

ASIAN-AMERICAN TIMELINE

(prepared by Dr. Bonnie Khaw-Posthuma)

- 1521** Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan claims the Phillipines in the name of the Spanish crown; colonial rule begins in 1565; first Filipinos reportedly arrive in California in 1587.
- 1790** Congress passes the Naturalization Act – granting U.S. citizenship to all “free white” persons.
- 1834** Afong Moy, the first Chinese woman known to have visited the U.S. is exhibited in a theater in New York.
- 1839-1842** China signs the Treaty of Nanjing –opening Chinese ports to trade by Western and later Japanese powers.
- 1843** Japanese citizen Nakahama Manjiro becomes the 1st Japanese individual to land in the U.S.
- 1848** First Chinese (two men, one woman) immigrate to the U.S. and land in San Francisco; discovery of gold leads to Chinese immigration to America (also known as “Gold Mountain”).
- 1852** Lured by the gold rush, more than 20,000 Chinese arrive in California (it was a myth that all Chinese wished to get rich quickly and return—only 50% did).
- 1853** Several hundred years of isolation end as Commodore Matthew Perry of the U.S. forces Japan to open its door to foreign commerce.
- 1854** People vs. Hall, a California case, rules that Chinese cannot testify for or against white persons in court.
- 1860** A Californian law bars Chinese-Americans, Indians, and African-Americans from public schools.
- 1865** Plans for the first transcontinental railroad in the U.S. are developed, and the Central Pacific Railroad begins hiring Chinese laborers.
- 1870** Congress grants naturalization rights to free whites and people of African descent, omitting mention of Asian (or as they call it “Oriental”) races.
- 1880** A Californian law prohibits mixed marriage between Caucasians and “Mongolians, [blacks], mulattos, and persons of mixed blood.”

- 1882** Congress passes the Chinese Exclusion Act barring Chinese laborers from coming to the U.S. for 10 years and prohibiting Chinese already in the country from becoming naturalized American citizens. Congress repeals the act in 1943 when China is viewed as an ally with the U.S. against Japan.
- 1885** Large-scale immigration of Japanese to the U.S. begins with the arrival of the first shipment in Honolulu, Hawaii.
- 1886** The Japanese government lifts its ban on emigration, allowing its citizens for the first time to make *permanent* moves to other countries; forcible expulsion of Chinese begins in many areas of the western U.S.
- 1889** First two Korean women, wives of Korean diplomats, enter the U.S.; *The San Francisco Bulletin* initiates its “yellow peril” campaign against Japanese immigration.
- 1892** The Geary Act extends the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 for another ten years and institutes mandatory registration by all Chinese.
- 1901** The first Korean immigrant arrives in Hawaii on a Japanese ship.
- 1902** Congress extends Chinese exclusion for another 10 years.
- 1903** Earliest group of Korean contract laborers lands in Hawaii to work the sugar plantations—the beginning of Korean immigration to the U.S.; the Japanese government in Korea stops all emigration in 1905 (before this happens about 7,000 Koreans arrive in Hawaii).
- 1904** South Asian Indians begin coming to North America, in particular British Columbia, Canada.
- 1906** San Francisco earthquake and fire devastate the city and its Chinatown.
- 1907** The Gentlemen’s Agreement between Japan and the U.S. requires Japan to bar further contract labor migration to the U.S.; as a result, labor contractors in Alaskan fisheries and on California and Hawaii farms and plantations begin recruiting Filipinos.
- 1908** Japanese picture brides begin arriving in the U.S.
- 1910** The U.S. Immigration Service establishes the Angel Island immigration station on the West Coast.
- 1912** Sun Yat-sen establishes the Republic of China and becomes its first president.

- 1913** California enacts the Alien Land Law to keep aliens ineligible for U.S. citizenship from buying or leasing land.
- 1914** World War I begins.
- 1917** America enters World War I; The Barred Zone Act further restricts immigration from almost all of Asia, except for Japan.
- 1918** World War I ends, and World War I veterans of Asian ancestry are granted U.S. citizenship; Great Britain, the U.S., and Japan fight for control of China; in Asia communist influence begins to spread.
- 1920** Under pressure from rising anti-Japanese hostility toward the picture-bride system, Japan refuses to issue any more passports to picture brides.
- 1922** Under the Cable Act, a female U.S. citizen can be stripped of her citizenship for marrying an alien ineligible for citizenship.
- 1924** A major new immigration act bars all Asians ineligible for American citizenship (Hawaiians and Filipinos are the exception) from entering the U.S.
- 1925** U.S. legislation requires that Filipinos must serve three years in the U.S. Navy in order to become eligible for U.S. citizenship.
- 1941** Japan attacks Pearl Harbor; the U.S. government declares war on Japan; U.S. Justice Department begins rounding up suspected Japanese collaborators on the West Coast.
- 1942** Executive Order 9066, signed by President Roosevelt, leads to the internment of Japanese on the West Coast; eventually 110,000 Japanese-Americans are imprisoned in 10 relocation camps in the U.S.
- 1943** A new Immigration Act repeals the exclusion laws and grants Chinese the right to American citizenship and sets a quota of 105 immigrants from China per year.
- 1945** In August atomic bombs hit Hiroshima and Nagasaki; on September 2 World War II ends as Japan formally surrenders; Korea gains independence from Japan; under the War Brides Act Asian wives, fiancées, and children of American servicemen are allowed entry into the U.S. (about 200,000 war brides come).
- 1946** The Philippines becomes an independent nation.

- 1948** Under the Japanese-American Evacuation Claims Act, the U.S. government must compensate former internees for financial losses due to their forced evacuation during World War II (ten cents is returned for every dollar lost); the U.S. Supreme Court finds unconstitutional a California law prohibiting interracial marriage; the Korean peninsula becomes separated into North and South Korea.
- 1950** The Korean War begins; Korean War brides begin emigration to the U.S.
- 1952** The McCarran-Walter Act repeals the Immigration Act of 1924. The new law promises naturalization and eventual citizenship for Asian immigrants and sets a limit of 105 immigrants annually for each Asian country.
- 1953** The Korean War ends with the signing of the Mutual Defense Treaty reestablishing the status quo along the 38th parallel.
- 1954** The French Indochina War ends with the signing of the Geneva Conference Peace Accords; Vietnam is split into South and North Vietnam; Laos and Cambodia become independent.
- 1959** The U.S. government institutes the “Confession Program” under which illegal aliens may change their immigration status by informing on other illegal aliens; Daniel Inouye of Hawaii becomes the first Japanese-American U.S. representative.
- 1964** Congress passes a Civil Rights Act to combat racial discrimination and passes another in 1965.
- 1965** President Johnson deploys the first U.S. military combat troops to South Vietnam to fight the Viet Cong and orders the bombing of Hanoi.
- 1967** A Supreme Court ruling prohibits state from erecting bans on interracial marriages.
- 1969** Third World students at the University of California, Berkeley, strike for the formation of an ethnic studies program; as a result of demonstrations, Asian-American Studies programs are established.
- 1975** Communist regimes come to power in South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, and about 125,000 refugees immigrate to the U.S.
- 1976-1985** More than 762,000 refugees from Southeast Asia immigrate to the U.S.

- 1981** Approximately 120,000 Southeast Asian refugees arrive in the U.S.; U.S. government spending on refugee-assistance programs peak at \$902 million; in Texas the Ku Klux Klan sets fire to the boats of Vietnamese fishermen.
- 1982** In Detroit two white men beat to death Chinese-American Vincent Chin (neither man is convicted of the crime); his death symbolizes the result of economic competition between Japan and the U.S.
- 1983** The National Committee for Japanese-American Redress (NCJAR) asks the federal courts to authorize monetary compensation for World War II internees.
- 1989** The Chinese government deploys troops to suppress pro-democracy demonstrations in Beijing's Tiananmen Square; Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* marks the beginning of an explosion in Asian-American cultural production.
- 1990** U.S. Census results show Asian-Americans to be the fastest-growing ethnic minority group in the U.S., with a 1990 population exceeding 7.2 million.
- 1992** Following the verdict in the Rodney King Trial, the Korean-American community in L.A. suffers devastating losses due to rioting; between 2000 to 2,500 Korean businesses are destroyed.
- 1993** Due to protests by Asian-American students, professors, and other activists, the University of California, Irvine agrees to establish an Asian Studies program.
- 1997** Various Asian-American organizations demand an apology over the March 24 cover of conservative magazine *The National Review*, which depicted President and Mrs. Clinton and Vice President Al Gore in stereotypical caricatures as a Buddhist monk, a Chinese coolie, and a Communist Red Guard.
- 2020-21** A report released by the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University, San Bernardino examined hate crimes in 16 of America's largest cities and found a 150% surge in anti-Asian hate crimes in 2020. Overall, hate crimes fell by 7%. New York City experienced the highest increase from 3 to 28 incidents. Boston and Los Angeles followed – with increases from 6 to 14 and 7 to 15, respectively.

Note – the timeline is modified from

<http://parallel.park.uga.edu/~tengle/1060/timeline.html>.

and CBS News "Reports of Anti-Asian Crimes hate crimes rose nearly 150% in major U.S. cities last year" (Mar. 13, 2021)