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Introduction to Asian American Studies: Final Zine Project (2)

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Final Project

Over the course of this class, we have examined different perspectives on historical events and learned about how these events have impacted minority lives. This careful examination allows us to be self-critical of both our actions and the actions of our country. Each week, we were tasked with reading a piece of literature that critiques a historical event or provides a different interpretation. Our goal was to take the message of each reading and represent it through a creative magazine article, known as a zine. As we began this project, we had some trouble comprehending the deeper meaning behind the readings and applying them to our contemporary events. However, as our group started working together more and more, we started understanding each other more and started understanding what the zines were saying.

In order to amplify the messages of the various readings, we chose to present the messages through different interpretations. The freedom in this project allowed us to write many different forms of zines that correlated with the readings they were based off. From immigration applications to travel brochures, many of our zines give the readers an opportunity to look beyond the surface of what Asian Americans experience today. The problems tackled in these zines still exist in major forms today, which has produced detrimental tensions and resistance to peaceful means. We used satire and emotional narratives to address those growing tensions, as the frustration caused by things like systemic racism can cause a cynical outlook on the future of race relations.

This project allowed our group to understand the content in the course together. Through our collaboration and different backgrounds/perspectives, we were able to create new and different ways to present the material. As unorthodox as the semester was, the class helped us not
only learn about the historical oppression of Asian Americans in the world, but about each other. This project provided a sense of consistency in a time of constant disarray and turmoil. It has allowed us to open to each other to create the best work that we could, but also a place for us to come together during these times of uncertainty. By reading our zines, we hope to provide you with a fresh understanding of the framework that has worked to impair Asian Americans’ ability to succeed in the world’s “melting pot.”
**Legal Actions Taken Against the Chinese**

**Jason Redlew**

**1875 - Page Law**
This outlawed “undesirables” from migrating, which often included many Asian people, specifically Chinese women coming to the US for prostitution. This prevented the formation of heterosexual Chinese families, and shows how intersectionality plays into discrimination in the US.

**1882 - The Chinese Exclusion Act**
The Chinese Exclusion Act made it illegal for Chinese laborers to enter the US. It was originally supposed to last for 10 years, but ended up being extended. Many Americans associated the declining economy with the Chinese workers, despite being a small percentage of the population. This also made it impossible for Chinese people to obtain citizenship.

**1888 - The Scott Act**
This law made it illegal for Chinese laborers already in the US planning to go abroad to re-enter into the United States, further reinforcing an institutional racist mindset.

**1892 - The Geary Act**
Effectively extended the Exclusion Act for 10 more years, outlawing immigration. This also required all Chinese citizens to have documentation of legal status - the precursor to today’s green cards.

**1942 - The Anti-Coolie Act**
“Coolie” is a term used to refer to “unskilled” laborers from India, China and other Asian countries. While this act did not specifically outlaw Chinese people, a large percentage of coolie workers were Chinese. So, effectively it was yet another anti-Chinese law, and ended up defining proper migration as coming from Europe.

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**Angel Island: America’s Dumping Grounds**

While many were quick to compare the Angel Island Immigration Station in San Francisco, 1910-40, to Ellis Island, this is absolutely not the case.

For one, unlike Ellis Island, San Francisco’s immigration station was the premiere place to segregate all Asian immigrants, which in turn they could enact policies (unique to Angel Island) to discriminate against them specifically.

One inhumane (out of the many) things they did to any Chinese immigrant was strip them down, and force them to do extraneous and inhumane testing for what they called “Oriental Diseases” which were in fact, common diseases such as hookworm.

Chinese immigrants specifically faced gauntlets of irrelevant questions regarding minute details about their life. For instance, what direction their home was facing. The punishment for getting any answers incorrect would most likely result in being deported back to China, with a record 9% of the nearly 100,000 Chinese immigrants being denied entry and deported.

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**“The Chinese Problem”**

With a growing US presence in Hawaii, we begin to see a decrease in native populations and an increase in American plantations and immigration workers.

Predominantly Chinese migrants, the social issue between them, the Americans, and the Native Hawaiians only grew as more immigrants came in. Voting was excluded to all Chinese immigrants and many saw the increase in immigrants as a threat to US plans of annexing the islands. Under the implementation of the Chinese Exclusion Act the Chinese were seen only as laborers, especially in newly annexed regions (ex the Philippines).

For many plantation workers, the Chinese were seen as an opportunity to take advantage of the cheap labor. Although paid, these workers were poorly mistreated and seen as “undesirables.” Many hoped that these workers would benefit them through their labor and then return back to China.
It seems the white man’s vitriolic anger knows no bounds, barring none, including Filipinos. The culture of the Philippines was disregarded by the whites, who saw the difference in gender roles as a direct threat to the nation. This threat is what they used to “justify” the same treatment they “gave” to the Chinese immigrants. They saw Filipinos as weak, and therefore as something that needed to be saved. This idea of the White Savior is something that is rooted deep within our history, and has caused great anguish and misery. Such misery comes alive when, after the war, a surge of Filipino immigrants comes to the United States. The Whites viciously attacked them on all fronts, vocal, mental, and especially physical. Filipinos would be routinely beaten, taken advantage of, and even lynched, with little to nothing being done by the government to prevent or help stop it. Essentially, the government pushed for a war that would result in a surge of immigrants, then turned their back on those same immigrants, causing a lot of the same systemic racism we see to this day.

**US-PHILIPPINES RELATIONS**

The United States justification for manifest destiny in the Philippines is almost no different to European colonization. When the people decided to take up arms for independence, the US saw the country as weak and unfit to govern themselves. Even though the Philippines was liberated back in 1946, it is interesting to see the close militaristic and economic ties between the two nations today. The US has provided millions of dollars for security assistance to the Philippines and also has conducted joint military exercises. However recently we have begun to see ties weaken as the current president Rodrigo Roa Duterte has requested several times to terminate the Visiting Forces Agreement. This would end the joint military operations between the two nations on Philippines soil. The termination of this agreement could be their opportunity to show their military prowess and sovereignty.

**RACISM TODAY**

The racism experienced by the Filipino workers in the US is comparable to the racism experienced by undocumented workers in modern day America. The term “undocumented” is a direct product of the 1892 Geary Act, where all Chinese citizens were required to have papers proving their citizenship. Filipino and Chinese workers were thought to be threatening the job market for American citizens, while also “preying” on the American women. The perception of Filippino workers was soon equated with an uneducated savage. Now, nearly 100 years later, we see this same racist mindset pointed at undocumented immigrants in the US today, claiming they are taking American jobs, once again ignoring the source of the problem: Immigration Reform. Undocumented citizens face the same hardships, despite all the “progress” our country has made.
TRANSPACIFIC ANTI-RACISM - THEN AND NOW

**Introduction**

Onishi's text outlines the process in which people in Japan, Okinawa, and the US came together to form Afro-Asian solidarities to stand up against whitesupremacy in the 20th century. Although the world has evolved immensely since the times of rampant and public displays of racism, we still see many of the same issues in today's world. When it comes to the modern day "majority", there are still power dynamics and stereotypes in place to keep the minority voice silent, as seen with the COVID-19 pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement. In the US, we have seen many implications of these two events, and can see many parallels to the history of racism.

**Standing in Solidarity**

Throughout the 1930s, the rise of Japan as a new powerhouse nation served as a bridge for transpacific race contact across the Pacific. Black intellectuals collaborated with Japanese activists to discuss the racial struggles they faced against white supremacy. These connections brought them together in a way which Du Bois described as "moving in a racial groove." The concept of standing in solidarity can be seen during both the past and present. Out of the millions that support the Black Lives Matter movement, many of those standing next to the black community are those in the Asian community. While not facing the extreme hardships of being Black, Asians are still one of the many minorities within America. Asians still face the consequences of being "foreign" through racial slurs and discriminatory acts. This was seen particularly at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, where Asians in non-Asian countries were seen as threats to those countries. However, it may seem very easy for Asians to stand with those against the minority because they have been considered to be the "model minority," in the way that they are the "most successful" minority group in America. Within a racial scale, Asians can be seen to hover somewhere in the middle. However, many have realized the problem with the concept of a "model minority" because it undermines the fact that Asians were discriminated against as if to say none of it ever happened. For that reason, a countless number of Asians are seen to support the Black Lives Matter movement and are standing in solidarity with them.

**Parallels to Today**

Being the first Asian nation to defeat a European nation (Russia) during modern times, many people had believed that the era of European superiority had come to an end. Japan had received respect from many European nations because of their power and also managed to challenge the white dominance in the world by stopping the division of China into different European nations. While in the early twentieth century, power was seen in how much territory a nation held. But when looking at the power struggles between nations today, it seems to be more economical influence than anything else. We can easily see this in the rise of China in the last couple of decades. Rising to the second largest economy in the world, China has proven to be able to spread its influence without the use of extreme military power. China’s model has challenged the global approach to a free market under a democracy, and we’ve begun to see examples of its success in other nations like Ethiopia. While most successful and predominantly white nations like the US and EU have managed to thrive under a democratic free market, we could begin to see signs of change in how other nations attempt to grow economically. Similar to how Japan used European imperialism to grow as an empire, we see China using the US free market policies to expand while still holding onto their authoritarian rule.

**Systemic Racism = Power Dynamics**

There is a strong parallel between the work of the Black Marxists in Japan and what’s happening today with the Black Lives Matter movement, specifically the treatment of protestors in Portland. Through Imperialism, Japan sought to enhance the power and influence of the country. However, black marxists and other minority groups pushed back against this, as it was consistently more difficult for people of color to obtain any power in Japan as a result of systemic racism. Through military enforcement, dissenters would be punished. This is not that dissimilar to the federal agents who were employed to "escort" peaceful protestors in Portland away. Is history repeating itself?
Dear White America,

You are born from a fragility greater than nearly any other country. You feel the need to control everything and one that isn't white. The fear of difference drives you, and your trail of destruction spans since the very beginning.

A particularly disgusting portion of White Fragility came from the Japanese internment camps, where, under the guise of “war suspicions”, America’s deepest darkest values were revealed (though not much effort is required to take off the mask). Being born in America is not a concern for you.

What concerns you is being outside of any social norm. It’s these minority groups, who don’t fit the cookie cutter image of the white prosperer, that are routinely marginalized, discriminated against, and have policies, like internment camps, enacted against them.

Sincerely,

Minority Groups of America

Dear Nursing Schools,

I am writing to you to express my disappointment in your decision to decline my admission. I was naive to think that I live in a world where only one’s capabilities are to be taken into consideration in selecting appropriate nursing students.

Unfortunately, it seems my identity as a Japanese-American was what determined my rejection, with some of you deliberately writing that the deferral was due to my race. Although I believe that I am highly qualified for the position, it seems this was not the case.

My awareness of racism has developed within these difficult times of the Second World War. I have been moved to internment camps, mistreated by police officers, and been nonsensically denied admission to nursing schools, even though I was born and raised in America. I guess that does not matter in these times.

Sincerely,

The Japanese-Americans

“I’m sure something gripped me and touched me in such a way that I feel I want to fight, shoulder to shoulder with every Nisei for the right to the same opportunity as the Caucasian.”

- Yuri Kochiyama

Letters to America

Jason Redlew, Joey Provost, Jonathan Brown, Maiki Kawakami

“Challenging the norms. We came to this place the same as you to find a fresh start. No matter the background we all deserve the same rights. My question to you is this; You claim to protect and serve, but who are you really serving?”

Sincerely, those who you’ve failed to protect.

Dear those who “Protect and Serve,”

The more time I spend in this camp the more I begin to understand your purpose. I was taught in my youth you were meant to protect and serve the people. However, as my perception of the world continues to grow the more I begin to question your motives. You keep us contained to satisfy the desires of the majority in fear of challenging the norms. We came to this place the same as you to find a fresh start. No matter the background we all deserve the same rights. My question to you is this; You claim to protect and serve, but who are you really serving?”

Sincerely, those who you’ve failed to protect.
As a nation, the US prides itself with being one of the most free and equal countries in the world. But what we fail to sufficiently acknowledge is our history of widespread and systemic racism.

It is quite disturbing how America would stoop to the level of commodifying immigrants for political and military points. How could a country that is supposed to have been “great” in the past be “made great again” if the foundation is built upon discrimination based on race?
Step 1) Establish a military presence
Military power shows the strength of the nation. Show them that it would not be in their favor if they were to fight back. Train the military to actively disregard any cultural values, ideals, and anything but “American” values. Take extra caution to make sure soldiers show no mercy, remorse, or any sign of human emotion. This will make things smoother and more efficient.

Step 2) Deceive the native people
Helpful Tools: Propaganda, Ignorance, Intolerance for differences, Hatred (otherwise known as: White Privilege) and White saviorism, Next, hand out “gifts” to convince them that what you are giving them is better than anything they could produce for themselves. This will make them more dependent on you.

Step 3) Impose your ideals onto them
Dehumanize the natives and reprogram them to have more ”American” ideals. Do so by washing away their culture and villianizing any opposing cultures or ideals. Implement a “Western” political system unfamiliar to the assimilated, making it easier to brainwash them. Also, implement laws that criminalize any native people who do not align themselves with American ideals

If you follow these three steps, you too will be able to overthrow the native people’s form of government and cause generations of pain and suffering!

By: Jason Redlew, Joey Provost, Maiki Kawaikami, Jonathan Brown
REFUGEE TRAVEL GUIDE
Jason Redlew, Jonathan Brown, Maiki Kawakami, Joey Provost

San Diego’s Camp Pendleton! It's varied topography which combines a breathtakingly beautiful 17-mile shoreline and diverse inland ranges!

Come on over to the island of Guam, where the climate is very similar to that of Hawaii! The tropical beaches and sunny weather will make you feel at home!

The Philippines boasts some of the nicest beaches to visit in the world! Come see America's "First Vietnam" in all its glory. Start your new life in a place that reminds you of home!
The refugees in Camp Pendleton were viewed as a "financial burden," with California's republican representative to Congress stating, "damn it, we have too many orientals." This dehumanizing view on the refugees equated them to a bad investment on the government's part. Camp Pendleton housed around 50,000 refugees. Pendleton proudly announced its success in relocating refugees throughout the country. However, they looked past the millions in Vietnam who were displaced due to the war.

**Realities Check: Philippines**
Travel options for the Philippines were very limited, leading most Vietnamese refugees to pile into boats like these. The extreme living conditions were breeding grounds for disease, and the boats themselves were at a constant risk for pillaging by pirates.

**Refugee Living Conditions**
The misleading stories the refugees were led to believe about their "new homes" had devastating consequences on the daily lives of refugees. It goes to show how historical America did not view refugee lives as "human," but more as an afterthought of the war.

**Realities Check: Guam**
Refugees were later moved to Guam. But, last minute planning led to only 200 square miles of land dedicated to refugee living, and extremely limited food and resource rations. All in all, around 115,000 refugees stopped through Guam, despite max capacity estimated at 13,000 refugees.
"There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle, because we do not lead single-issue lives."
- Audre Lorde

On a one way trip to America
With a single carry-on
I don't carry my clothes
My toys or my toiletries
I carry what's not to be said
Something that hasn't been unpacked
Unloaded, unraveled, or undone
Under my toenails and over my head
I carry what's not to be said.

One who was drunk on liquid courage
Two and three who rode the horse with no name
Four who abused the China hite
Five who had the plug from Big Pharma
Who longed for lucid dreams of passion
Those who yearned for reassurance
Were left in solitude by a foreign scheme

Society will try to “box” us,
Into the toxic cage of masculinity with chains of tradition bound tightly,
But will never hold love back.

They call me little bitch
And view me as weak.
Yet we are the brave souls Venturing into the unknown.

Society may fear us as wrong.
But we embrace it as pride.

The theme of intersectionality
Jason Redlew, Joey Provost, Jonathan Bornw, Maiki Kawakami
Director's Notes: culture vs. stereotype

Asian culture instills values of work ethic, respect, and obedience. How this comes across to the American people is intelligence, compliance, and silence. American society has viewed Asians as the model minority, being unproblematic in recent years. These assigned stereotypes on Asian people should not place one minority above any other, as it destroys the individuality of Asian people. However, COVID-19 has once again stirred up racism towards Asian Americans. With a society that focuses on ingrained stereotypes, it is important to always be self-critical in today's world.

Themes in the Play:

Assimilation

Culture is unique, but can also vary. When a single isolated culture clashes with another, it is seen as a threat in to their way of life. This new set of values can either be accepted into the original culture, or could be forced to assimilate into the original culture. This ends up creating a model minority: those who could be best assimilated.

Dichotomy: Good vs. Evil

As Asians are put on a pedestal above other minorities throughout American history, it creates a dichotomy of “good” and “bad” minorities. Even between different Asian races, when one is placed higher, the other(s) are vilified and viewed as lesser than. When one is labeled as a “good/superior race”, there always is a “bad/inferior race” with the situation.

Special thanks to:

White silence, for the 244 years of ignorance and silence, which have detriemented everyone except those identical.
Bob Smith
DLN: SAF274917402
DOB: 10/12/1978
EXP: 10/12/2020
Nationality: USA
SEX: M

Suspicious because:
- ID expired but let him through since it was fairly recent
- Was acting tense when asked to give ID
- Asked purpose of travel and claimed he had the right to not say

Julianna Ortiz
DLN: SUS676109833
DOB: 06/23/1999
EXP: 06/23/2025
Nationality: Mexico/USA
SEX: F

Suspicious because:
- Identified being with "suspicious" Latino man (later found to be her father)
- Father does not have dual citizenship (later identified to have green card)
- Traveled from Mexico and was requested to be tested for COVID-19

Ziqi Guo
DLN: SUS741185739
DOB: 05/24/1987
EXP: 05/24/2023
Nationality: China
SEX: M

Suspicious because:
- Did not speak English
- Unable to identify place of stay
- Traveled from Mainland China and was requested to be tested for COVID-19

Mikal Seif
DLN: SUS186402836
DOB: 02/07/1983
EXP: 02/07/2021
Nationality: Syria
SEX: F

Suspicious because:
- License soon expires
- Unwilling to take off head scarf
- Fit the profile of earlier security cam footage showing "suspicious" behavior

WHO ARE WE BEING "PROTECTED" FROM?

"Suspicious" behavior is subjective to the racist mind.

Jason Redlew, Joey Provost, Maiki Kawakami, Jonathan Brown
NEOLIBERALISM

Perspectives on: Philippines Outside Perspectives

- "Essentially, it is legal human trafficking"
- Equates Filipino workers to a commodity for the government to profit off of
- Product of buying into "benevolent assimilation"
- Deceitful for the government to encourage and celebrate migrant workers for their own benefit
- Viewed more as "cheap" workers rather than "good" workers
- Government enacts laws and policies that favor migrant workers and their families

- Shows the rest of the world that Filipino workers are capable/well educated
- Bringing profit to the Philippines
- Glorified for being brave enough to leave the country in order to profit the Philippines a subheading
- "Maximizes country’s competitive advantage in the global market"

Jason Redlew, Joey Provost, Maiki Kawakami, Jonathan Brown

Philippines