

The Pre-Chinese Exclusion Era: A Leader in Racism That Left a Legacy of Hate

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My mother was a Vietnamese refugee who was forced to quickly leave her homeland to live in the US. I (Thomas) always heard stories about her about her travels which made me interested in the Asian-American experience. When I heard about the abuse the Chinese had to go through during this era, I was immediately interested. Later, while in my beginning stages, my classmates Ben and Andrew joined my group because they too thought this was an interesting topic. After finding some background information of our topic, we found a way to connect our topic, the Pre-Chinese Exclusion Era, to the theme. We were all passionate about learning about this shocking time in American history.

We conducted our research by first looking at our school media center to find all the background sources we could. Most of these were books about the Transcontinental Railroad and the Gold Rush of 1849. Afterwards, we moved our research up to the internet and public library stage where we found books more connected to our topic. After that, we went to MelCat, an internet library system that allowed us to check out books we wanted to read from virtually any public library in Michigan. Also, near the middle of the research stage, I went to the Chinese American History Museum in Los Angeles to do some more research. When we had still had questions concerning our topic, we connected with Jean Pfaelzer, the author of *Driven Out: The Forgotten War Against Chinese Americans*, and had a phone interview with her. This helped answer some of the major questions we had.

We chose our presentation category because it best fit our expertise and our primary source based research. On each section of our project, we gave a brief introduction to our topic, and then added some primary sources to back up our information. We also liked using digital

media to give our readers a true experience of this era: we used over twenty photographs, cartoons etc...

Our topic, the Pre-Chinese Exclusion Era pertains to the theme because this era led the way for more racist actions against Chinese Americans throughout history. Some examples include, the Chinese Exclusion Act, the Geary Act, and the McCarthyism era. This legacy of hate made the lives of the Chinese very difficult and unfortunate. The Pre-Chinese Exclusion Era changed how we look at Chinese Americans today or other races in general.

(401 words)