



Library podcast

"The Chinese Exclusion Act" with Erika Lee

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[00:00:35] I want to welcome everybody to The Seattle Public Library for tonight's program. The Chinese Exclusion Act with Erika Lee My name is Orlando Lugo and I am a community engagement associate right here at the Seattle Central Library. I want to begin by acknowledging that we are on too much land on this Indigenous Peoples Day. That's very important especially today. We all know our country has a complicated history that dates back to the landing at Plymouth. So let's just sit with that.

[00:01:11] I'm going to cede the podium to Susan chanson who's going to do some brief remarks.

[00:01:17] Thank you Orlando Good evening everyone. My name is Susan chanson and on behalf of the Center for Asian American media I am serving as their outreach manager for specifically the Chinese Exclusion Act film the clips that you'll be seeing this evening are an excerpt from a larger documentary that will actually be coming to PBS next year through American Experience here on KCET yes. So you'll actually get a chance to see this next year. But this initiative and this campaign and event series of events is part of them funding that we've received from the National Endowment for the humanities to have conversations about immigration today specifically under who is American immigration exclusion and the American dream. You can find our Facebook page and join us there. We also have a hashtag the Chinese Exclusion Act PBS for you to continue the social media tweets and tags that you may like to enjoy. I'd just like to make a brief note thanks specifically to the wing for being our partner today and hosting and having it. And to the Seattle Public Library from graciously providing such beautiful space for this event. We hope you enjoyed tonight's presentation and please continue the conversation online as well. Thank you.

[00:02:33] Hi I'm Charlene Monroe Shan and I'm with the Wing Luke Museum. So again to welcome you to this program tonight I have the honor of introducing some of the speakers that will be after the film and our program is going to be moderated by Tom Ikeda. And he is the founding executive director of DNA show. He has a son essay which is a third generation Japanese American who was born and raised in Seattle. Tom's parents and grandparents were incarcerated during World War

Two. At the mini dock camp in Idaho. In addition to leading the organization over the last 20 years Tom has conducted over 200 video recorded oral history interviews with Japanese Americans so he'll be the moderator of the program that's going to follow the film screening. The second person I have the honor to introduce is Erica Lee and she is a distinguished McKnight University professor and the director of the Immigration History Research Center at the University of Minnesota. She is the author of three award winning books on U.S. immigration and Asian-American history including The Making Of Asian America. And founded the hashtag immigration syllabus and immigrant stories projects. She is currently writing a book on the history of xenophobia in America and pay attention to the movie and you'll see her in the film and then she'll be speaking afterwards. We'll also be joined by Marcia Shin who will assist us with framing the conversation with a very specific and contemporary issues of DACA

[00:04:20] And the Muslim band and etc. So stuff that's going on now today in the community.

[00:04:26] She's an attorney with the Washington State Attorney General's Wing Luke civil rights unit where she investigates and litigate cases of discrimination in employment housing and at government facilities and business open to the public. Most recently Marcia worked on Washington's lawsuits to stop implementation of the public of the Muslim travel ban and the terminate termination of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. Prior to joining the attorney general's office Marsha clerked for the Honorable Marcia J. Peck men of the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Washington Washington and worked as a Skadden Fellow and staff attorney at the legal aid society employment law center in San Francisco now known as a legal aid at work. Marshall attended Georgetown University as an undergraduate and the University of Pennsylvania School of Law as a total public interest scholar.

[00:05:18] Without further ado will get started with the film thanks so much I mention you.

[00:05:26] I'm Rick Burns Lisa and I made this film about the Chinese Exclusion Act. This piece of legislation passed in 1882 which said if you were Chinese by race or nationality you were excluded from coming to this country and from participation in American citizenship was on the books for 61 years. And amazingly it is a story just not known to the broad sector of the American public certainly Leon. You and I didn't know this.

[00:05:56] I started working with Rick 20 some years ago on the film about the American West. And that was when we first came across. A. Horrifying incident in which 34 Chinese miners were killed mutilated body parts were thrown off the Snake River at Deep Creek which is a river that borders Idaho and Oregon.

[00:06:20] And so the question is why is it that we do not know this history this story about the Chinese coming initially in 1850 through the gold rush and then the story of the Chinese Exclusion Act how it came about how the Chinese Americans who were here resisted it using the rule of law using every tool they could to say we're Americans just as much as you. It's both more shocking and more inspiring than any story I never knew.

[00:06:51] It just shows the human spirit of not giving in not giving up.

[00:06:57] And it's something that we continue today need to learn.

[00:07:03] Oh I can't think of a more important story to tell about America in the 21st century. The 35 minutes that you will see in the course of this excerpt are taken from three different sections of our film the beginning and the middle section of the film in which we describe how the Chinese Exclusion Act came to pass and then continues with peace towards the end of the film as we try to consider what some of the long term effects of it are.

[00:07:30] But we really hope anybody who's interested in how we have become the nation we've become we'll sit down and look at the whole film.

[00:07:38] Events in history do not happen in isolation. They evolve over time.

[00:07:45] And so this history is a history in fact that we're still living issues about immigration issues about labor racial issues issues about globalization. They're still fraught issues that we're debating today. So we do encourage you to watch to fulfill. And

[00:08:08] Thank you for joining us. Thank you so much. On June 30th 1885

[00:08:27] As the fundraising campaign for the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty finally began to pick up speed. A letter appeared in the pages of The New York Sun. Written by a young Chinese immigrant and recent college graduate named some song Bo. Would come to America years earlier as a small boy. And who dreamed of becoming a lawyer. Sir. A paper was presented to me yesterday. For subscription among my countrymen toward the pedestal fund of the Statue of Liberty. My countrymen and myself are honored and being this appeal to US citizens in the cause of liberty. But the word liberty. Makes me think of the fact that this country is the land of liberty for all men of all nations. Except the Chinese. That statue represents liberty holding a torch. Which lights the passage of those of all nations who come into this country. But are the Chinese allowed to come. Are the Chinese here allowed to enjoy liberty. As men of all other nationalities enjoy it. Free from the insults. Abuse

[00:09:57] Solves wrongs and injuries from which men of other nationalities are free. By the law of this nation a Chinaman cannot become a citizen. Whether this statute against the Chinese. Or the Statue of Liberty will be the more lasting monument to tell future ages that the liberty and greatness of this country. Will be known only to future generations some Sambo

[00:11:10] The solitary arm of the unfinished Statue of Liberty had languished on Madison Square in New York for more than five years when on May 6 1882 on the eve of the greatest wave of immigration in American history President Chester Arthur signed into law an extraordinary piece of federal legislation it was called the Chinese Exclusion Act. And it was unlike any law enacted since

the founding of the Republic singling out as never before a specific race and nationality for exclusion. It made it illegal for Chinese workers to come to America and for Chinese nationals already here ever to become citizens of the United States fueled by deep seated tensions over race and class and national identity that had been festering since the founding of the republic. It was the first in a long line of acts targeting the Chinese for exclusion and it would remain in force for more than 60 years

[00:12:11] It continues to shape the debate of what it means to be an American to this day. Chinese Americans always have this identification with the founding principle of this country so beautifully laid out by the Founding Fathers. And as so eloquently articulated the Declaration of Independence in the American Constitution the Chinese identify with this fundamental principle of liberty equality and justice for all. And

[00:12:54] All men are created equal. Now how can you say that this is a group of people. Who are biologically and culturally unfit to live several lives life to appreciate and practice American culture political and religious ideals that's why I think a lot of Americans had a hard time to learn that. The Chinese Exclusion Act. Really exists for 60 years. They couldn't believe that the government did. We have to remember that in the 19th century immigration into the United States was basically open. You just shut up. So the Chinese Exclusion Law is one of the first really comprehensively restrictive laws it is also the first and only time in the entire history of United States that a group is singled out by name. Chinese by name

[00:14:04] As being undesirable. So this is truly a remarkable moment. If there is a word that defines the Chinese American experience and Asian American experience its exclusion. And not just because of the 15 laws passed by the United States Congress specifically against the Chinese but also subsequent laws in the various states especially in California and in local jurisdictions such as places like San Francisco Los Angeles all the major cities enact laws including laws that actually expels and post the Chinese from its population

[00:14:51] Starting in California. The Chinese were marked as different

[00:14:57] And I see the 1882 bill as a link in the chain of bills and a chain of legislation and race riots and purges that are trying to move the country toward ethnic cleansing.

[00:15:15] The 1882 bill was not about Labor. I think it was about white purity

[00:15:22] And how do we get rid of people who were different.

[00:15:29] We focus a lot on the exclusion act from the point of view of racism. We can't help but talk about racism in the 19th century but again we come back to the fact that we haven't learned our lesson. We talk about 19th century and its racism as if it's in the past. It's all done with no dissent. We have yet to be solved this in 21st century

[00:16:03] I mean history is complex it is a mixed burden. We can talk about the war against the Chinese level by California. But we can also say that California was a laboratory for the larger process of adjustment that began nationally. There's very little in California that's exclusively California. Most of what goes on California is America remember. Wallace Stegner said about California it's like the rest of the country. Only Mawson

[00:16:33] Many people think of this exclusion law as being very racist very unfair. But if you look at the world at that time every country was like that in almost every ethnicity. Try to be a citizen of China or try to be a citizen of Japan is impossible unless you're ethnically Chinese or Japanese but this is a group of people Chinese they are kin to Chinese that were here. Who actually fought back and made America better than what it was and helped make America what it is today. The value so we have. Including equal protection under the law rights to education. What it means to be American. What makes you American to be born here. Are these going to define

[00:17:29] 1882 exclusion law has been forgotten. But once we remember it it is outrageous. And that's probably why we've forgotten because it is so outrageous. Americans cannot believe this happened. This is not an American thing to do. That's the outrage. How can this country in its culture and its politics and its economics do what it did against the whole class of people. The exclusion of all. I didn't say oh if you happen to be a Chinese citizen you can not come here anymore. It said that race of people were banned from this country.

[00:18:07] So was a racial exclusion law. So that banning of a whole category of people directly challenges foundational questions of what American freedom means and what American history means. Who we as a people can constitute. I think it's essential that Americans know about the exclusion of Chinese not because it's the Chinese. But because it reflects. How America has come to develop

[00:18:38] How America solid self at one time and how it continues to see itself. The Chinese were the first to be excluded but then all Asians were excluded eventually. So it sets the stage for people to understand that America is a gatekeeping country. We let some people in at some times we don't let other people in it at other times

[00:19:04] It has much to do with the character of our national history and that to me is the most important thing in understanding how we became who we are today. Some of it has to do with the fact that we excluded Chinese for 60 years so in California they're trying to think of all kinds of ways to get rid of the Chinese without passing an exclusion law. But they're also lobbying in Congress to get an exclusion law passed. Lawmakers in Congress for their part still led by radical Republicans whose principles have been forged in the fight against slavery continue to resist all efforts to get them to legislate against the Chinese on the basis of their race but by 1875 the political dynamic in America had begun to shift

[00:20:05] As Democrats in Washington began to understand that the Chinese issue could be indispensable to the post Civil War Rehabilitation of the Democratic Party that year with anti Chinese

sentiment at the state and local level on the rise and a presidential election looming. California lawmakers redouble their efforts to put pressure on Congress shifting the debate from the issue of race to the issue of contract labor widely seen across the country as another form of slavery. The issue of Chinese labor becomes the very easy one to galvanize the constituents of the Democratic Party working men in particular many of whom come from European immigrant backgrounds would have been working class would have been concerned about what appeared to be the flooding of Chinese workers into the nation

[00:20:55] The Democratic Party is seen as a protector of working men's rights and a guarantor of their opportunities. And that's where we don't have just simply a local story but one that then has large national resonance.

[00:21:11] Democrats suggest that the Chinese labor were actually equivalent to Black slaves and really got the liberals in the New England pushed them against the war. Look at all the slaves that they have here in the West Coast.

[00:21:27] So on the one hand you have this political pressure against the Republicans because they were advocating for Chinese coolies and on the other hand the Chinese suddenly became a threat in some of the East Coast factories were using Chinese as a strike breakers and so that make it possible for the fusion movement to get the support from the East Coast politicians.

[00:21:58] For the first time a pathway to Chinese Exclusion stymied at the national level for 20 years now began to open in 1875.

[00:22:09] Congress passes the Page Act which is an effort to speak to the demands of the Californians without circumventing the Burlingame treaty. The Page Act prohibits the immigration of people coming under contracts to work and prostitutes. Now Chinese have been stereotyped already. All the men are coolies all the women are prostitutes so they think this is the way they're going to stop the Chinese immigration. And because contract workers and prostitutes are not defined as free immigrants but is enslaved.

[00:22:45] They're not contradicting the terms of the Burlingame treaty. They've developed this success racist misogynist attitude among Americans. That Chinese women were naturally prone to become. Prostitutes. And therefore the Chinese women who wanted to come to the US

[00:23:07] Had to prove that they were never prostitutes that they weren't prostitutes then nor would they ever become prostitutes. Of course one can't prove what will not happen or happen in the future

[00:23:23] So many women chose not to even go through that humiliation.

[00:23:28] So we have that first act it's passed that is very racial and gender specific The Page Act is spectacularly successful at keeping women out. Not because all women coming were prostitutes although some were. But because the interrogation of the female arrivals was so horrific that once

you hear about this you don't want to try it. So female immigration plummets the impact of the page act was immediate and dramatic.

[00:24:03] In 1870 there were only 78 Chinese women in America. For every 1000 Chinese men by the end of the decade there were just 47

[00:24:18] When the United States Congress passes the paycheck. In 1875. And it bans. Most women except merchant's wives from entering the country. That's ethnic cleansing. Without women there won't be family progeny lineage children

[00:24:42] And so the population will just die off. And it was intended to die off. By 1876

[00:24:54] A starkly re consolidated white racial calculus was on the rise across America. From the streets of San Francisco to the halls of Congress. That year reconstruction would collapse entirely in the bitterly contested presidential election of 1876. When Republicans in Congress. Choosing self-interest over justice and equal rights agreed to withdraw federal troops from the south. In a backroom deal that sent their party's nominee Rutherford B Hayes to the White House. Even though he had lost the popular vote to his Democratic rival Samuel Tilden. During the campaign itself platforms of both major parties openly called for excluding Chinese. It came at a time when American politics was sort of balanced on a knife's edge between Republicans and Democrats

[00:25:49] If you look at the period between 1876 and 1896. You have five presidential elections in that period. They were all very close. The 1876 election in which the winner of the Electoral College and the winner of the popular vote were different. The difference in the Electoral College was one vote. Now California had six electoral votes. Maybe their decisive. Oregon had three. Nevada had three. Maybe their decisive. So the pandering for political support from the Pacific Coast votes converts. What would have been. A local issue with local agitation into a national political issue. Legitimised by recent federal legislation and the stunning outcome of the 1876 election

[00:26:42] A rising tide of political reaction now washed back across the country to California. This is the era when all of the promises of the Civil War are falling apart. The minute the Northern troops are withdrawn from the south. And reconstruction falls apart and the South is voting again in Congress and can take apart the civil rights victories of the Civil War. It becomes an invitation to race wars

[00:27:19] So you have California a political movement for exclusion. You have all this legislation going on you have violence you had gangs of kids that would throw rocks at the wagons of Chinese arriving from the docks on their way to Chinatown.

[00:27:34] That's down on the bridge and throw rocks at people or spit upon them.

[00:27:39] It was horrific. And then Chinese become the target of a so-called working man's party and a working men's movement.

[00:27:52] Dennis Kearney a recently naturalized Irishman emerges as a leader of the working man's party in San Francisco.

[00:28:01] He was very effective in pointing to Chinese immigrant men male laborers as being the source of the white workers trouble because the Chinese demand Grant was the tool. He was the slave of a fat cat. Industrialist boss who was exploiting workers. Not paying a living wage and out to prevent white workers from gaining their fair share. As the working man's party movement and kind of class hostility builds

[00:28:36] The first demand is down with the monopolies because the monopolies haven't once seen as increasingly hiring the Chinese and gaining their power from the Chinese. And the second demand is the Chinese must go. And they have sandlot rallies. With incendiary speeches and their slogan is The Chinese must go

[00:29:00] And Bernie would rile up these crowds. And after the rallies people would fan out into the streets and they would burn down Chinese wash houses and attack. Any poor soul that would happen to be on the street. And mobs of hundreds of people around the city of San Francisco. They tried to burn down the Pacific Mail Steamship docks which is where most of the Chinese arrived. They couldn't get into the shipyard. So they burned down the lumber yard next to it hoping that they would burn down the shipyard as well. It was just utter chaos in the city of San Francisco actually had to dispatch police and citizens groups to hold back

[00:29:43] These mobs.

[00:29:46] And now in Congress the firewall of Republican opposition itself began to crumble so finally the issue had been agitated for such a long time and the political impact of the issue had taken root in the Congress. But you got the 1879 15 passenger bill that was a bill that said that there could not be more than 15 passengers of Chinese background on any ship entering the United States. Otherwise the ship would be turned back and the captain would be fined and so on and so forth. In the first major debate in the Congress on the 1870 1915 passenger bill Senator James deplane of Maine broke from the Northeastern Republicans who basically opposed Chinese exclusion to support exclusion. His theory was if you had people who could not assimilate and become part of the body politic and therefore should not become American citizens then you also should not permit them to immigrate. Because if you allow them to immigrate you would always have a political underclass seething with resentment unable to enjoy the full fruits of the American dream. That he said would create social problems for the country. So better not to let them come at all. SENATOR BLAINE makes this statement. We have two days to decide. Whether we shall have on the Pacific Coast of the United States the kingdom of Christ or the Kingdom of Confucius. So a choice had to be made to restrict immigration and restrict citizenship rights or give the Pacific coast over to an alien culture and an on a symbol of all population unfit for citizenship.

[00:31:38] Now the 15 passenger bill ultimately got vetoed because President Rutherford Hayes on the advice of his secretary of state said we have treaties with China. The Burlingame treaty

specifically that appears to allow for the free movement of peoples between China and the United States

[00:31:57] And the 1879 legislation violates the treaty. People in the Congress knew it violated the treaty. At the same time. However. President Hayes then sent a delegation to China to renegotiate that Burlingame treaty so that some kind of legislation could pass. And that negotiation gave the United States the right to restrict or to suspend immigration of Chinese labor. Chinese government really didn't want that treaty. America pushed it on them. China objected but America assured them that the treaty would be administered in a fair way. So in April of 1882 when they passed a 20 year Exclusion Act which essentially barred an entire generation of Chinese labor from coming into the United States. That he broke a veto from President Chester Arthur and then Congress came back very shortly thereafter with a ten year Bill. And at that point President Arthur said look this is apparently the will of the Congress. 10 years of not as offensive as 20 years. And he didn't exercise the veto pen again and May 6 1882 the legislation becomes law. I dare say that people who voted for the Chinese exclusion laws came from Ohio

[00:33:27] Or Michigan or Minnesota. You never saw a Chinese person at the time they voted for those laws. And certainly the southern states were full of people who had never seen Chinese people either. Southern senators and congressmen voted for Chinese exclusion not because they had a Chinese issue within their own constituency but because they felt if they tune themselves to the political exclusionary interests on the Pacific coast they would gain sympathy for what they wanted to do in their own region of the country to voters of African background which is disenfranchised them.

[00:34:05] The fundamental point is you have your problem and we have our problem. We'll support you. You support us. It was an argument against civil rights. It was an argument against immigration. But there was still lots of dissension in the Congress against barring immigration. And there was absolutely dissension against barring naturalization. Hannibal Hamlin main Abraham Lincoln's first vice president chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee was very opposed to it. And on the floor of the Senate he denounced it. And he said I'm opposed to this. It violates fundamental American principles. And he says. I leave my vote. The last legacy to my children that they may esteem at the brightest act of my life. This is a person with enormous moral authority. So as the Congress acted the voices of dissent were not muted. They were in fact active. Eloquent prominent. And ultimately insufficient. So anything that the Congress did in these years was not by accident

[00:35:36] He really did two things. One is that exclusion from immigration and other thing was an exclusion from citizenship. They were Chinese that were legally in the United States. Coming from the time of the California gold rush and then in much greater numbers in connection with the construction of the transcontinental railway.

[00:36:02] So at the time there were approximately one hundred and five thousand Chinese in America. No they were two tenths of one percent of the overall American population. So what happens to the people who are already here. People legally in the United States. And what that was said it was these people cannot assimilate they are too different. In terms of their culture. In terms of

their appearance in terms of their language the clothes that they wear and the food that they eat and the gods that they worship. They cannot assimilate into the American population and in that sense

[00:36:42] They are different from European immigrants. So we're going to make as a Congress a judgment. We're going to say that because they are on a similar bill population. They cannot come to the United States and those who are here cannot become American citizens with the passage of time.

[00:37:04] Memories of the Chinese Exclusion era so painful for Chinese Americans themselves faded from public view and were forgotten in a nation that now preferred to think of itself in principle at least as having always welcomed immigrants. Those of us who are descendants of paper sons. And discovering that you're a descendant of a paper son. That generation my generation who did not know that our grandfathers were paper sons

[00:37:47] Because it was a secret that were kept in our families and never talked about. And then one day perhaps before a funeral. Or before a birthday party or something and something is said. That lets everyone know. And you realize. Oh. That's why we never talk about him or oh that's why. That family in Chinatown

[00:38:17] Is related to us or we can't figure out why or something. It's because of that legacy of exclusion and getting around exclusion. And once you realize that then that sense of alienation perhaps or that sense of understanding. That you are a legacy of exclusion. Hits you. And you realize oh I'm part of that long history. Of. Immigration exclusion. Assimilation acculturation

[00:38:56] Or marginalization. All of those processes that take place has its seeds in exclusion. It made me feel even more part. Of the flow of generations of that Chinese experience in America. And for those generations who came after. Who didn't have to face exclusion. I don't think they fully understand because they never had to deal with

[00:39:27] We only have to pick up a newspaper or listen to the news or read a blog about immigration today to understand why immigration is a complicated matter in the United States.

[00:39:41] The history of Chinese exclusion highlights that we have had a complicated relationship about immigration from the very beginning and that it's that duality of welcoming immigrants of understanding their need. Our dependence on them how they contribute to the United States as well as our fear and anxiety of the different changing demographics changing economic structure that has made us who we are. That duality and our complicated relationship of immigration has shaped who we are as a nation and shaped our economy our society or politics. And it continues to shape our ongoing understanding of what it means to be an American and how we continue to debate that to this day

[00:40:33] Gentlewoman from California. Mr Speaker I rise in support of House Resolution 683 today for the first time in 130 years. The House of Representatives will vote on a bill that expresses regret

for the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 one of the most discriminatory acts in American history over a century ago. The Chinese came here in search of a better life.

[00:40:59] During the when we look back I think we can learn that the Chinese are these resilient faith in the founding principles. I think about Chinese Americans contribution. To these grand American experiment. The exclusion law can be see as a fundamental flaw a huge mistake in that historical process of great experiment. I think if you really look at these system you can also say that you know the exclusion law was democratic. Was Legal

[00:41:46] But it was a wrong so something wrong could it be done.

[00:41:53] That's a process for building a democratic system. On the other hand even under enormous difficult circumstances with so many illusions so many disappointment and as so much of suffering generations of Chinese Americans never give up their faith and their hope. And I think that's a very remarkable

[00:42:37] Welcome everyone. I'm a nation you know I'm Rick Burns Lisa and I made this film about the Chinese Exclusion Act. This piece of legislation passed in 1882 which said if you were Chinese by race or nationality you were excluded from coming to this country and from participation in American citizenship was on the books for 61 years.

[00:42:59] And amazingly it is a story just not known to the broad sector of the American public. Certainly

[00:43:07] Lisa that film was so good I almost wanted to watch it again twice.

[00:43:21] Hello everyone. My name is Davida Ingram and I am the public engagement programs manager and I'd love to call Charlene up to the front because we're going to introduce the panel.

[00:43:34] What did you think of the film. Was it pretty amazing.

[00:43:37] Can we give a round of applause so we are right on time.

[00:43:45] And I wanted to just signal some transitions for us. For those of you are there some folks in the audience that are new to public engagement programs at the library. Make some noise because as a podcast so you can clap. You go to. One thing that we have as a community norm in our public engagement programs is that we normally do a turn and talk to someone a model and then I want you to just spend about a minute talking to your neighbor about a connection that you made with the film and our model and maybe saw Lincoln modeled too. My mentor is actually a Chinese American. Her name's HL t Quan and she grew up in the Tenderloin in San Francisco and she was fed by the Black Panthers breakfast program and so she ended up being a scholar of black history and I'm actually in Seattle because when I was a broke grad student I was restless and thought I would move across the country and I had about six hundred dollars and she gave me twelve hundred dollars and said please

don't ever move across the country with six hundred dollars. So I spent this film thinking about how grateful I am for her. Charlene Do you have anything that resonated with you for the film before we do the turn and talk for a minute.

[00:45:04] One of the things that I was thinking of is a few years back we did an exhibit at the wing museum on paper sons and I turned to a friend who had known a long time and I said we're doing an exhibit at the museum on paper sons do you know what those are. And she was Chinese American and she looked at me and she said we don't talk about those kinds of things. And I said oh well it's you know I've been so many years I'll try again I'll ask again do you know anybody who is a paper son. And she looked at me again and she said we don't talk about this. And I realized that even though it's been years and years that kind of legacy stays with the whole community and that impact I think when I was watching this film to it it resonated with me.

[00:45:47] Thank you.

[00:45:48] So let's do this. We want to stay on track for the program but can you take a moment to check in with your neighbor and share a connection and then we'll bring it back to center and we'll introduce our marvelous panel. So take a minute just to talk to your neighbor. In a moment. Charlene that's going to introduce our speakers. But for those who came in in the middle I just wanted to kind of zoom out and give you some context. First of all we are so thrilled to have this partnership with Wing Luke. They are a brilliant community organization. We say all the time in the library that we have something to learn from Wing Luke and I also love that Wing Luke is so close to our international district branch I'm looking at my colleague wing Van ling in the audience and waving to her so there's connections here. And our program was also introduced by my colleague Orlando back last November as we were heading into the election season we realized that there might be some fear in our communities around changing political times. And we made a commitment that we would do our best as the Seattle Public Library to bring communities together and to spend some time thinking about what we have in common and what we can do to make our country a really beautiful place where we know that we belong to one another. And my colleague Orlando has been doing a lot of work around immigrant rights and advocacy and I think that's a touchstone of our conversation tonight. So let's introduce our speakers and then we'll bring up our moderator Tom who's going to help us understand how we can move through our conversation they'll be about I think about 20 30 minutes of conversation with our panelists and then we turn the mikes over to you. And our job is to get out of here by 9:00 because that's when the parking garage closes.

[00:47:40] All right. Charlene thank you Davida.

[00:47:45] And thank you. At the Seattle Public Library to for hosting this event this is a wonderful wonderful space here. So it's been great to partner with the library. I am going to introduce very briefly the three that are going to be speaking since I gave a longer introduction at the beginning of the program. Our moderator is Tom Ikeda and he is the founding executive director of the show a digital archive that preserve stories of Japanese Americans that were incarcerated during World War 2. Our second guest is Erika Lee and some of you you all saw her in the film. Towards the end we're really

happy that she's here from Minnesota to join us. She is the author of three award winning books including *The Making of Asian America* and the director of the Immigration History Research Center. And our third guest our special guest tonight to bring some of these issues to the present is Marcia Shine and she is a civil rights attorney with the Washington state attorney general's office. So please welcome our speakers today

[00:48:59] So thank you Shah. You know when I was reduced you probably noticed that I'm Japanese American not Chinese American and

[00:49:08] My area of expertise is actually Japanese immigration and the World War Two incarceration of Japanese Americans.

[00:49:16] And so I was a little curious about you know doing this. But as I sat there I realize how important it is for us to know the stories from other communities that oftentimes we get really siloed in what we know and how we think about things. And so so I'm so I'm so grateful to actually be not only invited to to watch the film but to engage in this conversation a little bit about me. Yo I'm born or raised in Seattle grew up in the Rainier Valley. And so a lot of my classmates and friends were Chinese American so I knew a little bit about their history but as we talked about the paper sons and things like that I recognized there was that there was that connection that many of the friends I grew up had also. So but. Let's get started. And we asked both of our panelists to actually start a little because I want you to understand who they are. I want them each to talk about a little bit about the immigration story of their family in terms of and this is something that I think is common amongst a lot of Asian-Americans. We always kind of sometimes ask So what's your story. How did you come to America.

[00:50:32] So Erica when we start with you so thank you everyone for coming out on a Monday night. Thank you to the Seattle Public Library and to the wing for organizing this screening and also this panel. This is sort of a dream team panel to have Tom and also Marcia here to help guide our discussion not only about. The Chinese Exclusion Act but what I'm interested is in connecting that history to understanding what's going on today and how we can challenge what I see as an unprecedented new era of xenophobia that frankly puts the Chinese Exclusion era

[00:51:21] Pales in comparison to what happened back then frankly.

[00:51:25] So my family is immigration history is complicated. I grew up thinking that I was third generation American because both of my grandparents on both sides of my family were immigrants from China. It was only after some some of those family conversations that happened really quickly and then the subject moves on to something else. You know what I'm talking about when I started thinking Wait there's there's something else going on here.

[00:51:55] And as a graduate student I was able to really delve into some of that family history and realize that I'm sixth generation that my family was part of that Chinese Exclusion era where my great great great grandfather had come as part of the California gold rush but because of those laws that

were passed my family was split across the Pacific Ocean for three generations never bringing over though the wife but sending the son and then the grandson to continue working. So it wasn't until the early 20th century when my grandmother from that side of the family came stayed and we had the first generation of American born Chinese in the 1930s my family's immigration history is also complicated because. Most of my family were able to come in as merchants remember the exclusion laws barred laborers but it allowed in the very elite classes of merchants and teachers diplomats travelers and students. So one branch of the family did fairly well and we're able to continue coming as merchants. But the vast majority of Chinese this is peasant class working class they are laborers they are banned and the only way to come in to the United States is to go around the laws. Or completely evade them. So many people don't know this but the very first undocumented immigrants are not from Mexico they are from China. Their first Border Patrol officers are patrolling both the U.S. Canadian and the U.S. Mexican border. Not for Mexicans but for Chinese. And in fact they were informally called Chinese catchers riding on horseback. So my grandfather came as what was called a paper son. You heard this mentioned in the film. I'm not sure how many of you have heard of paper sons. This is a really educated crowd sourcing

[00:54:04] A paper son was somebody for those who don't know with someone who either claimed falsely to be one of those exempt classes or more commonly claimed to be the son of somebody in those exempt classes. And that's what my grandfather did. He was an orphan. He bought papers from a man that he worked for and toys on or Tai Shan China who claimed him as his son and he had to give up his last name of Li became someone else with the last name of Yi learned a whole family history and basically lied his way into the United States.

[00:54:47] He passed the test. My family lived with that last name of Yi for several decades. He was able to change it when he became a naturalized U.S. citizen but he was a paper son. I am here because he was an undocumented or wrongly falsely documented immigrant. So this is why this history is not just a scholarly interest of mine but is very much embedded in what I see as my my being here and how these immigration debates that seem that they're out there are happening to some that someone else are often part of our own families.

[00:55:36] Dna thank you for letting me share that.

[00:55:45] My immigration history and my family's history is a lot more recent. My grandparents were in during the communist revolution in China were of our rich class but we're were basically pushed out during the communist revolution. And my grandfather who was the sixth of eight fled to Taiwan as the representative of the family of the rest of the family stayed in China. And my grandfather and I think my you know raised his family in if you know the history of Taiwan. You know that's not really their country either.

[00:56:22] So they were sort of immigrants in Taiwan as well. And then my dad was you know born in Taiwan. But ethnically Chinese fell in love with the United States. I think he listened to Voice of America told me about how we listen to Voice of America back in Taiwan. He joined a rock band. I can't imagine if you met him you you wouldn't be able to imagine that either. And so they and my

parents emigrated V Australia to the United States because it was so difficult to get visas and immigrant visas from Taiwan in the United States. My dad spent a lot of time like he didn't Taiwan thinking about what it means to be American and I think that's a theme in the documentary that you saw is like what it means to be American and I was instilled with that constantly right.

[00:57:17] My dad would since Sunday and Sunday the whole day not watching football but reading about football so he could understand the rules so he could talk about it at work like a semi cogent American right. He wouldn't let me wear sandals because he was afraid people would think that I would look like a refugee. You know he. When they finally naturalized in 1988 he hung a picture of the Ronald Reagan's family not a picture of me but you're Ronald Reagan's family in our hallway. So he really you know loved the idea of being American and you know having done you know a lot of the recent our recent history of xenophobia and doing a lot of the research in laws trying to challenge some of the xenophobic atmosphere you read about the Chinese Exclusion Act cases and you read about how we're referred to as the Oriental invasion how we're referred to how we failed to assimilate. And that hurts because no one's no one's more American than my father.

[00:58:22] So that's just my my background the way I do the work that I do.

[00:58:29] You know as I as I heard the two stories it just strikes me when we we oftentimes talk about you know this concept of Asian American Asian-American. And yet when I just heard the stories and think about my past and my family's image they're also different they're also different. I you know when Erica you talked about how complicated immigration is not just this concept of even Asian-American his is very complicated but I really want to pivot quickly to the relevancy of what we just saw to what's happening in our country today.

[00:59:03] You know we have a legal perspective and historical perspective. And so Eric I may start with you in terms of you know making the linkages in terms of the you know the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and what happened to Chinese and to some of things happened today in particular I'm thinking of the Muslim ban and and some of things that are happening today.

[00:59:27] Can you talk about that and those similarities and differences that you see.

[00:59:33] I remember December of 2015 when then candidate Donald Trump made his statement and put forth in his platform the total complete and total shutdown of Muslims into the United States.

[00:59:52] And I had just finished teaching an immigration history course we were near the those very last semesters weeks when everyone is so tired but my students had read through the immigration files of immigrants coming through Angel Island really thick immigration files the interrogations the detention records the medical examinations they knew that history very very well. And I had to get up in front of class that December and say I never thought I never thought that I'd be standing in front of a classroom of students and. And inform you that our country is passing laws that not only are similar to the Chinese Exclusion Act the barred zone Adriatic barred zone of 1917 the national origins quotas

of 1924 but in fact it goes beyond what the Exclusion Act. Had called for because the Exclusion Act as bad as it was and it was very bad still allowed those elite classes of people

[01:01:16] And also U.S. citizens of Chinese descent only after legal challenges and the families of merchants and citizens only after legal challenges. But it left a crack in the gate in the door open. But what candidate Trump had called for was a complete and total shutdown. And I think that for me was a major turning point because as a historian I know the past very well and I try to make those connections to the present but I realized that there had been a huge blind spot in my own thinking of recent history and also just a very naive buy in to. The liberal and progressive message that we were working towards a better future in that we were you know progressively getting better it was going to be a long road but we could do it and I think for for me I realized that

[01:02:17] You know at the same time that we've made racial progress the xenophobes we're also making progress as well under under the disguise of national security arguments under the cloak of of border security arguments. We knew that was going on. But I I still had not realized or thought it was possible that we could then pivot and actually take some of these proposals such an extreme level seriously. And so for me I realized I have to rethink the way that I am looking at history because it's not it's not a it's going to get better story. It's a and it's not a. This is not who we are a story rather it's a this is who we are. And this is who we have been for a long time.

[01:03:07] We just haven't recognized it. And it's about time that we have that we that we deal with it. So

[01:03:14] That's that's my historical perspective and wakeup call. So Marcia. When the first Muslim ban happened the Washington state attorney general

[01:03:31] Came up almost immediately to challenge it. And so I'm guessing there was a lot of discussion amongst staff to take the stand which which got a lot of national prominence. Can you walk through a little bit about that as well as the legal perspective when you think of when you see you were happy in terms of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act and what is happening today. Talk talk about from a legal perspective small talk.

[01:03:59] I'll do the first in terms of our staff discussion of how we were able to challenge the first Muslim travel ban and then I'll take sort of a legal perspective more more and more detail. I think that you know we all had the same reaction when Trump

[01:04:17] Issued the complete shutdown as a campaign. As you know Trump the campaign candidate. Which was horrifying but it was I personally can't speak for myself I was still in the mode of like well at least he's not going to get elected. Obviously. I I am wrong many times and this is like one of the big wrongs and. And so when it when it happened you know when he got elected that was obviously for the first blow and then a week after his inauguration when he actually implemented the travel ban and the Muslim banned and and and actually and then you had Giuliani going up there saying this is actually directly tied to the December 2015. Trump can't candidate promise that we

were going to ban Muslims. It was just absolutely shocking. And I agree with Erica that it was you know we have these debates that this is who we are. This is also who we fight against. This is the you know probably a long standing to be this will not be the last time we talk about what it means to be American and who we allow into this country it's just one of the it's one of the times where we've gotten you know a reality check a reminder that this is a conversation that not only has to happen now but we'll probably have to continue to happen throughout our history if we're trying to you know not to be bombastic Save Our Soul but that that idea has to continue that discussion in terms of bringing it back to the Chinese Exclusion Act of the Muslim travel ban cases and all of actually both the first Muslim travel ban use the second model travel in case the argument that has won the day is the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965.

[01:06:02] I say the I say the year. Because when most people think about the Civil Rights Act they think about Title 7 employment the Fair Housing Act that all happened in 1960 in the 1960s early 1960s. One of the things that people don't talk about quite as often and although now we talk about it all the time is the Immigration and Nationality Act that happened during this same salary movement that basically changed the quota system that started this damage from the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882 continued into the national quota system from 1924 and was finally cast off in 1965 and in that statute the most important statute it says we as a country will not discriminate based on national origin. That is just a basic principle that is that is what has struck down the first Muslim travel ban it it struck down the second Muslim travel ban and will hopefully strike down the third Muslim travel ban.

[01:07:06] So let me play a little devil's advocate here. So I'm you I'm thinking about how our communities have reacted to the you know the you know the current Muslim travel bans and and so from my perspective as a Japanese American I often compare historically what happened to Japanese Americans both in terms of immigration bands and the World War to incarceration to some of things that are happening to today. And whenever I write about this I actually get pushback from Japanese Americans about 10 percent of the e-mail responses I get from the Japanese American community I would say don't make those comparisons that what

[01:07:52] Happened to Japanese Americans is very different than what's happening to today. And I was talking to Eric a little bit earlier she said it happens also in the Chinese American community.

[01:08:04] So so one is why how could that happen. Why why would members of a community that went through you know some of their ancestors may have gone through the impact of the Chinese Exclusion Act or the World War to incarceration. Why why would that happen. Why do you think. Eric I'll start with you.

[01:08:28] So this is this might get a little academic. But

[01:08:39] One of the things that I'm noticing in writing this extremely depressing history of American xenophobia is not only how xenophobia works to exclude others. So we're always finding that new other that and in and manufacturing and exploiting that fear of the other whether it's based on an economic argument you know back then it was they're taking away jobs in the 1990s was about

taxpayer benefits tax paid benefits whether it's a national security argument. The enemy alien during World War to the terrorist or potential terrorist or terrorist sympathizer rubric that we used today as much as we are identifying and targeting who the who the new other is. We are also including. Those who had previously been others as the good ones the good immigrants. Right. And we see it. It's very deft it's it's very changeable. But you saw how many of the leaders of the anti Chinese movement in California were. Irish Irish immigrants not Irish Americans Irish immigrants so the way that our racial system our system of discrimination our system of of hierarchies works is to encourage division is to encourage separation. It's to encourage othering and on a continual basis.

[01:10:27] And as some groups get I mean one of the one of the great things about America is this faith in gradual inclusion and a valuing of of diversity and inclusion but it also has this other side where in order to be included we often cannot his own and also can you know our our status is very vulnerable. And I think that's especially true for Asian-Americans as the model minorities. It's an extremely vulnerable position

[01:11:01] That you know Oh they like us. They finally like us. Well one way of continuing that we still get liked is to act like the oppressors and and not not make a big scene not go out and challenge.

[01:11:19] It's a it's it's complicated. It's divisive it's it's evil.

[01:11:27] So I think we see that it's not just in the Chinese American community.

[01:11:32] It's you know there are lots of debates happening in white communities especially those with you have European and more recent European immigrant background Italians Jews Greeks poles.

[01:11:47] So this is happening and it has to happen. I think amongst all of our communities I think the more that we're aware aware of how it's not just xenophobia targeting the other but how it also has this these tangled Evil Ways of propping up good minorities and good immigrants in service of that continuing system of division

[01:12:22] I don't actually have much to add. I think that like nails it right on the point I just wanted to give an example that from having talked to some of my friends not necessarily Chinese Americans but I have a friend who's married to an Iranian. She was an Iranian husband and she had voted for Trump and I you know during this during after the first Muslim ban I went back to her and I was like

[01:12:46] Hey look look look who is right. And. That conversation didn't go the way I expected it because because one of the things that she said was like why I think the way that he implemented it was wrong like it was like kind of haphazard.

[01:13:04] But I don't I don't disagree with the principle. You know and I was like but you know it would have affected your husband's family your husband's family couldn't come into the country and she was like Well my husband's family has converted to Christianity and I was like well that I mean it

applied to to all Iranians that applied to your family. And she was like well that's why I think it was haphazardly implemented. And that is hard right because like you go to law school because you think you can change the world and save the world through the law but you really can't. That's not really where these movements happen. And as you could see from the documentary A lot of this happened in the legislative bodies were all of these ideas are discussed it's not like some lawsuit not not even A.G. Ferguson's logs lawsuit is going to save us from this discussion right. We haven't convinced Trump supporters that that were right. We haven't come to a more or less divisive country where we can agree on this sort of based on what I would think is basic principle and I don't think so.

[01:14:04] I don't think litigation is necessarily always the way that that will be solved.

[01:14:09] So at this point it's your time to ask the panelists or me any questions so. So if you have a question raise your hand and if you have some people may have comments about this and I'll ask you to try limit you'll just general comments to maybe 30 seconds or or fewer

[01:14:31] In the movie they were talking about how a lot of the forest behind this exclusion act was from people that weren't on the coast or in around you know Chinese people at all they've never met a Chinese person their lives they were kind of working with like caricatures like that.

[01:14:47] And so that's kind of some of the impetus behind people that want to want to like break off and create like a smaller state or something because their ideas like how can we convince people who are not going to allow the people being affected into their community that makes any sense. How do we convince people that never meet Chinese people

[01:15:18] Think the question is that in the documentary film there was the movement to exclude Chinese came from the coasts but it could not have happened without votes in Congress and the Senate from the Midwest and the south.

[01:15:37] Right. And I think you're asking that today there are.

[01:15:46] Well first of all you know immigrants are no longer only coming through New York and in California but they're there all across the country great diversity of immigrants. But I think your question is how

[01:16:00] How can we challenge xenophobia in places where there aren't a lot of immigrants. Is it is that the question

[01:16:12] That is a challenge and I think one of the one of the comparisons between the past and the present. So the anti Chinese movement could not have gained traction without print media. You know back then there was literally just a magazine or a newspaper it took a long time to get somewhere but people consumed news from across the country and around the world in similar ways that we do today.

[01:16:38] What's changed obviously is the proliferation the 24/7 news cycle so that those media images that we have of the undocumented or the illegal alien or the the terrorist they are there they're so much more of them and they're circulating at such a faster pace so that states and localities that have very few immigrants are buying into that that anti-immigrant message and in fact if you look at the number of so-called anti Sharia laws that are being passed at the state level these are states that have very few Muslim immigrants in them. So this this is a it is it is a challenge. I I think we just need to to to challenge meet that challenge with the the opposite of that message. The fact based messages and also to make sure that those the stories and experiences of immigrants and refugees themselves get created preserved and shared so that we don't let others define the immigrant experience for us but that we work with communities to help them and us tell our own stories and our own truths we've got a question over here.

[01:18:12] Thank you. Thank you. We talk about the Muslim ban but something coming up on the horizon in the next month or so is darker. And how do we. And it feels like the Chinese Exclusion Act for me anyways draws more parallels in terms of the economics of immigrant laborers taking jobs et cetera et cetera build the wall et cetera et cetera.

[01:18:39] How do we safeguard against mass deportation of you know Dhaka. You know people who are born in the United States and beyond that to that nature.

[01:18:54] Thank you. I know I just said that litigation will not solve everything

[01:19:05] But the Age's office and our office is suing along with 17 other states to hopefully stop the Dhaka termination. One of the. One of the we have a bunch of boring legal claims but the you know you didn't give us enough notice and all this other stuff. You know you need to go through regulatory process in order to terminate things a program that has provided such benefits or other sort of legal arguments that this makes no sense. The program has universally been recognized as providing you know contributing contributing to state tax revenues improving people's economic lives improving the community because everyone's making more money. But probably the one that I think is the closest to my heart is our equal protection claim which is basically saying that this determination of Doc is racially motivated Dhaka serves 80 percent Mexicans 93 percent Latinos. Obviously we can go through Donald Trump's campaign statements around Brown is racially coded language referring to Mexican immigrants as criminals rapists and even some of his other statements that are not quite as clear cut like you know that are patronizingly racial or racially coded. So that that is also an argument that we. I think it's not there isn't the same thing where the Muslim travel ban where there was this I want a complete shut down of Muslims as you know like we want a complete shutdown of you know Mexican Americans although maybe the border wall some of the border wall statements would count as that but that's where hopefully what we're what we're trying to do and just to offer the historical argument as well.

[01:20:54] We have many many historical examples of what is called amnesty or legalization. Many that are well-known the Chinese confession program allowed for the mass legalization of Chinese who had come as paper sons in the 1950s less known are at the very informal ways in which we let

many thousands of European immigrants who had snuck across the border or Kellman as stowaways simply go to Canada and re-enter without any fanfare. But that was a legalization program. And then of course in 1986 under IRC the the legalization of of 2 million. So we've done it before and I think one of the things that is concerning is the ways in which some of the conversations about a DACA deal now would throw others under the bus. So that's something that we need to look out for as well.

[01:21:59] Hi. So I'm a little can be confused. Why would the working man's party show discrimination towards Chinese immigrant Chinese workers if it was the large industrial corporations also known as the fat cat. Why would the working man's uh party show discrimination towards the Chinese laborers rather than the large industrial corporations when it was the uh laborers that were being oppressed by them.

[01:22:32] That's a great question because obviously it's the working man's party and the Chinese are also workers. So one of the

[01:22:40] Things to remember here is this is before unions this is before unions were legal were widespread and and very effective. And this is also a great example of how in this particular group the white workers in California

[01:23:01] Were willing to and did not see any commonalities with their fellow workers who were Chinese quite frankly but saw that it was politically expedient to gain political power and support for unions and support for the white worker by pointing out how damaging Chinese labor was to them.

[01:23:23] So in order to get politicians to vote vote for their causes it wasn't against you know we want to end capitalism altogether but rather this is more expedient. We want to exclude these Chinese laborers who were causing us who by the way are our voters are causing us economic harm and damaging our livelihood.

[01:23:46] So it was again a divide and conquer situation.

[01:23:52] We've got a question up here so actually following up with what you're saying about the fat cats and if if the issue was fighting against monopolies why the working man would be against the Chinese immigration.

[01:24:23] This kind of kind of ties into what's happening now with Donald Trump who I mean being a fisher descendant of a beneficiary of an unjust immigration policy. His grandfather immigrated in 1885 three years after the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed and he has risen to be a very wealthy man exploiting many people. But then at the same time saying that it's the immigrants who are to blame for the problems of America. Whereas he really wants to make more money for the people who are exploit was exploiting the rest of us. He you know it's it's just OK. Just like well I'm just saying that we need to find common cause with working people regardless of race in America that this is at bottom an economic issue that they have racialized and and Chinese Latin Americans Dakar Muslim.

[01:25:44] We are being exploited by people we want to make money off of all of us. And Donald Trump is one of these people.

[01:25:58] Thank you for the statement.

[01:26:02] I was wondering in what ways were they exempted Chinese defined in the act as in How are the merchants explicitly stated the elite classes could be exempted but the laborers couldn't.

[01:26:17] How was that written explicitly said that in the in the law in the text of the law that Chinese laborers are excluded for 10 years. So if the temporary ban but that

[01:26:33] Under Section Six there were these exempt categories of Chinese who could still come the teachers students travelers diplomats and merchants.

[01:26:43] And essentially it was the United States saying we want to do business with you. We obviously have to have diplomatic relations with you. We want your teachers and students to come because we think that we can teach you a lot and then we want you to go back to China and remake China.

[01:27:01] So what we we just don't want the laborers and we don't want Chinese to settle here permanently. So the other aspect of the exclusion law was was to prohibit any Chinese immigrant from becoming a naturalized citizen as well high.

[01:27:21] One of the things that I found surprising about the film is that despite the area many Chinese immigrants seem to expect to be treated fairly by the U.S. government. And I was wondering why is that when it was obvious because of slavery and I don't know if the the black laws had been passed yet. Or the Jim Crow laws had been passed at the time that the exclusion act but people could see what was happening. So why. Was there kind of a disconnect where people expected that they were going to be treated fairly when other people who had been there were not being treated fairly at the time actually as far as I think some of the

[01:28:10] Comments in the film alluded to there was this this duality. One is that they realized that the United States was not living up to its ideals

[01:28:24] Either to them or to many others. However it was the fact that those constitutional values ideals and guarantees existed that allowed Chinese Americans and many other groups to at least challenge their unconstitutional treatment. So it's this. You know it again it's the sort of this this complicated situation where the United States fails continuously to live up to those those guarantees. But the fact that they are they're written down allows for legal action it allows for those expressions and those appeals to civil rights and equality. So it's it's a challenge you know but but it's there as a promise. And so they keep on trying to achieve that promise not only for them but hopefully for others as well.

[01:29:23] And I was just going to add that I wouldn't say like every Chinese American or all of the Chinese expected that. Right. I think that. You know when you think of the Japanese internment camps Korematsu was it was which is that the gentleman who challenged the Japanese internment camps he really stuck out. He stuck his neck out. He wasn't necessarily supported by his community in doing so. You only need one good thing about litigation. You only need one person to demand those ideals are lived are met and that person bears a lot of weight and responsibility on his shoulders his or Hershel shoulders thank you.

[01:30:10] We've got a question appear that will be kept under 30 seconds.

[01:30:14] Thank you. I was really struck by the use of religious language throughout the whole presentation in the film I believe it was Senator Blaine. They use the language of a kingdom of Christianity versus the kingdom of Confucius. And your friend who married into the Iranian family also using that same defense. So my question is how can we reconcile a government that understands itself to be there in terms of religion while also using obviously a religious graduate rhetoric to push immigration reform.

[01:30:52] Well actually one of the things you know in addition to the Immigration and Nationality Act one of the one of the strongest claims in challenging the Muslim travel ban case is the establishment clause that the government shall not establish a religion. Anything that has the taint of religion or religious bias it gets struck down. Obviously the Muslim travel ban case violated that that that basic tenant. And the question now on the third Muslim travel ban know iteration is whether or not that taints still follows. Because each time the administration is trying to amend its order. Trying to trying to eliminate this religious taint that it has. But it is an open query whether or not they can successfully do so given that it is tied to the first the first the first but you know they've come up with all of these justifications that this is national security. All of these countries all of these countries that are bans lack the right protocols identity sharing information.

[01:32:00] I mean and they're trying to justify it on a rational basis separate from religion because they have to because of our established OK I feel that the right has has really taken has really grasped on on on language and terms. I feel that like when he called Mexicans rapists and thieves whether we are we probably all just don't agree with that. But I think it was fresh and funny and catchy. It caught people's attention. And I think that the left in like the 60s the counterculture used to be much more fresh. And like Dick Gregory Mort Saul Richard Pryor. How can we reclaim terms on the liberal side. I think whether it's the right wing critique that it's politically correct. Regardless how can we be fresh in terminology and controversy and subvert the idea that terms like Muslim is evil Mexican is rapists. How can we think of new fresh terms and new fresh definitions.

[01:33:07] I think the first step is to cull out racism and xenophobia when we see it often. It's not in these what you called fresh but it's often in coded terms colorblind language that I think has allowed us to have obscured the continuation of of racism and xenophobia. So we first have to address because Trump is is kind of an outlier in that he's just so extreme in his language the more common pattern is to use. You know the racially coded term. So I mean I think first need to address that and

then call him out on it and others out on on the ways in which he's dehumanizing others. So let's give it a big hand to both my fellow

[01:34:14] As so.

[01:34:16] So this concludes this program. Thank you so much for your attention. And thank you to the public library for having this. Thank you

[01:34:25] This podcast was presented by the Seattle Public Library and Foundation and made possible by your contributions to the Seattle Public Library Foundation. Thanks for listening.