

STANDING UP AGAINST RACIAL DISCRIMINATION: PROGRESSIVE AMERICANS AND THE CHINESE EXCLUSION ACT IN THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY

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The passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act is a dark chapter in the immigration history of the United States. In contrast to the overwhelming “Yellow Peril” literature of the time, the outcries of mistreated Chinese were few and far between, as they had little recourse against their accusers. This research attempts to identify the rare voices of Chinese Americans and recognizes the bold vision and noble endeavors of some progressive Americans during the Exclusion Era of the late nineteenth century. Throughout the national debates on the Chinese Exclusion Act, a minority of Americans stood up in support of Chinese immigrants, while sturdily condemning injustice against them. They argued that such a discriminatory measure was a direct violation of America’s moral principles of freedom, liberty, and equity for all. Although their calls for justice were engulfed by the anti-Chinese hysteria of the time, they stood on the right side of history, and their brave acts inspired those marginalized people in their continuing march for civil rights advancement in the United States.