



The Asian American and Pacific Islander population in the United States hits just above 9 million, which constitutes only about 3 percent of the entire population. However, 65 percent of the entire world's population is made up of Asians. In recent history, Asian Americans have been known for making their mark in corporate America. But even with this sunny outlook, some still fail to acknowledge that Asian Americans have had to endure much discrimination in the past, and still face discrimination presently.

Though there is much evidence to support that the first Asian Americans immigrated to the United States with the Vikings, the first documented immigration began between 1850 and 1880 from China. These Chinese immigrants came from provinces like Fukien and Kwangtung, in an effort for American entrepreneurs to provide cheap labor on the nation's booming railway system. These immigrants left behind families in pursuit of the "American Dream", fueled by the California Gold Rush, only to find that they were being excluded from American life with the passage of the

Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. Congress passed the act that stated, "the coming of Chinese laborers to the United States be, and the same is hereby suspended." This brought a screeching halt to Chinese Immigration until 1943, along with the dreams of railroad workers to bring their families to the United States, or ever marrying an American in the United States since a miscegenation law made it illegal for any white person to marry any persons of "Mulatto, Negro, or Mongolian decent". And though a statute was earlier passed that stated that no child shall be barred from public school, it was repealed with landslide support. In that in addition to black children, both Chinese and Japanese children were also barred from attending schools designated for white children. With "Yellow Peril" sweeping the nation, Chinese migrant workers found that after the railroads were built, they could no longer find opportunities for work, school, or marital happiness in the United States. Many returned to their families in China with broken spirits and

broken dreams. The ones that chose to remain in the United States, found alienation and more hardships to follow. Though the discrimination continued, Chinese workers were once again allowed back into the country once WWII began. They were brought in to contribute to the US Effort in the nation's defense plants.

Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans became the target for widespread discrimination and hate acts as the bombing of Pearl Harbor brought the United States into WWII. From 1941-45, any person residing in the United States with even one-eighth Japanese descent was sent to an internment camp. With over 110,000 Japanese imprisoned, discriminatory laws against the Japanese ran rampant. Japanese were banned from all forms of education, property, and civil rights and laws granted to other nationalities. After the release of Japanese Americans from internment, many were faced with laws that did not allow them to purchase land or other property because of their nationality. Interestingly enough, though it is not implemented, some cities never officially repealed the law against Japanese Americans purchasing homes within city limits. Although now protected by the Equal Housing Act, Japanese Americans have hardly seen discrimination against them in recent times when purchasing a house, since only 4 percent of Japanese Americans fall below the poverty line—making Japanese Americans the highest percentage of any minority living above the poverty line. Though in the past, the pain and bitterness of internment and the loss of businesses, property, and jobs still haunted the community for decades after the war had ended. In an effort to make amends, in 1983, the US government agreed to pay \$20,000 in reparations to each of the 60,000 survivors after the internment was found by the Supreme Court to be unconstitutional and in violation of Civil Rights. Unfortunately, much of the reparations came too little, too late, as many of the survivors had perished before seeing any public apology or any of the reparations promised by the U.S. government.

With the start of the Vietnam War, many Americans began their feelings of discrimination against Vietnamese immigrants. The large numbers of American casualties made the United States a hostile environment for Vietnamese refugees and immigrants. Because America was put to shame during that encounter, hundreds of half American and Vietnamese children were displaced. Stateside, many of the fathers of these children never knew of their existence, and little was done to repair the damage the United States did to that particular region of the world, nor was there much done to help the children left behind in the shadows of that conflict.

Starting in 1975 and climaxing in 1988, the Vietnamese "boat people" crisis overshadowed the country and as Vietnamese refugees flooded the borders of neighboring countries.

Filipino immigrants were first brought to the United States, in large, through Hawaii as migrant workers for the sugar cane plantations, California as farmers, or Washington and Alaska as workers in fish can-

neries. Though the United States essentially colonized the Philippines in 1902 after the Spanish American War, much discrimination in the areas where Filipinos resided, especially since there was much resentment harbored towards Filipinos because of the beginning Philippine Insurrection in 1899. Filipinos were among the nationalities considered by many laws to be of "Malay" descent which restricted the rights Filipino Americans had. Though in modern times, Filipino Americans generally infiltrate almost every professional field, they are most known for their work in the medical field, more specifically, nurses. But the discrimination continues for the Filipino American, since many were called on by Uncle Sam to fight in wars, especially because of the delicate status of the Philippines during those times. Although the United States implored for Philippine nationals to fight in their wars, veterans' benefits are not currently offered to Philippine nationals that fought for the Americans during war conflicts, even though the uniforms these soldiers wore, and often died for was that of the United States.

More recently, discrimination has rocked the Asian American community by the discrimination and acts of hatred committed against South Asian Americans, more specifically those who come from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burma, and other Middle Eastern countries. Though racial stereotypes have been around for years with this group, discrimination became rampant after the events that rocked our nation on September 11, 2001. Since that time, South Asian Americans have been the target of ongoing and accepted discriminatory acts in some professional aspects, as well as social. Many South Asian Americans have suffered deep losses of business because of the discrimination, constant hounding by authorities questioning their intentions, tougher security measures for them at airports, and other social settings. Unfortunately, since the wounds of 9/11 are still so fresh in the minds and hearts of Americans, and the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, many Americans still fail to see the injustice served to South Asian Americans as a result.

As Asian Americans living in the United States, each ethnic group has been exposed to all and every level of discrimination. Though many laws protect the rights of Asian Americans, including Civil Rights and the Constitutional rights fought for by our forefathers, it is always important to remember the hardships and struggles of those who immigrated to the United States in search of a better, fuller life, in pursuit of the American Dream, and all it has to offer. And despite the trials Asian Americans have had to endure, and continue to face daily, Asian Americans in large, have still been able to stand up and succeed, even in the face of discrimination. **VBJ** 