Asian Americans in Oregon
A portrait of diversity and challenge
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Asian Americans in Oregon

Linda E. Powell
formerly assistant to the director,
Agricultural Fiscal and Personnel Services
Oregon State University

September 1990
July 1990

Dear Reader:

First it was only an internal report to share with a small group of people to make them aware of and sensitive to the history and issues surrounding discrimination. Now, that internal report has been revised and retitled, Asian Americans in Oregon and offers its message to others.

This brief account informs us of the chronology of decisions which have affected many of the lives of Asian Americans among us and also provides many pages of sources where additional information on this important subject can be obtained. Asian Americans in Oregon is a beginning document and encourages us to get to know the people involved, how they view the decisions which were made, and lists many of the significant contributions they made to Oregon’s history and culture.

No publication alone can open doors which have been closed because of discrimination. People must do that important task, but the insight provided in Asian Americans in Oregon is certainly one of the keys to furthering understanding among people.

John W. Erickson
State Superintendent of Public Instruction
When this booklet, *Asian Americans In Oregon*, first came to my attention a year ago, it was in the form of an internal University Extension report. Its purpose was to inform county Extension agents about segments of Americans in Oregon who have suffered from discrimination. I was so impressed with the report, that I immediately sat down and wrote a letter to University and College of Agricultural Sciences administrators recommending that it be published. The themes expressed in that letter seem an appropriate Foreword to the publication resulting from the original report.

*Asian Americans in Oregon* is an example of good social research. It is all the more impressive because it was not found in a scientific journal, but in the guise of the unassuming performance of a duty which an Extension administrator, Dick Craig, and a business and sociology student, Linda Powell, happened to take seriously. That duty was the fulfilling of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's civil rights plan of work for the Extension Service. This is applied social research in the finest sense.

The report is factual, but not sentimental or judgmental. It is written, in lean, non-academic, "just the facts, ma'am" style, letting the scenarios of laws and executive actions speak for themselves. The starkness is relieved by biographical narratives and by the element of progressiveness in the American political and legal response to racial and ethnic discrimination. This kind of history helps the dominant ethnic groups to recognize discrimination. But it does much more than that. It helps Americans understand that the persistence of ethnic identity and separateness, which is troublesome to many of our mainstream political leaders, is in large part a product of our discrimination.

This educational story confronts a profound tendency in our social history at the grass roots level. As such, it is as significant an endeavor as the development of a new wheat variety or a novel virus control. The University is well served to identify its social scientific services such as this one. These services are essential to upgrading the social infrastructure of Oregon, to educating its youth into the mainstream, and to developing a mature social and economic environment.

Harland Padfield  
*Professor Emeritus*  
Department of Anthropology and  
Office of International Research and Development  
Oregon State University
Acknowledgment

There are many people who are to be thanked for this work coming to fruition. First and foremost, my deepest gratitude goes to Dr. Harland Padfield, professor emeritus of the Department of Anthropology and Office of International Research and Development. Dr. Padfield sparked the notion of publishing, rallied support and financial backing, and skillfully guided me and the manuscript through, over and around the publication process. I am very grateful for his help. I admire Dr. Padfield and hope to emulate him by questioning what is and fighting for what should be when the two don't match—all while maintaining a sense of humor!

I also thank Richard Craig for the faith he placed in a member of his support staff in assigning the initial research project. His encouragement, criticism, and guidance were paramount in moulding the paper for its original purpose.

Appreciation also goes to Professor William Jenné of Oregon State University's Department of Sociology for providing research guidance.

Reviewers of segments of the initial draft included Drs. Andrew Hashimoto, L.J. Koong, and Robert Stebbins. To them I express my appreciation for their content reviews.

I gratefully acknowledge the efforts of those whose insightful content critiques during the second stage of revisions strengthened this publication:

- Dr. Jeffrey Barlow, Lewis and Clark College;
- Paul Cheng, Chinese Social Service Center;
- Dr. Lane Hirabayashi, UCLA-Berkeley;
- Jane Leung Larson, Northwest Regional China Council;
- Christine Richardson, M.A.

I also wish to thank Mr. Scott Ekstrom, a high school freshman student in Klamath Falls, who also reviewed the manuscript. I appreciate his readability review.

A publication of this nature is a first for the Oregon State University Extension Service and Oregon Agricultural Experiment Station. I appreciate the progressive thinking of each organization's administrators in providing financial and resource support. In particular, I thank Norman Goetze, emeritus agricultural program leader; Bruce DeYoung, Extension Sea Grant program leader; L.J. Koong, Agricultural Experiment Station associate director; Alberta Johnston, emeritus Extension deputy director; and Sue Anderson, Extension Administration management assistant, for their support in allowing me the time and resources to pursue publication.

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Asian Americans in Oregon

Before we can begin to try to openly understand experiences of other races, ethnic groups, etc., we must first understand ourselves and what shapes our perspectives.

From the time we are born, we are indoctrinated with the standards of our culture. Although the lessons are usually not consciously provided, we still learn how to view ourselves, our experiences, and other people. Among other group idiosyncracies, we also learn what our group deems “acceptable behavior” for our age and sex. This subconscious programming is so thorough that unless we have an unbiased exposure to different cultural groups, we may accept our group’s behavior, traditions, values, etc., as the only “right” way. This is termed ethnocentrism. Of course ethnocentric perspectives are relative. If you had been born to, or adopted by, parents of a culture other than the one in which you find yourself now, would you have the same view of which cultural group was “different” or “strange?” Would your experiences and your perspective of those experiences be different? As members of diverse racial and ethnic groups we can be proud and feel secure in our uniqueness—all cultures are valid.

In addition to our view of our own group, the biases we have about other groups (called stereotypes) also influence our perspectives. A stereotype is an oversimplified concept of what a group of people is like, ignoring the individual. Stereotypes can be positive or negative. For example, if you stereotype women, do you view them as helpless and dependent upon men for their well-being, or as self-reliant and strong of character? Once you begin to see people as individuals, stereotypes tend to fade.

Where did we pick up the stereotypes we hold? Perhaps our parents, relatives, or friends have taught them to us. Perhaps we have accepted the stereotypes that are portrayed on television or through other media.

Although as enlightened individuals we may try to understand the experiences and responses of different cultural groups, we must realize that our own cultural perspectives are so deeply ingrained that they can not be totally neutralized. Therefore, even when we try to be sensitive, our programmed stereotypes of both our group and others are still present. Recognizing this limitation within ourselves, this publication does not try to tell you why a particular group behaved a certain way in a particular situation. Instead, possible reasons for actions/reactions have been offered, allowing opportunity for you to explore cultural assumptions either on your own or through intergroup discussions.

Because this publication has a limited number of personal experience stories of Asian Americans, the books listed under Suggested Readings will help round out your understanding of various situations.
Who Are the Asian Americans of Oregon?

The United State's Equal Employment Opportunity Commission identifies "Asian or Pacific Islander" as "any person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, the Indian Subcontinent, or the Pacific Islands." Therefore, this category includes, among other groups, East Indian, Pakistani, Guamanian, Samoan, Filipino, Vietnamese, Thai, Burmese, Cambodian, Chinese, Korean, and Japanese. Table 1 identifies Asians as Oregon's second largest minority group.

Table 1.—Population estimates for Oregon (July 1989–June 1990)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Native American</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2,793,580</td>
<td>2,589,651</td>
<td>40,048</td>
<td>29,292</td>
<td>55,342</td>
<td>76,438</td>
<td>2,808</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>92.7%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Research and Statistics, Oregon Employment Division.

Figure 1.—According to Oregon's 1989 population projections, Asians make up the second largest group of people of color.

More specific breakdowns are prepared from the Census which is conducted every 10 years. Raw data from the 1990 census will not be compiled and available until sometime in 1992. So 1980 census data was used to identify the Asian ethnic groups with the largest populations in Oregon.

Due to the population demographics of Oregon as compiled for 1980, and for the ease of the reader, this report will focus on the following four groups: Japanese (8,433), Chinese (8,036), Korean (4,428), and Southeast Asian...
Limiting this publication to these four groups does not suggest that other Asian groups are less important.

Although there is a tendency on the part of the white population to view Asians as an *homogeneous* category, this is not the case. Each group has a unique background, language, culture, and migration pattern (Dworkin and Dworkin, 1982). There are also great differences among Asians in their reasons for coming to America and their experiences just before arriving.

**Ethnic communities.** Upon arriving in the United States, many immigrants form or enter already existing ethnic communities. What reasons might cause immigrants to group together? Perhaps it’s due to some common obstacles or barriers. One common problem many Asian immigrants face is a language barrier. Even those who learned some English prior to leaving their homeland found they could not communicate adequately (Choy, 1979). Additionally, anti-Asian sentiments and discriminatory policies influenced the formation of separate ethnic communities. Consider how legalized naturalization and occupational barriers during the prewar period might have motivated immigrants to cluster together in living locations. What other reasons might cause immigrant “clustering?” Perhaps the desire to share common customs and traditions, or to feel secure in a strange culture.

Ethnic communities, called *ethnic enclaves*, are not only found among Asian immigrants—many European immigrants also formed such enclaves upon arriving in America. These communities are still found in some areas today. Ethnic enclaves which separate their community from the outside community at-large may make it more difficult for immigrants to learn the English language and American ways, thereby encouraging those immigrants to stay together (Knoll, 1982).

**Sojourners, Immigrants, and Refugees**

Early Chinese and Japanese who came to America, like many of their European counterparts, were primarily *sojourners*—those who came seeking their fortunes, planning to return to their families to provide them with a better way of life. Few, however, got rich. Many returned to their home countries poor. Those who remained in the United States found an economy based on physical labor—one which did not value education as much as strength and stamina.

Gradually the incoming Asian population shifted from sojourners to *immigrants*—those people who, seeking to improve their lives, planned to work and remain in the United States. At this point the economy was still based on physical labor. This is a time many Americans can relate to—a time when perhaps your own grandparents or great-grandparents came to America. However, not all immigrants were treated the same; there were different quotas depending on race and nationality. Asians have been denied citizenship. Asians have even been denied admittance to the United States.
“In 1976 a study conducted on immigrants from various countries showed that after 3 to 6 years the average immigrant family earns as much as the average American family and pays more in taxes. As time goes on, immigrant families earn more than average American families” (Knoll, 1982). These averages are misleading for two reasons. First, immigrant families tend to have more employed family members. Secondly, Asian immigrants tend to live in larger cities where the standard of living (and therefore their pay) is higher than the national average. This means their average incomes are being compared to a national average which also includes lower, rural incomes.

A series of wars involving the United States has brought waves of Asian refugees to America. These refugees are far from being a homogeneous group; they include “a large number of the educated, former leading families of South Vietnam, destitute boat people... , and largely nonliterate mountain tribesmen” (Knoll, 1982) who speak different languages. Refugees do share the experience of having their homelands ravaged by war and their young men killed. Additionally, boat people experienced pirates boarding their boats to steal, rape, and kill, which left both emotional and physical scars.

In 1951 the United Nations defined a refugee as “a person outside his country of nationality or habitual residence from a well-founded fear of persecution because of race, religion, nationality, social memberships, or political opinions and who is unwilling to return because of fear.”

**Discriminatory Laws**

Early Asian arrivals experienced laws designed to limit their prosperity and freedom (see Table 2). While it is true that bad legislation of one kind or another is proposed virtually every session, the proposed legislation included in this listing are to demonstrate the extent of anti-Asian hostility. Some laws affected other minorities; however, all these laws impacted the Asian community. For example, laws that discriminated against aliens were an inconvenience to all aliens, but they constituted a complete bar to Asians because they were not free to become citizens.
Table 2.—Chronological listing of laws enacted or proposed limiting Asian prosperity and freedom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>1790</td>
<td>U.S. Congress limits citizenship by naturalization to free white aliens.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>By congressional act, Blacks become eligible for U.S. citizenship; Asians, however, do not.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>Chinese Exclusion Act halts Chinese immigration for 10 years. Exceptions included government officials, tourists, and teachers. This was the first U.S. citizenship by naturalization law specifically to single out one nationality for discriminatory treatment. This Act was repealed in 1943.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early 1900's</td>
<td>Amendment to the U.S. Constitution proposed denying the right to become citizens to the American-born children of Asian parents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service reaffirms only whites and blacks may become naturalized U.S. citizens.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>California law holds that persons ineligible for citizenship may not own land or property. Within a few years, Oregon and seven other states follow California's lead.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>The Oregon legislature considers barring women and girls from restaurants operated by Asians.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>Oregon passes an amendment which prohibits aliens from obtaining an Oregon fishing license.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>Oregon legislature petitions Congress to amend the U.S. Constitution to deny the right to become citizens to the American-born children of Asian parents.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>Aliens ineligible for citizenship cannot own any interest in: agricultural land by purchase, land for mining purposes, or timber land.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>Oregon law allows counties, towns, cities, and municipalities to refuse granting a business license to anyone not a citizen of the United States wanting to engage in the following businesses: pawnbroker, pool hall, card room, dance hall, soft-drink establishment. (This was held to be constitutional and within the power of the state.) Also, an alien engaged in the following businesses must display a large card in full view showing the owner's and employees' nationality(s): grocery, meat market, fruit stand, hotel, apartment house, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>Oregon passes an amendment calling for each county assessor to make a list annually of all Chinese and Japanese who &quot;own, lease, or operate&quot; real property. (This was to help enforce the above law.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>Immigration Act sets immigration quota of 2 percent for the nationals of a given country living in the United States in 1890. No one ineligible for citizenship can immigrate. Combined with 1790 congressional act, this act effectively halts immigration of non-whites except nationals. Philippine nationals' immigration opens to fill jobs once held by Japanese.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>December 7—Japan bombs Pearl Harbor. United States enters World War II. This provides for a resurgence of anti-Japanese hostility. Japanese who had been long-time residents, or even born in this country, became identified with the enemy—their loyalty was automatically questioned, leading to their internment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>Executive Order 9066 signed by President Roosevelt authorizes U.S. Army to remove civilians from the Western Defense Zones, which comprised a large portion of the West Coast states. Although Germany and Italy were also war enemies of the U.S., only persons of Japanese ancestry were removed from these zones. Individuals of German and Italian ancestry were not directly affected by the Order.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>Oregon legislature passed a law prohibiting aliens from working on farms, living on farms, and even stepping onto farm fields. Declared unconstitutional in 1949.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>Bill passed by Congress allows wives and children of Chinese American citizens to apply for immigration outside of quota system limitations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>Japanese are allowed to become U.S. citizens.</td>
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Early Attitudes Toward Chinese

At different points in Oregon history, Chinese have been viewed as having either a positive or negative influence. In 1822 when the Oregon Country was still an international no-man’s land, Representative John Floyd urged Congress to have 2,000 Chinese settle Oregon to make it an outpost of the United States. Floyd thought that the Chinese would “…teach the [Native Americans] the arts of peace and so turn them into Americans.” This was supported by Thomas Hart Benton, but the current white settlers did not agree with encouraging Chinese settlement. Despite opposition, Chinese did migrate to the United States. Being sojourners, they sought to make their fortunes, so they could return home to their families to provide them a better life (Edson, 1974).

Life in Oregon

In the early period of Chinese immigration, life in Oregon was basically a bachelor’s existence. This was true even for men who were married, as most wives remained in China. To illustrate the discrepancy between Chinese male and female immigration, let’s look at Oregon’s 1870 population statistics: Chinese male population, 3,232; Chinese female population, 98!

Why did so few Chinese women immigrate? Perhaps because they were obligated to fulfill their traditional role of caring for children and elderly parents. Perhaps the hardship of a 1- to 2-month voyage, or American anti-Chinese sentiments dissuaded them. Or, perhaps, if their husbands were sojourners, the expense of an additional passage fare was unwarranted. Whether for these or other reasons, few Chinese women (single or married) were among those early immigrants. Those brave, pioneering women who did come to America “suffered harsh living conditions and discrimination because of their race and sex” (Yung, 1986).

Chinese had an influence on the growth and development of Oregon in simple and significant ways. The Chinese brought the first grapefruit to Baker (and for a long time they were the only ones to eat it) (Andrews, 1949), and in 1875, Oregon pioneer fruit man Seth Lewelling named a new variety of cherries after his Chinese foreman, Bing (Bureau of Planning, City of Portland, 1978).

By 1850 the frontier communities of the west viewed the Chinese as a valuable resource to fill manual jobs. In 1860, only 5 of the 425 Chinese listed in Oregon resided east of the Cascades; all 5 were residents of The Dalles. Four were laundrymen and the other a cook. Of the remaining 420 Chinese in Western Oregon, 370 were miners.

The Chinese also had a very important influence in Oregon’s society and economy due to their involvement with the two most significant activities in the development of eastern Oregon: mining and railroad construction (Edson, 1974).
Railroad. During the 1860’s railroad work provided the greatest demand for Chinese labor. The Union Pacific relied primarily on Irish labor, but 90 percent of Central Pacific labor was provided by Chinese. Despite their part in the industrialization of Oregon by linking market places within the state, and to the eastern United States, “white workers physically prevented the Chinese workers from being present when the golden spike was driven which marks the joining of the two railroads” (Schaefer, 1979).

Mining. During the mining boom of eastern Oregon (circa 1862), many mining districts formed water companies to construct ditches or canals to bring water from up to 108 miles away. Much of the labor for these ditches was performed by the Chinese. One location southeast of Prairie City is still called China Ditch (Edson, 1974).

By 1870 there were 1,762 Chinese in eastern Oregon (13.5 percent of the total population). Although they worked in a variety of jobs, most worked placer mines that were abandoned or sold to them (Edson, 1974).

In the 1856-57 session of the Oregon Territory Legislature, a bill was passed that allowed for a $2 per month tax of all Chinese miners. By that time there were several hundred Chinese mining in Jackson and Josephine counties. The tax made for a nice sum to be added to the State’s coffers.

The taxation of Chinese miners marked the first formal Oregon discriminatory measure against the Chinese (Bureau of Planning, City of Portland, 1978). However, there had been unofficial discriminatory actions taken against the Chinese prior to this.
Laws and Other Forms of Discrimination

Prejudice against the Chinese was reflected in the accepted, everyday use of derogatory terms used to refer to them. From the beginning of their immigration, even newspapers, whether or not they supported the use of Chinese workers under contract, referred to the Chinese in a derogatory manner.

Laws. Periodically Oregon's cities and legislature have attempted to limit the prosperity and opportunity of the Chinese. This is not to say that Oregonians were alone (or even forerunners) in their discriminatory treatment of Chinese. Indeed, the basis of most of these laws were "borrowed" from California. Oregon was simply a component of the systematic anti-Chinese movement which was engulfing the West Coast.

• The State Constitution of 1857, ratified by U.S. Congress in 1859, also limited freedom. It provided that "no Negro, mulatto, or Chinese could vote..." and that "no Chinese immigrating to Oregon after the adoption of the Constitution could hold a land or a mining claim or even work on a mining claim" (Pollard, 1961). The Constitution of 1857 also denied the right of citizenship to both Chinese and Blacks. Blacks became eligible for U.S. citizenship in 1927; Chinese in 1943.

• In 1857 Chinese and Hawaiians were to pay $2 per month for mining in Jackson County. In Josephine and Jackson counties, any Chinese or Hawaiians engaged in any kind of trade or barter among themselves were to pay $50 per month for the "privilege" (Young, 1907).

• In some cases, Chinese were not openly identified as the target, but the proposed legislation intent was clear. During the 1870's some proposed legislation included:
  —prohibiting baskets being carried by suspending from or attaching to poles carried across one's shoulders. (This was how the Chinese transported the laundry for most of the city of Portland.)
  —fining any person found sleeping in a room containing less than 500 cubic feet of space per person. (The target being the inhabitants of Portland's overcrowded Chinatown. When Portland passed this in 1873 and began to haul Chinese out of Chinatown by the carloads for violating this ordinance, the city jail became overcrowded. Those incarcerated found themselves guilty of breaking the law there, too!) (Holbrook, 1937).

• Mining districts prohibited Chinese from owning claims. However, local mining regulations were probably not strictly enforced, since white miners were more than willing to sell a depleted claim to the Chinese. For example, less than 2 months after the Eagle mining district passed laws prohibiting Chinese miners from owning mining claims, it was reported (April 17, 1872) in the area's newspaper (Bedrock Democrat) that "much of the placer ground is being purchased by Chinese" (Edson, 1974).

• In 1879 Oregon Senator James H. Slater introduced a bill which would allow Chinese to live and travel in the United States, but deprive them of the right to work (Bureau of Planning, City of Portland, 1987). It was not passed.
The anti-Chinese laws in Oregon were confusing and contradictory, and although it appears as if the state and local legislation was often not adhered to by Oregonians, the fact that there were such laws indicates a feeling of hostility was present. The Chinese were, in fact, needed for their labor. The laws "...were intended to make and keep them dependent: unable to move out of a wage laboring situation; unable to directly compete with Caucasians ..." (Hirabayashi, 1989).

**Violent activity.** Hostile sentiments toward the Chinese first turned into mob violence in the Northwest in Tacoma in 1885. In one such incident, the Chinese were beaten and their homes and businesses burned. They were then forcibly loaded on a ship and sailed to Portland.

The Chinese were not any more welcome in Portland than they had been in Tacoma. In 1886 a (in)famous anti-Chinese organizer, Burdette Haskell, came to Portland from San Francisco to direct Oregon's anti-Chinese movement (Bureau of Planning, City of Portland, 1978). About that same time a large Chinese wash-house at Sixth and Madison streets in Portland was blown up with dynamite, and market gardeners' homes were attacked and burned to the ground (Holbrook, 1937).

Also in 1886, rioting was sporadic in Salem and Oregon City, and there were other incidents in Portland. Chinese homes and businesses were bombed, and a few Chinese were murdered. Haskell whipped up some Oregonians' anti-Chinese feelings to the point that a date was set for mob action to run the Chinese out of Portland. However, Mayor John Gates intervened—he swore in a volunteer force of 700 armed citizens, and 2 militia companies were activated. Mayor Gates also doubled the police force, and the sheriff swore in 200 deputies. Additional ammunition was brought in from Salem.

This display of support for law and order did not squelch anti-Chinese actions altogether. In 1887, 180 Chinese were driven from Albina, and more than 100 from Mt. Tabor. Also, mobs raided a colony of Chinese truck gardeners at Gills Lake.

The actual forced expulsion from towns did not stop in the 1800's: As late as 1915 Chinese were shipped out of Jacksonville, en masse, to San Francisco (Friedman, 1970).

**Employment**

In 1880, 77.7 percent of the Chinese in Eastern Oregon were recorded in the census as miners, while 22.3 percent listed other employment. These non-mining Chinese had a variety of occupations, including railroad workers, cooks, laundrymen, laborers, merchants, clerks, etc. In Western Oregon, Chinese filled the demand for hard physical labor such as the manual clearing of farm land (Edson, 1974).
With the end of placer mining in eastern Oregon in the 1880's, Chinese sought other employment. The few who remained in eastern Oregon began working in agricultural and ranching enterprises. Many went to the coastal cities to find jobs as laborers and factory workers. Many also moved to Portland where the flourishing salmon canning industry on the lower Columbia offered work opportunities (Edson, 1974). Thousands of Chinese also processed salmon in canneries along the Oregon coast.

**Holiday Celebrations**

The changing attitudes toward Chinese holidays and festivals provides a measure by which to assess the changing attitudes of local whites toward the Chinese. In the period before 1890, Chinese New Year celebrations were a source of ridicule, amusement, and anxiety. "The large, noisy Chinese celebration drew curious onlookers" (Barlow and Richardson, 1979). But by 1915 the Chinese celebrations involved the white community. White children would line up in front of the homes of different Chinese residents to have their "pockets filled with Chinese candies and Chinese nuts," and glass bracelets (Cockrell, 1987). By the 1920's the celebration of the New Year in John Day's Chinatown had become a local holiday "for which all schools were let out so the children could attend" (Barlow and Richardson, 1979). The section on John Day heavily uses material from Barlow and Richardson (1979).
John Day
The City of John Day has an especially rich Chinese history. The Chinese community of that area began near Canyon City where it experienced a number of fires. It appeared that racial tension between the whites and Chinese was at least partially responsible for this. Finally, in February of 1885, Chinatown, which had about 1,000 residents, completely burned down. Local authorities refused to allow the Chinese to rebuild. So this Chinese community moved down creek several miles to a place called Lower Town (later called John Day). What had once been the main street of Chinatown in John Day is now called Canton Street.

Members of John Day’s early Chinese community included:
• **Buckaroo Sam** who was a cowhand who worked several ranches in the area. He did not live in Chinatown and, in his later years, lived with a white family in John Day.
• **Charlie Po Kee** was a laundryman and dealt in bootlegged whiskey. He was one of the few Chinese who had a wife with him in the United States. Due to restrictive quotas, most Chinese women were not allowed to enter the United States. Although Charlie Po Kee’s wife’s name was not known, she was the only Chinese woman remembered from John Day’s Chinatown. The white townspeople called her “Crazy Jane” because she would run when anyone approached her, and she was rarely seen out alone. A difference of cultural standards between the Chinese and white communities is evident here. Mrs. Po Kee was probably trying to follow Chinese customs for respectability. That is, for a married woman to be considered respectable, Chinese custom required she not leave her courtyard, unless her face was covered with a veil and she rode in a sedan chair.
• **Lung On** mined gold, gambled, and eventually became a successful businessman. He invested in a small Pontiac dealership and service station called “The Tourist Garage.” This automobile dealership was the first in eastern Oregon. But perhaps he is best known as the companion and business partner of Ing Hay.
• **Ing Hay** became known as the China Doctor or Doc Hay. He was a Chinese herbal physician whose medical territory extended from Walla Walla, Washington, to the Nevada border in the south, and from Portland to west of Pye, Idaho, in the east. He also treated people in Seattle, Astoria, and Klamath Falls. Together with Lung On, they owned and operated “Kam Wah Chung and Company” which served many purposes. Initially, their main sale was of caseload items. The store also served as a sort of hiring hall for Chinese labor since Lung On spoke English well and could function as an intermediary between the Chinese and white communities.

Kam Wah Chung also served as a religious shrine for a Buddhist sect, a social center for discussing political situations back home, and a post office for the Chinese community (Lung On wrote letters home for illiterate Chinese). Kam Wah Chung was also a place to arrange loans and gamble. After Doc Hay’s death, John Day acquired the Kam Wah Chung and Company building and began to renovate it. Today it is a museum of a past era and Chinese community.
Population
By the mid-1870's, the Chinese had become the largest ethnic group in Portland. The community spread from Ash Street to Salmon Street, and from Front Avenue to 3rd Avenue. Portland's Chinatown was a well-established part of the city (Bureau of Planning, City of Portland, 1978).

In 1870 the U.S. census taker counted 3,330 Chinese in Oregon. In 1880 they numbered 9,510. The accuracy of the counts is uncertain—the raw data shows large blocks of entries who the census taker named "A. Chinaman." This gives some indication of the facelessness of Oregon's Chinese and of the attitudes of white Americans at that time.

Chinese Culture and Assimilation to American Customs
Despite being harassed and discriminated against, the Chinese have attempted to hold onto at least some of their culture while at the same time becoming "Americanized." For instance, in 1899, during the Spanish-American War, at a time when many Chinese men still wore queues (long pigtails), Portland Chinese formed the "American Born Chinese Brigade" as a part of the National Guard. This was the first Chinese brigade in the United States (Bureau of Planning, City of Portland, 1978).

Both Chinese and whites thought the other's customs to be odd. One particular Chinese custom whites found strange was the funeral procession. "Some Chinese would go out in front and scatter all along the road pieces of thin paper resembling tissue. These were about 4 X 6 inches and had many holes in them, much as though a pencil had been shoved through as often as possible without making the holes join." The Chinese believed the devil had to go back and forth through all the holes before he could overtake the body (Edson, 1974).

The Chinese were also amazed at the strange customs and institutions in the United States. One such case was reported by the Bedrock Democrat in March of 1872. The Chinese man saw American law courts in the following way: "One man is quite silent, another talks all the time, and twelve wise men condemn the man who has not said a word" (Edson, 1974).

Stereotypes. From the time Chinese began to immigrate to the United States and until approximately 1940, they endured stereotypes such as "inferior," "industrious," "obedient," "cowardly," "superstitious," and "sly." However, World War II seemed to mark a change in the white community's attitudes. The Chinese were then most often characterized as tradition-loving, loyal to family, and quiet. For the most part, Chinese are now considered a "model minority," and often described as patient, courteous, and Americanized. This new stereotype, while carrying with it its own burdens, reflects high achievement according to white middle-class standards (Dworkin and Dworkin, 1976).
Since the early 1900’s, the more hostile activity directed toward the Chinese has waned, and the image of Chinese has become more positive. Although stereotyped today as a “model minority,” the road to acceptance has not been an easy or fast one. It may have also meant the loss of some very positive societal characteristics (such as close parent-child relationships) for the Chinese.

Employment
Beginning in 1910 and lasting until the early 1940’s, Chinese were often employed in canneries. These workers would follow the fish along the coast—Astoria through Coos Bay, according to the season. When working around Florence, the Chinese set up camp near Rose Hill on a bank of the Siuslaw River, which local people called China Flats. According to the recorded recollections available at the Florence library, the Chinese also “did some mining up the beach, up China Creek...” (Cockrell, 1987).

Although “Chinese were allowed to become American citizens in 1943, and thus became eligible for many professional and commercial activities that had been denied them” (Bureau of Planning, City of Portland, 1978), many still found themselves in the same types of service occupations as their ancestors—domestic service and laundry work, operating restaurants and small stores catering to other Chinese. Why might that be so? Did the Chinese remain in service occupations because they lacked the necessary skills/education to do other work? Or did other barriers such as prejudice keep them serving others?

The recent success of well-educated Chinese immigrants or of Chinese students who have become residents is improving the occupational picture. Are, perhaps, job market obstacles also weakening?

World War II
As early as 1932 a group of 12 Chinese students, the first graduates of the aviation school in Portland, went back to China to participate in the war against Japan. The alignment of allies in World War II quickened the acceptance of the Chinese community. After the Pearl Harbor attack, the prime target of American anti-Asian racism became the Japanese Americans. “The Chinese, on the other hand, were portrayed as faithful allies, heroic fighters, and tragic victims” (Bureau of Planning, City of Portland, 1978).

Less than 2 weeks after Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, Hawaii on December 7, 1941, buttons displaying the crossed flags of China and the United States began to be worn by Chinese in Portland. Later this identification was used on Chinese businesses and automobiles. In 1942 some Chinese hung signs in their windows or wore buttons declaring “I’m not Jap” and “We’re Chinese.” What might have motivated them to do so? Perhaps because Japan and China were bitter war enemies, this gave the Chinese an opportunity to proclaim a heightened status over the Japanese in the United States. Or, perhaps, the Chinese identified themselves as separate from the Japanese out of fear.
Even those Chinese who felt bad about the treatment Japanese Americans were receiving didn’t want to be mistaken for Japanese and be subjected to the same treatment.

In 1945, Chinese of Portland donated three airplanes to China in its fight against Japan. The airplanes were named “Of the People,” “For the People,” and “By the People.”

The Assimilation Process
Since the Chinese began immigrating to the United States, they have attempted to maintain their cultural identity and, at the same time, fit into mainstream America. In general, this has been a difficult road. However, certain similarities between American and Chinese values have aided the assimilation. For instance, both traditional Chinese and white middle-class America highly value education for both men and women, strong family structure, and achievement.

Chinese Americans’ family structure may be greatly affected as they become increasingly acculturated. With each new generation the differences between Chinese and non-Chinese family life are narrowing. Where acculturation is less advanced, parent-child relationships tend to be stronger and more harmonious than those among non-Chinese Americans. Parental authority is more absolute and the extended family is more important than is typical in white middle-class families. “Divorce is rare and attitudes on sexual behavior tend to be strict. The latter is [in part due to] Chinese generally frowning upon public expression of... emotions” (Dworkin and Dworkin, 1976).

Two differences in values between tradition-oriented Chinese parents and middle-class American parents are individualism and competitiveness. Chinese parents stress sharing and putting one’s own success and happiness second to that of the family; American parents value competitiveness and independence (Dworkin and Dworkin, 1976). One organization which helps ease stresses caused by cultural differences is the Chinese Social Service Center located in Portland. Established in 1983, the Center acts as a cohesive force in Portland’s Chinese community by offering a number of services. Among them are English and Chinese language and culture classes, counseling, Chinese foster home placements, and parenting classes. The parenting classes cover anticipated family problems brought on by cultural differences between traditional Chinese parents and their “Americanized” children. The Center also serves as a gathering place—it serves a Chinese food luncheon twice per week.

Many Chinese Americans have experienced upward occupational mobility, that is, they have moved into jobs of higher status. This may be due to weakening discriminatory barriers in the job market, in combination with the amount of education they achieve. By all educational measurements,
Chinese Americans exceed whites in amount of formal education. Considered as a group, Chinese have a higher average income than whites. However, the higher average income for Chinese may be deceptively optimistic “...because individual Chinese Americans’ earnings may be lower than whites’ when both have comparable educations and occupations...” (Dworkin and Dworkin, 1976). Additionally, Chinese tend to live in larger cities with higher standards of living. Therefore their average incomes are being compared to a national average which includes lower, rural standards of living.

Another factor which aids Chinese in joining mainstream America is that when coming to the United States, many Chinese households accept Christianity. In China, religious beliefs can be intermixed. For example, one can be a Confucianist, Buddhist, and Taoist at the same time. Therefore, many immigrants have been willing to accept Christianity, even though doing so may ultimately mean rejecting their old faiths (Dworkin and Dworkin, 1976).

An indication of lessening racial discrimination on the part of the white community are efforts being made to learn non-English languages. Today, Oregon education is emerging as a national leader in the study of Chinese. According to Verne Duncan, former state school superintendent, “The study of foreign language is not required by the state, but local school districts have taken the initiative” (Oregon Department of Education, 1987). As of Fall 1987, only three states topped Oregon in the number of Chinese language programs offered (Oregon Department of Education, 1987).

Summary
Chinese have been and continue to be an important part of Oregon’s history, involved in her growth and development since the 1800’s. They have suffered overt discrimination by being beaten, run out of town, and otherwise harrassed. Despite these hardships, Chinese are making significant progress in Oregon today. They fill many important societal roles in both the private and public sectors. For example: Gene Chao of Portland served on the Oregon State Board of Higher Education through 1988; Mae Yih of Albany is a state senator representing District 19; Duncan Law of Astoria is a professor emeritus at OSU Seafoods Laboratory, and Sherry Sheng is executive director of the Washington Park Zoo in Portland.
Japanese of Oregon
Prior to 1940

First Japanese in Oregon
The first recorded Japanese to come to the Oregon Territory were three survivors of a shipwreck. In 1834 a Japanese ship sank near Cape Flattery on the Olympia Peninsula. On January 29, 1834, a Native American brought news to Fort Vancouver that a ship had been wrecked and there were three survivors who were with a local tribe (Bureau of Planning, City of Portland, 1978).

By trading gifts with tribal leaders, Dr. John McLoughlin of Fort Vancouver gained release of the three Japanese sailors. Although these survivors were the first Japanese to come to Oregon (Vancouver was a part of the Oregon Territory), they were not the first settlers, for after a short stay they were returned as far as China via London (Bureau of Planning, City of Portland, 1978).

Oregon’s first Japanese settler was a political refugee from Yokohama named Suzuki Kinzo. During his first years in Oregon, he attended a Portland high school. Then during the 1860’s he worked as a lamplighter (Bureau of Planning, City of Portland, 1978).

The first Japanese woman settler in Oregon was Miyo Iwakoshi, who came here in 1880 as Captain Andrew McKinnon’s bride. The captain built a sawmill east of Gresham, calling it “Orient Mill” in honor of his wife. The community which eventually grew up around the mill is still referred to as Orient. Along with the couple were Iwakoshi’s younger brother, Rikichi, and an adopted daughter, Tam Nitobe. Around 1891 Nitobe married a young Japanese man from San Francisco named Shintaro Takaki. This was the first Japanese wedding in the State (Bureau of Planning, City of Portland, 1978). Takaki was also responsible for the establishment of Japanese-owned business endeavors in Oregon; he had opened a restaurant in 1889 (Stearns, 1938).

Immigration, Employment, and Population
Japanese often refer to themselves in relation to their arrival in the United States. Issei are first generation, the immigrants born in Japan. Their children, the Nisei, are American-born. The third generation, the Sansei, are the children of the Nisei. The Yonsei are the fourth generation (Schaefer, 1979).

For immigration pattern purposes, Japanese immigration to the United States can be divided into three stages. The first immigration period was pre-1908. As early as 1887, direct steamship lines were established between Portland and Kobe, Japan. Although it did not make for a dramatic increase in Oregon’s Japanese population for several years, Japanese immigrants did begin to arrive in increasing numbers once this avenue of transportation was established. Like their European counterparts, the typical early Japanese immigrant was a young bachelor who regarded himself as a sojourner. He entered the economy as a laborer, holding jobs unwanted by most whites in areas such as railroading, mining, and migratory farm work.
The next 16 years (1908-1924) was a period of curtailed immigration; only elite classes were allowed to enter and exit the United States. Among all American immigrants of the day, Japanese were the most literate and brought the most money. This is largely due to screening of undesirable persons by the Japanese government which did not want its reputation tarnished (Dworkin and Dworkin, 1976). This was also the period prior to World War II when the majority of Issei women arrived—most as “picture brides.”

From 1924 to 1952, no one ineligible for citizenship could immigrate to the United States (Knoll, 1982). This effectively shut out Japanese immigrants. Therefore, the third immigration period has been since 1952. “In 1952, Issei were permitted [naturalization] rights, and new Japanese immigration was allowed after 28 years of exclusion” (Dworkin and Dworkin, 1976).

Both in Hawaii and the western states, most Japanese were first employed as agricultural workers. Then, like the Chinese before them, they moved into other activities (Melendy, 1972). On the West Coast, significant numbers of Japanese entered domestic service, mining, lumber, and small business occupations.

Despite the direct steamship lines established in 1887, Oregon’s Japanese population did not increase dramatically for several years. The 1890 census showed that there were 25 Japanese in Oregon, 20 of whom were living in Portland. That same year the Oregon Short Line became the first railroad to employ Japanese. The number of Japanese railroad workers began to increase after the passing of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882. As the supply of Chinese laborers became less available, railroad companies began to actively recruit Japanese workers. Shintaro Takaki became involved in supplying Japanese labor, and in 1891 sent 40 Japanese workers from Portland to the Union Pacific Railroad. “...Portland rapidly became a major center for the distribution of newly arrived Japanese laborers” (Bureau of Planning, City of Portland, 1978).

By the year 1900, railroad activity had caused Oregon’s Japanese population to increase to 2,501. Japanese began to settle on agricultural land by 1904. Some of the Japanese who had come to clear land of trees and to work as farm hands, as well as those who had completed their contracts with the railroads, began to buy land. Therefore, by 1905, 35 percent of the Oregon Japanese had become farmers, while only 26 percent were still employed by railroad companies. Ten percent were cooks and house servants, and the remainder were woodchoppers, students, or merchants. Only 4 percent of the population were women and children. In the early 1900’s, the U.S. Immigration Commission reported that 40 percent of the mainland Japanese worked on western farms in sugar beets, grapes, fruits, vegetables, and hops, which required considerable hand labor at peak periods (Melendy, 1972).
Beginning in 1906, the Japanese began raising strawberries near Russellville, located east of Portland on Stark Street near what is today known as Mall 205. "In 1911 almost one-half of the farming land around Russellville was under their control..." By that time Japanese farmers had begun growing a variety of fruits and vegetables (Stearns, 1938).

An agreement between Japan and the United States, called the "Gentlemen's Agreement," was signed in 1907. Under the terms of this agreement, Japan promised to stop the emigration of Japanese labor to the United States (Bureau of Planning, City of Portland, 1978). The "Gentlemen's Agreement" was concluded in 1908 "whereby Japan would issue passports to United States-bound Japanese nationals only if they were former residents; parents, children, or wives of residents; or ‘intending to assume active control of an already possessed interest in a farming enterprise’ " (Dworkin and Dworkin, 1976).

With the conclusion of the "Gentlemen's Agreement," the door was opened for picture brides between 1910 and 1920. Under this system of immigration, the number of Japanese women in Oregon between the ages 20 and 44 increased from 201 to 769 (Pursinger, 1961). Since "in most Asian cultures, marriage is not only a union between two people, but also an advantageous merger of family interests," Japanese men in America followed the traditional procedure for finding a bride—parents selected the marriage partner. Usually the ceremony was conducted in Japan with someone standing in for the groom, as most men did not return to Japan for the wedding. "Often the first time the couple would see each other was when the woman arrived in America. The husband would have only a picture to identify his new bride" (Knoll, 1982).

At this time in Clatsop County, Japanese (ineligible under federal law for U.S. citizenship) had not bought or settled on any lands, and therefore most were laborers. In Astoria (Clatsop County) Japanese operated some small businesses; others were laborers in sawmills.

By 1920, Portland's Japanese population was employed in various occupations—merchants, hotel and restaurant workers, tailors, shoemakers, dyers, cleaners, factory workers, farm hands, etc. According to the "Report on the Japanese Situation in Oregon" written by Frank Davey at Governor Olcott's request, "about 90 percent of the small hotels and lodging houses within the urban core area of Portland were in Japanese hands" (Bureau of Planning, City of Portland, 1978).

Agriculture. Japanese began to migrate to the Hood River and Willamette valleys. This was in part due to white land owners in the Hood River area who were eager to have their land cleared. In many cases the Japanese were given portions of the tracts they cleared in exchange for their work (Bureau of Planning, City of Portland, 1978).
By 1910, although Japanese farmed only 4,508 acres in the State, they were concentrated in three areas—Hood River, Salem, and eastern Multnomah County. Therefore they influenced the local markets in those areas, especially in vegetable and berry farming. "By 1920 they produced 75 percent of all the strawberries grown in [Hood River] County" (Bureau of Planning, City of Portland, 1978). At that time, Japanese apple growers began to diversify by planting pears. They also pioneered in planting strawberries between rows of young trees. This provided an income while waiting for trees to mature and produce (Pursinger, 1961).

Within 10 years, an estimated 60 percent of the state's Japanese population was active in the agricultural industry. Truck vegetable markets in Marion and Multnomah counties, and berry markets in Hood River and Washington counties, were predominantly run by Japanese. They acquired farms by saving money from crops they grew as tenant farmers, and then buying the land. They specialized in crops requiring a great deal of labor—strawberries, onions, flowers, asparagus, celery, etc. (Knoll, 1982). By 1940, 75 percent of the vegetables sold in Portland came from their fields (Pursinger, 1961). In the Gresham area, Japanese farmed rented land. There they directly controlled "50 percent of the acreage in raspberries, 90 percent of the strawberries, 30-40 percent of the loganberries, and 60 percent of all the vegetable truck gardening." Japanese had also begun to get involved in the potato and dairy industries (Pursinger, 1961).

Prominent Japanese Businessmen in Early Oregon. In 1901 Masuo Yasui came to Oregon as a railroad worker. He became fascinated with the Hood River area and settled there. He worked on Japanese crews clearing hillsides for orchards. Later Yasui opened a store and pioneered the successful Japanese apple and pear industry of that area (Melendy, 1972). The descendants of Masuo Yasui still reside in the Hood River area and have made a major contribution to agricultural development in Oregon. Ray Yasui of Hood River was a recipient of the Agricultural Hall of Fame award in 1989. The Oregon State University College of Agricultural Sciences awards this honor on the basis of "...excellence in agricultural accomplishment and service" (Arnold, 1991).

In the early 1900's Shinzaburo Ban was the leading Japanese businessman in the State. His varied enterprises included a large mercantile shop in Portland with branches in two other states and Tokyo, Japan. He owned a shingle company and lumber mill, and raised Jersey stock cattle. However, in 1924 the S. Ban Company went bankrupt.

"In 1910 Roy Fukuda, an ex-section hand, cleared the first tract of land in the Lake Labish swamp." By 1913 he was recognized as a key producer of Golden Plume celery, and "thus the Lake Labish area became synonymous with fine celery" (Pursinger, 1961).

Another leading Japanese merchant in Portland was M. Hachiya who came to America in 1895. By 1911 Hachiya was prominent enough to be listed in a

**Laws Affecting Oregon’s Japanese**

In addition to federal laws limiting Japanese immigration, Oregon’s Japanese also faced other federal and state laws aimed at limiting their opportunity, as shown in Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>“Oregon legislature received the first bill to curb [Asian] ownership of real estate” (Pursinger, 1961).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>circa 1917</td>
<td>Farmers in Crook and Deschutes counties passed resolutions forbidding the “residence, employment, commercial, or agricultural activity, or the lease or sale of land to members or descendants of the Japanese race” (Pursinger, 1961).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WWI</td>
<td>“The ‘Japanese problem’ has always been more acute in the town of Hood River than in any other place in Oregon. During WWI a society known as the Anti-Asiatic Association was formed there and included prominent citizens as its officers” (Pursinger, 1961).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>Oregon’s Alien Land Law passed. It forbade Japanese without citizenship to buy or lease land. However, some Issei farmers were still able to purchase or lease land by putting it under the names of their children who had citizenship (Bureau of Planning, City of Portland, 1978).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>Oregon legislature passed a law prohibiting aliens from working on farms, living on farms, and even stepping onto farm fields. Declared unconstitutional in 1949.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>Issei become eligible for U.S. naturalization.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

One way Japanese in the United States tried to overcome opportunity limiting actions was through the Japanese Association of America. Its services included educating new arrivals about the United States, teaching English as a second language, and providing legal assistance to “fight the numerous anti-Japanese laws... [and making available] Agricultural experts [who] advised about crops and soils... In general, [taking] care of local community needs” (Melendy, 1972). The first Japanese Association of America was established in San Francisco in 1900. By 1921 there were four such major associations. Among them was the Japanese Association of Oregon in Portland, with three or four locals in Oregon and Idaho.
Japanese always have been a relatively small proportion of Oregon’s total population. The U.S. Census of 1940 listed a total of 4,071 Japanese in Oregon—1,617 Issei and 2,454 Nisei. Over three-fourths of Oregon’s Japanese were concentrated in Multnomah, Hood River, and Washington counties. Life was continuing much as before until December 7, 1941, when Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. With that, the United States was catapulted into World War II.

**World War II**

Within a few days after Pearl Harbor was attacked, the FBI rounded up Japanese Americans who appeared to be leaders in their communities. They were questioned about involvement in war action against the United States. One individual picked up was Ko Wakatsuki, a fisherman out of San Monica, California. Once a resident of Salem, Oregon, he had been living in the United States for over 35 years at the time of the Pearl Harbor bombing. When the FBI picked up Mr. Wakatsuki, they did not inform his wife or 10 children what they had done with him. For two full days there was no word from Mr. Wakatsuki or the FBI. Finally the Wakatsuki family learned through the grapevine that he had been shipped to an internment camp. His family didn’t know where he had been sent, for how long, or even if he’d been charged with a crime. Almost one year elapsed before they saw him again.

“All Japanese Americans were [required] to turn in cameras, binoculars, and short-wave radios to local police” (Knoll, 1982). The FBI, with the help of local officials, carried out dragnet operations. They cut off phone service to homes that were to be searched. “Strict curfews and [required] identification papers restricted the movements of all people of Japanese ancestry... Any person with more than one-sixteenth Japanese ancestry had to leave the Western Defense Zones” (Knoll, 1982). In Oregon, Zone Number 1 was “roughly from the coastline inland to U.S. Highway 99-W plus the entirety of Portland, Hermiston, La Grande, and Pendleton. Zone Number 2 was roughly all the area between U.S. Highway 99-W and U.S. Highway 97 plus the Bonneville Dam region and the Bull Run water reserve which furnished Portland’s drinking water supply. Therefore, Zone Number 2 ran through the centers of cities such as Redmond, Bend, and Klamath Falls... ” (Pursinger, 1961).

This all came about because of Executive Order 9066. Although the order did not identify by race those individuals to be evacuated, only Japanese residents were forcibly imprisoned. Why were Japanese living in the United States confined? Some claim it was necessary for national security reasons. If so, why were only those of Japanese ancestry imprisoned? Why not Italians and Germans—their ancestral homelands were our war enemies as well. Some wartime propaganda insisted that the Japanese Americans were forcibly confined for their own safety. Why weren’t they given the option of staying in the communities they were in? Was it necessary to “protect” them behind barbed wire fences?
Those within Western Defense Zones were given the choice of voluntarily moving out of the zones, or being placed in temporary assembly centers. Voluntary migration did not work well. “Governors of all western states except Colorado refused to assure the War Relocation Authority that any person of Japanese ancestry could safely relocate in their states” (Knoll, 1982). Of those who attempted to move out of the zone, “most were turned back by armed posses at state lines, refused gas and food, and in general intimidated” (Fujimoto, 1971). Spring of 1942 was chaotic for Japanese Americans. Community leaders were being interned, and even routine decisions were difficult to make; i.e., Japanese farmers didn’t know where they would be at harvest time—should they plant crops?

By March the Japanese were being moved into assembly centers: makeshift detention camps. Oregon’s assembly center was the Portland Livestock Pavilion. Each family was tagged with a number which became their official designation until the camps were closed. While at Oregon’s assembly center, one intern recalled “visiting friends who were sitting on suitcases outside of stalls still containing fresh hay and manure. Guard towers with armed soldiers and barbed wire surrounded us” (Fujimoto, 1971). Oregon’s Japanese were later moved to the center in Tulelake, California, or the Minidoka Relocation Center near Twin Falls, Idaho.

Americans of today may wonder why so many Japanese went quietly, “standing obediently in long lines... organizing families into efficient crews to move baggage and help the sick and elderly” (Knoll, 1982). Were they trying to prove their loyalty? Were they trying to avoid further reprisals? There is an old Japanese proverb which says: “The nail that sticks out is the one that gets hit.” Would you and your family have cooperated with the Order? If not, why? If you would have, why? Does cultural background and experiences influence actions?

Japanese Americans had to leave behind whatever they couldn’t carry with them. After spending years turning forests into farmland, Japanese farmers had to either sell their lands or leave them in the hands of neighbors. “They got little for what they sold... Non-Japanese farmers... offered less than the farms and orchards were worth” (Knoll, 1982).

Were only the young and able-bodied interned? Not at all. Junichi Doi, a 60-year-old Japanese national, was the first official evacuee to enter Oregon’s assembly center. Patients arrived by ambulance from a Portland hospital. Even blind and deaf children from state schools were imprisoned. Obviously, Japanese Americans were no longer viewed as individuals—they were grouped together as potential enemies of the country.

Mrs. Wakatsuki and her 10 children were sent to Manzanar Relocation Center located in the desert of California. In her book, *Farewell to Manzanar*, the Wakatsuki’s youngest child, Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston, describes how the bus of Japanese Americans drove through windblown sand and dust, “…past a barbed wire fence, [and] through a gate...” into
the compound. “Each barracks was divided into six units, sixteen by twenty feet, ... with one bare bulb hanging from the ceiling....” Each one-room unit was to house six people—regardless of whether they knew each other. (Some recent studies refer to internment camps as “concentration camps”—Gesensway and Roseman, 1989.)

During their internment in relocation camps, most Japanese attempted to make life as normal as possible. There was a complete cycle of life—births, weddings, and deaths. The Portland assembly center had a hospital with two evacuee doctors, dental facilities run by the three evacuee dentists who brought their equipment, and a pharmacy under the direction of an evacuee registered pharmacist. “Kindergarten, elementary, secondary and adult education classes began almost immediately...” High schools even had cheerleaders and yearbooks. Portland public schools supplied textbooks; evacuees supplied the teaching staff. “The Multnomah County library furnished ... books and reading materials ... to help with school programs and [for leisure reading]” (Pursinger, 1961).

Despite being interned, most Japanese Americans appeared to remain patriotic. “Ironically, Fourth of July parades were held, with camp-organized Boy and Girl Scout troops marching past proud parents” (Schaefer, 1979). Life in camps was not all so placid, however. In some cases stress from close confinement without privacy, accusations of disloyalty, and lack of control over one’s life led to uncharacteristic aggressive behavior and the disintegration of traditional family bonds. Where mealtime had once been a time of cherished family closeness in both preparation and dining, many families
soon found themselves split. Meals were prepared by a crew in a mess hall and families ate communally. Soon after arrival, the children began to eat together, and the adults would eat their meals with other adults—not their children.

What the people outside the camps heard about those inside was not complete. "Major riots occurred in at least two of the camps during the first year; suspected agitators and protest leaders were sometimes interrogated and even beaten by FBI agents, and/or held incommunicado in secret/illegal Western Relocation Authority detention centers, such as the one constructed in Leuup, Arizona..." (Hirabayashi, 1989).

Most relocation centers were located in deserts. This made it unbearably hot in summers and bitterly cold during winters. When evacuees first arrived, the camps were not complete. There were knotholes in barrack walls and cracks around the doors which allowed the desert sand and dust to blow in. Ms. Wakatsuki Houston describes how upon awaking the first morning she found everything covered in a fine dust, including her eyebrows and hair which were coated with it.

"Ironically, one of the few ways that the Nisei could leave the camps was to volunteer for military service" (Schaefer, 1979). Some 33,000 Japanese Americans served in the armed forces (Knoll, 1982). "By 1943 a special combat unit for Nisei volunteers was created for fighting in Europe" (Schaefer, 1979). It became the most decorated American unit.
Japanese Americans are one of the most decorated cultural groups in U.S. military history. Altogether, those Japanese Americans who served during World War II earned 18,143 decorations for valor, 7 Presidential citations, and 9,486 Purple Hearts. Other Japanese Americans served as nurses, language instructors, and translators in the Pacific. All this was being accomplished by Japanese Americans whose parents were still forcibly interned (Schaefer, 1979). One such internment center was located in Tulelake, California: less than a dozen miles south of Oregon’s border. Even those in the camps aided the war effort by buying war bonds, weaving camouflage nets, and donating blood. This support helped to change the minds of many Americans outside the camps about the supposed Japanese American threat (Knoll, 1982).

Interned Japanese Americans were eventually permitted to work outside the compound and some labored in the beet fields of eastern Oregon. This helped both the war effort and the local economy (Pursinger, 1961).

The first step in closing the camps came on December 18, 1944. On that date the Supreme Court decided that the U.S. government could not indefinitely detain citizens whose loyalty was not in question. This marked the end of the imprisonment of 110,000 people (two-thirds of them American citizens) who had been denied the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty. “Imprisoned because of ancestry, Japanese Americans knew that neither German nor Italian Americans [had been] uprooted” (Knoll, 1982).

Japanese Return from Camps
Japan surrendered in August 1945. In 1946 all internment camps were closed. But how did the evacuees feel about returning? Ms. Wakatsuki Houston describes her feeling as dread. “What will they think of us, those

who sent us here? ... Three years of wartime propaganda—racist headlines, atrocity movies, hate slogans, and fright-mask posters—had turned the Japanese face into something despicable and grotesque” (Houston, 1973).

When looking at the general mood of the United States right after the war, returning evacuees had cause for concern. Some terrorist actions did take place against them. Also some labor unions wouldn’t work when Japanese Americans came on the job. Portland refused to issue business licenses to Issei (Schaefer, 1979). Other groups tried to dissuade Japanese Americans from returning to Oregon by boycotting them—they refused to do business with them (Dworkin and Dworkin, 1976).

“Those among the first to be released faced other problems. Orchards left in care of others were withered from neglect or leveled by vandals. Household goods had disappeared from homes and storage depots. Barns and homes had been burned. Merchants refused to sell Japanese Americans the goods they required to start over again. Some banks froze their accounts” (Knoll, 1982).

After the return of the Japanese Americans, a group of Oregonians formed the “Oregon Property Owners Protective League,” whose purpose was to “educate.” In February, 1945, this group asked Governor Snell to enforce all alien land laws in effect. They also wanted the U.S. Constitution changed so that people of Japanese ancestry could not become American citizens. Although it was introduced in the Oregon legislature, it never got through. By this time the Berry Growers Association at Forest Grove had joined the league; however, by May, the members voted to separate from the Oregon Property Owners Protective League (Pursinger, 1961).

Despite such discriminatory actions, Portland did welcome its former residents better than most other western Oregon areas. In February 1946 the Portland Citizens Committee was formed to help returning evacuees. They assisted in finding housing for them, contacted Portland employers to get lists of available positions and pay rates, and encouraged unions to allow returning evacuees to become members. “The Committee organized ... welcoming groups to meet the [Japanese Americans] with offers of transportation ... and temporary shelter... ” (Pursinger, 1961).

**View of Relocation Today**

In 1980, President Jimmy Carter established a seven-member Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians to study the long-lasting legal and social implications of the uprooting of Japanese Americans during World War II. One of the members, Robert Drinan, expressed that he felt the internment may have been caused by three factors, separately or in combination—fear, racism, and bad judgment. “The time has come, to admit that the fear was unjustified, that the racism was inexcusable, and the mistake must be rectified” (Knoll, 1982). During 1987, Congress
considered reimbursing Japanese Americans who were financially harmed by internment.

On August 10, 1988 President Ronald Reagan signed a bill which provided a one-time payment of $20,000 to each person of Japanese ancestry who was placed in internment camps during World War II, conceding that "No payment can make up for those lost years. So what is most important in this bill has less to do with property than with honor, for here we admit a wrong" (Gazette-Times, 1988). However, at the time this document went to print, not one check had been issued, nor has the project received any funding from Congress.

Cultural Assimilation

By many measures, today's Japanese American family would appear to be a success story. Their divorce, crime, delinquency, and mental illness rates are lower than those of any other minorities or whites.

There is also a compatibility between Japanese culture and middle-class American values. Both value college education and share a high achievement orientation. Japanese culture calls for politeness, respect for authority, and duty to community. These cultural traits are highly acceptable to middle-class Americans. Because of the emphasis Japanese Americans place on college education and advanced training, they are likely to scatter throughout the country, making it difficult to maintain cultural ties (Schaefer, 1979). Some recent studies indicate a "decreasing level of ethnic identity with each new generation... Each succeeding generation is less likely to be Buddhist,... more likely to live in non-Japanese areas" and have a higher rate of marriage to non-Japanese (Dworkin and Dworkin, 1976).

Japanese rarely show up on welfare rolls, and generally have a lower unemployment rate than all other groups. "In short, all of these traditional measures indicate a law-abiding, self-sufficient, and compliant people" (Dworkin and Dworkin, 1976).

Despite their gains and compatibility of values, Japanese Americans, like other minorities, continue to face some discrimination. Such practices include a continued lack of housing in some areas, a reluctance to hire or promote Japanese, racial slurs and stereotyping, etc. (Knoll, 1982).

However, there are also signs of lessening discrimination close to home—efforts to learn the Japanese language. Today Oregon is second only to Hawaii in the number of Japanese language courses offered. According to Verne Duncan, former state school superintendent, "Oregon is a national leader in the study of Asian languages." (Oregon Department of Education, 1987). Since study of non-English languages is not required by the State, the credit for this achievement belongs to local school districts and Oregon's citizens.
Koreans of Oregon

Little information is available on Koreans in America, and even less pertaining specifically to Oregon. This is largely due to the relatively recent arrival of Koreans in the United States.

Population, Immigration, and Occupation

Korean immigration to the United States can be considered in three phases:  
* early labor immigration of mainly male laborers to the Hawaiian Islands (prior to 1905) and their picture brides (1910-1924);  
* brides of American servicemen, war orphans, and a small number of professional workers (1951-1964);  
* the new wave of "family immigration" since 1965 (Hurh and Kim, 1984).

Prior to 1951

Large-scale Korean immigration to the United States and its territories began in the early 1900's as a direct result of initiatives on the part of American sugar planters in Hawaii (Houchins and Houchins, 1974). One effort to recruit Korean laborers involved placing advertisements in Korean newspapers. The ads emphasized nice weather, job opportunities, medical benefits, and democracy. The first ship, carrying 101 immigrants, arrived in Honolulu in January 1903. The Korean population was not an element of the United States mainland population until later that year, when they left Hawaii for better opportunities and varied employment on the West Coast.

Most Korean immigrants came to work on railroads and in mining in Oregon, and were also employed in housework, janitorial and restaurant work, and other physical labor occupations in urban areas (Choy, 1979). Some Korean settlers began vegetable farming in West Coast states as early as 1911. They then expanded into orchard, nursery, and vineyard ventures (Houchins and Houchins, 1974). In 1921 a partnership was formed between two Korean immigrants called the Kim Brothers in California. Their wholesale fruit business expanded into large orchards and nurseries. They were one of the first to commercialize the nectarine strain which is marketed today as "Le Grand" and "Sun Grand." The Kim brothers also commercialized more than a dozen other hybrid fruits (Choy, 1979).

Some scholars believe that Koreans tended to assimilate into American culture quicker than other Asian groups for two main reasons: first, assimilation was easier because during their early immigration period, the majority of Korean immigrants were of the predominate American religious faith—Christianity; and second, it was done out of necessity—because of the relatively few Korean immigrants with whom to interact, it was necessary for them to learn English and otherwise assimilate quicker (Knoll, 1982).

Approximately 80 percent of the Korean immigrants to arrive in Hawaii were bachelors. So they exchanged photos with prospective brides in their homeland, as had the Japanese bachelors before them (Choy, 1979).
Between 1910 and 1924 approximately 1,100 picture brides immigrated to the United States (Hurh and Kim, 1984); some came directly to the mainland. One port of entry was Portland (Choy, 1979).

Discrimination
Treated as second class citizens, "Koreans were refused service in restaurants, barber shops, and public recreation facilities. White landlords often refused to rent to them or to lease them farming lands" (Choy, 1979). "Prior to 1952, first-generation Koreans in the United States were virtually barred from all professions since they were not citizens" (Melendy, 1977). Despite being American citizens, American-born Koreans, found it extremely difficult to secure white-collar jobs even if they had college degrees (Choy, 1979). Some overt discrimination was known to exist in parts of Oregon as late as 1965 (Stebbins, 1988). These types of discrimination were not uncommon to other minorities either (Choy, 1979).

World War II
Koreans in the United States contributed to the U.S. war effort in many ways. They served in the American armed forces, worked as interpreters, etc., and some were sent to the Pacific war front as underground agents. Those who could not enter the service helped in other ways. Some volunteered as national guardsmen and emergency fire wardens, or worked in naval shipyards. Others participated in Red Cross and USO programs, and sold war bonds (Choy, 1979).

During World War II some Koreans in the United States resisted being misidentified as Japanese by carrying identification cards saying "I am Korean" or wearing buttons picturing both the United States and Korean flags. Some Korean women also began to wear traditional Korean clothing as a means of identification. What may have motivated the Koreans to identify themselves as such? Consider the following facts. First, at this time Korea was unwillingly ruled by Japan. Second, Japanese in America were suffering harsh discriminatory treatment, including internment for those on the West Coast. Even Koreans who felt badly about the treatment Japanese were receiving in the United States didn't want to be subjected to it too.

Immigration, Education, and Employment
Koreans in Oregon 1951 to Present
According to the 1954 report of the Korean National Association, Korean farmers in California and Oregon owned land, farm implements, and facilities worth $4 million (Choy, 1979). This was quite remarkable, considering their relatively recent arrival in those states. The success of Korean farmers in Oregon was in part due to their forming farming cooperatives in order to be more competitive (Knoll, 1982).

From 1951 through 1964 there was increased immigration of Korean women. Many immigrated as wives of U.S. military men.
Prior to the 1970 Census, Koreans were not counted as a distinct ethnic group; they had been included in the “other Asians” category. However, the make-up of the Korean immigrating population was strikingly different from the previous groups of Asian immigrants (which were predominantly adult male laborers) (Hurh and Kim, 1984). “The extended family frequently came along from Korea—grandparents, father, mother, and one to three young children” (Melendy, 1977).

Other differences in the make up of immigrants were education and job experience. Earlier immigrants tended to have little schooling and mainly worked as manual laborers. But after 1968 Korean immigrants were mainly highly educated professionals (Melendy, 1977). In 1970, “68 percent of the Korean immigrant workers... belonged to the highest-ranking category of occupations—including doctors, dentists, lawyers, accountants, and engineers.” By 1976, this percentage had decreased to 40 percent—however, 40 percent is still a significant proportion (Yu, 1984).

Data from 1970 shows that Koreans over 24 years old had an education level median of 12.9 completed school years; Caucasians had 12.2 (Houchins and Houchins, 1974). Despite their education, many Korean immigrants faced at least a temporary downward occupational mobility, that is, they had to accept jobs of lesser status. Upon entering the United States, 30 percent of those who had been among the professional ranks in Korea found they had to accept clerical or manual labor jobs (Yu, 1984).

By the mid-1970’s, most of the immigrants from Korea were highly educated (Hurh and Kim, 1984). Nearly 50 percent were college or university graduates (Choy, 1984). And, one-third of Korean immigrants employed in the United States were small business owners and/or managers; only one-fourth were semi-skilled and unskilled workers (Hurh and Kim, 1984). The high educational levels of most Korean immigrants has helped “...them to adjust well to the world of American work” (Yu, 1984). This is not to say that there aren’t difficulties.

The “Melting Pot”
When extended families immigrated to the United States, they usually experienced their first culture shock when their children entered American schools and learned different traditions and another language. Different cultural backgrounds caused difficulties.

The first generation tends to hold traditional Eastern cultural values wherein the father, as the head of the family makes major life choices for his children. He decides their “...school major, specialization of study, and even a marriage partner. Parents tend to disregard [what mainstream America would view as] children’s rights. [Some] American-born Korean children... tend to ignore their parents’ authoritarianism” (Choy, 1979). Traditional Korean immigrants have a Confucian philosophy and life-style
based on family-centeredness. "They find the free-style, aggressive, individualistic American way of life incompatible with what they were accustomed to in [Korea]." Some who have tried to adopt the American lifestyle rather quickly have been rejected by some Americans because they did not fit American stereotypes of what Korean immigrants were like (Choy, 1979).

Many Korean immigrants have found that maintaining their own cultural heritage in American society is not easy. With young Koreans becoming "Americanized," Korean customs tend to be abandoned. In order to give Korean American children a grasp on their heritage, camps have been established to teach children of non-traditional Korean homes some common Korean practices. These "practices include taking off [your] shoes inside the home, and serving and receiving with two hands instead of one. The children also learn that the traditional construction of Korean houses included an ondol (underground radiant) heating system" (Kim, 1984). Considering this type of heating system it's easy to see why Koreans traditionally ate and slept on the floor (Kim, 1984).

Large centers of Korean life and culture have been established in cities such as Los Angeles. In Los Angeles there are approximately 300 Korean churches, Korean television and radio stations, and many businesses where Korean is the only language spoken (Stebbins, 1988).

All in all, Korean immigrants have adjusted well to life in America. They have and continue to make contributions to American society. One prominent Korean immigrant was Herbert Y.C. Choy. He became the first Asian to be appointed to a United States federal court. In 1975 Judge Choy's jurisdiction included Oregon.
Southeast Asians of Oregon

Southeast Asian or Indochinese—What’s the Difference?
Actually, “Southeast Asian” and “Indochinese” refer to the same peoples. However, “Indochinese” is not a popular label among Southeast Asians because it reflects the period of French domination over Vietnam during the late 1800’s. The name “Vietnam” was done away with in 1886 by France in favor of “Indochinese Union.” This new name supposedly acknowledged the cultural influences of India and China in Southeast Asia. Prior to independence in 1954, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos formed French Indochina (Knoll, 1982). So, rather than use a term that carries with it overtones of domination, we will refer to the peoples of these countries as Southeast Asians.

Employment and Education
The vast majority of Southeast Asian refugees who arrived most recently do not have the job skills necessary for living in a technological society—they did not choose to come to the United States to market skills that our economy supports. Instead they left their homelands to escape persecution. As a whole, they were unprepared for the drastic changes they were to face. Many Southeast Asian refugees have difficulty finding jobs when entering the United States. Three key reasons for this are that they have little or no education, limited English language communication skills, and job skills which are not in demand in the United States

When they do find work in the United States, the jobs are often lower in status, poorer paying, and have less of a future than the ones they held in Southeast Asia (Haines, 1985). However, work force participation rates of refugees who have been in the United States for five years or longer tend to be even higher than those of the general population. For example, in a 1982 survey of work force participation, 74.3 percent of Southeast Asians who had arrived in the United States in 1976-77 were working, as compared to 64.1 percent for the general U.S. population (Haines, 1985).

Differences and Similarities
As a whole, Southeast Asian refugees are very different from immigrants because refugees did not leave their homeland with plans to live in a particular country—they fled to escape persecution, execution, and starvation. When compared to immigrants, Southeast Asian refugees tend to be younger, married, and more likely to be employed as manual laborers.

And yet, refugees are not a homogeneous group unto themselves: they have dissimilar cultures, expectations, and homeland experiences ranging from urbanized Vietnamese to rural tribesmen of Laos. With these distinctions in mind, this section on Southeast Asian Americans is divided into subsections based on homeland and, in the case of Lao, some information is provided by tribe.

Despite background differences, there are similarities in experiences of refugees in the United States. First we will focus on the similarities.
Culture and Assimilation

When the United States began to resettle refugees in 1975, the governmental policy called for the refugees to be dispersed throughout the country. Despite this policy, refugees tended to “cluster” (form ethnic communities as is common among all newly arrived immigrants). Seventy-five percent of all Southeast Asian refugees live in only 12 states; Oregon ranks eighth (Haines, 1985). The City of Portland, in particular, is listed among the cities where large numbers of Southeast Asians have settled (Knoll, 1982).

Table 4.—Southeast Asian refugee arrival in Oregon.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Cambodian</th>
<th>Lao</th>
<th>Vietnamese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>474</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1,681</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>1,182</td>
<td>1,322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>413</td>
<td>2,925</td>
<td>1,902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>861</td>
<td>1,272</td>
<td>1,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>821</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>467</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>362</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Oregon claims to have made a major commitment to the resettlement of refugees. And, indeed, since 1975 Oregon has resettled over 20,000 Southeast Asian refugees. When considering refugees from all countries, Oregon ranks eleventh nationally in terms of the total number resettled. It is estimated that 80 to 85 percent of all refugees resettled in Oregon live in Multnomah, Washington, and Clackamas counties.

Refugees also experience various degrees of culture shock. What is culture shock? You may have gotten a taste of it if you have visited a foreign country where everyone spoke a language you didn’t understand, and where behaviors were unfamiliar. The anxiety which can accompany this kind of experience is called culture shock. Many newly arrived refugees also experience culture shock when entering the United States. However, in their situation stressors are compounded. Not only are language and customs different, but so is the environment—weather, climate, shelter, food, clothing, etc. Distress may be greater because rather than simply “visiting,” they are faced with integrating into a strange society to make a living to survive.

To be sure, there are many cultural differences between acclimated Americans and newly arrived refugees. It is especially interesting to note that even where similarities exist, acceptability is viewed differently depending on the
race of the person engaged in the action. Consider the practice of telling a "white lie." Although both white Americans and Asian refugees may tell "white lies," the Asian tends to be viewed as being dishonest, whereas the white American tends to be viewed as trying to avoid hurting someone's feelings. Do stereotypes come into play? Can prejudices influence how actions are perceived?

A significant difference in the everyday existence between newly arrived refugees and Americans involves a general attitude toward police. Americans, when in need of particular assistance, tend to seek out police officers. Some may describe their presence as providing a feeling of safety or security. This is often not true for newly arrived refugees. In their home countries police were "...agents of death, oppression, and injustice" (Knoll, 1982). The fear some refugees had can be illustrated by a situation which happened in 1981. "When police ... [arrived to investigate] a situation where a Southeast Asian man was ... drunk, his sobbing wife begged officers not to kill him" (Knoll, 1982).

Some dishonest Americans have preyed upon Southeast Asians’ naivete of American systems and institutions. For instance, a refugee "...paid a large fee to a Los Angeles attorney to help him reunite his family. Nothing was ever done." Some refugees have been approached by men in business suits claiming to be tax collectors. They appear at refugees’ homes and demand payment in cash (Knoll, 1982).

Southeast Asian refugee children have tended to make rapid adjustment to American society. Parents who hold traditional beliefs may find this disturbing; especially in cases of teenage dating and conflicts with their children. Parents may also fear that when they become elderly their children will not want to take care of them, as is customary in Southeast Asia (Knoll, 1982).

**Vietnamese**

Why did the Vietnamese leave their homeland? Many left out of fear—fear of being imprisoned or killed. Some feared communism and the loss of freedoms. They fled because of religious, economic, and, in the case of Chinese in Vietnam, racial discrimination. "Others left because life in Vietnam held no future for their children ... It became a common practice for Vietnamese parents to sacrifice everything to provide opportunities for their children to leave the country" (Haines, 1985).

Through the media during the late 1970’s, we became familiar with some of these refugees, especially those known as boat people. The sacrifices they made for a chance at freedom and the hardships they endured gained international attention. The number of boat people who died at sea can only be estimated. Some estimates run as high as 60 percent (Knoll, 1982). The ordeals the refugees endured are horrifying. Setting out to sea on small boats, they were swamped by monsoons and attacked by Thai pirates. Rough seas caused food and lives to be lost overboard. People died of starvation and dehydration.
Pirate attacks were vicious. They boarded boats to steal goods and murder, rape and abduct refugees who had no means of self-defense. “One man lost a finger when a Thai pirate hacked it off because the refugee did not remove his wedding ring .... A mother watched [helplessly as] Thai pirates [raped] her teenage daughters” (Knoll, 1982). Survivors may have difficulty overcoming the emotional scars left by such brutality (Haines, 1985).

**Population, Education, and Employment.** The immigration of Vietnamese took place in two waves. Those in the first wave were generally better prepared for living and working in the United States. They had more education and greater fluency in English. The first wave refugees had primarily professional and middle-class managerial backgrounds.

Refugees in the second group included those whose skills could not easily be transferred to an industrialized economy—they were simple fishermen, and rural or tribal people. Considering their level of educational achievement, English proficiency, employment background, and length of time in the United States, it not surprising that the labor force participation of the first group has been higher than the second. However, many of the refugees from the first wave of immigration have had to settle for jobs of lower status than they had in their home countries. This has made for a difficult transition (Strand and Jones, 1985).

**Culture and Assimilation.** Certain Vietnamese cultural qualities blend well with American middle-class values. Similarities include valuing hard work and success. However, Americans tend to base such values at an individual level, whereas Vietnamese tend to feel a “responsibility for family members, and by extension, for the community” (Strand and Jones, 1985).

Adjusting to American lifestyles has by and large affected the family unit. Many Vietnamese women have “abandoned their traditional role in the family and become breadwinners.” They may not be prepared (professionally or psychologically) to handle their new role. Also some husbands find it difficult to adjust to swapping statuses with their spouses within the family unit. Such change can cause great tension in the family. But the Vietnamese cultural value of emphasizing the well-being of the group over the individual has helped ease the situation (Haines, 1985).

Cultural differences can result in misunderstandings when we view nonverbal signals from our own cultural perspective. For example, in American culture a smile indicates amusement or happiness. In Vietnamese culture a “...smile is a proper response in most situations in which verbal expression is not needed or not appropriate. It is used as a substitute for ‘I’m sorry,’ ‘Thank you,’ or ‘Hi!’” (Hu'ynh, 1987). Vietnamese may also respond to criticism with a smile which is meant to show that no hard feelings are held against the one criticizing. When this happens in the classroom American teachers may assume Vietnamese students understands when they do not.

Education tends to be valued very highly by the Vietnamese culture. Traditional Vietnamese culture based on Confucianism calls for teachers to be
regarded with great respect. Although Vietnamese parents may put more pressure on their children to succeed in school than their American counterparts, athletic performance is usually included in that emphasis. Vietnamese parents tend to expect their children to focus on academic activities and not hold jobs while going to school (Haines, 1985).

Vietnamese children experience different teaching methods in the United States than they were accustomed to in Vietnam. Vietnamese teaching techniques stressed memorization, whereas American methods involve hands-on and group projects, multiple-choice questions, and analyzing material. Another difficulty for recently arrived Vietnamese students may involve the issue of privacy. Sex education and “group showering and clothes changing in American physical education classes [may] offend [them]” (Haines, 1985).

Despite cultural differences, Vietnamese children in general are doing well in school. Many have been valedictorians. First generation Vietnamese college graduates tend to be concentrated in the “hard sciences” (such as engineering) rather than the “soft sciences” (such as humanities) (Haines, 1985).

Many Vietnamese children are integrating into the larger society and accomplishing great things. Indeed, the first female cadet at West Point was a Vietnamese American!

Cambodians
When discussing the people of Cambodia, in addition to the name Cambodian, the term Khmer is sometimes used. Khmer refers to both the people and their language.

Khmer have undergone devastating experiences in their homeland. By 1978 Cambodia was being viewed as an Asian holocaust—the entire country was in danger of starvation and mass executions swept the country. “Refugees reported as many as eleven of fourteen family members had starved, been tortured, or ... executed.” It is expected that the emotional and psychological scars from their experiences in Cambodia will not heal quickly. A report from 1982 stated, “Some [refugees] tremble when they hear the roar of planes and helicopters. Children fear walking through forests, anticipating hidden communists” (Knoll, 1985).

Refugees. The majority of Khmer refugees were peasants or unskilled laborers in their homeland. Most had not worked in industrialized jobs, and had little or no education. According to one survey, close to “...three-quarters of the Khmer [refugees] had a junior high school education or less; of this number, 37 percent had no schooling [at all]” (Haines, 1985).

Other Khmer refugees were from the middle and upper class ranks. They had held governmental, professional or white collar jobs in Cambodia. They were also educated—many with college or postgraduate training. Upon
arriving in the United States, however, they often have difficulty moving into occupations comparable to those held in Cambodia, thus they experience downward occupational mobility. Of all the Southeast Asian refugees to initially settle in Oregon from 1975 to 1989, only about 16.5 percent were Cambodian (Khmer).

**Culture and Assimilation.** The general character of the Khmer is strongly conditioned by Buddhist moral and ethical teachings. These teachings stress decision by consensus, respect for others, outward appearance of being passive and tranquil, and not being argumentative. Flaunting one’s wealth, power, or prestige is frowned upon (Strand and Jones, 1985).

Buddhist teachings are put into practice by discouraging aggressive and competitive behavior, avoiding personal confrontations, and quietly accepting orders from those of higher status. “Even when caught in troublesome situations, Khmer generally do not assert themselves, complain, or ‘fight for one’s rights,’ as Americans might do. [So] they are apt to appear compliant and passive in the face of various difficulties, although in fact they may feel considerable distress, frustration, or hostility inside” (Haines, 1985).

Both Khmer and American cultures highly value the family unit, and regard it as a center of devotion. Particularly among the Khmer, children are treated with great affection. The parent-child relationship is very strong. From a contemporary American point of view, traditional Khmer families tend to be very conservative in the freedoms they allow their young daughters. For instance, traditional parents may not allow their daughters to date or “...talk casually with young men” (Knoll, 1982).

Some scholars report that “Khmer women are ... strong and competent, accustomed to [having] a say in things...” (Haines, 1985). This being in part based on Khmer women owning property and controlling the family’s money. However, the words of Chanthou Sam paints a different picture.

“A Cambodian woman is supposed to sit at home, cook, and clean house. I want to be somebody. I want my own job, house, and car before I marry. I want to be independent. It is very hard to be caught in the clash of cultures.” Chanthou Sam (Knoll, 1982)

Chanthou Sam, at 12 years old, escaped from Cambodia with her family in 1975. When she arrived in the United States, she did not speak English. Just six years later, she was voted Rose Festival Princess in Portland, Oregon—chosen for her warm personality and academic accomplishments.

**Lao**

Only those people from lowland Laos call themselves Lao as a first label. The Hmong and Mien use tribal identities because it also denotes their “religions, clan structure, and sense of history” (Knoll, 1982). So, respective of this, we shall also include information particular to those tribes.
The exodus from Laos resembled the situation in Vietnam. Village life was torn apart by guerrilla fighting, freedoms were crushed, and executions occurred. Starvation was eminent as drought intensified the waning of the food supply. People from the lowland began to migrate to Thailand. Large refugee camps were established there—attempting to help the Khmer survive until other countries would resettle them.

Life In America
Lao culture differs from American culture in significant ways, which may lead to misunderstandings of each other’s actions.

Sponsorship. In Laos, people form networks to share goods and services among themselves. Those individuals who have greater resources enter a sort of patron-client relationship with those people who have less. Such relationships benefit “clients” because they obtain assistance in various matters and goods. But what is the benefit to the “patron”? In Lao culture, a “patron” is of higher social status and the patron’s advice is valued and sought; the patron is respected.

From the time Lao refugees and their American sponsors first meet, they are each operating from their own cultural assumptions. That is, American sponsors assume that the refugees will eventually care for their own families without the sponsor’s constant help. The Lao, however, assume a “patron-client” relationship is being entered into. Sponsors appear to be like patrons in that they help the refugees shop and find jobs, and give them rides. Also, American sponsors, as Lao patrons, tend to be respected and of a higher social status than their “clients.” “The Lao refugee responds as a good client by doing what the sponsor asks; joining the sponsor’s church, filling out forms, and going to English class” (Haines, 1985).

Other Values and Customs. Education, age, and kinship are some of the factors that influence the nature of Lao relationships. Greater respect is usually given to older people. Those in authority are also regarded with great respect.

According to Lao custom, property is equally divided among sons and daughters. This could result in wealth being spread out among many people and families. To help keep property within the smaller family group, marriage to second cousins is preferred. Through these inter-relations, individuals can be seen as being “imbedded in a web of relationships that center on the family and community” (Strand and Jones, 1985).

Employment. On the surface, Lao workforce participation is encouraging. According to a 1983 survey, they had a higher employment rate than any other Southeast Asian refugee group. However, when looking more closely, one sees that their average weekly wages are lower than all but one other Southeast Asian refugee group. Also, “Lao do not have as high a participation in language or other training as do the other groups” (Haines, 1985). Therefore, they may be limited to the lowest and most menial jobs.
Hmong and Mien Tribes. Both the Hmong and Mien tribes are described as primitive hill tribes of Laos who “fought fiercely and effectively on the side of the democratically elected government of Laos against communist [rebels]...” (Haines, 1982).

For the Hmong, the household is the primary social and economic unit. In Laos, the property on which they lived was owned jointly. But the head of the household, who was usually the oldest male, controlled it (Strand and Jones, 1985). Most Hmong were active in agriculture in Laos (Haines, 1985). Hmong respect age and value personal leadership qualities (Strand and Jones, 1985).

In general, Hmong are accepting the values of American society while maintaining a separate ethnic identity. Some traits that tend to remain are: 1) community cohesiveness fostered by kinship ties; 2) preferring marriage among tribe members; and 3) Hmong continuing to be the children's first language. While such ethnic identifiers continue, some important changes are happening. Traditional teenage marriages are being discouraged as most parents accept the importance of college education for both boys and girls. Women's roles are changing as they begin working outside of the home, and as family planning becomes more popular (Haines, 1985).

The Hmong have identified their greatest challenge to be their limited proficiency in English—both written and spoken. A 1983 survey indicated that only 26 percent of those who responded said they spoke English well or very well. A higher percentage—31 percent—indicated they did not speak English at all (Haines, 1985).

The Mien make up the smallest percent of the Southeast Asians in America. The estimated number of Mien in the United States in 1982 was around 3,000 to 4,000. The largest community (1,500 people) in Portland, Oregon. In Portland’s Halsey Square, two religious groups renovated and continue to maintain apartments. Their intent was to “teach English, advise Mien women on how to make money selling handicrafts, and offer tapes in the Mien language on everything from urban survival skills to Bible stories” (Knoll, 1982).

There are some Mien traditions which are generally unchanged. Some of them surround the ritual of marriage. There are traditions which determine whom an individual may marry, and a custom which calls for the services of an astrologer. The astrologer helps ensure the marriage will be successful by “...[determining] the [best] time for the wedding ceremony, even if it is 3 a.m.” (Knoll, 1982).

In general terms, Southeast Asian refugees are a diverse group. There are successful professionals and struggling tribes people. Most are trying to integrate their cultures with American middle-class standards while holding onto their own ethnic identity.
Asian Americans were, and continue to be, vital to Oregon’s development. Early on they provided labor and ingenuity necessary to turn the Oregon Territory into a thriving entity. They possessed the same pioneering spirit as their European counterparts. Asians and Europeans alike came to America—“the land of opportunity”—to better their lives. They were not, however, treated alike. There were different immigration quotas depending on race and nationality—Asians have even been denied admittance. Once in the United States, Asians also faced laws and personal actions which were designed to limit their opportunity and keep them in a subservient role.

The longer Asian Americans are in the United States and the more education they achieve, the more they tend to scatter across the country. This reduces ethnic enclaves and quickens assimilation. Assimilation tends to be less challenging for Asian American groups whose native culture shares common values with middle-class America.

Asian Americans have served in the armed forces, contributing to U.S. war efforts in many ways—they fought bravely (becoming highly decorated individuals and units); they served as interpreters and underground agents; they built naval ships; they sold war bonds; etc. Asian Americans carried out these duties of loyalty even while being discriminated against—and in the case of Japanese Americans during World War II, while their families were imprisoned without cause.

Today Asian Americans fill many important societal roles in private and public sectors—doctors, lawyers, engineers, judges, legislators, educators—the list is endless. Yet despite their gains and contributions to society, Asian Americans continue to experience some forms of discrimination.

It is important to realize that the discriminatory laws, acts, and events outlined in this publication have, by and large, passed. Discriminatory laws have been repealed. Our civil rights legislation of the 1960’s began removing the legal basis for discrimination. While discriminatory sentiments still exist among some segments of our population, as a whole we are becoming more enlightened—more aware, accepting, and understanding of other cultures and races. This awareness is promoting greater appreciation for diversity and less tolerance for discrimination.
Suggested Readings


References

References


Glossary

Acculturated
Adapted to a different culture.

Aliens
People born in a foreign country who have not become citizens of the new country in which they live.

Assimilation
The process by which ethnic group differences are eliminated.

Culture shock
The distress, confusion caused when adjusting to a different culture.

Discrimination
Unfavorable treatment of categories of people based on arbitrary/irrelevant grounds.

Emigration
Leaving one country to settle in another.

Ethnic enclaves
Communities wherein residents share a common cultural heritage, language, customs.

Ethnocentrism
The viewing of others’ behavior in terms of one’s own culture, tradition, and values.

Homogeneous
All the same; identical.

Immigrants
People who come in to a new country or region with plans to settle there.

Issei
Japanese immigrants to the United States who were born in Japan.

Nisei
People of Japanese ancestry born in the United States whose parents were born in Japan.

Picture Brides
Women who immigrated to the United States to meet husbands they had never seen before—a husband would meet his wife at the docks with a photograph of her in hand so he could identify her when the ships arrived.

Prejudice
An unreasonable bias held even when facts contradict it; intolerance of other races, cultures, etc.

Refugee
A person who flees from a country to see safety elsewhere—such as in time of war, religious persecution, etc.

Sansei
People of Japanese ancestry born in the United States whose grandparents were the last in their family born in Japan.

Sojourners
People who live somewhere temporarily.

Stereotype
Oversimplified concept of what a group of people is like, ignoring the individual.

Yonsei
People of Japanese ancestry born in the United States whose great-grandparents were the last in their family born in Japan.
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