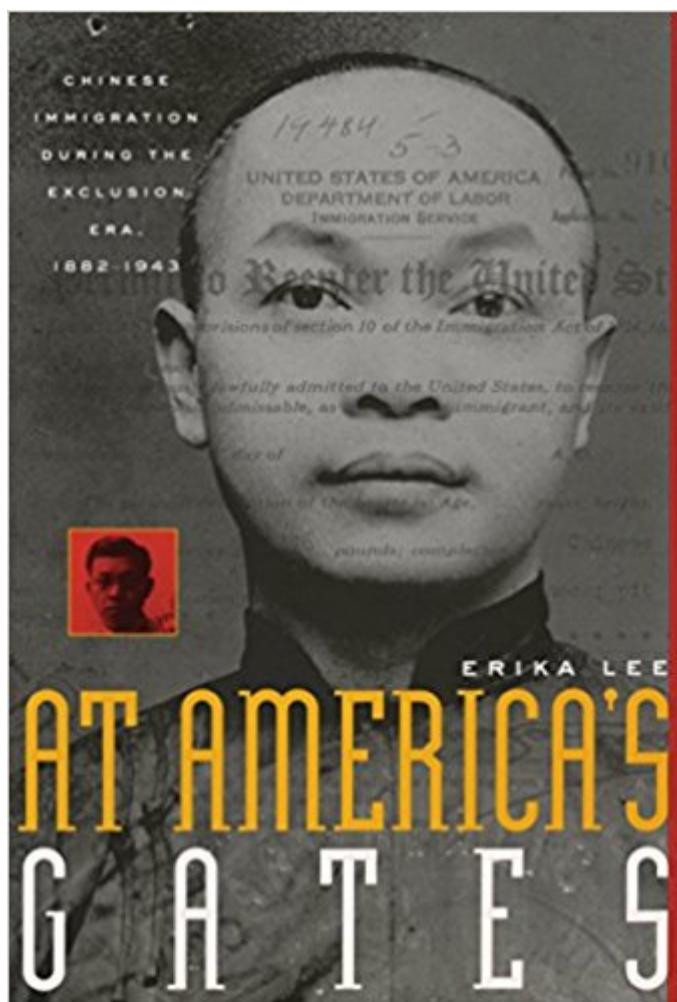


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# At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration During The Exclusion Era, 1882-1943



## **Synopsis**

With the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, Chinese laborers became the first group in American history to be excluded from the United States on the basis of their race and class. This landmark law changed the course of U.S. immigration history, but we know little about its consequences for the Chinese in America or for the United States as a nation of immigrants. *At America's Gates* is the first book devoted entirely to both Chinese immigrants and the American immigration officials who sought to keep them out. Erika Lee explores how Chinese exclusion laws not only transformed Chinese American lives, immigration patterns, identities, and families but also recast the United States into a "gatekeeping nation." Immigrant identification, border enforcement, surveillance, and deportation policies were extended far beyond any controls that had existed in the United States before. Drawing on a rich trove of historical sources--including recently released immigration records, oral histories, interviews, and letters--Lee brings alive the forgotten journeys, secrets, hardships, and triumphs of Chinese immigrants. Her timely book exposes the legacy of Chinese exclusion in current American immigration control and race relations.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

"Lee addresses a multiplicity of issues and deftly weaves together several themes that, in the past, had been treated separately." Makes a very significant contribution to both Asian American history and to U.S. immigration history. The amount of research that went into this book is prodigious. (Sucheng Chan, University of California, Santa Barbara)" Makes a very significant contribution to

both Asian American history and to U.S. immigration history. The amount of research that went into this book is prodigious." -- Sucheng Chan, University of California, Santa Barbara"Lee has authored a masterful book, well written and based on extensive research in both English and Chinese sources." -- "American Historical Review"

Lee opens a new chapter in immigration history with a rich, poetic and careful transnational account of how the 'exclusion period' produced anxiety, division and successful resistance among the Chinese it failed to exclude. She strikingly demonstrates how this drama changed the whole story of immigration restriction.--David Roediger, author of *Colored White: Transcending the Racial Past*The book, eloquently written with rich original materials, contributes to the existing literature on United States immigration history and Asian American studies, and challenges scholars to see a significant connection between Chinese exclusion and the United States as a gate-keeping nation.--*Journal of American Ethnic History*Makes a very significant contribution to both Asian American history and to U.S. immigration history. The amount of research that went into this book is prodigious. Lee addresses a multiplicity of issues and deftly weaves together several themes that, in the past, had been treated separately.--Sucheng Chan, coeditor of *Claiming America: Constructing Chinese American Identities during the Exclusion Era*This is the most thorough, complex, and subtle study I have read about Chinese immigration during the era of exclusion. Erika Lee's book offers both a remarkable social history of the Chinese immigrants who challenged the laws meant to keep them out and a sobering account of how suspicions of nonwhite immigrants legitimated the expansion of repressive state power. A major contribution to the history of immigration, race, and nation in modern America.--Gary Gerstle, author of *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century*The book deepens and integrates our knowledge of the linkages between racist ideologies and national legislation, local politics, and the growth of federal bureaucracies. It is a model of scholarship that will impel topical discussions and policy debates among students and scholars alike.--*The International History Review*At America's Gates is the strongest, best grounded, and most persuasive assessment of the long historical shadow Chinese exclusion has cast over the development of American immigration policy.--*Journal of Social History*Well documented, well researched, and highly readable.--*New York History*The author's openness and sensitivity to the inherent problems and flaws with the government records of the Chinese immigrants . . . demonstrates her seriousness and carefulness as a scholar, and her skillful dissecting of a body of enormously complicated materials makes the book a remarkable historical study. With its elegant style and clear language, this book can be appreciated not only by scholars and graduate and

undergraduate students but also by the general public.--Journal of American HistoryLee has authored a masterful book, well written and based on extensive research in both English and Chinese sources.--American Historical ReviewExtensively researched. . . . [At America's Gate: Chinese Immigration during the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943] is helpful when trying to understand our government's complicated laws regarding immigration: encouraging foreigners to immigrate when their services are needed and excluding them when it seems appropriate.--Journal of the WestScholarly substance wrapped up in . . . a well organized and clearly written package . . . The single most useful book on the history of Chinese exclusion. . . . The strongest, best grounded, and most persuasive assessment of the long historical shadow Chinese exclusion has cast over the development of American immigration policy. It deserves a wide readership.--Journal of Social HistoryIn telling this Chinese American story as an American story, Lee defies limiting historiographical categories that too often have narrowly defined scholarship. She thus begins to break down barriers that have separated historians of Chinese America and immigration from American history. In opening a wider conversation among historians as well as with policy makers and the American public, Lee makes her subject especially relevant in the post-September 11 world.--Register of the Kentucky Historical SocietyLee's book is an important study on Chinese exclusion and its importance for nation building and US immigration policy. . . . Lee's careful archival work and mastery of relevant literature is evident, and her study is especially poignant because of its tie to her family's history. This is an impressive and sophisticated [book].--ChoiceA compelling, readable narrative.--Law and History ReviewAt America's Gates is a tour de force in Chinese immigration history. . . . Lee's work is comprehensive in its historical and archival research and progressive in its transnational discourse, which explores both the local and global dimensions of Chinese immigration and exclusion that is embedded in the critical language of ethnic studies. . . . Her book is accessible to a wide readership and written with literary grace and passion.--Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography

Erika Lee argued that the American implementation of exclusion policies towards Chinese played a significant role in transforming the United States from a nation of immigrants to a 'gatekeeping nation'. Her book is divided into four parts: Part one deals with the events leading up to the eventual Exclusion Act of 1882 by addressing the public paranoia of invading Chinese 'hordes' as well as the attitudes of Immigration Officials towards Chinese; Part two discusses the restrictive nature of the exclusion policies that specifically targeted Chinese as well as how Chinese circumvented these oppressive laws with the aids of lawyers, judges, non-Chinese (that is, European) friends and

various others; Part three examines the inefficiency of the exclusion policies as the policies failed to sufficiently curb amount of Chinese entering the United States but rather resulted in corrupt Immigration Officials as well as smugglers creating a 'black market' for immigration and thus labelling Chinese as one of the first 'illegal' immigrants in the process; Part four analyses the immediate consequences of the Exclusion Act of 1882 by explaining that the exclusion policies resulted in Chinese illegally entering the United States which caused Government Officials to raid Chinese residence and places of business at anytime as well as construing that the vigilant surveillance of Chinese by Government Officials, indeed the general public, created an ambience of fear for Chinese communities. Furthermore, Erika Lee's extensive use of both primary and secondary sources made this book especially compelling. Lee cited hundreds of primary and secondary sources which she integrated beautifully in her book. Overall, I believe her argument to be just and well formulated. However, it is hard to believe that the Chinese alone caused the US to become a "gatekeeping" nation. American Nativism extended far beyond the Chinese during this time. At the time of the Exclusion Act of 1882, for example, Americans already had a distaste for the new stock immigrants coming into the US. The Immigration Restriction League, as another example, sought virulently to exclude most (if not all) immigrants like the Italians, Slavs, and numerous others. Indeed, it could be argued that the Chinese were just the first victims of American Nativism and American treatment for Chinese merely reflected future treatments towards other immigrants groups. As a result, the Exclusion Act of 1882 was just the first set of Acts arising from a predetermined goal at ultimately excluding all immigrants. The Chinese were just the first set of victims.

I really enjoyed reading this book because it's educational and about a subject that I had not explored before. I bought this book as a textbook for one of my college classes. The reason why it gets 3 stars is that the writing style is terrible. The author writes in circles, using the same examples over and over again, then starting a new paragraph to describe in detail what I thought I had just read all about. The number of times that words like "also," "as well as," and "in addition to" were used drove me nuts. Almost every sentence contains one of those phrases, or so it seems. I would recommend this book as a good learning tool, especially for someone who learns best through repetition. It definitely drives its points home. I would not really recommend this book to someone for casual reading or someone who already knows about the Exclusion Era because it is simplistic and the writing style is frustrating.

Great product. Excellent shipping times

I got this book for an immigration course I'm taking at college. I'm super excited to read it and I'm very pleased with the condition that the book is in.

This is a wonderful book which tells the story of the west coast immigration journey which involved a controversial path. The Chinese Exclusion Act that was enacted in 1882 and updated periodically until 1943 was passed to restrict Chinese immigration into the United States. That legislation limited immigration on the basis of nationality or race for the first time. During the twentieth century, various other Asian ethnic groups were added to the excluded list to limit immigration from different parts of the Far East. The Chinese Exclusion Act was repealed by the 1943 Magnuson Act which permitted Chinese nationals already residing in the country to become naturalized citizens. It also allowed a federal quota of 105 Chinese immigrants per year, although significant Chinese immigration did not occur until the passage of the Immigration Act of 1965. I suggest you read further at [...]

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