have explained in depth how China became known as the "sick man of East Asia" while being one of the world major powers under Qing rule, they explained that the main reason behind the beginning of china struggles is the rise of imperialism and the competition between imperial powers like England and France, this competition sought to achieve lot of goals including economic expansion and controlling territories.

Szczepanski, K. (2020) confirmed that external factors were the main reason behind the collapse of the dynasty, the latest Western technology during the industrial revolution

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contributed to European military superiority. Cannons, guns, and ironclad warships were developed, while the Qing Army lacked advanced weapons to confront the enemy, and its

reliance on traditional arms shaped conflicts that led to wars and European attempts to colonize it. The decline of China started with The Opium wars occurring from 1839 to 1842 and from 1856 to 1860, between western countries mainly Great Britain over the opium trade, which caused economic problems and corruption in China. Unfortunately, China failed to ban this illegal trade which led to widespread addiction and caused serious social and economic unrest there.

The Qing dynasty was unprepared for war, the army consisted of poorly trained soldiers who could not resist the superior British strategies. According to Ben (2022) “The army was no longer as strong nor had the terrifying presence of yesteryear”. Actually, it was true, once the British started attacking Chinese coastal cities The Chinese were frustrated after the bombing and felt weak in the face of such magnificent weapons that they had seen for the first time. The wars did not only expose China vulnerabilities and its traditional military abilities but also caused severe consequences for Chinese society, contributing to economic, social and political collapse. The dynasty defeat ended with the Treaty of Nanjing 1842, this agreement provided no benefits, it required China to pay an indemnity of \$21million silver dollars, cede control of Hong Kong to the British, and increase the number of ports where British merchants could do business and live (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d.). To pay this amount, China was obliged to create a currency shortage, leading to inflation and a devaluation of copper coins, as well as raise taxes on merchants and peasants.

The economic crisis in China did not end easily, as the Second Opium War (1856-1860) reflected the ongoing conflicts which led to the emergence of internal issues and more ports opened for foreign powers. Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada (2017) stated that the Second Opium War led to further unequal treaties that continued to exploit China's resources such as the opening of 11 more ports.

Internal factors were also a part of china collapse and the destabilization of its society, Instead of uniting together to get rid of Western imperialism, civil wars broke out as a result of the Qing dynasty failure to react to western exploitation, reform economic decline and political corruption that occurred during the opium wars. Taiping rebellion was one of the most violent civil wars lasted from 1851 to 1864, which aimed to overthrow the Qing dynasty but the only loser in this war were people.

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The rebellion claimed the lives of 20 million Chinese, This number was roughly 10 times of Americans who were killed from the revolutionary to the Vietnam Wars (Hoffman, 1993).

While (Wasserstrom, 2016) demonstrated that the total number of deaths reached 100 million, of whom 70 million died due to hunger and disease the rest due to depression. According to Maddison, A (n.b) the rebellion did not only take lives, it also impacted more than 50% of China provinces and damaged its wealthiest region. The war was horribly devastating and bloody, forcing the survivors to leave their homes. Despite the extensive losses incurred, the conflicts persisted and the situation in China did not improve or undergo any significant changes. Instead, conditions continued to deteriorate and more civil wars occurred like Nian and Boxer rebellions resulting to the widespread of poverty and famine that affected nearly all regions of China.

Undoubtedly, any country exposed to war suffered a major crisis including poverty and famine. However, in the case of China, the wars were not the sole contributing factor. The severe drought that touched it in the late of 1870s was incredibly devastating. (Zhang & Liang, 2010) confirmed that this natural disaster caused grain prices to rise which resulted in the widespread of famine that touched China provinces such as Hebei, Shanxi, Shaanxi, Inner Mongolia and others, the situation got so bad that people resorted to eat corpses and committing homicide in order to survive. Consequently, the population perished from hunger by 40-50%. It was terrible, was not it? Cannibalism was a practice primarily in ancient times, but appeared to resurface in China due to the great famine and frequent floods.

2. 1. 2. Shortage of Opportunities in Economy and Societal Upheaval

China encountered various economic issues that led to the nineteenth century being described as a long term economic decline for China, commonly referred to as the 'Daoguang Depression'.

The outcomes of wars and natural disasters contributed to the decline or even the loss of the blessings that China enjoyed. Particularly in terms of its economy. *Tears from iron* by Kathryn Edgerton-Tarpley (2008) highlighted that famines often lead to similar economic and social consequences, these factors include anti-social behaviour, higher rates of crime in addition to food riots as a form of resistance and increased suicides and infanticide. It was true, all of these features occurred in China without exception. After the wars, the circumstances for the survivors were so harsh that they considered death more merciful than their existence. The

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spread of Western hegemony and their control greatly affected the Chinese community and their working conditions.

The situation created challenges for some individuals in obtaining work, while others faced termination of their jobs or were forced to work for westerners in their own country for very

low wages. For example, the opening of many ports to foreign trade after the loss of the Opium wars resulted in the influx of imported goods into China and undermining local industries. As a result, many craftsmen and merchants lost their jobs and many factories closed. In addition, imported goods were sold at lower prices than local products, which led to an increase in demand for these foreign items. While foreign businesses made significant gains, Chinese companies were marginalized and pushed aside.

2. 2. Opportunities in the United States as Pull Factors

Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, "America is another name for opportunity". This quote may seem ordinary, but it tells about the great opportunities that exist within the United States of America, such as the gold rush (1848-1855) and the expansion of the railroads that contributed to the growth of cities and increased demand for labor in many fields.

While numerous countries such as China and France faced significant difficulties and challenges, including: wars, economic stagnation and political problems in the 19th century, the United States experienced advancements in multiple sectors which contributed to attract those fleeing poverty and who seek a brighter future and wealth.

The United States has seen an influx of immigrants from all over the world. Margo, A (2014) noted that in the 19th century, the United States succeeded in increasing agricultural production, with about 76% of people working on farms, which led to increased productivity (p.8). Oehser, H & Gopnik, A (2025) mentioned the incomes obtained through agriculture, found that "it increased from about \$5,400,000,000 in 1879 to perhaps \$13,000,000,000 in 1899". The massive expansion in the iron and steel industry in various cities also contributed in improving the economy and increasing exports, Oehser, H & Gopnik, A (2025) argued that the continued production led the U.S to surpass Great Britain in iron production before the end of the 19th century.

2. 2. 1. The Gold Rush (1848-1855)

The discovery of gold or as it is called the Gold Rush 1848-1855 by James W. Marshal at Sutter's Mill in the territory of California, incredibly accelerated the growth of the American economy which solved previous economic problems. This incident opened up great options to

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generate wealth in ways that were not available before, according to (Historical Impact of the California Gold Rush, n.d.) the influx of gold established various machines and factories. Furthermore, it addressed transportation issues, developed roads and other infrastructure, it accelerated agriculture and trade grow tremendously, making California a great economic

power. This flow helped also to reshape and improve the living conditions of all social classes, that why it was seen a good sign to flee from poverty.

As reports about the discovery circulated, the United States saw a massive migration from different locations due to the increased demand for workers .Approximately 300,000 gold seekers moved to California during that time and they became known collectively as the forty-niners. Although not everyone had the opportunity to work in the gold mines, numerous employment were available. The population surge in California led to the establishment of various institutions, including schools, hospitals, stores and restaurants, thus facilitating the accessibility of job.

2. 2. 2. Expansion of Railroads

The United States has consistently sought to position itself as a preeminent power on the world stage, through innovations, promoting economic efficiency and advancing past achievements. The Industrial Revolution in the early 1800s brought the development of old machinery, steam power, cotton gin and other agricultural instruments that radically changed the American society, causing economic growth.

These developments and innovations did not stop at the early industrial revolution period, The Second Industrial Revolution known as the Technological Revolution which took place between 1870 and 1950 once again shook up the American society and economy, this period did not only advance production techniques but also stimulate the construction of a robust transportation system that boosted economic growth, allowing the United States to effectively exploit its abundant wealth and expand it to all areas, both rural and urban. According to (Chanlder, 1891, as cited in Mohajan, 2019) the construction of railroad in the US grew rapidly.

In 1850, about 14,000 km of railway had been built and it continued to reach 120,675 km by 1880. The same year, the US operated 17,800 freight locomotives, hauling 23,600 tons of freight and 22,200 passenger engines, while in the South, the railway network expanded to 46,700 km by 1890. The expansion of railroads in the US significantly facilitated the movement, export and exchange goods. It linked the agricultural Midwest with the industrialized Northeast, facilitating the process of delivering heavy goods such as industrial equipment, building material and coal to various regions across the country.

2. 2. 3. Promises of Better Conditions

The United States ruled a vast area of land that was not part of the thirteen states, and the methods of acquiring it varied. For example, the Louisiana Purchase brought nearly 828,000 square miles of land to the United States, expanding the country westward, while others Surrendered their territories. Although the economic growth of 19th century occurred due to innovations and developments in various fields, the U.S. government also made efforts to take advantage of these vast areas and expand the economic gains.

After much debate over the fate of these lands, the Homestead Act of 1862 was signed into law on May 20, 1862 by Abraham Lincoln. It was one of the most important laws in American history that benefited both the government and the citizens, and even some immigrants. This law gave new opportunities to those who missed out on the Gold Rush and paved the way for financial independence. According to (Shanks, 2005) among the immigrants there, the Europeans benefited greatly from this law, as they became independent property owners and had enormous wealth. By 1890, the government had provided 373,000 homesteads alongside the unoccupied land which fulfilled the government promise of better conditions.

2. 3. Migration Patterns

The U.S witnessed many important and beneficial events that led to substantial waves of immigration in the 19th century, leading to it being described as a nation of immigrants.

China was one of the countries that experienced bad events during that era, marked by wars, famine, widespread of poverty civil disorders. Most of Chinese immigrants in the US came from Guangdong Province in Southern China because it was located near major ports like Canton which made their movement to other countries easier. Additionally, many devastating historical events took place there such as the severe floods, droughts, The Opium Wars and foreign intervention that disrupted local economies and the social conditions of the citizens.

Over one 100,000 Chinese workers from Guangdong province arrived to the US during the 1849 California Gold Rush, hoping to change their harsh situation. Their goal at that time was not to improve their living conditions only, but also to become extremely rich due to the increased demand for workers as gold miners in California. However, not everyone could be

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employed in the gold mines, as they were not just the Chinese workers. Rather they worked to various fields in other Western States such as Oregon and Montana in grain farming, cooking, garment industries and wool production. The majority of the immigrants were men, who

sought to collect as much wealth as possible before returning to their families, but many decided to stay. The arrival of Chinese immigrants in the US was not in vain, as they greatly contributed to the development of the American economy, especially during the building of railroads.

According to (Sayej, 2022) Chinese workers contributed greatly in the building of the transcontinental railroad, numbering about 15,000 workers. Additionally, their presence brought many advantages including traditional ways of using herbs for treatment. Shelton (2023) said that the existence of Chinese medicine dated back to 1851, when a Chinese herbal store was opened in Fiddletown, California. The United States benefited greatly from their healing methods and has become a destination for every patient.

Other waves of Chinese immigrants arrived after the passing of the Homestead Act 1862 which promised to provide lands for workers. Paccone, P (2023) said that religious freedom and opportunities to obtain land ownership prompted people to migrate and join their families who were already settled there.

3. Chinese between Restriction and Tolerance

The 19th century in China was an era of significant adversity, which led to substantial waves of immigration to the U.S. Despite all their contributions to develop the American economy, they faced very difficult challenges, including the emergence of strict laws targeting them like Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, in addition to the widespread societal hostility. According to Gyory, A (1998) Anti-Chinese sentiment first began in mining camps, where Californians and other miners discriminated them (p.7)

The reasons behind this feeling varied, as some individuals believed that by occupying most of the available jobs in the country, they would monopolize and control future job opportunities, while others feared that their lands and jobs would be seized. However, over time, some tolerant laws emerged to challenge the discriminatory practices and gave hope to the Chinese community in the U.S. like Immigration and nationality act 1965.

According to David, G & Lin, J (1997) the Act of 1965 permitted those who want to contribute to the American society to enter the U.S, and added that one million and a half Chinese moved from China to the U.S between 1966 and 1983. The act paved the way for Chinese to reunite with their families after long time of separation.

3. 1. Exclusion Policies

As the Chinese began to adapt to their lives in the U.S, they faced unexpectedly restrictive policies from the American government, particularly, in the aftermath of the Civil War. Nearly all historians concurred that some of the earliest arbitrary policies targeting immigrants were first applied to the Chinese. These policies did not only brought them into conflicts, but also alienated them from feeling the sense of belonging in American society, reminding them that they were merely outsiders. Intensified over time, and consistently worked against their interests. All Chinese immigrants were suffering there from all sides, Long, J et al. (n.d) said: “Many local governments passed legislation that confiscated the property of the Chinese. There were also instances of mob violence against the Chinese” (p.9)

Exclusionary policies were not only issued by the government, but Americans also participated in. Even before the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, white miners were targeting Chinese workers. O’mahony, E (2022) talked about an incident happened in California:

In 1853, a white miner named George Hall robbed one Chinese miner and killed another. Based on the testimony of several Chinese witnesses, Hall was arrested and sentenced to hang. However, the California Supreme Court declared that the testimony of Chinese people could not be used against white defendants, and Hall was released.

3. 1. 1. Chinese Exclusion Act (1882)

As the population of the US increased, most of which were immigrants, the government began to choose who was suitable to remain in America and get rid of those who were not qualified. While Chinese immigrants were the primary targets of Congress and public opinion. The government sought to spread and justify anti-China sentiment through speeches. (Davis, 1878) a member of parliament in the House of Representatives and who was extremely harsh towards Chinese immigrants said in his speech in California:

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In the city of San Francisco, my own home, this opposition is most keenly felt, as the body of Chinese is larger there than at any other Point in the United States; and many thousands of unemployed men say with great bitterness that but for their presence work and bread would be plenty. For months past life and property have been threatened by this agitation, and to the wisdom of Congress we appeal to grant us that quiet and relief which our own Legislature has no power to give us (p.3).

This part of his speech was enough to arouse public animosity towards them, asserting that they controlled San Francisco and were the reason behind the widespread of unemployment, and he was not the only one who sought to foster hostility towards them, they were also statesmen who shared same desire.

The Chinese Exclusion Act (passed on May 6, 1882) was signed by President Chester A. Arthur. This act imposed restrictions including the exclusion of Chinese from citizenship, which means that there is no legal protection for their rights. Additionally, they were banned of re-entering the country for ten years, which restricted the Chinese more and prevented them from reuniting with their wives, as there were those who had not seen their families for a long time. These restrictions were not limited to the Chinese in America only. Under the act, even their families in China were prohibited from entering the U.S.

During the long period of exclusion, many Chinese employees were fired from their jobs and sent back to their home countries, on the grounds that they did not have the necessary qualifications for their jobs. (Chen, 2015) stated that Chinese immigration decreased significantly from 39,579 to 8,031 in 1882 and 1883.

3. 1. 2. Scott Act (1888)

The strict laws that the government passed towards the Chinese affected their rights, and went even further and created the Scott Act of 1888 by President Grover Cleveland, the act aimed to reinforce the exclusionary policies established by the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.

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Under this law, even those who had obtained legal certification from the government to return were prevented from returning to the United States.

The act resulted in the inability of many Chinese who formed a family there to join with them again, and they were around 20,000 to 30,000 workers, even those who were on their way to the United States were unwelcomed and sent back. The restriction placed upon them caused psychological devastation, as they were not only barred from seeing their families but also unable to reclaim their properties.

Landman, H (2007) said: “once Chinese labourers left the United States, they could never return. While the 1882 act forbade Chinese immigration for 10 years, the 1888 act made the exclusion policy permanent” (p.365). The Scott Act of 1882 and the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 had the same goal which is pushing Chinese workers and immigrants away from America despite their contributions there.

3. 2. Chinese through Civil Rights Promotion

The Chinese were not the only ones who suffered discrimination in the United States. African Americans also suffered the severe injustice of slavery, inequality, and violence for centuries. However, they could not remain silent about such practices, which led to many protests, including the Civil Rights Movement, which sought to achieve and ensure racial equality in the American society.

The Chinese community supported these protests, seeing it as an opportunity to call for the restoration of the rights taken away from both sides through their participation in the movement that started in 1954. Li, H (2018) stated that Mao Zedong, a Chinese communist politician and founder of the People’s Republic of China, made a declaration in 1963 to support the African Americans in their movements to end all the racist practices and racial discrimination in the U.S, and that everyone should be equal there (p.1351)

Chinese living in the U.S were involved in all the movements and protests made by the black Africans, Mao Zedong motivated the Chinese to call for protests to end racism. As a result, a large number of Chinese individuals actively involved in the Black Movements in 1964 (Duan, R, 2024).

3. 2. 1. Civil Right Act 1964

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The 1960s period witnessed various movements occurred in the U.S, the Civil Rights Movement was one among the most important social movements in American history, as it helped in the appearance of civil liberties some reforms through the passage of the Civil Right Act, which was signed by President Lyndon Johnson on July 2, 1964.

The act prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, or national origin in public places. (Wan, 2005) claimed that The Civil Rights Act of 1964 helped reform policies and eliminate inherent biases in immigration practices toward Chinese, giving them equality with immigration from other countries. This law revived hope to Chinese immigrants to end the racist practices in American society, as some residents there were allowed to use public services freely where they had previously faced discrimination.

Various Chinese Activists emerged that time. Grace Lee Boggs, a Chinese American Activist sought to change the status of marginalized women and people of color in the U.S, emphasizing the importance of uniting with Black people to achieve collective liberation for all races (Raju, A, 2021)

3. 2. 2. Equal Protection of Immigrant Rights

The ongoing protests and demonstrations of black people were the main reasons that led to the creation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, through which the Chinese were able to take advantage of in the American society. However, the problem of the Chinese who were prohibited from returning to the U.S due to the Scott Act of 1888 remained, until 1965, when President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Immigration and Nationality Act in New York, which removed the restrictive act that separated them from their families for a long time.

Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, also known as the Hart-Cellar Act, stated that "no person shall be discriminated against... in the issuance of an immigrant visa because of his race, sex, nationality, place of birth, or place of residence". Actually, the law was designed to benefit all the immigrants in the US. (Villazor, 2016) said that the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 eliminated racial discrimination that had existed in previous immigration laws.

The law has proven to be more beneficial to the Chinese community, especially for those who had lost hope of re-entering the U.S and meet their families, they became enable to come and pursuit their lives.

3. 3. Tensions and Contradictions of policies

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The history of Chinese immigration to the United States was shaped by a complex interplay between exclusionary policies and efforts to reform restrictions. These contradictory policies created significant tensions among Chinese immigrants, who were torn between maintaining hope for a better future and submitting to restrictive measures.

American ideals were deeply expressed in the Declaration of Independence, which declared that "all men are created equal" and endowed with the unalienable rights of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness". However, these ideals were contradicted by what happened to some immigrants there, some of whom were denied the most basic rights including work, travel, voting, etc.

Tensions continued even with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. While the law granted rights to some races, some continued to suffer violations of their basic rights, even newcomers after the 1964 law, such as Asians. Zhang, S (2020) stated that new Chinese immigrants arrived in New York and were disappointed to find housing only in Chinatown. They were also shocked by the racist and hateful atmosphere there in the 1970s (p.18)

4. The Impact of Policies on Chinese Communities

The restrictive policies had negative effects on the Chinese immigrants, especially on the psychological side, as they were ridiculed for their appearance, which led to some of them going crazy. According to (Chung-Mao, 2022) Western countries used caricatures to denigrate and dehumanize the Chinese for nearly half a century.

Neil Moret, a Western artist, denigrated the Chinese through an image titled « Chinese Monkey Doodle » in which he bullied their physical appearance. The government did not intervene to address this issue and viewed it as a part of their unfair policies. Rather, it encouraged these derogatory caricatures by publishing them in magazines and newspapers.

Wu, Y (2025) talked about the negative impact of the restrictive policies on Chinese immigrants, said that Chinese Exclusion of 1882 led to families separation, additionally they businesses were closed down, and even those who did not leave the country were deported to China. Xiao, S (2018) reported that approximately 20,000 Chinese were prevented from re-entering America, and about 600 who were on their way to return denied from entering despite having government-issued certificates to enter.

4. 1. Economic Hardships and Exploitation

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Since the Chinese arrived in the United States, they have held many jobs, especially during the Gold Rush and the expansion of railroads. Their reception was primarily driven by the demand for labour to develop the country economy only. In addition, they were employed to do tiring and difficult works that the Westerners refused to do.

The misfortunes that the Chinese experienced varied from one to another, even those who succeeded to work in the gold mines were impacted by the "Foreign Tax Act of 1850" which imposed tax payments to all foreign miners in California. This legislation was considered an exploitation of immigrants' fortunes due to the constant increase in taxes, particularly for the Chinese, which prompted many to give up their jobs in the gold mining and look for other works.

Bai, E (2024) stated that: "Fearing competition against cheap Chinese labor, American workers, driven by the idea of Manifest Destiny, sought to limit and exclude the Chinese. They utilized controlling images and racist depictions in order to demonize the Chinese" Chinese were firstly used a cheap labor and later excluded from the country despite their contributions.

4. 1. 1. Chinese Immigrants as a « Cheap » Labour Force

Chinese immigrants were known to be strong, patient and hardworking, but in the US they were not appreciated for their efforts. Rather, they were exploited and seen as a cheap labour.

The construction of the transcontinental railroad in the US was directed to who were willing to accept low wages, despite the dangers associated with the work, including tunnel excavation and the use of explosives.

Chinese there had no solutions, as even their country was suffering from a catastrophic situation at that time. (Kennedy, 2024) confirmed that most of the immigrants employed in the Central Pacific region were treated badly, claiming that according to the project of railroads, Chinese workers were paid \$26 monthly in the 1864, and required to work six days a week.

The salary was very low 30 to 50 percent less than that of white workers even if they were doing the same or different work, this cheap labour was the beginning of discriminatory policies that became more widespread after the passage of the restrictive laws. New American Economy (2019) said: "Chinese immigrants were viewed with suspicion as low-skilled, sub-standard cheap labor and reviled as wholly foreign"

4. 1. 2. Systemic Discrimination as a Halt to Economic Mobility

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The U.S government continued to create laws that restricted the Chinese immigrants and deprived them of all their rights and hindering their ability to attain financial and economic success, because they were surrounded by limitations.

However, the U.S did not fully benefit from all the exclusionary policies they instituted, as the country economy started to decline due to the inability of white labourers who took over

the Chinese positions in almost all the industries to achieve the same levels of production that they had previously achieved after pushing the Chinese workers away from the U.S.

For instance, the passage of Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 negatively impacted the nation economic, according to (Long et al. 2024) economically, the Chinese Exclusion Act led to the decrease in total manufacturing output by 62%. Furthermore, the number of manufacturing businesses declined by 54% to 69%.

4. 2. Family and Social Isolation

The majority of Chinese immigrants to the US during the 19th century were male. Eventually, women also decided to join them looking for better life but their aspiration to set foot on American land proved futile. During that time they were perceived as prostitutes and accused of transmitting sexual diseases.

In addition to their intense hatred towards them, The Page Act of 1875 was created which paved the way for the passage of Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. The Page Act of 1875 was enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States, it prohibited Chinese women from entering the United States under the pretext of protecting the nation from prostitution.

According to (Hijar & Historian, 2022) the law sought to spread bad thoughts towards Asian women by describing them as deviants. The law negatively impacted the Chinese immigrants there, especially those who were waiting the coming of their wives or siblings. (Citizenship and Acts of Exclusion Against the Chinese, n.d) claimed that "Bachelor Societies" were created among the Chinese male in the US as a result of this law, even married men faced difficulties, as their wives and children were prohibited from coming. This situation led to the separation of parents from their families.

4. 3 Growth and Formation of Chinatown

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The experiences of Chinese immigrants in the U.S were largely negative, the mistreatment of restrictions and exploitation led to the formation of Chinatowns in many locations that served as a protective zones and a place to practice their businesses.

Chinatowns were formed in various cities such as San Francisco, Los Angeles and New York, their residential areas contained of clothing stores, restaurants, pharmacies and temples, all of which had a positive impact on them as they were able to maintain their own cultural identity in the face of injustice treatment and enhance their financial situations because most of the workers there were not outsiders.

The formation of Chinatowns had various advantages on Chinese immigrants especially after the passage of Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, Kandil, Y, C (2019) stated: “The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 barred Chinese laborers from entering the U.S., but because merchants were exempted, Chinatowns became full of shops and restaurants”. Goodman, J (2025) also confirmed that the restrictions imposed on Chinese immigrants in their places on residence forced them to unite and form their own communities in Chinatowns.

5. Conclusion

During the 19th century, China situation was declining socially, economically, geographically and politically, while the US was enjoying valuable opportunities. However, the experiences of Chinese immigrants in the U.S. were marked by exploitation through arduous labour for minimal compensation and the enforcement of exclusionary laws that proved more harmful than beneficial. This adverse environment impacted their lives, most of them were separated from their families, targeted and violated, in response to these harsh conditions, Chinatowns emerged as a means of self-protection and to improve their financial circumstances.

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Chapter Two: Chinese Immigrants under diverse problems and enhanced policies

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1. Introduction

Even throughout the twentieth century, Chinese Americans continued to face repressive and reformist policies at the same time that both granted and limited their opportunities to integrate into the American society. These policies were different from the previous ones, where systemic barriers touched other aspects like wages, the children inability to attend schools and economic situation.

This chapter aims to delve into the multiple challenges faced by Chinese Immigrants both sexes, exploring the role of organizations and protests and how they contributed to erasing the oppressive practices placed upon them. It deeply examines the impact of anti-miscegenation laws which imposed racial segregation on marriage and analyse how the educational barriers that restricted their children access to knowledge were solved.

The chapter will also highlight the importance of Chinatowns in preserving their cultural identity and overcome isolation there. By addressing all these points, the chapter seeks to illuminate Chinese immigrants' contributions to the American society, demonstrating their constant attempt to achieve civil rights, economic stability and cultural preservation in the face of persistent anti-Chinese sentiment.

2. Organizations Responses to the Chinese Needs

Numerous organizations to help the Chinese immigrants emerged to address the consequences of the discriminatory laws, unfair practices and social exclusion that marginalized their lives and deprived them from basic rights since their early arrival to the United States in the nineteenth century.

As the struggles for a better life intensified, more and more organizations began to emerge under various names and with different strategies to meet their needs, all played a pivotal roles in providing them with sense of belonging and solidarity in a foreign land, giving financial and physical supports via mutual aid, especially to newly arrived immigrants and those who attempted to reunite with their families after a long time of separation.

The organizations offered them the basic rights that they were deprived from and helped to combat the systemic oppression that continued to destroy their hopes of constructing a stable life without any obstacles or xenophobic policies.

O'Mahony, E (2022) confirmed that early organizations were founded in San Francisco in 1849 to help new immigrants adjust to life in the U.S, later helped to find jobs and provide

medical assistance for sick immigrants. Each organization had its own purpose, Lai, M, H (1972) stated that various organizations like Chinese workers' association in New York City and Miscellaneous Workers Union introduced a large job opportunities to Chinese immigrants.

2. 1. Chinese Consolidation Benevolent Association

The Chinese Consolidation Benevolent Association (CCBA) known as the Chinese Six Companies, was one of the earliest organizations that was established in the United States during the late of 19th and the early 20th centuries, it consisted of 07 member associations: Sam Yup, Hoy Sun Ning Yung, Hop Wo, Yan Wo, Yeong Wo, Kong Chow, and Sue Hing. Firstly, it was constituted in San Francisco and extended to branch out into various places like New York and San Diego to serve all Chinese immigrants.

According to Leong, K, C (2020) & Li, P (2024) this organization was the main representative of the Chinese Immigrants and its importance was mainly seen during the period the passage of Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, it provided help and support when racism started to grow against them. The CCBA was seen as the most powerful tool that sought to secure the rights that were denied to them in a society marked by racist practices and anti-immigrants sentiment.

The increasing prominence of CCBA association everywhere, helped in providing various services including cultural protection by reviving Chinese traditions every year, and health care for all the Chinese residents including their children who were mentally affected by other laws that served to restrict their educational path by providing psychologists.

2. 2. Chinese American Citizens Alliance (C.A.C.A.)

The Chinese American Citizens Alliance (C.A.C.A.) is a non-profit organization founded by a group of Chinese Americans, it was first established in San Francisco, California in 1895 as the Native Sons of the Golden State and later expended to other cities like all other organizations.

According to Yung et al. (2006) the organization played a crucial role in combating the unfair policies such as the Immigration act of 1924 which separated the American citizens from their Chinese wives, this situation was unacceptable, prompting CACA to make efforts to address concerns about the ability of Chinese Americans to assimilate.

As a result of the organization's persistent advocacy the congress revised the law in June 1930, allowing the Chinese wives of the U.S citizens to enter the country again. Unfortunately,

not all were permitted to enter because the reform was only directed for those who had married before May 6, 1924 (P.129) the organization also contributed to change the harsh reality that devastated the Chinese immigrants, including school segregation by cooperating with Chinese students and parents to fix their concerns.

The CACA mentioned on its official website the various achievements it has made, including the Mei Lun Yuen Housing project, North East Medical Services, Chinese Recreation Center and most importantly the Chinatown branch of the Employment Service. In addition to all these realizations, it continued to call for justice and ensuring their voices are heard.

3. Chinese Participation in the Asian American Movement

It is important to recognize that the struggles of immigrants in the U.S did not include only the Chinese immigrants, but all Asians were subject to discrimination, violence and oppressive practices. Inspired by the black people protests and power, The Asian American Movement emerged in the late of 1960s to the early 1980s, it was a socio-political movement created by a group of activists who sought to create solidarity among the Asians to end racial and residential discrimination, unfair treatment and school segregation.

The AAM united all the Japanese, Chinese, Filipino Americans, Asian Indians, Pacific Islanders, Koreans, Vietnamese, and others, they were present everywhere to solve their conflicts which continued to increase. For instance, Asian American for Action, founded in 1969 in New York, was inspired by the Black Power Movement united all Asians together under one identity, along with the Asian American for Equality Movement formed in 1974 Manhattan's Chinatown, which created a powerful grassroots movement that aimed to achieve justice.

The Chinese appreciated these movements well and their participation was important as most Chinese shared the same or perhaps more suffering as all Asians. Geron, K (n.d) stated that Asians made efforts to preserve Japanese and Chinese culture. Furthermore, their participation in movements aimed at ending racism and achieving political participation (p.332)

3. 1. Push Factors behind Their Participation

The early Asian American activists created AAM in response to the widespread hostility and exclusionary policies that denied them of basic rights. However, over time things got worse and their suffering increased to the point that their lives were in danger. Los Angeles, California was a city that witnessed an anti-Asian sentiment mainly the Chinese, as most of them settled there to work in the gold mines, railroads and other industries, but over time they were

increasingly blamed for widespread of unemployment and seen as inferior because of their race despite their contributions to the American society.

The American journalist Lue, M (2021) confirmed in the *New Yorker magazine* that the hostility of white workers against the Chinese had grown to the point of burning their homes, shooting and assaulting them in the streets.

The beginning of the 20th century was marked by new restrictive policies that served as a driving factor behind their participation in Black or Asian movements. Stop AAPI hate (2024) confirmed that Chinese immigrants experienced land-ban ownership in 1913, and were prohibited from accessing to more than 200 land, this legislation was passed across 39 states.

3. 2. The Role of Chinese Women in Labour Movement

President Grover Cleveland signed the Labour Day Act in 1894 to recognize the contributions of American workers, while workers of other races and colors were excluded despite their contributions to the American economy since their arrival.

Since labour exploitation was one of the xenophobic policies that affected all Asians mainly the Chinese, many movements arose to fight low wages, long working hours, and improve working conditions. Chinese women played a crucial role in challenging oppressive labour practices in the U.S through their participation in various organizations such as The Chinese Progressive Association (CPA) which was established in 1972 in San Francisco, California to advocate for their labour rights.

When the garment industry was booming in the 1970s, women made up more than 80% of the workforce most of them were Chinese. Dandelion, R (2019) confirmed that they faced exploitative conditions, more than 10 hours of work and their earnings were depended on the quantity of garments they produced.

Chinese women activists made a lot of protests against this harsh reality that touched all Asian immigrants there. Workers and their activism continued to influence modern immigrant rights.

4. The Impact of Anti Miscegenation Laws

In early colonial America, anti-miscegenation laws were legal regulations enforced to separate the races and maintain white supremacy. At that time, the laws prohibited racial mixing through marriage between Black people and white settlers or any other racial groups. However

over time with the increased immigrants from all around the world in the 19th to the 20th centuries the laws expanded to include all the Asians.

The U.S Supreme Court justified these laws on the grounds that intermarriage would lead to the emergence of new mixed races, thereby eradicating white purity in the society. Anti-miscegenation laws affected all people in the U.S not only the Chinese immigrants, as most of couples faced annulment or rejection of their marriages which prohibited them to form families.

Kumar, A (2022) said that: “15 states (included in the 30 that already had anti-miscegenation laws in place) amended laws to restrict the marriage of whites with Chinese or Mongolians”. The German-American philosopher Hannah Arendt expressed his idea about these laws, stated that these laws led to the emergence of injustice among races.

4. 1. Loving V. Virginia 1967

The desire to end the anti-miscegenation laws continued to grow among the residents and even the American citizens, the interracial couples and activists began protesting and ensuring their voices through the participation in the civil rights movements. It was so hard to eliminate these laws because they were evident in most government courts for instance, the Virginia Supreme Court on June 13, 1955, ruled that the marriage between Han Say Naim and Ruby Elaine Naim was void because the groom was a Chinese immigrant and the bride was a white women, after one year when she filed a lawsuit to annul her marriage to her Chinese-American husband, The Virginia Supreme Court declared their marriage void from its inception.

Anti-miscegenation laws were repealed on June 12, 1967, by Loving v. Virginia, which was a significant case that erased all the laws preventing interracial marriage among people in almost all U.S. The case revolved around Richard Loving, a white man and Mildred Jeter, an African American and Native American ancestry who were married and later sentenced to prison for violating the Virginia Racial Integrity Act of 1924 which also followed these racist laws.

The couple believed that the law was unconstitutional violation of the equal protection and due process clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment and after losing the appeals there, they took the case to the U.S Supreme Court where the justices found that they were right and Virginia Supreme Court decision was unfair and inconsistent with the 14th Amendment which meant that the couple had won the case.

The couples were acquitted in the U.S Supreme Court and anti-miscegenation laws were overturned in other states. According to Furbush, J (2022) the case remains one the most

famous civil rights victories, ending all restrictions on interracial marriage in the U.S and ensuring equal protection in the future.

5. The Growth of Anti-Chinese Sentiment

The Chinese residents' dream of ending Anti-Chinese Sentiment in the American society did not come true, but rather continued into the twentieth century, fuelled by a series of incidents that increased hostility toward Chinese Americans and reinforced their marginalization.

These events were more terrifying than the previous era, the racial hatred turned lethal where lot of tragic incidents took place leading to violent attacks and murders, leaving them deeply traumatized and afraid of further attacks, while they were calling for acceptance and integration into the American society. However, small incident that did not result in any deaths led to riots and protests demanding an end to brutality against them, particularly by white police officers.

The Yellow Peril, a term emerged in the 19th century to depict the Asians people as danger to westerners, continued to impact Chinese immigrants the 20th century. Despite their contributions, they were viewed as a threat to American society, leading to a rise in anti-Chinese sentiment. Blanchard, K, S (2019) stated that: "The Yellow Peril anxiety that China is trying to destroy Euro-American society has continued through the 20th century and beyond"

5. 1. Police Brutality against Chinese Immigrants (Peter Yew 1975)

The story of Peter Yew in Chinatown, New York City, on April 26, 1975 was one of the incidents that showed police brutality and injustice towards Chinese residents. This incident was the reason for massive protests in all the states against racial discrimination.

While Yew was walking, he intervened to stop a police officer who had knocked a 15 years old boy to the ground while trying to break up a fight. In response, the white policeman beat Yew violently and took him to the police station where he was further assaulted and charged with assaulting the officer. The incident outraged the Chinese residents of New York, Chinatown and organizing a large protests were important to highlight the issue and ensure the world heard about this unfair practice.

According to Maitland, L (1975) more than 2500 Chinatown residents of all ages to protest the alleged beating of Peter Yew, from 9 a.m on Bayard Street until the afternoon. The protests continued for several days where the number of demonstrators increased to nearly 20,000 with the support of all Asians.

5 .2. Vincent Chin Case 1982

It has been observed that each time the Chinese residents sought to achieve security and justice, hatred towards them escalated, along with police brutality, racial prejudices and civil rights violation. The number of Chinese murders increased in the American society because the sentences issued against these criminals were lenient and their punishment did not align with the gravity of their crimes. Vincent Chin was a victim of racist criminals.

In June 19, 1982 Vincent Chin, a Chinese American of 27 years old was brutally killed by two white autoworkers Ronald Ebens and Michael Nitz using baseball bat because they blamed him for the decline of the auto industry. Despite the horrific nature of the crime, the media paid no attention to the case, and even the judiciary was lenient with the criminals. Pak, S (June 22, 2023) claimed that Ebens and Nitz were not punished for their heinous crime as they deserved, but after they confessed to the crime, their sentence was reduced.

At the end, when they were sentenced by Judge Charles Kaufman on March 16, 1983, they received only three years' probation and a \$3,780 fine. The judge justified his sentencing decision saying that the justice system should change punishments to fit the killer situation rather than focusing on the gravity of the crime. The sentence issued against the criminals sparked anger among Asian communities, especially Chinese, who viewed it as a sign of indifference to the racism they face.

6. From Barriers to Educational Opportunities

Education was viewed as the path to social and economic advancement in the United States. But the education system in the United States was not fair to all international students, as laws were created to promote the exclusion of non-white children from access to public schools. In the early years of the United States, non-whites were prohibited from receiving formal education and only public schools were available to them. However, even in such schools, racial segregation continued to restrict their educational path.

African Americans were the first who faced segregation in public schools, they were segregated so that teachers did not provide equal instruction to everyone. This unfair practice was not only directed to them, Asian groups were also victims of discrimination in public schools, among them the Chinese students who were suffering from educational equality. Actually, racial segregation in schools towards them rooted in the 19th century where the government prohibited Chinese immigrants or even U.S born Chinese from attending public schools, as an example the Tape family case whose daughter Mamie was denied from attending Spring Valley Primary, an all-white school.

The Asian American Education Project (n.b) a non-profit organization said that school principle, Jenny Hurley refused to enrol Mamie because of her race. As a result of this harsh segregation, the family took the case to the California Supreme Court, where school officials argued that the California Constitution stipulated that Chinese people are a threat to the safety of the state, providing grounds to prohibit them from San Francisco schools.

Discriminatory practices against Chinese students continued even after the California Supreme Court declared that Mamie could attend the school under the Fourteenth Amendment, they were increasingly prevented from assimilation with other students, being allowed to attend only Chinese schools built specifically for them. However, many subsequent cases challenged these unfair practices and played an important role in pushing lawsuits to end segregation in schools, which was not achieved in Mamie case but did happen over time.

6. 1. Lum V. Rice (1927) and its Impact on Chinese Children

No one cared about the Fourteenth Amendment when racial discrimination was common among the society and even some government officials, many cases related to school segregation against some races in the U.S continued to reach the twentieth century where lot of cases revolved around the exclusion of a Chinese-American student from attending public schools, for instance in Mississippi Chinese people were classified as « colored » and could not attend schools of whites.

According to An, S (n.b) educational discrimination against the Chinese did not exist only in California, but also in other places such as Mississippi which created segregated schools for the Chinese in the late of 1930s, this reality was presented in The Supreme Court case Lum v. Rice on November 21, 1927 which revolved around a Chinese American called Martha Lum who was prohibited from entering a white public school in Mississippi, the U.S Supreme Court upheld racial segregation claiming that the exclusion of Chinese race from a white schools did not violate the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution under the idea of 'separate but equal'.

Lum v. Rice case was one of the cases that disappointed all Asians students who were also denied from the same rights making them wonder why they were considered colored and categorized with black races.

6. 2. The Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974

The Educational Opportunity Act of 1974 was a significant turning point for all races who were fighting racial segregation in the American schools. The law was enacted as a response to

the discriminatory practices and the unfair rulings in many cases that prevented students from attending public schools with white students because of their race like the case of Martha Lum in 1927 and Nichols in 1974. Although lot of institutions were established for colored races and minority groups, they did not receive full education that white students in other schools received.

The act played an important role in supporting educational equity and address minority groups struggles, As stated in United States Code 1701 Section 204 (1974) that schools must eliminate discrimination against students on the basis of race, color, or nationality,, they should also avoid sending them to schools far away from their homes if it leads to racial segregation and instead they should help them to overcome language barriers to achieve equal participation among students (P.515).

In fact, this law contained many rights that addressed other matters that were always in the interest of students. The EEOA gave hope to all races among them the Chinese Americans who were thinking about leaving the U.S because of the unfair educational system against their children.

6. 3. The Establishment of Bilingual Educational Programs

Historically, the U.S has opened the door for to many immigrants who brought with them their own traditions and rituals. However, they faced challenges in integrating into American society, as they were unable to establish communication due to language barriers, especially in schools where immigrant students needed to speak and join in others' speeches.

The students inability to speak English was one of the reasons for the emergence of schools segregation, but when Equal Educational Opportunities Act was passed, the U.S government proposed implementing bilingual education, which had been in place since the 1840s, but it failed in various states due to lack of promotion.

During the 1970s, the U.S Supreme Court dealt with numerous cases related to educational opportunity aimed at ending inequality and provide adequate English language instruction. Lau v. Nichols case was one of the important cases that led to the implementation of bilingual education program to non-English speaking students, it originated when a group of about 1,800 Chinese students and Kinney Kinmon Lau filed a lawsuit against San Francisco school system for failing to provide them with any instruction to help them learn English. At first, lower courts ruled that the school administration had not violated any law, claiming that such a small number of Chinese students were unable to access the school solely due to insufficient funds. However,

in 1974 the U.S Supreme Court ruled that depriving students of the opportunity to learn English will lead to discrimination, the outcome of the case was in favor to the students leading to the establishment of many bilingual educational programs in many schools.

The U.S Department of Justice (2024) claimed in its official website that the availability of educational opportunities for a large number of students in the U.S was a direct result of the courage and the victory demonstrated by Chinese speaking students in Lau case.

7. Economic Integration and Challenges

The Chinese Americans experienced a cycles of economic challenges and barriers particularly in labour markets. Despite being essential workers and active contributors to the American economy, they faced restrictions and marginalization that prevented them from improving their conditions there such as low wages and building miles of tracks and industries in the freezing cold...etc, since the beginning of their working lives with the California gold rush in the 19th century. Blog, T (2024) stated that: “America benefited immensely from the exploitation of a small and hardworking minority of laborers, yet did not afford them their respective humanity”

Chinese immigrants did not surrender to harsh circumstances and continued exploitation since their arrival, but rather worked hard to change the condition and gain their rights and end labor exploitation, until the mid-20th century with the emergence of some reform policies Chinese labourers enjoyed opportunities that paved the way for them to form their own businesses in Chinatowns and obtain better and stable jobs after a long period of continued marginalization and labour exploitation.

7. 1. Wage Inequality and Economic Barriers

The American economy was built over centuries thanks to the contributions of European settlers, enslaved people and immigrants from various ethnic groups. Questions have been raised about whether all the contributors to the economic progress of the U.S were paid fairly, regarding the Chinese immigrants they faced employment barriers, harsh conditions, and unequal wages that were lower than those of white workers since their arrival. Because their labour rights were consistently violated, some left their employment and relied on ethnic businesses in the hope of better conditions, but unfortunately same conflicts and exploitation continued with more restrictions being imposed that limited their rights for high wages particularly in agriculture, the railroad maintenance and manufacturing since the 19th to the

20th centuries. While Chinese male immigrants suffered labour exploitation in various jobs like laundry business as Siu, P (1987) explained in his book *The Chinese Laundryman: A Study of Social Isolation* how Chinese laundrymen faced social isolation and economic hardship, Chinese female immigrants were also subjected to labour exploitation in garment industries where they faced harsh conditions low wages as other Asian workers there, as a result lot of organizations such as The International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) which took place in New York emerged to fight against these illegal exploitation that placed them in lower position.

7. 2. The Rise of Chinese American Small Businesses

Contrary to the perception that the 20th century was an era defined by discrimination and deprivations for the Chinese immigrants, the period also brought significant changes and saw the abolition of several oppressive policies that had been enacted in the previous era such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 which was the first major law restricted them, eventually repealed in 1943.

The Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus claimed that “ The repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1943 was a crucial first step toward justice for Chinese Americans, who continue to shape our nation in countless ways ” (2024). Chinese immigrants were finally accepted to be naturalized citizens and gain citizenship.

The naturalization paved the way for Chinese immigrants to own property and open small businesses, in addition to the passage of the immigration and nationality act of 1965 which allowed more Chinese to enter the U.S and start their own enterprises. Although it was not easy at first because the existing banks refused to finance them, the United States allowed the emergence of Chinese-American banks, which financed their own businesses. According to The Economist Intelligence Unit (n.d) the Chinese American banks have contributed to financing and increasing the integration of Chinese Americans and even other minorities into the financial system. For example, Cathay Bank, one of the oldest Chinese-American banks financed numerous Chinese companies in California.

The contribution of Chinese American businesses played a crucial role in the development of the American economy and paved the way with numerous services being available such as the libraries, laundry services, restaurants, jewelleryes, handmade craft and textile shops. Their success in the consumer market laid to other investments such as the creation of import-export companies that enriched the American trade.

8. Chinatown as a Center of Chinese Identity Survival

As Chinese immigrants expanded since their arrival in the United States, they were viewed as a threat to American society, and hatred toward them grew, leading to segregation, exploitation and attacks. As a result Chinatowns began to form in cities such as New York, Los Angeles, Philadelphia and Boston, they were initially emerged as a safe place where they could protect themselves from any kind of attacks in a hostile environment and find a sense of belonging. Later, it was also seen as a place where they could preserve their own language, traditions, and cultural identity, which were otherwise unattainable.

According to Xu, Y (2010) The Chinese community desire to maintain their lifestyle was the reason they gathered in Chinatown, in addition to hostility from the majority that led to the emergence of their own ethnic businesses (p.26). The early Chinatowns played a crucial role in facilitating the adaptation of newly arrived Chinese immigrants in the 20th century, especially those who arrived after the Immigration and nationality act of 1965, as they felt a sense of belonging through the presence of their religious temples. However, not all Chinatowns owned temples, therefore an increasing number of temples were constructed and many religious festivals were held.

Yang, F (2002) noted that since the 1970s, traditional Chinese folk religion, with its many festivals has been revived and numerous syncretic temples have been built in cities like Houston, where three temples were built with Chinese style architecture: The Tien Hou, the Teo Chew and the Guan Di in the 1990s (p.79).

In the context of Chinese diaspora, Chinatowns played a significant role for the establishment of religious centers to practice their rituals which were deeply considered too sacred to ignore.

Language, as a fundamental part of culture, needs to be preserved, and this is what Chinese Americans in the United States tried to do to preserve traditions for future generations. However, it was not easy as they faced extremely difficult conditions and were excluded from public schools. As a result, Chinese schools were established in Chinatowns in the 1880s. The Chinatowns served as important centers that enabled the establishment of Chinese language schools there, where the academy offered courses in Chinese literature and history in both Mandarin and Cantonese languages, despite the hostility that continued to ravage its institutions, until the Immigration Act of 1965, when new waves of immigrants led to the formation and revival of Chinese-language schools that had previously been closed and destroyed.

8. 1. Chinatowns Response to Isolation

The initial purpose of Chinatown was to bring Chinese Immigrants together in same area. However, they suffered from persistent feelings of isolation and confinement due to societal avoidance. In response to these struggles, the creation of cultural institutions, family associations and places where their culture could be practiced was essential.

The exterior of Chinatown was a symbol of cultural heritage, distinguished by its distinctive architecture, where Restaurants, streets, and commercial spaces were decorated in their own unique style such as pagoda roofs, lion statues, and decorative gates "paifang", creating a family atmosphere and a sense of belonging to overcome isolation.

Cultural festivals were also held in Chinatown, where everyone celebrated together, such as the Mid-Autumn and the Qingming Festivals, these celebrations gave them the opportunity to enjoy their customs and educate future generations the Chinese culture, As it is noted in (Eugreenia, 2023) Chinatown is a prime example of resilience and resistance, viewed as "resilient communities" that demonstrate a history of national identity and provide a sense of belonging and connection to those who might otherwise feel excluded.

Chinatown helped change the sense of isolation experienced by Chinese immigrants, paving the way for resident immigrants and newcomers to feel a sense of belonging and foster group solidarity in a racist American society.

9. Political and Civil Rights Contributions

The social and political activism of Chinese Americans has profoundly shaped their identities and societal standing. This activism has adapted across different historical periods, reflecting the broader struggles against, injustice, prejudice and marginalization since their coming to the U.S. In response to these systemic racism, Chinese American activists engaged in various social and political organizations. For instance, the congress decision to extend the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 through the passing of the Geary Act of 1892 represented the oppressive practices that continued to limit and prohibit them from integrating into the fabric of American society to the early 20th century.

Wong Kim Art, a man born in the United States to Chinese parents, was denied from returning to the country after visiting China, he challenged the government decision alongside with the Chinese activists who protested to achieve justice. The case was one of the important civil rights victories, as it confirmed the removal of the previous laws that restricted the Chinese

from entering or leaving the U.S, in addition to the establishment of birth right citizenship which protected the rights of next generations as it is mentioned by Immigration History (n.d) " This decision and birth right citizenship has served as a key means for immigrants of all backgrounds to establish permanent legal standing in the United States"

Chinese Immigrants have historically witnessed various cases aimed at restricting them. However through collective action, such as protesting, organizing centers and support networks they could challenge the limitations and achieved rights previously prohibited such as the dream of political participation, which was difficult to achieve but nevertheless succeeded.

10. Conclusion

The Chinese community's journey during the 20th century was marked by a complex path, with significant challenges, unlike the previous era. Chinese residents faced determined struggles against discriminatory practices such as labour exploitation and low wages, leading to the formation of organizations, movements, and protests.

Chinese immigrants faced a tragic reality of violence, leading to murder, like the case of Peter Yew, as well as educational barriers that limited their children's right to attend public schools like the case of Martha Lum, and the anti-miscegenation law which prohibited interracial marriage and impacted newly married. However, the mid-20th century witnessed radical transformations, with the abolition of previously illegal practices leading to the acceptance of mixed marriages, and the emergence of laws that provided educational opportunities.

Chinese residents were also able to establish small businesses, improve their financial situation, and preserve their cultural identity in Chinatowns by reviving their religious rituals and practices. The development of civil rights for Chinese immigrants remained a complex interplay of reforms and restrictions throughout history.

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1. Introduction

Historically, the United States has been known for its ethnic diversity, with different languages, religions, traditions and cultures coming together in one country. In modern American, this diversity still leads to a complex understanding of identity to all, particularly for Chinese Americans.

The chapter addresses identity struggles related to adaptation and assimilation. It also examines how previous and modern incidents, as well as the portrayals of Chinese Americans have influenced the identity development, focusing on the generational divide and how they interpret and express their identities. The chapter aims to highlight the experience of Chinese Americans in confronting the complexity of identity to achieve social acceptance within the American society.

2. Adapting to and Preserving the Culture

Since the emergence of Chinatowns, early Chinese Americans have actively sought to preserve their culture, as they are the largest ethnic group among Asian Americans. These efforts began as a result of the harsh conditions that targeted and restricted them, leading to their isolation and gathering in one place where they found themselves able to preserve their cultural heritage and make their neighbourhoods authentically resemble the streets of China to avoid the loss of identity.

Maintaining cultural continuity in a multicultural country is not easy and requires a lot, especially when generations change and face pressures of assimilation and the complexities of adapting the American social customs or preserving their ancestral cultural heritage, leaving them confused to find their identities to achieve a sense of belonging.

Di Julia, a Chinese American student and one of those who still question their identity, said that she was afraid it had become a reality: Two nations might claim her, but she could not claim either of them (2012).

2. 1. From Assimilation to Preservation

Chinese Americans journey from assimilation to preservation of their culture is a complex narrative, as they attempted to shift the cultural assimilation into cultural preservation. Early Chinese Americans were on the verge of assimilation where they had a strong contact with other workers, particularly during the California Gold Rush period and the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad. However, as hostility toward them spread and restrictive policies increased because they were perceived as a cause of job shortages, they felt unaccepted by the

American society and refused to be victims of assimilation. As a result, Chinatowns became a cultural centres. Where they preserved their language and cultural practices.

By the mid-20th century, a major turning point occurred when repressive and discriminatory laws were abolished. Many Chinese Americans, especially their descendants, were able to attend public schools and institutions, which facilitated their adaptation to the new environment. Since then, the struggle to preserve culture began, as the first generation was more attached to its culture, unlike the second generation, whose raising did not resemble that of their parents.

As a result, Chinese Americans taught their descendants Chinese customs, religion and traditions using their language and made them attend Chinese schools after leaving the American or during weekends. Fang, Y, J (2015) stated that weekend heritage language schools began to be established during the 1960s in an effort to preserve cultural identity among young Chinese Americans, especially those born in the United States and living in a Euro-American environment. These schools paved the way for them to know their culture and preserve it for future generations.

2. 2. Maintaining Cultural Identity through Traditions

Traditions are an important bridge that connects an individual to his identity, and passed down from one generation to the next. Chinese Americans continued to make efforts in modern America to maintain their cultural identity. Previously, during the anti-miscegenation law Chinese Americans were forced to form familial from their racial ties, so they raised their children according to the Chinese standards. However, they continued to protect their cultural identity, especially after the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 when a large number of immigrants came to the U.S and integrated with their children in the schools.

Traditional festivals were part of Chinese Americans way of preserving their traditions together and promote the collective celebration of their heritage. In fact, these celebrations date back to the 1860s, and despite the wars that the United States witnessed, they have continued into the modern America as the Lunar New Year, also known as the "Chinese New Year."

According to Totenberg, M (n.d) Chinese American children see this celebration important for understanding the traditions of their parents, as they gather together to eat, celebrate the dragon dances, and exchange red envelopes for good luck. Although the celebration was not very close to that of China, the goal of maintaining cultural identity was important to all Chinese Americans residing there.

As Chinese Americans begun to form their own businesses in the mid-20th century, the number of restaurants has increased, offering their traditional food such as 'Chop Suey'. Liu,

H (2009) said that the rapid growth of restaurants in New York and elsewhere has led to the development of another major professional channel where Chinese food has become a popular ethnic cuisine in the U.S.

Culinary traditions have continued without losing their roots. Leung, K (2014) stated that Food played a crucial role in preserving traditions, as immigrant parents preferred to cook foods that reminded them of their homeland. Cuisine was among the ways Chinese Americans represented and preserved their cultural identity.

3. Cultural Identity through Generations

The evolution of Chinese American cultural identity began with the first generation and continued to reach their U.S born children. This evolution has gone through three steps, first, from a deeply entrenched culture to a blended and finally, Self-expression of heritage. The early Chinese immigrants in the U.S had strong ties to their cultural heritage and were not influenced by the Western culture. On the contrary, they have contributed to the American society through the application of herbal medicine, while at the same time preserving their ancestral heritage.

With the spread of hostility towards them and the establishment of Chinatowns, the development of Chinese cultural heritage began there, where Chinese Americans felt free to practice and preserve the entire heritage for their next generation. As the U.S born children began to grow, they found themselves facing a dual identity, experiencing the effects of assimilation into the American society. According to Zhitong, C (2020) “The second-generation Chinese Americans are stuck in the ambivalence and conflict concerning their self-identification” (p.533). Although they were proud of their background by celebrating festivals and rituals, they were also drawn to American standards because their cultural identity had no place in society.

The third generation and beyond were divided into those who maintained their cultural identity, those who preferred to cling to the American identity to avoid being seen as foreign, and those who maintained both identities in the hope of finding a balance between them. the consequences of this attempt made them face cultural mixing and struggling inner conflicts, as Ningsih, K, A (2023) examined the real story of Nathan and Lydia, two third- generation children who struggled with their identity in public spaces because of their mixed-race, as told in the book *Everything I Never Told You* (p.244). Chinese American cultural identity has continued to change from generation to generation, shaped by different factors that each generation experienced.

3. 1. Factors Shaping Cultural Identity

The shift in one's sense of belonging, especially in a foreign land, is often accompanied by various factors. What led to the variation in the preservation of Chinese Americans' cultural heritage from one generation to the other has been driven by historical, social, familial, and political factors. The first generation used the restriction policies, the racism against them and the sense of isolation as a way to strength their community there, by maintaining traditions, religion rituals and more importantly the language. These enabled them to create their own place and offer the second generation their cultural identity to preserve it.

American born Chinese children were different from their predecessors. When the first generation came from their homeland, they directly engaged in labour force and did not attend any formal American education that could influence their identity.

The second generation, in contrast, attended American institutions and was exposed to American cultural norms. Family and social environment were both responsible for their dual identity, leaving them torn between preserving their parents' heritage and integrating into the society in which they lived. According to Gu, A (n.d) The incompatibility of Chinese second generation in their cultural orientations resulted from the interaction of the prevailing cultural values in society more than the values their parents (p.10). The experiences of discrimination, assimilation into the society and the dual identity were the factors contributed to the shift from the collective goal to preserve Chinese cultural identity to Self-expression of heritage.

4. Chinese Americans “*Model Minority*” Stereotype

Historians see that the term of “*Model Minority*” traced back to the 1960s, it appeared to portray the Asian Americans as a minority group who achieved higher social and economic status through educational, occupational, and economic success.

At first, the positive stereotype made them proud to own the term, as they were considered smart and competent in almost all the fields. It can be said that this term replaced the previous one “yellow peril”, a racist term used to describe that East Asian peoples posed a danger to the Western world and civilization. However, this stereotype had an indirect negative impact, contrary to what is seems.

Gue, Y (2017) stated that *Model Minority* was a myth used to spread the idea that Asian Americans had superior abilities and intelligence that set them apart from other races and therefore want to have a higher income compared to other individuals. In fact, this idea has served to spread hatred against Asians all rather than improving their portrayal in the American society.

4. 1. Chinese Americans Achievement

Chinese Americans achieved successes that have contributed significantly to American economic development. When they first arrived, they help build the transcontinental railroads. Post 1965, Chinese Americans and newly arrived immigrants made many diverse contributions too. According to the Asian American Education Project (n.d) many Chinese American figures achieved recognition in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics, for example Chien Shiung Wu (1912-1997) her pioneering work in nuclear physics brought her to the forefront of public attention, earning her the title of “Queen of Nuclear Research.

Chinese American have also contributed to the medical field, Lai, A (2024) mentioned their successes for instance, Min Chue Chang (1908-1991) a Chinese American biologist and an early innovators in In-Vitro Fertilization and the oral contraceptive pill, which later led to the birth of the first “test-tube baby,” Louise Joy Brown in 1978.

The achievements of Chinese Americans have been so extensive that their generations also achieved remarkable success in their educational path, to the point that their rates have been the highest among both black and white races. Batalova, J & Rosenbloom, R (2023) stated that despite all the harsh conditions that Chinese faced, they still represent the third largest number of immigrants and achieved a higher levels of education than the others.

4. 2. Beyond the Positive Stereotype

Many researchers sought to analyse and understand *Model Minority* stereotype that portrayed Asian Americans as more intelligent than other races after various incidents that served to discriminate them. The stereotype seemed good at first, but after researchers examined it, it appeared to have negative consequences.

This stereotype has created academic pressure and tensions among family members, as parents always expect their children to get high grades and never fail, as they were influenced by the *Model Minority* idea. For instance, if their children get low grades, their parents will feel disappointed because they did not respond to the stereotype, leading to tensions and separation between them (Qin, Way, & Mukherjee, 2008).

The *model minority* glorified the successful students while concealing the reasons for others failure, including the extreme poverty of their parents, which made it difficult to finance their children. Asian American women also experienced fractured realities under the *model minority* myth, contributing to higher rates of suicide, depression, and anxiety.

According to (Noh, 2018) there were factors contributed to their suicide: the pressure to succeed and maintain the stereotypical image of Asian Americans which affected their mental health. Additionally, their vulnerability to the model minority led them to blame themselves when they failed to achieve success. These interconnected factors showed that the negative consequences of the *model minority* were more influential than the positive ones.

5. Stereotype and Racial Profiling

Although the *model minority* myth portrayed Asian Americans as a successful race, racial discrimination persisted in modern America and deeply rooted in their historical experiences such as the low wage compared to others, and evolving into various forms of discrimination. Racial profiling, an unethical practice, has been on the rise despite the need to eradicate it. For example, the assertion of incompetence among Chinese Americans was in contrast to their portrayal as a *model minority*.

Politically, the U.S government also racially profiled various Chinese Americans there, especially those who contributed to the advancement of the American economy where they were accused of espionage, destroying their professional careers. Through the findings of (Lee, J, J et al, n.d) 42.2% of Chinese scientists experienced racial profiling by the US government, compared to 8.6% of non-Chinese scientists because of their race (p.8). Modern racial profiling was more closely linked to the US government, which continued to accuse Chinese Americans of espionage only to have them expelled or imprisoned.

Chinese Americans continued to suffer over time, but each era has been different depending on the events. American's acceptance of the immigrant's power and contributions has been difficult, leading it to look for reasons to eliminate them (not all the races).

5. 1. Chinese Americans as “Bamboo Ceiling”

Although Asian Americans were viewed as one of the most educated and successful ethnic groups in the United States, they were also viewed as underrepresented in senior leadership roles across various sectors of American business, government, and academia. The term of bamboo ceiling referred to the factors that contributed to this underrepresentation, Lu, J. G. (2024) defined bamboo ceiling as the phenomenon that despite the educational and economic achievements of East Asians (such as ethnic Chinese and Koreans) in the United States, their representation in leadership positions was weak. It was like invisible barriers were being used to keep them from reaching high professional. Lin, X et al (2018) confirmed that Chinese Americans were barred from holding high level positions in Silicon Valley, despite the large

portion of the staff they occupied and their significant contributions there as programmers in various companies.

In fact, the necessity of cooperating with Chinese Americans due to their intelligence and professionalism was the reason behind their acceptance as employees in the United States. However, racial prejudice persisted even if it was not directly apparent, which made them continue to try to find their place in society and erase anything that contributed to discrimination against them, such as the cooperation of Asian Americans to break the idea of the bamboo ceiling.

5. 2. Espionage Allegations

Chinese Americans thought that reaching the highest position may be a success and a source of pride, but within the U.S of America unexpected circumstances may arise, leading to the destruction of the professional career that has been worked on for long time. The visual analysis highlighted how many scientists were accused of espionage despite a lack of evidence, brutally tried, and sentenced to prison, in addition to having their reputations tarnished.

In the post-cold war period, the United States was afraid of economic espionage from other countries; as a result, Congress passed the Economic Espionage Act of 1996 under President Bill Clinton to protect the intellectual property of the American economy. According to Zhang, W (2024), the US government has used this law over the past two decades to brutally persecute people of Chinese descent, resulting in racial targeting (p.587). While the Committee of 100 provided data on the Economic Espionage Act confirming that espionage charges were directed at individuals of Asian descent: 62% of the accused were Asians from various groups, while the majority, 52%, of these individuals were Chinese Americans.

The accusation against the Chinese Americans began at the end of the 20th century and continued to reach the rule of President Donald Trump. In 2012, Sherry Chen, a Chinese hydrologist was fired from her work at the National Weather Service and arrested for espionage, although the false charges were later dropped and her case which was investigated by the Internal Investigation Unit was resolved, she remained unemployed.

In 2019 she filed a civil lawsuit against the U.S. government, seeking compensation for all the false accusation and the expulsion she was subjected to. American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) (2022) stated that Ms. Chen would receive \$550,000 from the Commerce Department and an annuity from the U.S. government valued at \$1.25 million over 10 years. Despite her victory, Yang, Z (2022) reported that Chen said:

I reflect on the years that so many have lost, including myself, and the trauma that lingers on for those directly impacted and for their families. Victories, such as this, alone do not fully compensate for what has been lost.

Sherry Chen was an example of a large number of scientists who were accused of spying for China, which affected their identity as a respected community.

6. The Impact of Incidents and Marches on the Development of Chinese Americans Identity

Throughout American history, Chinese Americans' journey towards identity formation has been profoundly shaped by a complex interplay of significant incidents and acts of discrimination that have hindered their assertion of identity. These complex incidents have reinforced marginalization and challenged their ability to fully form and embrace a cohesive Chinese American identity.

Despite their long-term presence there, which has left them questioned about their place in society as external factors, such as hostile public sentiment, it continued to influence their dynamic development of what it means to be Chinese American.

Even riots, such as the one in Los Angeles 1992, were racially motivated to express anti-Asian sentiment as a whole, in addition to the exclusionary acts sanctioned by the U.S government to exclude and prevent Asians from joining the white community, as in the case of Lum family children. All of these practices continue to affect Chinese Americans in modern America, suppressing their identity in American society.

6. 1. 1992 Los Angeles Riots

The 1992 Los Angeles riots, commonly known as “race riot”, a tumultuous period that exposed deep tensions within the city. Although the riots were triggered by the use of force by four white police officers against Black motorist Rodney King, the riots further inflamed tensions when the destruction extended to the property of Asian Americans, particularly Korean Americans.

Chinese Americans, as a part of the Asian community were affected by this incident. Unfortunately, the riots exposed the racial divide again, Kotkin, J (1992) said about the racial divide and disunity in Los Angeles: “rather than unity in the city's hour of deep crisis, as was widely hoped after the riots, there has been a notable rise of political me-ism that threatens to

frustrate, even undermine recovery attempts”. Americans and even foreign immigrants in the United States begun to fear Asians because they were portrayed as dangerous in the media during the Riots.

Lee, S (2015) stated that the riots of 1992 made Americans aware of the presence of Asians in the American community. However, the misrepresentation of Asians as troublemakers and the shared experiences of violence that targeting of Asian-owned businesses (some Chinese businesses included) made them racially united and politically aware but unfortunately, it impacted their identity formation as they were all considered troublemakers without exception.

6. 2. Lum V. Rice

The Lum family case (1927) significantly impacted Chinese American children in their educational path, contributing to their denial of equal access to schools during that time. However, its implications extended beyond education, it became a part of the barriers that continued to impact the Chinese Americans while trying to destroy the feeling of otherness and create their own identity to fully integrate into the American society.

According to Jung, J (2024) the Lum V. Rice case was a debate of Asian identity in a segregated American society, in addition to the fact that it was not in favor of Martha Lum, it revealed the difficulty of achieving equality in America and proving the legitimacy of their identity. The Lum family case entrenched social divisions between Asians and whites in all institutions beyond education field.

Since the case occurred in Mississippi, the city became a powerful advocate for racial disintegration, prompting some Chinese Americans to leave the city in the hope of finding the opportunity to form an identity that suits them without discrimination. However, their movement from Mississippi involved other races like the Africans. This action hindered the attempt to form a cohesive identity there, as they chose to displace and left the rest struggling to find their place in a racist city.

7. Political Engagement of Chinese Americans

Early studies of Chinese immigrants in the United States discussed their establishment of Chinatowns and organizations in response to discriminatory practices. However, in modern America, they realized that this was not enough, especially when they noticed that the process of constructing their identity took a long time and was not yet complete, which also made them vulnerable to discrimination and viewed as outsiders without an identity.

Before World War II, Chinese Americans were excluded from political participation, but in its aftermath, they gained the right to vote for the first time. Their political engagement grew significantly after new waves arrived thanks to the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, where young Chinese Americans increased their civic engagement to call for opportunities and stability through local and national discussions, which increased solidarity among them and sense of political awareness. For instance, the Chinese American Matt Fong was elected in 1994 to the California State Treasure Commission.

Chinese Americans have focused on priorities to achieve such as a coherent political ideology and increasing awareness of race focused policies (Ong, P & Lee, J, 2007). However, Chinese political representatives lacked political communication from the major parties and as a result felt ignored, which seemed to be a modern limitation but in the political sphere.

Chinese Americans succeeded to achieve political representation, Fish, E (2016) stated that: “Asian Americans have traditionally had lower political participation and lower voter turnout compared to other minority groups, but today their political influence is rapidly growing”

7. 1. Solidarity through Political Participation

Through research conducted by Ong, P. and Lee, J (2007) the result showed that the main problems that Chinese Americans wanted to solve in their political engagement were: 49% regarding job opportunities and economic conditions, 21% regarding educational issues, while 22% regarding the housing crisis, in addition to intergroup relations, which seemed to be a greater concern at the national level than at the local level. These statistical findings were achieved through Chinese Americans collaboration, with the hope of addressing these challenges that continued to affect them in modern America.

Political solidarity of Chinese Americans has become one of the most powerful modern ways to advocate their rights, this opportunity helped to establish various political organizations. For instance, the Organization of Chinese Americans (OCA) founded in 1973 aimed to unite Chinese Americans into one voice and advocate for social justice, this organization has included several participants among them Chinese Americans congressmen and women, in addition to some Asian activists and journalists. Danico, Y (n.d) talked about the (OCA) organization claiming that it has expanded to include more than 80 chapters and branches, and has made contributions in various cities, all for the political interest, it also talked about the Asian Americans Leadership Council (AACL) organization in 1971 and its effort to develop leadership skills and political awareness in the Chinese American community. These

organizations helped in the widespread of political awakening among Chinese Americans, resulting in the growing number of Chinese American candidates at the local, state, and national levels.

7. 2. Chinese Americans in Political Office

The presence of Chinese Americans in political positions has been a notable attempt to break down barriers and cultivate a sense of civic responsibility within the Chinese American community. Their political participation went beyond voting and involving in political organizations, it even included representation in Congress and some political parties, helping to make their voices heard.

Lily Lee Chen, the first Chinese American female to become mayor in 1983, California. She played a pivotal role in increasing the Chinese American population there and advocated for more services and representations. Chen, C (2019) mentioned the contributions of Lily Lee Chen saying that she was a driving force behind numerous improvements and accomplishments there, such as bringing the Olympic Games to Monterey Park, seeking to introduce Asian culture through them. While some Chinese Americans politicians sought to reach identity acceptance through their engagements, others like Judy Chu who was elected to the U.S congress and supported by the Chinese Americans community in the U.S, emphasized on the importance of achieving equality and advocate for immigration reform that targeted them.

Other figures besides those mentioned, have made a significant effort to represent Chinese Americans, their achievements continued to inspire future generations to pursue careers in public services and engage in political leadership, thereby prompting a more inclusive conception of citizenship in the nation.

8. Representation of Chinese Americans in Media

“Media creates the narrative foundation for how people of color are perceived and treated in the real world” Jess et al (2022). In modern era, media platforms including social media, television, radio..., have become a significant instrument for people to share their experiences and thoughts about something or someone.

The portrayal of Chinese Americans reflects the perception of the American society toward them, in the previous two decades, they were negatively stereotyped since their arrival which reinforced xenophobia and racial discrimination through printed caricatures and common words that depicted them as inferior and ugly. In recent years, their representation became a complex

tapestry of both positive and negative stereotype, prompting them to advocate for full recognition and a better representation in the American media.

Although they deserved better portrayals and being seen as role models for their resilience in the face of discrimination, they found themselves making efforts to prevent the perpetuation of misrepresentation and combat its spread around the world. The representation of Chinese Americans in Media was influenced by previous restrictive and racist practices. Clossey, E (2021) reshared what the producer and author said: “Century-long stereotypical portrayals in film and television have dehumanized the AAPI community”

8. 1. Evolution Representation

The evolution of Chinese Americans representation in American has had a long journey from the 19th century to the present day. The early portrayals vilified Chinese immigrants in the 19th and even the early 20th centuries, during the California gold rush (1848–1855) Chinese were the largest workers there, While they should be seen as hardworking and good contributors to American society, they were viewed as “outsiders” and depicted in various caricatures, including one published by artist George M. Reeves in 1895 under the title “The Chinese Must Go”

The twentieth century was different from the previous era, as their portrayal was influenced not only by the constraints they faced, but also by global conflicts, changing political policies, and their contributions. For instance, their alliance with the U.S during the WWII against Japan improved their depiction and were seen as “brave” and “heroes” which created a sense of acceptance among them. Unfortunately, this feeling was not complete as they were portrayed positively only because of their achievements while they were still racially rejected in society. Although they were accepted by Americans during the war, their culture was rejected and considered inconsistent with what it means to be American (Grayeb, E, n.d).

Hollywood played a significant role in shaping the American public view of Chinese Americans. At early decades they were negatively portrayed, Hollywood moguls used the Chinese figures to employ them in roles that were misaligned with their morals, like the film *The Lotus Blossom* (1957), Yuen, C (n.d) stated that through this film, Asian women were portrayed as passive, obedient, submissive, and designed to please the white man.

Some artists refused various roles such as Anna May Wong, a famous Chinese America artist who faced racist practices in the Hollywood sphere and fought to humanise Chinese roles, she said: “I was so tired of the parts I had to play. Why is it that the screen Chinese is nearly always the villain of the piece.....We are not like that.” (Sakamoto, E, 1987).

This misrepresentation affected not only the identity of Chinese American artists, but also all Chinese residents there. However they still continue to limit the roles that destroyed their image and try to fully represent their morals.

8. 2. Chinese Americans towards Positive Change

The American society used all the tools to distort the image of Chinese Americans. However, the civil rights movements, along with the political changes that occurred during that time, such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964, presented positive and respectful images, all centered on their courage and patience in achieving equality.

For instance, Hollywood began to accept the good portrayal of Asians all such as the film *Enter the Dragon* (1973) and *The Joy Luck Club* (1993), which increased their visibility as good individuals. However, some challenges remain, influenced by the previous historical background, which provided a complex representation of Asian Americans during that period such as the fell into the trap of the "model minority" and the "bamboo ceiling" stereotype.

Despite the fact that the negative stereotype of Asians in Hollywood during the 20th century took a long time, it still exists in the American society and reflected in the films today, though less explicit than in previous era but appears through indirect insinuation (Yuen, C, n.d). The portrayal of Chinese Americans is highly variable, with Hollywood or any media instrument lacking consensus on how to represent them. According to Shin, P (2019) reshared what Xiana Dawn Moon, a Chinese American singer writer said: “good news is that we finally have more representation, and things are changing”

9. Intergenerational Relations and the Influence on Identity

Identity formation across generations is a complex process, as it requires the transmission of culture, language, beliefs, and experiences to understand themselves and their place in the world. However, to successfully maintain these elements in a foreign country is extremely difficult.

Chinese American identity since their arriving in the U.S in the 19th century was influenced by adaptation, assimilation and intergenerational transformation, the journey was multifaceted because each generation experienced historical, political and social changes that were unique and very different from each other which affected their identity creation. Various researchers confirmed that the differences between generations within the Chinese American community led to misunderstandings, a clash in values and beliefs and identity crisis.

According to Dong et al. (2021), in immigrant families, when intergenerational differences arise, tensions escalate, leading to contradictions between the “traditionalism” of the first immigrant generation and the “westernization” of their descendants and future generations. Understanding the historical events that each generation experienced is essential to analyse how their relationship was and their perception of identity. Thompson, B et al (2009) said that: “Family stories play a critical role in developing family and individual identity since members of this generation have some control over how the stories will be passed on to subsequent generations”. The experience of early Chinese immigrants differed from that of their children, making it impossible for them to receive advice from their parents, as they grew up in a different environment.

9. 1. Intergenerational divide

The generational divide among Chinese Americans was strongly present through their different perceptions and attitudes that made them vulnerable to exploitation and confusion about where they belong. Chinese Americans: A Survey Data Snapshot (n.d) found that Chinese Americans describe their identity in several ways: 53% as Chinese or Chinese Americans, about 34% see themselves as Asian Americans or Americans, while 8% as Americans.

The first generation were those who immigrated to the United States in the 19th century, they had a strong connection to their homeland and held on to their traditions, values, culture, and language despite the external pressure and the limited social conditions they faced. The establishment of Chinatowns also helped preserve their cultural identity, as they viewed themselves from the perspective of their country of origin. The second generation were those who born in the U.S and raised according to American standards while staying connected to their parent’s Chinese heritage.

The way in which the second generation dealt with mixed cultures led to generational divide, despite the fact that both faced almost same discriminations, the early immigrants created a sense of solidarity and strong desire to maintain their identity, while the second generation have been influenced by both American and Chinese norms. A simple example of their experience was the use of heritage language at home and English language at schools. Guo, W (2022) found out through his research result that although the Chinese Americans study the language in Chinese schools, the environment continues to shape their language habits, making it difficult to master speaking and writing Chinese perfectly.

The integration into the American society did not prevent them from participating the celebration and enjoying the traditions of their parents, unlike the third generation, which has fully assimilated to the mainstream American life and often experience a symbolic connection

to their heritage. The Generational divisions among them have created tensions regarding their identity that still affect them in modern America.

9. 2. Intergenerational Identity Conflicts

Identity is important in an individual life. However, disparities in self-perception can create conflicts, particularly within immigrant communities. Chinese Americans have faced these conflicts because the process of identity formation has been influenced by their experiences, which means that each generation has its own unique perspective on it, leading to various tensions.

Through an in-depth interview with Chinese American students, Qin et al. (2012) found that cultural misunderstandings, language barriers, and feelings toward their parents' country of origin created tensions. Lijuan one of the students interviewed said that her mother is proud of her Chinese heritage and when she disagrees with her on certain cultural aspects, she gets upset, saying that Chinese culture is great (p.47).

Intergenerational identity conflicts in the Chinese American community are linked to the long-standing issue of identity division among them, while other aspects are also part of the ongoing conflicts today.

10. Chinese Americans during the COVID-19 Outbreak

Over the past two decades, Chinese Americans have had a long journey in American society marked by various social, historical and political events, where they experienced both racist policies and reforms. However, the COVID-19 outbreak has strongly revitalized the anti-Chinese sentiment. Chinese Americans have been blamed for the spread of the pandemic in the American society, Social media and television news have reported instances of racism and hate crimes directed against Chinese descents during that time.

Donald Trump, President of the U.S has been seen as the reason behind the revival hatred towards the Chinese through his speeches that have angered all Asians, especially when he described the pandemic as “China virus”. Dr. Reja, M (2021) said: “at the start of the pandemic, Trump condemned xenophobic attacks against Asian Americans, but he continued to use incendiary rhetoric and deny doing so was racist”. Since then, they have been labelled as those who brought the virus, and another journey of racism began.

At the early beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, Chinese immigrants started experiencing discrimination again, according to Barron, J (2020) Chinatowns in New York lost between 50% and 70% of their businesses at the start of COVID-19 virus. These losses

impacted the Chinese community, leaving them without jobs or even healthcare services during their sickness.

10. 1. Hate Crime and Harassment

The pandemic has once again exposed racial hostility toward Asian Americans, but it has more specifically targeted individuals of Chinese descent, as the virus was first identified in Wuhan, China. Chinese descent were subjected to various types of crimes: "verbal harassment," "assault with and without injury," and "domestic crimes". A Chinese restaurant in New Jersey was destroyed with racist messages: "Chinavirus" and "go home to China", while a car of another Chinese owned restaurant in Chesapeake was found vandalized with anti-China graffiti.

Chinese students and employees have also been targeted and faced all forms of verbal and physical assault by their colleagues, with some universities, such as the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus, even encouraging these practices. Despite the brutal events that occurred during the first year of the pandemic, government authorities showed no response. Instead, they implicitly supported these racist ideologies, which subsequently led to the deaths of many Asians. Tian, Z et al. (2023) mentioned that hate crime statistics published by the FBI found that hate crime incidents against Asians increased from 158 in 2019 to 746 in 2021.

Each racist incident has increased their fear and further impacted their identity formation process, as this pandemic has revealed that they are still viewed as foreigners whether they are assimilated into American norms or not. According to Qin, D, B et al (2012) intergenerational conflicts are common, especially among immigrant families, added that the intergenerational conflicts within Chinese immigrants faced by adults and youth represent the situation of all immigrants.

10. 2. Impact of Stop Asian Hate on Chinese Americans Identity

Stop Asian Hate was a series of protests and demonstrations began firstly in the U.S in 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic, to fight the racism and racial discrimination against Asian Americans. These protests occurred as a response to the mass shooting at Atlanta-area spas, where 8 Asian people were killed among them two Chinese.

The COVID-19 pandemic period has been one of the most difficult moments that Asians have ever experienced, as they have not only suffered from racial discrimination but their mental health has also been affected, especially Chinese students who were constantly bullied and blamed. The pandemic heightened social rejection of Chinese descent individuals, leading

to their identity being profoundly impacted again, especially those who believed that they fit the American norms but later shocked to be viewed as outsiders.

Chinese Americans have encouraged intergenerational solidarity to unit their identity through protests even after the pandemic, where racial discriminatory practice have continued to affected each one in a different way. For instance, *Kevin Wang*, a Chinese professor who was authorized to work was abruptly fired from New College of Florida under a law applied on July 1, 2023, that prohibits colleges and universities from employing anyone from so-called “countries of concern” including China (Herman, A, 2025). This was just an example of workers being fired, even some students were facing exclusion from universities in some cases.

While many Chinese Americans or Chinese residents returned to their homeland after the pandemic, others decided to stay there and fight to assert their identity. However, the process of continuing to form their identity was difficult, as those who chose to remain in the United States faced mental health issues because they were victim of the Virus and the hostility of the Americans. Cheah et al (2020) stated that 543 Chinese American families were subjected to direct and online discrimination and all of them have shown symptoms of severe anxiety and depression.

11. Conclusion

The journey of Chinese Americans in modern America has been full of challenges, primarily in preserving their culture and maintaining it through generations, alongside to their desire for political participation to foster solidarity and achieve equality. Nevertheless, despite their successful political engagement, previous historical events have continued to impact them, as evidenced during the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, which has revealed that Chinese descant remain unaccepted and face persistent issues related to their identity and race, where they continue to experience systemic racism, including social marginalization, which has led to the rise of hate crimes and the unfair dismissal of Chinese-American workers and students from their jobs and academic institutions.

Findings

Finally, according to the research findings, Chinese immigrants' journey of suffering began with their arrival in the United States in the 19th century, with the first law enacted to restrict them (the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882) to the present day, as the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed anti-Chinese sentiment among Americans.

Despite the reform policies that were created, they were not fully implemented for Chinese immigrants, as the research found out the suffering of Chinese people from racism and injustice that each individual experienced even after the passage of laws such as hate crimes, worker dismissals, educational barriers.... etc.

Contrary to the initial hypothesis, the results of this study do not support the hypothesis that Chinese immigrants received their full civil rights after 1965 due to the acts and reform policies that were created at that time, Through in-depth analyses of laws and the experiences of the Chinese people, such as the Lum case and the educational barriers placed upon the Asians, the Peter Yew case in 1975, the murder of Vincent Chin in 1982, the accusation of workers as spies, and what has happened in recent years during the COVID-19 pandemic, it revealed the true feelings of Americans toward Chinese immigrants, as they were once again subjected to racial discrimination and increasingly blamed for the spread of the virus.

Chinese immigrants continued to suffer from civil rights violation in modern United despite their contributions. They still hope that one day racial discrimination and inferiority in American

General Conclusion

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The history of Chinese immigrants in the United States has been a complex journey marked by exclusion, discrimination, and limited reform. Massive waves of Chinese entered the United States in the 19th century for several reasons, including the failure of the Qing dynasty to control political, geographical, and economic instability in China, others migrated there looking for better life and unlimited opportunities, particularly during the Gold Rush (1848), when Chinese experiences began. The discovery of gold and the expansion of railroads allowed most of Chinese immigrants to get the opportunity to work but the wages were low compared to European workers. However, they were seen as the reason behind labour shortage and outsiders because of their race, which led to hostility towards them.

Beyond social animosity, Chinese immigrants were also targeted by the government through restrictive policies such as Chinese exclusion act of 1882 and Scott act of 1888 which deeply impacted their families by prohibited them from re-entering to the U.S. The establishment of Chinatowns as a safe place and organizations along with their participation in civil rights movements was a response to the harsh conditions they faced, although new reform acts created such as civil rights act 1964 that ended all kinds of discrimination, they continued to suffer from inequality and rejection like the arrest of Peter Yew (1975) and Vincent chin (1982) who were the victims of Anti-Chinese sentiment.

In modern America, Chinese Americans have continued to face racial discrimination, their portrayal is highly fluid, as they are exposed to both positive and negative stereotypes in the media, which has impacted their sense of belonging. Yet, systemic inequality has persist even under the guise of praise.

The conflict between traditional Chinese values and American norms has led to intergenerational identity conflicts that continue to affect them today because each generation has its own conception of its identity. These tensions have become more pronounced in recent years, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, when anti-Chinese sentiment has revived again and affect all Chinese descent and their generations. Even those who believe they fit American norms have been and continue to be viewed as outsiders and blamed for the pandemic spread in the U.S, leading to various crimes and job terminations.

Finally, the research findings reject the hypothesis states that Chinese immigrants gained their full rights after the civil rights act of 1965, the study demonstrates that although Chinese Americans have played a crucial role in the development of the U.S. economy, they remain deeply ingrained in modern American society. Despite the Civil Rights Act of 1965 and other reform policies that appeared to grant them rights, they continue to face racial discrimination

General Conclusion:

and inequality, each subjected to different forms of targeting, such as those perceived as Chinese spies being fired from their jobs, artists facing racist practices in their artistic field, and Chinese American citizens being wrongfully detained. These hostile sentiments have been exposed once again by the COVID-19 outbreak, which has led to a rise in hate crimes and the unfair dismissal of Chinese American workers and students from their jobs and academic institutions. The government can erase all of these racial disparities by encouraging anti-bias education and racial engagement across the board. However, this may prove difficult, as the citizens are influenced by the speech of President Donald Trump about the pandemic as a "China virus" which has fuelled Asian hostility.

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