



TITLE

RIGHTING WRONGS: CONGRESS “EXPRESSES REGRET” IN 2011-12 FOR THE CHINESE EXCLUSION ACT OF 1882



GRADE LEVEL: MIDDLE SCHOOL TO HIGH SCHOOL

SUBJECT: History, Social Science

THEME: Activism, Bias and Stereotype, Civil Rights, Colonization, Identity and Culture, Immigration, International Affairs, Labor, and World War II

STANDARDS: UCLA Public History Initiative: Era 6: The Development of the Industrial United States (1870-1900); Standard 2: Massive immigration after 1870 and how new social patterns
Educating for American Democracy, The Seven Themes - Educating for American Democracy
Theme 3: We the People

OBJECTIVES:

Students will be able to:

- Students will explore the idea that throughout our history we have promoted and implemented legislation that runs directly counter to principles in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.
- Students will see that the Chinese Exclusion Acts represented, collectively, rights denied to Chinese and other Asians over 60 years, and not just an immigration issue.
- Students will assess how Congress reviewed its own legislative history, acknowledged its past mistakes and the consequences of those acts.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

- How well does the U.S. live up to its ideals as identified in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution? (Virginia: GOVT.11: Civil Liberties and Civil Rights; GOVT 19: Citizenship*)
- In what ways can citizens influence policy, political decisions, and institutions and generate new perspectives on past history? (GOVT.9: Knowledge of the Process of How Public Policy is Made*)

CLASSROOM TIME:

1 to 2 Periods



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BACKGROUND:

The 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act is one of the most unfortunate pieces of legislation that the U.S. Congress has ever enacted. It is the only time in American history that a specific nationality was singled out to be excluded from entering the United States and also denied Chinese the right to become citizens. Its passage marked a period where Chinese and, over time, all Asians would become barred from entry into the country. It was not repealed until 1943 during World War II. This series of lessons is intended to outline the history of how those Acts came to be, what the major consequences of them were, and how, only recently, the U.S. Congress has come to recognize how wrong they were.

While this topic is designed as a unit, teachers should feel comfortable in breaking the unit down into individual lessons that can focus more in depth on one or two primary sources and their meaning.

Activity A: The Transcontinental Railroad, Then and Now

1. Open class with James Wade's cartoon, "You Can Go, Or Stay." And model primary source analysis: sourcing, context, close reading. <https://www.loc.gov/item/91793034/>

2. Using sections of Senate Resolution 201 (excerpts from 5 sections), groups of 4 to 5 students/group, will analyze their section of the Resolution determining the document's meaning and historical context. (a glossary of terms is provided for this part.)

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1sqCurtCVrZDvJgt6Wt8LbM1WjoX9R8Mb/edit>

3. A representative of each group will come forward to create a timeline of Chinese American history from the arrival of the Chinese to America to the present. The main point to be made is that the Act passed in 1882 was not a singular Act but that Congress repeatedly voted for and expanded upon over 60 years.

4. Use the other sources mentioned above to provide the specific evidence (corroboration) that lies behind each "Whereas" of the Sen. Resolution.

- "Columbia" or ("Lady Liberty") cartoon, 1871: Thomas Nast highlights the contradiction between American ideals vs. American actions. Foreshadows violence later.
- Harper's Weekly Editorial: Much is to be noticed here, but focus should be brought to the last quote in the editorial: "... the fact that the United States has committed two great wrongs, one on the negro and the other on the Indian, does not justify her in committing this third wrong."
- Sen. Hoar served in the Senate from 1877 to 1906. He opposed the Act from the start. His was the sole vote of dissent in the Senate when the Act was renewed in 1902.
- Labor (and a man who is seen as a giant in U.S. labor history, Samuel Gompers) led the movement to exclude Chinese and continued to do so vehemently.

5. Use the accompanying slideshow that includes notes for the teacher to provide a broader context for the information learned so far:

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/OB7rcNgeEhXQGTvpFX1jdUZOV0k/edit?resourcekey=0-OatsaGfB1rpmN-IdeF7UA#slide=id.p17>



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EXTENSION:

Compare this Resolution to the other injustices for which Congress has made amends: Japanese Internment; coup overthrowing Queen Liliuokalani in Hawaii; slavery and the ensuing Jim Crow laws; treatment of Indigenous Peoples. How were these similar/different? (Teaser for future thinking? Contingency question: Are there other events the U.S. should apologize for?)

ASSESSMENT:

1. Sourcing of documents: Where did it come from, who made it, when, etc...? Close Reading: Identifying details, attitudes, perspectives within each of the documents. Contextualizing: Interpretation and Analysis: Demonstrating understanding of attitudes at the time(s); How did attitudes change/evolve over time to the passage of the Resolutions in 2011 & 2012?

Corroboration: The Resolution itself provides the corroboration – remarkable for its detailing events and attitudes existing in the past and recognizing the need to apologize. Acknowledging the wrongs of our past is a strength of our democracy.

2. The close study of the documents and how students explain their meaning should reflect a solid level of understanding of the two key parts of the Chinese Exclusion Acts: keeping Chinese from entering the country and denying them citizenship.

Using the excerpts of the Senate Resolution 201 and the related questions, students' answers should demonstrate a grasp of the purpose behind the original Act and its consequences, and should also explain how it was expanded upon over time.

From the information provided in the documents and in the Senate Resolution, students in their groups should have created a draft timeline. Now, have the class prepare a powerful visual comprehensive timeline that supports their understanding of the Acts.

SOURCES:

Cartoon: James Wade: "You Can Go, Or Stay." Puck Magazine (cover), 1886

Senate Resolution 201 (May 26, 2011): Excerpts

Cartoon(s): Thomas Nast: of "Columbia" protecting a Chinese man from mob, "Hands Off, Gentlemen! America means fair play for all men." Harper's Weekly, Feb. 18, 1871. (Many other possible cartoons may be used)

Harper's Weekly Editorial about Yew Fun Tan, student at Yale

Sen. George Hoar quote from 1902 debate over extending the Act yet again (Cong. Record, 4252, 1902)

American Federation of Labor booklet cover and page excerpt, author Samuel Gompers, entitled Meat Vs. Rice, expressing AFL's support of Chinese/Asian Exclusion, originally published 1902, reprinted and updated in 1908.

Slide presentation of impact of Chinese Exclusion Acts.

