

## Chinese Exclusion and Restrictions on Immigration to the United States—A Comparative Activity

*For use in conjunction with “Chew Heong v. United States: Chinese Exclusion and the Federal Courts,” by Lucy Salyer, available at <http://www.fjc.gov/history/home.nsf>. A unit in the Teaching Judicial History Project, developed by the Federal Judicial Center in partnership with the American Bar Association’s Division for Public Education.*

### Activity Objectives

By “making connections” among Chinese immigration and exclusion in the United States in the 1880s and related issues from contemporary and other historical periods, students will gain comparative understanding of immigration, immigration policy, law, and the American experience. The activity also addresses the relevant curriculum standards noted below.

### Essential Questions

- How did the Chinese Exclusion Acts compare to later restrictions on immigration? What remains unique about the Chinese exclusion legislation?
- Did the organized legal challenge to the Chinese Exclusion Acts establish precedents for later challenges to immigration restrictions? Why, or why not?
- Since the first legal restrictions on immigration were passed by Congress in the 1880s, what have been the most common arguments in favor of restriction? And in favor of unrestricted immigration?

### Legal Issues Raised by the *Chew Heong* Case and Other Challenges to Immigration Restriction

Chew Heong’s challenge to orders prohibiting reentry into the United States and later challenges to immigration restriction raised questions about the legal rights of noncitizens resident in the United States.

### Estimated Time Frame

Two to four 50-minute class periods.

### Recommended Prep Work

Teacher should be familiar with “*Chew Heong v. United States: Chinese Exclusion and the Federal Courts*,” by Lucy Salyer; a PDF version of the unit is available online at <http://www.fjc.gov/history/home.nsf>.

## Description of the Activity

1. *Taking a Stand/Opinion Continuum Exercise*: As a whole group, complete an “Opinion Continuum/Taking a Stand” exercise. Designate different parts of the room “Strongly Agree,” “Agree,” “No Opinion,” “Disagree,” and “Strongly Disagree.” Distribute the Opinion Continuum handout. Read a statement and ask students to react to the statement and move to that part of the room that represents their positions. Ask students holding each position to provide one reason why they hold the position. Try to elicit different rationales and get students to think about their perspectives by asking clarifying questions. After several students with different positions have given their rationales, ask if any students would like to change their position based on the rationales of others. Before moving on to the next statement, ask students to record their final positions on the Opinion Continuum handout. Repeat the process with all statements. Alternatively, ask for a hand count on each statement, record the results, explore rationales, then ask students if they wish to change their positions before recording their final opinions.

Opinion continuum statements:

- a. Immigration is a big problem for the country.
- b. Immigration should be open to all.
- c. Immigrants should assimilate to American society.
- d. Immigrants threaten American values.
- e. Immigrants take jobs away from people born in the United States.
- f. Noncitizens living in the United States should have the same legal rights as American citizens.

2. *Analyzing a Contemporary Immigration Cartoon*: Distribute the “Go Away!” editorial cartoon by R. Cole (*The Trentonian*, May 20, 2006). Ask students to take a look at the cartoon and individually respond to the following questions. They should be prepared to share their rationales for their answers.

Cartoon analysis prompts:

- a. Who is the female figure depicted in the cartoon? Why do you think the cartoonist selected this figure to treat this subject? What is its significance for immigrants and immigration?
- b. Who do you think is being told to “go away”? Why? Where might they be coming from? Why are they coming to America?
- c. Why do you think one of the signs says “Adios. No Habla Espanol”?
- d. What does the cartoon suggest about attitudes towards immigrants and immigration?
- e. Do you think the cartoonist supports these attitudes? Why?

As a whole group activity, debrief the questions. Remind students to provide their rationales for their responses. Ask probing questions to explore different in-

terpretations of the cartoon. Collect the cartoon to redistribute during Part 3 of the lesson.

3. *Interpreting the Significance of Chew Heong and Its Contemporary Relevance:* To introduce students to the *Chew Heong* case, assign students to read the introductory narrative section (pp. 1–8) of the “*Chew Heong v. United States*” unit by Prof. Lucy Salyer. Ask students to consider the following questions either individually or in small groups:

- a. Why did the *Chew Heong* case attract public attention?
- b. What was the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882) and why was it significant?
- c. Before its passage, in what other ways were the Chinese singled out through laws?
- d. What did the people who supported the Act argue about the Chinese?
- e. How did the Chinese resist the Exclusion Act?
- f. What did the U.S. Supreme Court rule in the *Chew Heong* case, and why?

Check for understanding and debrief the reading, focusing on the questions above. Conclude by redistributing the cartoon and discussing these two questions:

- g. What is the significance of Justice Field’s dissent in the *Chew Heong* case?
- h. What connection, if any, do you see between the main message of the “Go Away!” cartoon and the issues and concerns that led to passage of the 1880s Chinese Exclusion Acts?

Note: If you eliminated Part 2 (Analyzing a Contemporary Immigration Cartoon), rather than ask question h, above, conclude by writing the Opinion Continuum statements on the board and asking: “*What connections, if any, do you see between these statements and the issues and concerns that led to the passage of the 1880s Chinese Exclusion Acts?*”

4. *Identifying, Comparing, and Contrasting Immigration Issues Across Time:* As a whole or assigned small group activity, assign students to consider the following “connected” sources, one from the “Chew Heong” era and others from contemporary and other historical periods:

- Yan Phou Letter on “The Chinese Must Stay” from *Chew Heong* unit and 2006 Arnold Schwarzenegger *Los Angeles Times* op-eds on immigration, American identity and assimilation (selected)

*Main Issues: assimilation, citizenship, pluralism, and American identity*

- Chinese Exclusion (Scott) Act of 1888 (pp. 42–43); excerpt/table from “The Immigration Act of 1924” in *Documents of American History*, 9th ed.; and “Immigration Timeline” handout

*Main Issues: open immigration and restrictions based on race and national origins*

- Excerpts from Denis Kearney on “Our Misery and Despair” and “The True Cost of Illegal Immigration: In Plain English,” USC Annenberg School of Journalism, August 28, 2006

*Main Issues: impact of immigration on American workers and economy, attitudes towards immigration and immigrants, illegal immigration*

Write the Opinion Continuum statements on the board if you have not already done so during Part 3 of the lesson. Ask students to consider and be prepared to report on the following questions:

- a. What excerpts did you read? What are they about?
- b. Thinking first about the statements on the board, and then brainstorming additional ideas, what do you think are the main issues addressed in each excerpt that you read? Identify at least one part of each excerpt as evidence to support your response. (Encourage students to identify issues other than those reflected in the statements on the board.)
- c. How are the issues treated in the two excerpts you read similar?
- d. How are they different?
- e. What do the excerpts suggest about attitudes toward immigrants and immigration at the time they were written?
- f. What impressions or observations do you have from reading these excerpts?

Reconvene the class as a whole. Ask each group to report on its excerpts. Capture key points on the board.

After the reports, pose the following questions:

- a. What key issues or concerns about immigration recur across time (throughout American history)?
- b. Have the issues changed? If so, how?
- c. What attitudes towards immigrants and immigration do you think recur across time (from the *Chew Heong* case in the 1880s through the present day)?
- d. Have these attitudes changed? If so, how?

Conclude the discussion by posing the following questions:

- a. What do you think are key American values? (Capture brainstormed responses on the board as they are suggested by students.)
- b. Should the values be expressed or represented in current immigration policy? Why?
- c. Which values are most important in this respect? Why?

5. *Applying New Knowledge to Taking a Stand*: Have the students, as a whole or as assigned small groups, complete the “Opinion Continuum/Taking a Stand” exercise for a second time (see Part 1 above). Instruct students to independently compare their responses to the Opinion Continuum statements before they studied the *Chew Heong* case to their post-study responses. Discuss changes as a whole group activity after students review their responses independently.

### Assessment

One assessment possibility is to implement the Opinion Continuum/Taking a Stand exercise for assessment purposes. After discussing the changes in their opinions after independent review of their Opinion Continuum handouts, ask students to write one paragraph beginning with a topic sentence explaining whether their responses to the Opinion Continuum statements changed and why. Ask the students to cite relevant points from the excerpts and class discussion about the material, giving attribution.

Teachers can also informally assess students’ understanding through classroom discussion, including asking students to explain and support their positions on immigration. More formally, teachers can assign students to write a short essay on an issue discussed in the activity, which must draw upon activity-related information or extended research to support their viewpoints or positions.

### Alternative Modalities and Enrichment Activities

1. Assign students, either individually or in small groups, to research some or all of the highlighted legislation, court decisions, and other events included in the “Immigration Timeline” handout.

For instance, students could research *Wong Kim Ark*, 169 U.S. 649 (1898), the late nineteenth-century Supreme Court case on the citizenship status of a man of Chinese ancestry born in the United States. Ask them to consider the following issues and questions: What was at issue in the case? What did the Court decide? Is this decision still in force today? What do scholars and advocates think about the contemporary significance of the case?

2. Students might also conduct research about the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island. Issues and questions to consider: Why are the Statue of Liberty and Ellis

Island symbols for immigration to America? What is the poem inscribed on the base of the Statue? What is its message? What was Ellis Island used for from 1892–1954? What is it currently being used for? You might also direct students to this Statue of Liberty activity on the American Bar Association website: <http://www.abanet.org/publiced/amcon/starters/identities3.html>. Students could also conduct research on Angel Island in California. What was it used for from 1910–1940? What are current plans for its use? Students could research both Ellis Island and Angel Island and compare and contrast their purposes and use.

3. Assign students to research the Alien Registration Act of 1940, which required fingerprinting and registration of aliens, and the McCarran-Walter Act, also known as the Immigration and Nationality Act (1952), which defined ideological grounds for deportation and exclusion of immigrants. These provisions were mostly repealed in 1990, but many legal scholars argue that many provisions of the USA Patriot Act of 2001 are analogous. Ask students to compare and contrast the provisions of the 1952 and 2001 Acts that apply to aliens, and to identify key concerns and attitudes about national interests and aliens underlying the provisions.

4. Have students research and compare and contrast recent U.S. legal proposals to create a temporary “guest worker” program with the Bracero Program (1942–1964), under which 4 million Mexican laborers worked temporarily on contract in the United States, principally in agriculture. Identify arguments for and against a contemporary “guest worker” program. Ask students to consider whether some of the criticisms of the Bracero Program might be applicable to a contemporary guest worker program, and why. Introduce the topic by asking students to read and discuss the Phil Ochs song, “Bracero.”

#### *Abridging the Activity*

You may abridge the activity by completing either only Part 1 (Opinion Continuum Exercise) or only Part 2 (Analyzing a Contemporary Immigration Cartoon).

In Part 4 you may also assign all student groups to work with the same excerpt and move from group to group to cover the report questions. Or, for Part 4, ask students to work in pairs and assign each pair to report on one question (a–f).

### Standards Addressed

#### *U.S. History Standards (Grades 5–12)*

##### Era 6—The Development of the Industrial United States (1870–1900)

*Standard 2:* Massive immigration after 1870 and how new social patterns, conflicts, and ideas of national unity developed amid growing cultural diversity.

*Standard 2A:* The student understands the sources and experiences of the new immigrants.

*Standard 2B:* The student understands “scientific racism,” race relations, and the struggle for equal rights . . . explain the rising racial conflict in different regions, including the anti-Chinese movement in the West. . . .

Era 10—Contemporary United States (1968 to the present)

*Standard 2B:* The student understands the new immigration and demographic shifts . . . analyze the new immigration policies after 1965 and the push-pull factors that prompted a new wave of immigrants.

*World History Standards (Grades 5–12)*

Era 7—An Age of Revolution, 1750–1914

*Standard 3D:* The student understands how China’s Qing dynasty responded to economic and political crises in the late 18th and the 19th centuries.

*Standard 6A:* The student understands major global trends from 1750 to 1914.

*National Standards for Civics and Government (Grades 9–12)*

*Content Standard V:* What are the roles of the citizen in American democracy? . . . Becoming a citizen. . . . students should be able to . . . explain the distinction between citizens and noncitizens (aliens) and the process by which aliens become citizens.

## Opinion Continuum Handout

Name:

Date:

Mark your final position for the statements below, using the scale below.

5 = *strongly agree*

4 = *agree*

3 = *neutral*

2 = *disagree*

1 = *strongly disagree*

1. Immigration is a big problem for the country.

5                      4                      3                      2                      1

2. Immigration should be open to all.

5                      4                      3                      2                      1

3. Immigrants should assimilate to American society.

5                      4                      3                      2                      1

4. Immigrants threaten American values.

5                      4                      3                      2                      1

5. Immigrants take jobs away from people born in the United States.

5                      4                      3                      2                      1

6. Noncitizens living in the United States should have the same legal rights as American citizens.

5                      4                      3                      2                      1



Student Handout for Part 2

Tuesday,

Editorial Cartoon by r.cole, The Trentonian



Saturday, May 20, 2006

"Go Away!" by R. Cole, editorial cartoon  
The Trentonian, May 20, 2006

*Excerpts for Part 4*

4a. Yan Phou Letter, *Chew Heong* unit (pp. 72–74)

4a. “Next Step for Immigration” and “Keep the Immigration Debate Civil”

*“Next Step for Immigration,” March 28, 2006, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Governor of California*

Our goal should be to create a policy that reflects our national motto: *e pluribus unum*—Out of many, one. Here are the immigration principles that have always guided me and that I believe should guide Congress . . .

Immigration is about our economy. The freest nations in the world, and the freest economy in history, depend on a free flow of people. Immigrants are here to work and contribute. I support efforts to ensure that our businesses have the workers they need and that immigrants are treated with the respect they deserve. We should pass a common-sense temporary worker program so that every person in our nation is documented . . .

Finally, immigration is about our values. Too often the debate centers on what immigrants owe us. Too seldom do we ask what we owe them. Above all, we owe it to our country and our immigrants to share our values. We should talk about our history, our institutions and our beliefs. We should assimilate immigrants into the mainstream. We want immigrants to not just live in America but to live as Americans.

*“Keep the Immigration Debate Civil,” Sept. 12, 2006, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Governor of California*

AS BOTH AN IMMIGRANT to this country and a proud American citizen, I have a unique perspective on this debate. When I came to America, I wrapped myself in the flag because I wanted to be a part of the American dream. I worked hard, learned English and followed the laws. I learned the customs and culture of my new country. I spent time with English-speakers just so I could hear them talk and learn the language from them.

Being an immigrant is like being a guest in someone’s house. Your hosts go about their daily routine. You can sit on the couch and do your own thing, or you can ask, “What can I do to help? How can I be a part of this household?”

What people see today when immigrant rights activist march in the streets carrying Mexican flags and angry signs is that you do not want to join America’s

house. The message that sends is that you do not want to learn our language or our culture. Unlike the message sent by the masses of Irish, Italian, German, and Asian immigrants, whom Americans now proudly call our “melting pot,” these images suggest that Mexican immigrants do not want to make that effort.

I do not believe that this is the message most Mexican immigrants—legal or illegal—wish to send. I believe that most Mexican immigrants are as proud to be part of America as I was. They are some of the hardest working and strongest believers in the American dream. So my message to you is: Carry your home country in your heart, but carry the American flag in our streets.

[Document Source: Excerpted from *The Los Angeles Times*, [www.latimes.com](http://www.latimes.com).]

4b. Chinese Exclusion (Scott) Act of 1888, *Chew Heong* unit (pp. 42–43)

4b. The Immigration Act of 1924 (U.S. Bureau of Immigration, Annual Report of the Commissioner–General of Immigration, 1924)

*The quotas established by the immigration act of 1921 were unsatisfactory for two reasons: they admitted too large a number of immigrants; they did not discriminate sufficiently in favor of immigration from Northern and Western Europe. The act of 1924 sought to remedy the first defect by reducing the percentage of immigrants admitted in relation to nationals already in the country from three to two, and remedied the second by establishing 1890 rather than 1910 as the basic date. The report and summary of the law of 1924 is given in lieu of the law itself for purposes of conciseness. [Editor’s Note]*

*Under the act of May 1921, the quota area was limited to Europe, the Near East Africa, and Australasia. The countries of North and South America, with adjacent islands, and countries immigration from which was otherwise regulated, such as China, Japan, and countries within the Asiatic barred zone, were not within the scope of the quota law. Under the new act, however, immigration from the entire world, with the exception of the Dominion of Canada, Newfoundland, the Republic of Mexico, the Republic of Cuba, the Republic of Haiti, the Dominican Republic, the Canal Zone, and independent countries of Central and South America, is subject to quota limitations. The various quotas established under the new law are shown in the following proclamation of the President, issued on the last day of the present fiscal year:*

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
A PROCLAMATION

Whereas it is provided in the act of Congress approved May 26, 1924, entitled “An act to limit the immigration of aliens into the United States, and for other purposes” that—

“The annual quota of any nationality shall be two per centum of the number of foreign born individuals of such nationality resident in continental United States as determined by the United States census of 1890, but the minimum quota of any nationality shall be 100 . . .”

Now, therefore, I, Calvin Coolidge, President of the United States of America acting under and by virtue of the power in me vested by the aforesaid act of Congress, do hereby proclaim and make known that on and after July 1, 1924, and throughout the fiscal year 1924–1925, the quota of each nationality provided in said Act shall be as follows:

Country or area of birth	Quota 1924–1925
Afghanistan	100
Albania	100
Andorra	100
Arabian peninsula	100
Armenia	124
Australia, including Papua, Tasmania, and all islands appertaining to Australia	121
Austria	785
Belgium	512
Bhutan	100
Bulgaria	100
Cameroon (proposed British mandate)	100
Cameroon (French man- date)	100
China	100
Czechoslovakia	3,073
Danzig, Free City of	228
Denmark	2,789
Egypt	100
Estonia	124
Ethiopia (Abyssinia)	100
Finland	170
France	3,954
Germany	51,227
Great Britain and North- ern Ireland	34,007
Greece	100
Hungary	473
Iceland	100
India	100
Iraq (Mesopotamia)	100
Irish Free State	28,567

Country or area of birth	Quota 1924–1925
Italy, including Rhodes, Dodekanesia, and Castel- lorizzo	3,845
Japan	100
Latvia	142
Liberia	100
Liechtenstein	100
Lithuania	344
Luxemburg	100
Monaco	100
Morocco (French and Spanish Zones and Tang- ier)	100
Muscat (Oman)	100
Nauru (proposed British mandate)	100
Nepal	100
Netherlands	1,648
New Zealand (including appertaining islands)	100
Norway	6,453
New Guinea, and other Pacific Islands under proposed Australian mandate	100
Palestine (with Trans- Jordan proposed British mandate)	100
Persia	100
Poland	5,982
Portugal	503
Ruanda and Urundi (Bel- gium mandate)	100
Rumania	603
Russia, European and Asiatic	2,248

Country or area of birth	Quota 1924–1925	Country or area of birth	Quota 1924–1925
Samoa, Western (proposed mandate of New Zealand)	100	Syria and the Lebanon (French mandate)	100
San Marino	100	Tanganyika (proposed British mandate)	100
Siam	100	Togoland (proposed British mandate)	100
South Africa, Union of	100	Togoland (French mandate)	100
South West Africa (proposed mandated of Union of South Africa)	100	Turkey	100
Spain	131	Yap and other Pacific islands (under Japanese mandate)	100
Sweden	9,561	Yugoslavia	671
Switzerland	2,081		

[Document Source: Excerpted from *Documents of American History*, volume II, since 1898, 9th edition, Henry Steele Commager ed., 1973.]

#### 4b. Selected U.S. Immigration Timeline

- 1790 The Naturalization Act of 1790 provides “that any alien, being a free white person” who has lived in the United States for two years “may be admitted to become a [naturalized] citizen.” This first federal naturalization law also requires that naturalized citizens must be of “good moral character” and provides that “the children of citizens of the United States that may be born beyond Sea, or out of the limits of the United States, shall be considered as natural born Citizens.”
- 1868 States ratify Fourteenth Amendment proposed by Congress. First clause provides that “All citizens born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside.”  
Senate ratifies Burlingame Treaty giving China “most favored nation” status and recognizing the right of free migration, thereby encouraging immigration of Chinese to the United States.
- 1875 Supreme Court rules that immigration is a responsibility of the federal government, not of the states. Congress passes first immigration law, the Page Act. Prohibiting the “importation of women into the United States for purposes of prostitution,” it effectively restricts entry of Chinese women.
- 1880 Angell Treaty between China and the United States allows for the regulation, but not outright exclusion, of Chinese immigration. Restrictions on immigration limited to Chinese who have not previously lived in the United States.
- 1882 Congress passes the first Chinese Exclusion Act, suspending new immigration by Chinese laborers for ten years. Permits conditional re-entry of laborers who have lived in the United States.
- 1884 Second Chinese Exclusion Act amends 1882 Act, further restricting return of Chinese laborers who previously lived in the United States.
- 1884 Supreme Court rules in *Chew Heong v. United States* that the 1884 Act’s requirement for certificates of residence only applies to Chinese laborers who were in the United States when the return certificates became available.

- 1886 Statue of “Liberty Enlightening the World” officially dedicated. Emma Lazarus writes “New Colossus” poem in 1883 to help raise funds for the Statue. Inscribed on base in 1903.
- 1888 Third Chinese Exclusion Act (Scott Act) declares all return certificates void, denying entry to all Chinese laborers seeking to enter the United States.
- 1891 Congress passes the Immigration Act to create the Bureau of Immigration within the Department of the Treasury. The Bureau will open 24 immigration stations, including Ellis Island in New York, at ports of entry in major seaports and along both borders of the country.
- 1892 Ellis Island opens and remains an operational immigration station until 1954. Nearly 12 million immigrants pass through the facility.
- 1898 In *United States v. Wong Kim Ark*, the Supreme Court rules that, under the Fourteenth Amendment and English common law, children of Chinese parents born in the United States cannot be denied American citizenship.
- 1907 Japan enters into “Gentlemen’s Agreement” with the United States, agreeing to end further immigration in exchange for easing of discriminatory practices against Japanese already in the United States.
- 1910 Angel Island immigration station opens near San Francisco. Until 1940, operates principally as a detention center for Chinese and other Asians barred from entering the United States.
- 1917 Asiatic Barred Zone Act effectively extends Chinese exclusion from immigration to the United States to a broader “zone” encompassing much of east Asia and the Pacific Islands. Congress overrides President Wilson’s veto to pass law.
- 1921 Congress passes the Quota Act, limiting immigrants of specified nationalities to 3% of their numbers already in the United States. Does not include quotas on immigration within the Western Hemisphere (including Canada, Mexico, and other countries of Central and South America).
- 1924 Quota Act Amendment decreases national-origin quotas from 3% to 2% and changes baseline from 1910 to 1890 Census, a period of far fewer immigrants from southern and eastern Europe.



- 1940 Alien Registration Act (Smith Act) requires non-citizen alien residents in the United States to register with the government. Nearly 5 million do so within first four months.
- 1942 Bracero Program begins, ultimately bringing 4 million Mexican laborers to the United States to work temporarily on contract, principally in agriculture, through 1964.
- 1943 World War II-era Magnuson Act repeals late nineteenth-century Chinese Exclusion Acts and makes Chinese eligible to be naturalized as U.S. citizens, but retains stringent quotas for Chinese immigrants. China was a wartime ally of the United States.
- 1952 McCarran-Walter (Immigration and Nationality) Act codifies all prior federal law on immigration and naturalization. Abolishes Asiatic Barred Zone and outright exclusion of Asians. Keeps national-origin quotas, including “Asia Pacific Triangle,” which severely limits immigration of peoples indigenous to this region. Permits government to bar or deport aliens engaged in activities “prejudicial to the public interest” or “subversive to national security.” In 1990, most of these “ideological” provisions are repealed. Congress passes Act over President Truman’s veto.
- 1965 Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) Act of 1965 ends immigration quotas based on national origins, which had been in effect since the 1920s. Also known as the Hart-Celler Act. President Lyndon Johnson signs the legislation at the Statue of Liberty. Sets forth preferences for immigration, including for relatives of American citizens and permanent residents, immigrants of certain professional backgrounds and occupational skills, and for refugees (amending similar provisions of the McCarran-Walter Act). Establishes first numerical quotas for immigrants from the Western Hemisphere, ending official policy of open borders within the Americas. Initially, caps annual immigration at 40,000 for Mexico and Canada, 20,000 from any other one country, 120,000 from the Western Hemisphere, and 290,000 overall.
- 2001 Enacted shortly after September 11 attacks, PATRIOT Act provides expanded powers to the federal government to combat terrorism, including powers to detain, deport, or refuse entry to aliens for reasons of national security and suspicion of terrorism.
- 2006 Legal immigrants in the United States number approximately one million this year. Total documented foreign-born population of the United States exceeds 35 million—more than 11% of the total.

#### 4c. “Our Misery and Despair,” Dennis Kearny and H.L. Knight, California’s Workingmen’s Party, 1878

Here, in San Francisco, the palace of the millionaire looms up above the hovel of the starving poor with as wide a contrast as anywhere on earth. To add to our misery and despair, a bloated aristocracy has sent to China—the greatest and oldest despotism in the world—for a cheap working slave. It rakes the slums of Asia to find the meanest slave on earth—the Chinese coolie—and imports him here to meet the free American in the Labor market, and still further widen the breach between the rich and the poor, still further to degrade white Labor.

These cheap slaves fill every place. Their dress is scant and cheap. Their food is rice from China. They hedge twenty in a room, ten by ten. They are whipped curs, abject in docility, mean, contemptible, and obedient in all things. They have no wives, children, or dependents.

They are imported by companies controlled as serfs, worked like slaves, and at last go back to China with all their earnings. They are in every place, they seem to have no sex. Boys work, girls work; it is all alike to them.

The father of a family is met by them at every turn. Would he get work for himself? Ah! A stout Chinaman does it cheaper. Will he get a place for his oldest boy? He can not. His girl? Why the Chinaman is in her place too! Every door is closed. He can only go to crime or suicide, his wife and daughter to prostitution, and his boys to hoodlumism and the penitentiary . . .

We are men, and propose to live like men in this free land, without the contamination of slave labor, or die like men, if need be, in asserting the rights of our race, our country, and our families.

California must be all American or all Chinese. We are resolved that it shall be American, and are prepared to make it so. May we not rely upon your sympathy and assistance?

With great respect for the Workingmen’s Party of California.

Dennis Kearney, President

H. L. Knight, Secretary

[Document Source: Excerpted from *History Matters: The U.S. Survey Course on the Web*, <http://www.historymatters.gmu.edu>. Original Source: Dennis Kearny, President, and H. L. Knight, Secretary, “Appeal from California. The Chinese Invasion. Workingmen’s Address,” *Indianapolis Times*, 28 February 1878.]

4c. “The True Cost of Illegal Immigration: In Plain English,”  
Karl-Erik Stromsta, August 28, 2006

**Do illegal immigrants really take jobs from American workers?**

*Yes, they do.*

There is no doubt that to many native-born U.S. workers illegal immigrants represent competition, plain and simple. The economic platitude that “immigrants take jobs no American would do”—expressed by both President Bush and Mexican President Vicente Fox—is only partly true. Many American wait tables, wash dishes, mop floors, and lay bricks for a living. In fact, more than 80% of jobs in farming, cleaning, construction and food preparation sectors—jobs usually associated with illegal immigrants—are held by native-born Americans.

Out of 473 job classifications, as assigned by the Center for Immigration Studies, just four are made up predominately by illegal immigrants: stucco masons, tailors, produce sorters, and beauty salon workers.

Which is a fancy way of saying that there aren’t many jobs that American workers won’t do.

**But aren’t there some crucial American industries that rely heavily on immigrant workers?**

*Absolutely.*

Slightly less than half of America’s farm workers are in this country illegally, according to the U.S. Department of Labor. In fact, last year more than a billion dollars worth of lettuce rotted in the fields of Arizona because farmers couldn’t marshal enough seasonal (read: illegal) help.

And Big Ag isn’t the only industry hiring massive amounts of illegal workers. Trailing closely behind are restaurants, construction, food processing, landscaping and the hospitality industry. In other words: Many American businesses count on the hearty work ethic and strong backs of illegal workers to stay afloat.

Financial analysts have even begun warning clients that if restrictive immigration legislation is passed at the federal level, stock portfolios heavy on these industries could suffer dramatically.

Another rarely discussed consideration is the fact that illegal immigrants often fill jobs that would otherwise be outsourced. For example, without immigrants filling the ranks of the U.S. garment industry, Americans would undoubtedly be importing even more clothing and textiles from countries like China, further widening the already chasmal trade deficit.

Illegal immigrants do take jobs from Americans on occasion, but they also contribute significantly to a number of important U.S. industries in a way that American workers simply can't. To assume that business as usual can continue in America without them is myopic.

**Does the presence of illegal immigrants drive down wages for American workers?**

*Yes, a little.*

Several recent studies have demonstrated that one segment of workers in particular—the lowest-paid, lowest-skilled Americans—find their wages depressed across the board by illegal immigrants. (The decrease is 5 percent in one study, 7.2 percent in the other.) African and Hispanic American workers are hit especially hard, due to their disproportionately large representation in this economic demographic.

Yet the situation becomes less cut-and-dry when we stop to consider that illegal immigrant workers drive down the cost of almost all goods and services for all consumers. Thus, by working for such low wages, illegal workers actually increase the spending power of Americans.

So while Americans' paychecks might be a bit lighter because illegal immigrants are willing to work for so little, their dollars are also stretching further.

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