

HST 202: ONLINE U.S. History W19 (Escobar)

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Chinese - Now & Then

by [Joe Escobar](#) - Saturday, March 2, 2019, 4:08 PM

This thread is for discussions on the Chinese - Now & Then topic.

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Analyzing cartoon number 5-The horrors of the past

by [Breanna Lindsey](#) - Monday, March 4, 2019, 8:47 PM

I decided to analyze this cartoon first because it spoke out to me most. The first couple things I noticed on this image is there are two very distinct sides. The left side is showing Chinese employees and it looks like they may be done working and their day is over. It’s clear that the space the Chinese men are in is very crowded, there is a ton of men in the image. Their living conditions look filthy and disgusting, not safe for them to be living in. It looks like men are sleeping on plywood covered with blankets. There is not enough space for all the men so they are sleeping on top of each other, hanging off the edge, and some men are sleeping on the floor. There are rats crawling on the ground and there are two men eating them. That could be a sign that they are not receiving a decent amount of food. One man even looks like he is holding a spear while he is sleeping. This image is showing that these Chinese workers are being treated very poorly. They are not receiving good care, food, living conditions. Not to mention they are probably very dirty from their long work day. I am assuming that these men are workers, and they are coming “home” to these conditions after a horribly long work day, working in dangerous conditions, barely making a wage. This is showing the viewers a sad reality that needed to be fixed.

The other side is showing an american man who looks like he is coming home from work. He is very well dressed and has a wife and three children. The home seems to be very happy and a middle class family. The mother is handing the baby to the man and the children are playing on the floor with the cat. There is tea on the table and a fireplace near the entrance. Above the doorway there is a sign that says, “God Bless This Home” this sign is showing the family makes enough money to buy decorations. They have higher education and they might be religious. This home looks safe, comforting, and a place for family. One could say this family is doing well.

At the bottom of the page it says, "A Picture For Employers" I think this is saying that maybe the man on the right is the employer and the group of Chinese on the left is the employees. This statement maybe saying that at the end of the day employers get to go home to a nice home while their employees have to stay behind in miserable conditions. The employer looks very happy, so he must be a man who is not thinking much about his employees or their benefits. I understand the history and how they were treated but it doesn't make it right. There are sentences in the image but I can't fully read it. I think it may be saying why do these men have to live like this everyday who do the hard labor while the employer gets to live a luxurious life. At least more of a better life than the Chinese men. The artist of this cartoon seems like he may have been an activist, who was trying to tell the readers what really goes on behind doors. This was the crushing reality for these men and the truth needed to be told.

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Re: Analyzing cartoon number 5-The horrors of the past
by [Jasmine Gutierrez](#) - Saturday, March 9, 2019, 4:35 PM

That's an interesting way of interpreting the title of the comic. When I first saw it, I interpreted it as the man coming through the door is the boss, perhaps owner of the business. Then, the Chinese workers are stuffed in the closet to hide away all of the unjust working conditions. How I interpreted it is that the foreman just shoves the workers in the cabinet at night in case the owner comes through to check in. With more careful examination, your interpretation does make more sense, that the foreman can just come home to a good family and lots of space whereas the workers stay in a cramped closet.

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Re: Analyzing cartoon number 5-The horrors of the past
by [Breanna Lindsey](#) - Sunday, March 10, 2019, 11:12 AM

Hi there!

I appreciate your interpretation! That view is something I didn't see. I think the closet is interesting. It could be because it's small, dirty, crammed etc. The boss does get to go to a nice home with a family. There are plenty of signs that he is somewhat wealthy and educated. I think your view is on to something, but studying the cartoon there is tons of information. Something that I think could disprove the closet idea is; yes, it looks small but it's big enough to hold those men. Of course it is crammed and very uncomfortable, but closets are usually only big enough for a couple persons. There also seems to be beds in the room and men are sitting on the floor. I think the boss knew what was going on with his workers. America was very racist and didn't give much thought or care about you if you weren't a white male. Even white females struggled with their place in society. I believe he was completely aware of his actions, but he tried not to address them. This leads to what the commercial was saying too. America continued to deny the Chinese rights and human working conditions. They used the Chinese and treated them very poorly. The boss shows this image very well, while he gets to go home smiling, his workers are stuck and suffering. There is a lot of good content in the cartoon.

Thank you!

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Re: Chinese - Now & Then
by [Taylor Dotson](#) - Tuesday, March 5, 2019, 6:39 PM

The Chinese were drawn to California, but it was not intended to be a permanent arrangement. The commercial was all about how they turned their backs on what helped made them great. It points out how the Americans treated the Chinese and what was part of their great downfall. The following images are reasons why the Chinese feel mistreated and why they are led to feel more empowered now. They had seen what the downfall of the United States was and were able to take these changes back to China to create a more stable economy and life. In the second picture to me it represented the building of the railroads. The Pacific Railroad bill was passed which led to government providing money to the two different railroad companies. The Chinese represent the Central Pacific which worked from the east. Union Pacific was the second company that worked west, and it employed mostly Irish laborers. It was always a competition to work fast and whoever laid the most tract stood to gain in government subsidies as well as commerce. Both companies would engage 20,000 men at one time and the majority were foreigner who were brought in to build the railroad. When the Great Railway strike occurred, many white workers rioted in San Francisco Chinatown. In the sixth photo

you can see a man who clearly is a worker and is holding a working men’s sign and is punching a man outside of China Town. In the fifth photo is shows the different in a white man coming home to his family on one side and a crowded place full of Chinese men on the other side. The Chinese had to create their own community as they were not allowed to own any land. At the beginning they had to leave their families in china and for those who were not married were unable to intermarry with whites. They were forced to bond and create communities and since they could not own their own land they were forced to stay together in small crowded areas.

-Taylor

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Chinese Cartoon #2
by [Clifford Lyon](#) - Wednesday, March 6, 2019, 7:08 PM

Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century with the California gold rush, there was a fear in this country that the Chinese were coming here and taking over this country. Our textbook tells us that “they were pushed from home by poverty and unstable political conditions related to China’s defeat in the British Opium Wars,” (Murrin 596). Many of these Chinese immigrants were simply trying to make some money before returning home hopefully to a better life, but they found Americans to be hostile toward them. They gained a reputation as a people who would outwork any American for lower wages. A lot of Americans took advantage of this and gave the Chinese some of the worst jobs available at the time.

In time though, Americans began to feel threatened by these people who worked so hard for so little. The opinion started to circulate that these Chinese immigrants were here to take away all of the jobs from hard-working Americans. Rumors started to circulate about them being here to steal American women. They found themselves discriminated against in nearly every part of American life. Soon they found themselves discriminated against by the government as well. Our text says that “In 1850, the California State Legislature responded to anti-foreigner agitation with a Foreign Miners’ Tax aimed at all foreigners; two years later, the legislature specifically targeted Chinese immigrants,” (Murrin 597).

This fear that these Chinese immigrants were coming here and taking all of the jobs away from Americans became legislation in this country, another example of the dark cloud of racism which so often comes to visit us. Cartoon #2 is addressing this specifically. Although it has both a Chinese immigrant and an Irish immigrant swallowing Uncle Sam, the message is clear: these people are here to consume and destroy our country. Racism was a huge part of American history, some would say it still is. On one hand, we pride ourselves on being a “melting pot” of all different cultures, on the other, we are threatened by any group who is not white and protestant. This has been a continuing theme throughout all of the chapters in our text.

Chinese immigrants came to this country to make money, like so many other people wanted to. Unfortunately, because of the way they looked and the “weird” culture they brought with them, they were treated as outcasts. There was a genuine fear in the United States that these people were going to take over and run all Americans out of work. I think parts of this perspective are still prominent today. We still fear foreign workers who we think are going to take away American jobs, yet we seem unwilling to do something about it (work harder) except complain and circulate fear and racism. This is a problem which many ethnic groups have faced in America and continue to today. I hope that one day we will learn form this history and stop treating foreigners like they are people to be feared. These kind of changes tend to take a while but I think we are overdue.

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Fear the Yellow
by [Jasmine Gutierrez](#) - Thursday, March 7, 2019, 1:59 PM

These cartoons were really interesting to me, This is a part of American history that gets overlooked often. It's clear that all the political cartoons and the commercial are anti- outsourcing sentiments. However, the tone of the cartoons heavily differs from the commercial. In the cartoons, the Chinese are seen as leeches of a kind. Like in the #3 cartoon, there are dozens of Chinese shown to be forcing their way beneath Uncle Sam, like an infestation. The #2 cartoon literally shows China feeding on Uncle Sam. The tone of the cartoon is to make the Chinese seem like pests that needed to be crushed underfoot. They were inferior to America and taking good jobs away from hardworking American. However, in the commercial, the tone is different. Now, China has taken on an equal, almost superior connotation in comparison to the US. In the commercial, China is now a powerhouse, full of more advanced technology. They are now seen as a superpower that is taking advantage of the US. Now, it's making the US seem like victims against a tyranical society. The tone moved from seeing the Chinese as an annoyance and disturbance to something that needs to be feared and protected from.

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Commercial-Now & Then
by [Breanna Lindsey](#) - Friday, March 8, 2019, 11:26 AM

I did a very in depth analysis of cartoon number fiver. Explaining everything I saw, and what I thought each item meant and represented. Something that I wanted to talk about, but didn't mention in my analysis is what the commercial we watched meant and how it correlated to the cartoon I analyzed. The commercial is very interesting and begins with a man is speaking to a group of students, the year is 2030 and they are in China. The man asks, "why do great nations fall?" he begins listing great nations and the USA was on his list. He says the reason is because great nations turn their back on what makes them great. I thought this was a very interesting statement. In the late 1800's the Chinese came to America to earn more money, usually to help their families back home. These Chinese men were not planning on staying in the US permanently, they wanted to start working making a bigger wage and then go back home. The US took advantage of these Chinese men and put them in terrible conditions. A big majority of the men worked on the railroads. These were dangerous conditions and the wages were very low. The Chinese men had to sleep and live in filthy corridors, they should have had better care, but the US knew they could get away with it. The US treated the Chinese absolutely horrible, but these men still worked hard, and built some of the greatest railroads ever. They helped build America. The US continued to use the Chinese men and take advantage of them. Throughout history America and China have traded, and America has continued to ask things of China. The video continues and says one of the many other reasons is "crushing debt" and after he continues with, "of course, we owned most of their debt." This is showing that America continued to rely on China without ever re-paying them. Now America is in debt and in the video China has finally taken over and owns the US. This commercial is explaining that if America continues to do this, China will soon take advantage of the US. Like we did to them. This commercial is a very interesting viewpoint. It is also incredibly valuable because we need to treat other countries people with respect or America could have a downfall.

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Cartoon #5-The Great Wail of China
by [Clifford Lyon](#) - Saturday, March 9, 2019, 8:54 AM

Cartoon #5 is a very good depiction of the contrast in pay and living conditions faced by both white and Chinese laborers. At the bottom of the cartoon there is a caption which reads "A picture for employers." The picture on the left shows Chinese laborers eating and sleeping in extremely overcrowded living quarters. There are far too many people in this living area for anyone to sleep comfortably on the bunks, so some men are sleeping on the floor. Others are sitting on the floor dining on rats. Everyone in the picture looks uncomfortable, miserable, and sick.

The picture on the right is showing a white laborer presumably entering his house after work carrying a lunch pail. His wife is there to greet him at the door holding an infant. There are two other children playing on the floor who appear happy to see their dad. There is also a pet cat. Coffee has been made and it is waiting on the table, and above the door there is a sign which reads "God Bless Our Home." The man appears to be happy and healthy as he comes home to his family.

There is a caption underneath each of these pictures. The caption underneath the picture of the Chinese laborers reads "Why they can live on 40 cents a day," the caption underneath the picture of the white family reads "and they can't." The message is unmistakable: employers preferred hiring Chinese laborers because they did not have to pay them very much. Our textbook explains that these Chinese laborers were often peasants in China who came to America to escape poverty and make some money before returning to their wives and children (Murrin 596). These laborers first worked as independent gold prospectors until they could not make the same profits they once did, at which point they turned to mining and the railroad for work. In a passage which highlights this cartoon perfectly, our text says that "Some 12,000 Chinese laborers ultimately built the Central Pacific Railroad, often under exceptionally harsh conditions, and with substantially less pay than white laborers," (Murrin 597).

Eventually, the white laborers would catch on to the fact that these Chinese laborers were taking a lot of the jobs due to their lower wages. This would lead to massive discrimination to the point where the U.S. government decided to put a stop to almost all Chinese immigration to the U.S. for ten years (until it was renewed for another ten) with the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 (Murrin 597). The fear that the Chinese were taking over this country led to an entire ethnic group being told they cannot enter this country. Now, as we see in the commercial for this forum, there is a fear that the U.S. government is becoming so far indebted to the Chinese government that China will end up owning the U.S. Is this a case of Americans simply requiring too much money to do the same job? Is it a case of Chinese laborers living in mass poverty due to their own government restrictions? It's quite possible that each of these are true.

The fear of Chinese takeover is still alive and well in this country today. We have employment standards which make wages and work conditions far better than what they were in the nineteenth century, but we still have a fear that we are being overrun. This fear leads to racism, which may ultimately lead to [violence](#) as it did in the nineteenth century. The difference between the two time periods is that in the nineteenth century, Americans were fearful and angry that the Chinese would take away all the jobs from the working-class. Today, we fear that the Chinese government will end up owning and controlling our government through debt. In some ways, the latter is a much more troubling prospect. Whether this is a realistic fear, I am not sure, but it certainly seems as though we are headed in the right direction to find out.

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The next target of racism

by [Katie Lauck](#) - Sunday, March 10, 2019, 6:29 PM

All of these cartoons were upsetting to look at, as most reminded me of cartoons we've looked at that were centered around the racism toward blacks. Cartoon #5 caught my eye because it really depicts how the chinese were treated in these days compared to whites. The cartoon shows about 12-13 chinese laborers crammed into one room with only a small bunk bed on the left side, while on the right it shows a white man coming home from work to his wife and kids, depicting the perfect American life. Around 16,000 Chinese men arrived in the United States in 1870, escaping a collapsing government and extreme poverty in China, hoping to create a better life for their wives and children, only to arrive to incessant discrimination and inequality. "Some 12,000 Chinese laborers ultimately built the Central Pacific Railroad, often under exceptionally harsh conditions, and with substantially less pay than white laborers." (Chapter 18, pg 597). Many Chinese men are responsible for the building of the railroad but got none of the credit and even though they did more than whites, they got paid less. I think this cartoon is a good portrayal of the unfairness the Chinese endured and for what reason? This brings me to cartoon #4, showing a Chinese man with a gun in one hand, a torch in the other, and a knife in his mouth. He is standing over a bleeding woman with a crazy look to him. This whole cartoon again reminds of the story of Nat Turner and his rebellion, urging me to believe that whites thought the Chinese were there to kill them and steal their way of life. "But, the law forbade Chinese laborers, who were said to endanger "the good order of certain localities." (Chap 18, pg 597). It seems as though whites were racist toward and against the incoming of any new race or culture that was different than them; blacks, Irish, Germans, Indians, and Chinese. This is portrayed by cartoon #3, depicting a Irish man from the ape-like features, and a Chinese man eating Uncle Sam, and the saying "The great fear of the period, that Uncle Sam may be swallowed by foreigners". This really solidifies the idea that white people believed foreigners were there to destroy their American culture and take over the land. Racism was such a common occurrence during this period, and the Chinese were the next target. By 1892, the Chinese Exclusion Act reduced the number of Chinese in the United States from 105,465 down to 89,863 (pg 597).

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Re: The next target of racism

by [Clifford Lyon](#) - Sunday, March 10, 2019, 10:08 PM

Hi Katie,

You bring up some very good points in this post. I find it interesting that while White Americans were still very much focused on treating African American laborers like they were still slaves, while they were forcing the Native Americans from the land they had lived on for centuries while destroying one of their primary sources of food (buffalo), they found yet another ethnic group to marginalize. The video for this week titled "[The Chinese Experience](#)" was extremely informative in my opinion. Before reading this chapter and watching the associated videos, the best educational piece that I had relating to the 19th century Chinese laborers was the AMC series "Hell on Wheels" which is actually quite interesting and provides a lot of perspective on the building of the Transcontinental Railroad. The section of "[The Chinese Experience](#)" which I found most interesting was when the Irish laborers went on strike and there was some doubt as to whether the Chinese laborers had the mental capacity to perform "skilled labor." The job at hand required the building of walls and someone finally submitted that the Chinese had built the Great Wall of China, so why not build some walls for the railroad? It was believed at that time that the size of one's cranium determined their mental capacity, basically your skull size determined how "big" your brain would be. This was the science of the time. It was found, however, that the Chinese cranium was larger on average than that of the Anglo-American. According to the science of the day, this meant that the Chinese had more mental capacity than the white masters of the universe. Naturally, the science changed to accommodate this discovery and keep the white man at the top of the food chain, as it were.

The Chinese came to this country to escape poverty and make money to bring home to their families, an honorable endeavor. What they found here was the worst kind of poverty. They were paid less than their white counterparts (Murrin 597), and they were forced to work harder than them as well. The fact that they endured this is a testament to their strength of character. We know from the video "[The Chinese Experience](#)" that Leland Stanford was publicly against the Chinese, yet he relied on them not only to make him his fortune but also to keep his household running. We also know from the video that white labor leaders exploited the Chinese as a way to mobilize the white workforce, and threaten them when need be. The Chinese intended to come here and make some quick money and then go home. Unfortunately, because of their work ethic and unwillingness to complain, they were cast as the greatest internal enemy in this country. The video tells us that before 1882, the only people who were legally excluded from the United States were Prostitutes, Lepers, and Morons. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 added the Chinese to this list, simply based on their race. Americans were afraid that the Chinese were coming here to take away all of the jobs from white men, and this was enough to mobilize the federal government into legally excluding an ethnic group from our shores.

Today, we see the Chinese in a different light, although they are still seen as a very real threat to America. The Chinese are often viewed as extremely intelligent, calculated, and malicious. The commercial shows this in great detail. The Chinese are seen as the people who are constantly plotting the downfall of America. Some of this, no doubt, goes back to the Communism vs. Capitalism debate, but I think a lot of it is historically rooted in racism. When the Chinese came to this country, they came for a reason which we would consider honorable had it been performed by an American. Yet they were met with racism, discrimination, and poverty. They were told that they could not become American citizens and that we do not want them here. Today, they are seen as the all-seeing eye of the world who watches and waits with evil intent and looks forward to America slipping up. Is this history repeating itself? I don't think so. I think we are giving the Chinese far more credit today than we ever did in the 19th century. In the 19th century, we hated them because we thought they were going to take all of the lowest, most menial jobs from whites who needed them. Today, we fear them because we think they are plotting a takeover of the entire country at the highest levels. The times have changed, and Americans are worried that they may not be the top dog for much longer.

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