

**BECOMING AMERICAN: THE CHINESE EXPERIENCE
PROGRAM ONE: GOLD MOUNTAIN DREAMS**

BILL MOYERS: I'm Bill Moyers. The story that you're about to see, in this series of three programs, is one I have wanted to tell for a long time now. It's about the Chinese in America, and I started thinking about it thirty years ago, when I met some young Chinese Americans in San Francisco who were challenging the city's power brokers. The stories they told opened up whole chapters in the American epoch that were, at that time, all but unknown to me. Then over the years I interviewed scores of other Chinese Americans – poets, scientists, artists, entrepreneurs. And on assignment in China I discovered how our two countries are connected through personal ties that have survived politics and war. I came to see what one historian meant in 1965, when he wrote that the Chinese in America have been patronized, welcomed, lynched, despised, excluded, liked, admired, but rarely understood or accepted.

It's been quite a drama that has played out over the last two centuries. And it's far from over. I said it's a story about Chinese-Americans. But, as you'll see, it's really about all of us.

MOYERS: The young men and women on this bus have come from California to Guangdong Province, in Southern China. They're part of the Chinese-American success story: students and college graduates, with bright prospects. But here they're looking back -- to where the Chinese-American story began -- a story remote even to them.

ELIZABETH HOM: I feel that I have never really explored everything there is to know about my family. And I feel the best way for me to understand like what they probably have gone through is to see it for myself.

The way the older generation deals with family history is just the bare facts. Like "I came to the United States at this time," and that's it. And then they close the storybook. And then all the other details they don't go into. Part of it is that the past is very painful.

MOYERS: Small-town America . . . the mid-19th century . . . a familiar scene. The caravan rolls in. The tent goes up. P.T. Barnum's show has come to town.

Step into a side-show tent, to see the two-foot tall 'man in miniature' – General Tom Thumb ...

There's the tattooed man, with seven million punctures.

And one of the most extraordinary curiosities yet ... a living Chinese family.

CHARLIE CHIN: You could pay a certain amount of money to view a Chinese family. They were in a room, just doing whatever they were doing. I suppose it would be like somebody saying, "Well, you can watch an American family." You'd walk into a room and see them looking at a TV set or making themselves a Cheese Whiz sandwich

And you can view people living in their native habitat as if they were wildlife.

MOYERS: Who they really were, no one knows, but Barnum cast them as aristocrats and draped them in splendid silks.

Barnum's China was a romance from Marco Polo filled with sages and scholars, courtesans and emperors.

SHAWN WONG (Writer): American civilization at that time is very young. So here's this idea, wow, 4000 years of civilization and art and culture and it's represented in these people.

MOYERS: But no one knew the American mind like Barnum. His audience had also been raised on blood-chilling reports from missionaries and other travelers, they told of a modern Sodom and Gomorrah -- a vile and wicked place.

SHAWN WONG: Who knows what goes on in the Chinese opium den? Everything is mysterious, very sinister, very dark.

MOYERS: What was this race, then? Ancient and wise? Debased and cunning? For the next hundred years, the image of the Chinese would veer back and forth, as they left Southern China to push for their place in America.

It began as a trickle in the 1830's and '40's. They disembarked from trading ships one or two at a time, and without fanfare, joined the crowded saloons and tenements of New York's lower Broadway. They were sailors, actors, petty tradesmen. And on one ship, along with a cargo of tea, three students, bound for a Connecticut church

[Words of] **YUNG WING:** "I remember the first Sabbath. We three [boys] sat in the pastor's pew, in full view of the whole congregation. We were the [focus] of the whole church. I doubt whether much attention was paid to the sermon that day."

MOYERS: Yung Wing, with his two friends, was being groomed as a missionary – his stay in America was supposed to be brief. But then, he didn't want to leave. He became instead a local celebrity: Yung Wing, Yale Class of 1854.

K. SCOTT WONG (Historian): Yung Wing had a very positive experience at Yale University. He enjoyed the company of his fellow students; his fellow students appeared to enjoy his company as well. If you look at his yearbook from his graduation, many of them write in the book saying that they appreciated him, that they learned a lot about China from him

MOYERS: Could a man with yellow skin become American? The law was unclear. When Yung went for his citizenship, nobody stopped him. These were the easy days; soon he and his countrymen would be actors in a savage drama... that moved from the mining towns of the Far West... to the halls of Congress and the White House. Yung couldn't know the full meaning of his words when he told his mother that America was preparing him for great things.

Toishan County, Guangdong. It's near here that Yung Wing and most of the early Chinese immigrants were born.

In America, they would be hounded by suspicions that their only true attachments lay here, that they could never be loyal to the United States. Certainly, their roots in Guangdong ran deep. Their ancestors had reclaimed the marshes of the Pearl River Delta and the young men were raised to work its quilt of canals and fields.

It took catastrophe to drive them out.

STANFORD LYMAN (Historian): There was the greatest flood [Canton] had yet experienced that destroyed villages. We have missionary reports talking about bodies floating in the water, whole villages destroyed. There was a civil war going on. One estimate being 30 million people were killed.

MOYERS: Civil war, flood, famine drove thousands of young men to the ports.

AL CHENG (Chinese Culture Center of San Francisco): It was so bad that they had sort of a consensus agreement that they would send half the men out of the whole Toishan area, in the hopes, orlike a gamble, that at least, a percentage of them would do well and send money back to rescue that whole region.

CHARLIE CHIN: We know the Confucian ethic tells us that a young man is supposed to stay close to home when he's an adult to take care of his parents. But in this particular situation in order to support parents and family, you had to leave home, very unusual in China, they left home seasonally. Where did they go? They went to the seaports.

MOYERS: Long before they would come to America, the young men of Guangdong traveled widely, through the South China Sea and the Pacific. But whatever their destination, their obligation to their village was paramount. It was the reason they'd left, and it shaped their life overseas. When young Americans like Christine Wong come here today, for the first time, the power of these ancestral villages is still evident. The ties are so close, her family name is shared by everyone here.

CHRISTINE WONG: It's just like so overwhelming, like all these people and then everyone in the village comes out. I just learned at my mother's village I'm the 24th generation Fong. Which I ... I couldn't even imagine 24 generations ago what life was like.

AL CHENG: In southern China the villages are usually clustered by family names. So if you go to a Wong village, everybody will be all Wongs there, or a Ma village, they will be all Mas. So that's one indication that they're all related to each other in one way or another.

MOYERS: Family, clan, village, – here, the words are all but synonymous. If it's true today, it was much more so two centuries ago. The understanding between a family and the men who were sent away was concrete, practical, and rigidly enforced.

CHARLIE CHIN: It was considered very important that the young men marry before they left the village, as an added pressure to make sure that they would always, number one, return money to the village because now they had a wife and perhaps children in the village but also that they would eventually return to the village.

MOYERS: It wasn't just family ethic; it was spiritual law. Every emigrant knew he must be buried near his ancestors, so his spirit could join them, to be cared for and honored by succeeding generations.

A hundred and fifty years ago, these villages in Southern China were charged with astonishing news -- news that would put the ancient bonds of home and clan to their greatest test.

It's said that a merchant named Chum Ming was the first Chinese to hear about the gold found near Sutter's Mill. His letter from California to a villager back home was the secret that couldn't be kept. That anyhow is the story, folded now into Chinese myth.

MAXINE HONG KINGSTON (Writer): The people in China named America after the gold rush, you know. Somewhere out there is the gold mountain. But it fit the old stories, the mythic stories. Like it fit that somewhere there were seven cities of gold.

WANG GUNGWU (Historian): When there was news of gold, who would know first? Port of Canton where the news would spread. And these people are accustomed to dealing with the foreigners. They're not terrified or horrified at the idea of going thousands of miles to someplace else in seek of new opportunities and adventure.

CONNIE YOUNG YU (family historian): I think that my great grandfather felt that he would sacrifice maybe ten years of his life and that was, you know, it's amazing to say, you know, I'll see you in ten years. But they knew that it was a big journey. It was a big sacrifice of their lives to, to go to America.

But he would eventually come back. Maybe as a middle aged man, maybe as an old man - but he would return.

MAXINE HONG KINGSTON: And the plan would be that they would come back heroes, gold mountain heroes. And there would be money and food and status forever.

[Words of] **HUIE KIN:** We were two full months or more on our way. Our baggage consisted of a roll of bedding and a bamboo basket. Into this we put our shoes, hat, and all our worldly possessions.

MOYERS: As an older man, long settled in America, Huie Kin looked back.

[Words of] **HUIE KIN:** For days there would be no wind, the sails and ropes would hang lifeless from the masts, and the ship would drift idly. Fresh water was scarce.

One morning, my cousin was suddenly taken sick with fever, and we woke up to find him gasping for breath. He passed out that afternoon and his body was quietly lowered into its watery grave. Years later, we heard that his ghost went back to his old village.

KEVIN STARR (State Librarian of California): I think they came really sort of dropped psychologically into the void. In that sense, their experience resembled the Puritans, the Pilgrims who came to Cape Cod in the 1620s and found Cape Cod a howling wilderness because they had left Leiden behind. And I think the individual Chinese had left the complexities of their own culture behind and were going into very uncertain, uncharted territory.

MOYERS: These mountains were a magnet for the boldest, greediest most desperate men from all over - Canada, Mexico, China, the American South. The gold mines of California were not yet part of America – barely even part of civilized life.

CHARLIE CHIN: You could be murdered for your shoes on a dirt road in the hinterlands in the middle of the night. You could be sleeping in your tent and a group of miners might come and decide that they're going to burn down your tent and take your gold dust. There was no law to speak of. So there was great danger, but there was great opportunity.

[Words of] **J.D. BORTHWICK:** Crowds of Chinamen were bound for the diggings, under gigantic basket-hats, each man with a bamboo laid across his shoulder, Chinese baskets and boxes, immense boots, and a variety of Chinese 'fixins' which no one but a Chinaman could tell the use of, all speaking at once, gabbling and chattering their horrid jargon.

GELING YAN (writer) (translated from Mandarin): They of course cling together in groups, like cans of sardines shipped from China. They were bony and small, with their queues [Chinese pigtails] such a distinct look. They sensed that there would be danger, and that they must stick together.

KEVIN STARR: So their, their groups held together in, in the way of an older and more cohesive culture as opposed to the Anglo-American groups, which tended to break apart ...

The Chinese, many of them came out of irrigation farming, working with wood, with water, with land movement, etc. And those skills were immediately applicable to gold mining.

MOYERS: Teams of Chinese took over claims the Whites had abandoned and slowly, methodically, sifted through the silt. Many were rewarded with gold. And in the confusion of languages and skin colors on the frontier, the first Chinese managed, most of them, to stay out of harm's way.

SHAWN WONG: When the Chinese first came to San Francisco, they were welcomed, open arms. Mayor Geary stood and welcomed them publicly from a platform and said: "We welcome Celestial men of commerce to our city and we welcome all those who come after you."

CONNIE YOUNG YU: My grandfather Yung's uncle went back to his village in China with all these wonderful stories of adventures in America.

He told about gold dust. And he talked about a city that was lit by gaslight ... and Chinese operas and new little restaurants that were being built on “Dupont Gaii.” My grandfather Yung was so excited. He was 11 years old. He wanted to hear all those stories because in the village nothing changed for thousands of years. And, he begged his parents to allow him to come to America.

MOYERS: The Chinese pushed their way to California -- a second wave of more than twenty thousand - just as the easy gold was vanishing from the riverbeds.

They banded together – and like other immigrants - formed groups that reflected their home districts, villages and clans. Called “huiguans,” these associations ordered and organized early immigrant life. They were there at the dock when Huie Kin’s ship pulled in.

[Words of] **HUIE KIN:** In those days there were no immigration laws; people came and went freely.

Somebody had brought large wagons for us. Out of the general babble, they called out in our local dialect and, like sheep recognizing the voice only, we blindly followed...so strange and so exciting that my memory is just a big blur.

CONNIE YOUNG YU: The early immigrants like my great grandfather. And he is brought to some crowded tenement where he'd stay with a group of people. And right away, they would have to be put to work.

MOYERS: With jobs and money, the Chinese were able to import pieces of their life back home. Just four years after the discovery of gold, a Chinese opera troupe was touring the mining towns.

[Words of] **J.D. BORTHWICK:** The Chinese had their theatre... and their performances were quite unintelligible to outside barbarians.

MOYERS: With their culture, they also brought old animosities from home: Hop Wo versus Sze Yup; Sze Yup versus Yen Wah - deep divisions by region, dialect, clan. Fights broke out making for lurid copy in the white press.

SHAWN WONG: In 1852, with almost twenty thousand Chinese in California, they went from being welcomed by Mayor Geary as the ‘Celestial men of commerce’ to suddenly a ‘horde,’ you know, the ‘horde of Chinese coming to invade California.’

MOYERS: In the 1850’s, California passed its first anti-Chinese laws, including a special tax aimed just at them. Then, in 1854, the state set a white murderer free because the witnesses against him were Chinese. California’s highest judge provided the following history lesson:
[Words of] **CHIEF JUSTICE MURRAY:** When Columbus first landed upon the shores of this continent, he gave the Islanders the name of Indian. This has been used to designate not alone

the North American Indian but the whole of the Mongolian race. The countries washed by the Chinese waters, were named the Indies....

Even admitting that the Indian of this continent is not of the Mongolian type . . .

MOYERS: The judge's mangling of geography and history had a purpose: to fix the uncertain place of the Chinese in America, to link them with Native Americans and blacks as legal outcasts unable to testify against whites.

LIPING ZHU (Historian): The direct effect was that anti-Chinese violence increased. If the Chinese could not testify, then the whites would not have to worry; they'd be free to kill and rob Chinese at will. So this was a dreadful decision.

[Words of] **State Tax Collector:** Monday July 30, 1855. Went up the River to Hesse's, hunted Chinamen -- done pretty well -- collected about eighty licenses. I was sorry to have to stab the poor fellow; but the law makes it necessary to collect the tax; and that's where I get my profit.

MOYERS: California's leaders were quick to sense the public mood. Divided on so many issues, they agreed on this: the Chinese must stop coming.

In the 1850's, Leland Stanford, businessman and politician, was launching a career that would help change the face of the American West. He would shift back and forth in his views of the Chinese, his volatility a mirror of the country's.

Stanford had made his way to California looking for a quick fortune, and made one in hardware. Then, restless, he ran for Governor.

[Words of] **LELAND STANFORD:** Asia, with her numberless millions, sends to our shores the dregs of her population ... I shall concur with any constitutional action having for its object the repression of the immigration of the Asiatic races. ...

L. LING CHI WANG (Historian): He was sounding the alarm that, you know, 'We have to keep those Chinese under control because they pose a serious threat to our culture and our civilization and our well-being. We cannot allow the Chinese to come in here and overrun us.'

MOYERS: Under assault, the huiguan leaders set aside their rivalries to form a united group, the Chinese Six Companies. In the long journey of becoming American, one of the first steps ... was to become Chinese.

WANG GUNGWU: To these people at that time there's no such concept. The basic idea is that I'm from Guangdong, I'm from the Pearl River Delta and you're a Hakka -- they know who is who and they speak different languages, they don't understand, mutually unintelligible.

But once you're treated as Chinese ... then they are Chinese!

MOYERS: The California mines had become treacherous places for the Chinese. They were learning to compete head to head with whites was to risk one's life.

GELING YAN (translated from Mandarin): So basically they were already kind of afraid. So whatever they encountered they just endured with all their might – “If I endured this maybe it will pass; and I try to keep a low profile, make myself low-key, as if I didn't exist.” Only doing their work, never daring to cause trouble.

MOYERS: Whites had given them a generic name: ‘John Chinaman,’ they'd be called, at work or on the street. They knew better than to argue, and they had more pressing concerns: their families were counting on them.

CHARLIE CHIN: They're pushed into other occupations: starting a garden to grow fresh vegetables and then realizing that you could also sell these vegetables to non-Chinese.

Chinese labor was brought in to clear land.

They began the process of digging irrigation ditches and channels to drain the water out.

They become fishermen. They notice immediately the abundance of sea life in the coastline, shellfish, squids, octopus, all kinds of things which are delicacies in China which by and large European Americans ignore. They would begin drying it, salting it, sending it back to China.

There were no women here, and men are willing to pay money for somebody who can cook food or wash clothes. Men would begin crude restaurants, making a huge batch of what we call chow, stir fried vegetables and meat. You stepped up to a place, usually outdoors, and somebody came along, gave you a mound of rice, put chow on top of it. And this was a quick and fast way for people to fill themselves.

MOYERS: Triangular yellow flags began appearing in San Francisco – the sign for a Chinese restaurant, a place to get abalone and shrimp, tamarind and ginger. “The Chinese carry off the [prize],” marveled one travel writer. “They anticipate your wants, and secure your patronage.”

MAXINE HONG KINGSTON: This was the kind of work that a Chinaman could get at that time. They did women's work. A lot of them were nannies, and they had restaurants, and cooking, and they did the laundry.

MOYERS: In the women-poor West, there this was one sure supply of jobs: domestic help. It was work white men wouldn't take, so the openings were plentiful for new arrivals like Huie Kin.

SUE BELL (great-granddaughter of Huie Kin): I think it was the only work that my great, great grandfather could sort of find as a Chinese immigrant. And I think there were a lot of other Chinese immigrants who were doing this sort of domestic work.

KEVIN STARR: It's very common for upper class Californians not just to have Chinese on their staffs, but to have Chinese living with them, becoming really part of the family - albeit in a feudal relationship of servant and master, master and retainer. Nevertheless, a close intimate relationship.

MOYERS: In his old village, Huie Kin had been a farm boy -- he and his father and the livestock, all sleeping in the same room. Only fifteen and still wearing his queue – the traditional Chinese pigtail – Huie Kin found himself in a new world.

[Words of] **HUIE KIN:** The Gardiners had a big house on Telegraph Avenue and Twentieth Street, with a beautiful lawn and big, shady trees. Mrs. Gardiner taught me to read and write, and I learned much also by listening in when she gave lessons to her children. It was here that my American education began...

KEVIN STARR: I think that relationship is very profound. between upper class Californians who could bring the Chinese into their families, It works as a kind of underground current against the anti-Chinese agitation that's going on in the larger society. It's an assimilation, literally through nurture, through family life - it's assimilation of two races to each other. But it's in truncated form, unacknowledged, subliminal

MOYERS: They had found shelter, steady wages, even some human affection – but at a high price. Over time, the image of the Chinese as servants – slave-like and submissive -- would come back to haunt them.

SHAWN WONG: The more that Chinese went into that profession; the more that visual image was embedded in the American mind - the stereotype began to grow and to be reconfirmed and reconfirmed over and over

CHARLIE CHIN: The men have to keep spreading out to look for opportunities, to go and see the other side of the hill, the other side of the mountain. There might be something there.

I think the most remarkable thing is just the pure courage that these men had to go to places unseen, unknown, unmapped.

If they were going to go to Idaho or going to go to Montana, they had no real idea how far it was except in terms of time.

LARRY KINGSBURY (archeologist): And you can imagine 50, 60 Chinese men, walking across the landscape, each carrying everything they possibly would need, food, clothing, tools. They walked. That's how they got here. To the mountain of gold.

LIPING ZHU: Americans thought the Chinese were submissive, and wouldn't fight back. But that wasn't true on the frontier, that's a false image.

MOYERS: It's fair to say that the story of the Chinese in Idaho doesn't loom large in American history; their names and faces have mostly been lost. But in Idaho the Chinese found their own true frontier, where the odds were not so heavily against them. And there was one whose name survives. The Chinese called her Lalu Nathoy; to Americans, she was Polly.

LARRY KINGSBURY: She came on a pack train, a string of horses. The pack train had to follow a trail. Single file, going down the mountain, canyon, to the mining camp.

She probably had to ride a horse because it was just too many miles to walk. And being property, being owned by somebody, that merchant wanted Polly here in good condition.

MOYERS: You could not have a less promising start in America than Lalu Nathoy: she arrived a slave.

GELING YAN (in Mandarin): It was a period of extreme chaos in China. A lot of families were extremely poor, and could not afford to bring up their daughters, so they sold them, and they took the girls to America. The girls themselves did not know what they were coming to America to do. Only after they came to the U.S did they discover that they were sold here to become prostitutes.

MOYERS: Slavery after the Emancipation Proclamation: it was a sordid episode in American history, the work of ruthless Chinese profiteers aided by corrupt U.S. officials. Few Chinese women were coming to America – fewer still to Idaho -- but of these most were prostitutes, held against their will.

Lalu Nathoy was put to work as a 'sing-song girl,' a bar hostess in one of the makeshift mining towns that dotted the Idaho Territory. That may have been her first good fortune: to land in this improbable place.

In the 1860's, Chinese miners moved into the Boise basin, pooling their money to buy claims that whites thought had run dry. Soon, they were nearly half the population and there were new names on the map, like Shanghai Gulch.

LARRY KINGSBURY: To the West we have Fook Sing. Next, Lin Wah, next the Hun Wah mining company.

They moved a lot of earth. Whole hillsides are missing.

MOYERS: And they found their gold. In a month, one group extracted six thousand dollars' worth - equivalent to five hundred years of a man's labor in Guangdong. Idaho's towns sprung to life, with Chinese everywhere, as storeowners, herbal doctors, cattle drivers, lawyers, outlaws. Louie Kin's served Chinese and Western food around the clock, and when the shout went out, "My Fan Tan La," men knew the game was on.

But these saloons, where Lalu Nathoy worked, were as violent as Dodge City's: the trick was staying alive.

LIPING ZHU (in Mandarin): You couldn't depend on the police or sheriff.

So the Chinese brought bowie knives and Springfield army rifles, Colt Revolvers, Smith & Wesson Pistols. To carry a weapon probably gave them a sense of security. One famous Western historian once said, "God had made some men large, some men small, but Colonel Colt made them all equal."

MOYERS: "A Chinaman is slow to deeds of desperation," said one Idaho paper, "but when he starts in, he generally means business." A miner named McGinnis found that out when he tried to bully some neighboring Chinese, and paid for it with his life. Frontier justice, Chinese-style, included late-night arson, or a delivery of firewood to an enemy, each log filled with gunpowder.

Of course whites muttered about this primitive, heathen people in their midst. Of course there were stories about John Chinaman ... but out on the frontier they had a different twist.

LIPING ZHU: Once American lady hired a Chinese cook. When Chinese went to her house, and she asked the Chinese his name, the Chinese answered, "My name is Wong Hong Ho." The White lady said, "Oh, it's too difficult for me to remember that. Why don't I call you John" And then the Chinese smiled, and said, "What's your name?" And she answered "My name is Mrs. Melville Landon." The Chinese said "Oh, it's too difficult for me to remember. Why don't I call you Tommy?"

MOYERS: The racial animosity ran two ways: in the Chinese community, all non-Chinese were referred to as "barbarians."

Still these two groups – roughly matched in numbers and guns – kept their hostilities in check. When housing was short, they would bunk down in the same rooms. If free food or music were on offer, they'd even show up at each other's parades.

LARRY KINGSBURY: It's Chinese New Years. Got their cymbals, got their drums, took their guns - Walked right down through the very East Main Street right through town. And it was a time of celebration, and even the Americans enjoyed the Chinese parade.

MOYERS: The celebrations would end on Main Street, where the whites played poker, the Chinese Fan Tan. They could buy drinks for one of the few women in town, Lulu Nathoy, still a 'sing-song girl,' and still a slave. The freedom the Chinese men had grabbed was not hers -- not yet. She'd find that in a dancehall down the street, in the unlikely person of Charlie Bemis.

PRISCILLA WEGARS (Anthropologist): Charlie, people said he was lazy. And that he started out as a miner but that was too hard work. And so he went into maybe gambling and saloon owning and that kind of thing.

MOYERS: He may have been thin on ambition and short on looks, but Polly saw her chance. One day, she wasn't with her Chinese owner anymore. She'd moved in with Charlie Bemis.

WEGARS: What I expect might have happened was that Charlie offered her the opportunity to be his housekeeper. She would have a place to live. She could make some money.

MOYERS: Whatever the terms, she was now free.

By the time she became Mrs. Polly Bemis, the gold had been washed out of Idaho's hills and the Chinese miners had moved on. Their women were gone too, many dead of disease and abuse.

But Polly survived and settled here, catching her meals in the Salmon River, dodging anti-Chinese officials, and goading Charlie to make something of himself.

From slave to frontierswoman was quite a journey, but that was true of so many Chinese, improvising lives for themselves in the 19th century American West.

PRISCILLA WEGARS: When we think of pioneers most people think of people that came across the west in covered wagons. But there were other pioneers who came here from a different direction. They came across the Pacific.

MOYERS: Thousands of such pioneers would be drawn from their Guangdong villages to join the boldest enterprise of the age: the drive to build a railroad East.

DAVID BAIN (Historian): It was just absolutely the most dangerous and foolhardy and crazy gamble that human beings could take. That people could actually get a railroad across a 7,000 foot tall mountain range in the 1860's.

MOYERS: The building of the transcontinental railroad was probably the greatest engineering feat of the 19th century and it shook the way whites viewed the Chinese. It would shake the Chinese worldview as well.

The image of this race was never fixed; as whites' fortunes rose and fell, as their own needs changed, they would see the Chinese differently.

Leland Stanford, after two years as Governor, quit to build the rail's western leg. As Governor, he'd joined the anti-Chinese cause and later, he'd join it again. But he was an improviser, a Westerner, not about to be tied down. He and his partners, hungry for labor, would draw thousands of Chinese to America and bind them to this country as never before.

LING-CHI WANG: I think that Stanford is very much a businessman by then. And to him it's the bottom line. And the bottom line was that he needs cheap labor to help build the railroad. And in fact, the more miles of track that he lays the more land and natural resources that he gets from the Federal government.

CONNIE YOUNG YU: Well, the year that my great grandfather came to America was 1865- Luckily, in 1865, the transcontinental railroad was about to be built and he became one of those railroad workers that was hired on.

MOYERS: Recruited in Guangdong, mustered into work-gangs at the docks, they were ferried to the California Sierras to shovel and haul away dirt and rock. They would number eleven thousand – almost one in every five Chinese in America.

DAVID BAIN: This tunnel was built almost entirely by Chinese labor. There was nothing special about it that needed anything other than someone who could slam a hole into a rock and then get out of the way.

MOYERS:

They cut through the Sierras one mountain at a time. When they reached the pure granite of Tunnel Number Six, teams were set to work from both sides, night and day, through a lethal winter. Progress was measured in inches per day.

MAXINE HONG KINGSTON (Writer): Here are these heroes leaving China thinking that they're going to find ranges of gold mountains. And instead, what they find are the Sierra Nevadas. They came from a people who believed that there are nine hells. And when they tunneled into the Sierras they would say, 'I've entered one of the hells.'

MOYERS: Those who perished in the cold were left where they fell; co-workers marked the man's name and village beside him, in hopes that one day his bones would be shipped home. The Central Pacific kept no record of how many died: its focus was on the survivors, blasting their way through the rock.

NORMAN TUTOROW (Stanford Biographer): In one of his reports to President Johnson, Stamford sent a letter praising the Chinese, and saying: "If it weren't for the Chinese we could not be building this railroad."

MOYERS: By 1866 the Central Pacific bosses needed more than brute labor. Could they use the Chinese for skilled work? Did they have the brains? It was not a small question in 19th century America.

CHARLIE CHIN: There was a huge movement that had the endorsement of science as it was known then of measuring the heads, measuring the skulls of various groups of people to demonstrate their mental capacity. Obviously, strangely the Europeans seemed to have the best craniums for higher intellectual activities, and then by degrees as you got further and further away from Europe, people's ability started to diminish.

STANFORD LYMAN: And it was discovered much to the embarrassment of the scientists, that the Chinese cranium was on the average larger than that of the White cranium. And since they wanted the White brain to be on top, they had to do something to find some way of resolving this difficulty.

MOYERS: The difficulties of the Central Pacific were more immediate. With the Chinese were the two men driving construction: Charles Crocker and James Strobridge.

DAVID BAIN: There had been a strike of Irish masons, and Strobridge went to Crocker and said “we’re losing time on the culverts and on the walls,” and he said “go hire some Chinese and set them to work making the walls.” And Strobridge scoffed and said “make masons out of Chinese? It will never work.” And Crocker’s reply: “They built the Great Wall of China, didn’t they?”

MOYERS: Sure enough, the Chinese were assigned skilled work as well: they served as masons and tracklayers, water boys and foremen.

DAVID BAIN: You had the equivalent of a modern day city up here.

CHRIS GRAVES (Railroad Historian): At night, it was all fires, little campfires, all along this whole thing, hundreds and hundreds of campfires.

DAVID BAIN: Food at the end of the day, cooked in giant woks, the wonderful smells that must have emanated on the mountainside here.

MOYERS: But in this makeshift community, there was also talk about how they were paying for their food and the white men weren’t – how the bosses drove them for long hours and whipped them when they tried to quit.

GELING YAN (translated from Mandarin): They began to become aware that this was a society that allowed protest - unlike in China, where protest might lead to getting beheaded - in this country a strike can actually get you somewhere.

STANFORD LYMAN: Imagine [two] thousand workers coming out with their big hammers to pound nails into the track. And imagine their head men are bringing them out in groups. And they come to the tracks. And instead of starting to pound the nails they sit down on the tracks and don't move. And the managers are saying, “Let's go to work. Go to work.” And they sit there silently. And then they pick up and go back to the tents that they, the meager tents that they lived in on these things and don't come out again. It must have been an awesome image.

MAXINE HONG KINGSTON: They demanded the same pay as the white working men. And their strike slogan was: ‘Eight hour day, good for White man ... all the same, good for Chinaman.’ They saw themselves as the equal to any white American.

STANFORD LYMAN: At the time it happened it was one of the biggest strikes in American history. Never before had that many workers sat down and refused to work.

MOYERS: “The strike of the Chinamen is the hardest blow we have had,” wrote one of the partners. “The truth is, they are getting smart.”

The company’s response was swift: all food supplies were cut. E.B. Crocker, brother of Charles, was there.

[Words of] **E.B. CROCKER:** None of us went near them for a week –[we] did not want to exhibit anxiety. Then Charles went up and they gathered around him. He told them that he made the rules for them and not they for him. Not a cent more would he give. He had the sheriff and posse come up to see that there was no fighting.

MOYERS: The managers thought it could never happen: a strike by illiterate villagers from across the world. But only guns and the threat of starvation got the Chinese work-gangs back, hammering inside the tunnels.

DAVID BAIN: No ventilators, no way to blow air into a place ... the smell of black powder - blasting powder.

CHRIS GRAVES: The smell of people.

DAVID BAIN: The smell of people.

When they finally broke through, after a year and a half of cutting and blasting, when they finally broke through to read the feelings of the people as that breeze from the east came blowing through the tunnel and all of a sudden this absolutely foul air cleared through and there was just this sense that there was another world on the other side.

MOYERS: By the time Leland Stanford helped hammer the last spike at a ceremony at Promontory, Utah in 1869, he and his partners, flush with new wealth, were again singing the praises of the Chinese.

NORMAN TUTOROW: Strobridge invited this Chinese work gang to his private car, and the senior officials of both railroads were there for a dinner in which they honored the Chinese, and you can imagine the place was full of newspaper reporters from all over the country. They were recognized for what they had done.

CONNIE YOUNG YU: My great grandfather worked for a dollar a day on the railroad. And he later became a foreman. And he worked so hard. It took him months to accumulate enough money to buy a gold piece, that he would look at every night.

He was one of those people called ‘Gum Saam Hok’ -- which means ‘guest of the gold mountain,’ a sojourner. And that was a term the Chinese used. In other words, you're a guest and you'll go back home.

When my great grandfather sent for his wife to come to America, that was a big, big leap. Because a woman who leaves her village, I mean, that's just not done. Women did not leave the village and she did. And I think at that point, my grandfather ... my great grandfather ... felt that there was a future in America and it was a place to have children.

MOYERS: The Chinese lived in a state of limbo. Congress vacillated, granting them civil rights in 1870, even while refusing to make them citizens. But they'd been here twenty years:

now their temples were made of adobe and brick, their earnings split, some sent home to China, some spent here building their American communities.

[Words of] **HUIE KIN:** Our people were all in their native costumes with queues down their backs, and kept their stores just as they would do in China, with the entire [store]-front open, and groceries and vegetables overflowing on the sidewalks.

SUE BELL: I think my great, great grandfather started to gradually arrive at the comfortableness with America and the putting down roots as did his countrymen. And that they didn't have to have as close and strong ties to their ancestral villages.

MOYERS: Some of these men settling in America were Civil War veterans. Scattered among the muster rolls were names like Charles Chin, John Afoo, and Char Kwan.

One who'd tried to enlist for the Union was the graduate of Yale College, and U.S. citizen: Yung Wing.

K. SCOTT WONG (Historian): At this point in Yung Wing's life he's employed by the Chinese government, but he also has an unswerving loyalty to the values of the United States. So therefore, on the one hand he can attempt to enlist in the army, at the same time he's using this opportunity to be in the United States to help modernize China.

MOYERS: Yung was now a businessman and an emissary for the Chinese government, shuttling between the two countries. But he was taking on the trappings of an American life.

SHAWN WONG (Writer): Yung Wing not only became an American citizen, but also married an American woman.

MOYERS: Mary Kellogg's family welcomed him; he built a life with her in Connecticut, Christian and English-speaking; he gave his sons American names. And he cut off his Chinese queue, traditional symbol of allegiance to the Emperor. He was casting his lot in with American values and ways: he didn't yet realize how much he was at risk.

The new rail would slice through American life, topple the old rules of commerce, re-draw the map, shake the lives of most Americans, including the Chinese. In the railroad's first year, a small-town businessman named Calvin T. Sampson came up with a bold scheme.

ANDREW GYORY: In North Adams, Massachusetts, a little town up in the Berkshire mountains, there's a shoe factory that's run by Calvin Sampson. There're several strikes in 1868, 1869, and 1870, And Sampson just gets fed up with having to deal with the union, to deal with the workers.

MOYERS: All Sampson meant to do was solve his local labor problem. But this obscure shoe-manufacturer would help rouse ancient stereotypes in the American mind.

ANDREW GYORY: He sends one of his management to San Francisco And they hire 75 Chinese immigrants for a dollar a piece, they come across on the just completed Transcontinental Railroad and they arrive in North Adams, Massachusetts, on June 13, 1870.

The Chinese immigrants are mostly teenagers. They're age 15, 16, 17, 18. My guess is that they probably don't realize the extent of what's happening.

There's the scene of them stepping off the train and the whole town is gathered to see them. And keep in mind, most White Americans east of the Rockies have never seen a Chinese immigrant in their lives. They've never seen an Asian immigrant in their lives.

There's a lot of tension because these Chinese immigrants are being brought in as strike breakers. They're being brought in to take over their jobs.

L. LING-CHI WANG: It create a kind of fear that: "Is this the beginning of large number of Chinese coming into Massachusetts and then going into New Jersey and into Pennsylvania? The arrival of these seventy-five Chinese receive a huge amount of of attention, [laughs] more so than they deserved.

MOYERS: It couldn't have come at a more unstable time, of business booms and busts, unimaginable fortunes being made, a labor movement looking to get its share. And now this yellow peril: Chinamen, infinite in supply, servile by nature, ready to take over every honest white man's job.

ANDREW ANDREW GYORY: You have workers, working class leaders, union leaders end up having demonstrations and protest meetings throughout the country. You have them in New York, you have them in Baltimore, Chicago, Boston, Albany, Philadelphia.

[Words of] **Dr. VAIL:** Now comes this Asiatic race. They will work for half price, and live upon a mouse or a rat, and call it a dainty morsel. Laboring men, you must prevent the intrusion of these heathen people." (New York World, 9291870)

MOYERS: The handful of Chinese in the East -- barely two hundred in all -- triggered economic and racial hysteria. Recruit them into the unions? No. Labor leaders had a different use for the Chinese.

L. LING-CHI WANG (Historian): They discover that they can use Chinese to mobilize the white working class, and to organize themselves into a powerful political force.

STANFORD LYMAN: There are mass meetings held by unions. There are statements of the great threat that is involved here. And so what had begun as a small scale operation of hostility to the Chinese, now became a national enterprise.

MOYERS: Everyone was using the Chinese -- bosses as well. The yellow threat was just the tool with which to bully unions.

In 1877, a New York cigar maker staged his own “Chinese invasion” – one Chinese man walking in and out of his plant to make workers believe more were on their way.

Another hired White scabs and dressed them as Chinese, complete with queues.

“Chinaman” became an all-purpose epithet among East Coast working men. In the West, where the Chinese lived, it would be far worse.

[Words of] **DENIS KEARNEY:** The Pacific Coast is cursed with parasites from China, used as a weapon by grasping capitalists to oppress poor laboring men.

MOYERS: The speaker was San Francisco’s Denis Kearney, a one-time sailor who had found his way west from County Cork, Ireland.

He picked up a following in the vacant lots on the city’s west side. His long list of enemies included the capitalist bosses, political swindlers and railroad trusts -- but he could electrify a crowd, he found, when he denounced the Chinese.

KEVIN STARR: And he began to give these talks to other men hanging around the sand lots at night. They'd build a big bonfire and he'd harangue them – “The Chinese must go.” He began to demonize the Chinese.

MOYERS:

Kearney’s audience was laborers with time on their hands. They’d come west dreaming of good jobs but by 1873, the markets had crashed.

KEVIN STARR: San Francisco fills up with men from the agricultural fields who can't find work. There's people sleeping on the streets, there's homelessness. There is outbreaks of juvenile delinquency. Young men become very restive, beating up groups. The word ‘hoodlum’ is coined in San Francisco at this time to describe the young men who would huddle, huddle them, gang around somebody, huddle near them and beat them up ...

HEATHER COX RICHARDSON (Historian): The workers in California are angry at what’s going on around them and they’re angry not only at the Chinese but at the, what seems to them, to be the rich capitalists who are keeping them down by hiring Chinese or who are refusing to give them basic subsistence wages.

ANDREW GYORY: Kearney gets up there, he's a young guy, he's all of 31 at this time, 30, 31.

And in California, in San Francisco, he'd give speeches practically every night or at least every week throughout the fall of 1877, and he became the head and tail of the movement.

[Words of] **DENIS KEARNEY:** We have made no secret of our intentions. We make none. Before you and the world, we declare that the Chinamen must leave our shores.

ANDREW GYORY: And one of the dramatic moments in the Kearney speech is he opens his jacket and throws his jacket down because he gets so hot and sweaty, and that always brought big cheers, eruption of cheers among the audience. And then he would launch into this crusade or this fusillade against the Chinese that could go on for half an hour, for an hour or so.

[Words of] **DENIS KEARNEY:** We declare that we cannot hope to drive the Chinaman away by working cheaper than he does. None but an enemy would expect it of us; none but an idiot could hope for success.

ANDREW GYORY: It's almost like a circus performance, and he gets the crowd riled up and to cheer for him and he always ends his meetings with these anti-Chinese resolutions for the meeting to support.

[Words of] **DENIS KEARNEY:** My chief mission here is to secure the expulsion of Chinese labor from California. The Chinese must go!

I will give the Central Pacific just three months to discharge their Chinamen, and if that is not done, Stanford and his crowd will have to take the consequences.

MOYERS: The attacks on Leland Stanford put him in a predicament. No public figure was as tied to the Chinese as he. And it wasn't just a matter of his railroad employees; he had dozens of Chinese working at his home.

NORMAN TUTOROW: He talked to an anti Chinese group one day. They asked him for an interview, and he said "to avoid problems with the neighbors and the rancher and the townspeople, I will eliminate the Chinese workers, and bring in Caucasian workers."

CONNIE YOUNG YU: He would, you know, keep them out of sight and dismiss them for a while and then when the coast was cleared, they'd be rehired.

MOYERS: Chinese lore tells of Stanford's intimate relationship with them: of herbalists brought in to treat his wife Jane, of her trying to legally adopt one of her servant boys.

CONNIE YOUNG YU: He was very good to his workers. Probably very good to his gardener and his houseboys and made them very comfortable. And he probably thought, "Individually, I treat them well. Officially, I don't know them."

MOYERS: The private affections of the West's leading citizens remained just that: private. There were few protests from the mansions of Nob Hill in the 1870's, as anti-Chinese violence flared.

SHAWN WONG: "They were lying in ambush. He came to his death by homicide. He was murdered by a thief. He committed suicide. He was choked to death with a lasso by a robber. He was strangled to death by a man. He was starved to death in prison. He was frozen to death in the snow. He was going to drown himself in the bay. After searching for several days, they caught the murderer."

MOYERS: In 1875, a Chinese-English guidebook appeared, teaching immigrants the phrases they might need in their new country.

SHAWN WONG: “He was killed by an assassin. He tried to assassinate me. He tried to kill me by assassination. He’s an assaulter. He was smothered in his room. He was suffocated in his room. He was shot dead by his enemy.”

SHAWN WONG: I look at the Wong Sam’s English-Chinese phrase book as the very first history of Chinese life in America from the Chinese point of view.

MOYERS: In 1877, in the mining town of Chico, armed white men stormed a cabin where Chinese workers were resting, and set the men on fire. That same year, gangs spent three nights torching the Chinese laundries of San Francisco. They were the worst riots in the city’s history: it took five thousand men to restore the peace. Huie Kin was across the Bay in Oakland.

[Words of] **HUIE KIN:** There were long processions at night with big torchlights and lanterns carrying the slogan 'The Chinese Must Go.'

We were simply terrified; we kept indoors after dark for fear of being shot in the back. Children spit upon us as we passed by and called us rats.

MOYERS: The Chinese Six Companies issued a chilling statement: if Chinese men were going to die, many white men would die with them.

In a few short months in 1877 and ‘78, Denis Kearney mobilized his own political party. His men became city council members, state senators and, soon, Mayor of the largest city in the West, San Francisco. In 1878, he took his campaign nationwide.

[Words of] **YUNG WING:** Tens of thousands of my countrymen are by law deprived of a livelihood and are being driven from their homes to starve in the streets ...

MOYERS: Yung Wing, representing the Chinese government, spoke out against Kearney. But this educated man in his Connecticut home had never been at risk himself. The 1870’s, so dangerous for Chinese laborers, had been for Yung Wing a time of fulfillment.

Six years before Kearney came East, Yung Wing realized a life-long dream: a program of U.S.-China friendship and exchange -- students brought to America to learn and be immersed in Western ways.

SHAWN WONG: At the same time Denis Kearney and his Working Men’s Party is rising up and - and - leading the call for The Chinese Must Go - Yung Wing’s school is flourishing.

K. SCOTT WONG: The main target of the anti-Chinese movement were Chinese laborers, Yung Wing, being an educated man, being an emissary of the government, there was a class

difference, and so the anti-Chinese movement was not directed at people of Yung Wing's background.

CHARLIE CHIN: Most of the reception they got was pretty positive in the very beginning. They were seen as curiosities. They are introduced to polite society, they go to parties, they're invited to dances and teas.

SHAWN WONG: They organized a baseball team called the Celestials, sometimes they were called the Orientals, you know - what else would you call them?

They had a pitcher on the Celestials who was a south-paw His name was Lefty. And so part of your entry into American life is you now have a nickname (laughter). Chinese nicknames are something very heroic - you know - like Brave Warrior, things like that , Big Wall, Strong Foundation, but in America all you needed was a name like Lefty ...

MOYERS: Yung's Chinese sponsors – his supervisors in the government -- were appalled by what they saw. They wanted their young charges to learn, but not this – not to absorb these alien and debased customs.

SHAWN WONG: The students assimilated too well into American society. The elders back home felt that they were beginning to lose a lot of the traditional Chinese culture -- getting too far away from the Confucian Analects.

MOYERS: But Yung Wing was delighted: other Chinese following in his footsteps, soaking up New England's democratic values. This was the future – and neither his superiors nor Kearney and his unruly mob were going to stand in his way.

In 1878, as Denis Kearney toured the East, he was closely watched by the most ambitious politicians in Washington, those with designs on the White House. Here was a man turning working class rage into growing political power. That would have gotten attention in any political season – but especially after 1876.

ANDREW GYORY: The 1876 election is extremely close. And Hayes is awarded - the White House by a single electoral vote --- closest electoral count in American history.

And both parties know that the election of 1880 is going to be equally close, and could go either way.

MOYERS: As politicians scoured the landscape for vote-getting issues, there was nothing fresh about the anti-Chinese cause. Californians had been pitching it in Congress for years, with only mild success.

HEATHER COX RICHARDSON: In general, Easterners really couldn't care less about the Chinese either way. They're not a factor in their lives except in very small places. What they do care about overwhelmingly is that they don't want organized labor to take over the government.

All of a sudden, out in California, with Denis Kearney and the sand lot gang, You've got workers joined around the anti-Chinese issue and threatening to take over government, then Easterners start to pay attention and they get terribly, terribly nervous.

MOYERS: There was plenty to be nervous about: violent strikes all over the country, and now Kearney and his party thrashing Republicans and Democrats alike. Any politician who could steal his thunder just might help the country - and help himself as well.

HEATHER COX RICHARDSON: The Chinese are an easy target. It's a very easy group of people to throw overboard in order to try and, and maintain political balance in the country.

The anti-Chinese movement was a perfect tool to try and grab the working, class vote without actually having to do anything.

MOYERS: One of the most charismatic and skillful politicians of the day was James Blaine, Republican Senator from Maine.

ANDREW GYORY (Historian): No one ever accuses Blaine of being an idealist. He's in it for the power.

He's immediately the front runner for 1880.

Before this time, Blaine had never said a word about Chinese immigration his entire life, never given a speech on it, never written anything about it. If you look at his record, he had been very much in favor of black civil rights and civil rights in general so you might expect he'd come out in favor of Chinese immigration. But he delivers a blistering attack in Congress in February of 1879

[Words of] **JAMES OF BLAINE:** The question lies in my mind thus: either the Anglo-Saxon race will possess the Pacific coast or the Mongolians will possess it.

This is servile labor, worse than slave labor and]we have this day to choose whether we will have for the Pacific coast the civilization of Christ or the civilization of Confucius. (thunderous applause)

ANDREW GYORY: And what's significant, is not just the nastiness that Blaine uses, because other politicians had used nasty terms before, it's the fact that he is such a prominent politician, and expected to be the next President or at least the next Presidential candidate.

He lifts the issue out of the gutter, out of the sandlots of San Francisco and makes it respectable.

[Words of] **JAMES BLAINE:** "I am pleading the cause of the free American laborer ... and of his children ... and of his children's children. ... This is an immigration that does not observe the tie of parent and child ... that does not have in the slightest degree the ennobling and civilizing effect..."

MOYERS: Blaine and his followers brought new polish to the anti-Chinese cause. No more angry calls to arms: this was about the sanctity of the American home, and protecting it from a race that cared nothing for marriage or family.

SUE BELL (Great-Granddaughter of Huie Kin): The Chinese came to to take care of their families. I mean they wanted to provide for their families back in China. That was that was the reason that my great, great grandfather came.

MOYERS: The subtleties of Chinese life -- the old ties in the village, the new ties here -- were not the concern of Congress. The politics were clear: the Chinese did not have the vote -- Californians and white laborers had many.

In 1881, no less than eleven different bills were submitted calling for Chinese exclusion.

[Words of] **SENATOR A. SARGENT:** Should we be a mere slop-pail into which all the dregs of humanity should be poured? ... The Chinaman can live on a dead rat and a few handfuls of rice...work for ten cents a day...

[Words of] **SENATOR JOHN MILLER:** The Chinese are machine-like... they are automatic engines of flesh and blood; they herd together like beasts. We ask you to secure the American Anglo Saxon civilization without contamination or adulteration ... Let us keep pure the blood which circulates through our political system...

[Words of] **SEN. SALISBURY:** The Chinese do not and will not assimilate with our people, they come only to get money and return. They secretly maintain laws and a government of their own. They bring with them their filth and frightful diseases ...

ANDREW GYORY: There's a Senator from Massachusetts named George Frisbee Hoar, and he leads the argument in defense of Chinese immigration. And he talks about the evils of racism. He talks about how racism has left its hideous and ineradicable scars on every generation in American history.

What's significant is that he's considered almost like a doddering fool. He's mocked for not facing up to the stern realities of the present. Maybe 15 years ago after the Civil War that could have been said, but this is a new era and Hoar is considered outdated and out of fashion.

MOYERS: No one could have seemed more out of fashion than Yung Wing, with his dreams of U.S.-China friendship and exchange. He was under assault from both sides. The nation he'd held as a shining example wanted nothing more to do with his race. And his bosses back in China saw his school as a menace.

The final blow came when Yung Wing tried to get his students into Annapolis and West Point and the U.S., in violation of treaty, turned him down flat.

[Words of] **YUNG WING:** The answer to my application was: “There is no room provided for Chinese students.” It was curt and disdainful: it breathed the spirit of Kearneyism with which the whole atmosphere was impregnated and which had hypnotized all the departments of the government, especially Congress.

MOYERS: The rejection was just the excuse the Chinese needed; they closed Yung’s school. He returned to China in disgrace and the students were sent West, to wait for a ship home. In Oakland, a local baseball team challenged the boys to a game.

SHAWN WONG: And they take up the challenge, they play this one last baseball game – a game that in which the people who came to see it think that the Chinese are going to lose the baseball game.

But Lefty was a great pitcher. He struck out batters and he amazed people. He he had it going on as a pitcher.

The Celestials win and they lose at the same time. They win the game but they have to go home.

MOYERS: On May 6, 1882, some nine months after the students set sail, the Chinese Exclusion Act was signed into law. With a few exceptions – such as merchants and diplomats -- the Chinese were no longer allowed to enter the United States.

ANDREW GYORY: The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 marks the first time that the United States banned any group of people based on race or nationality. And it sets the fashion or the style for future anti-immigrant acts. In other words, race and nationality become legitimate reasons to keep out other people. That had never been the case before 1882.

LIPING ZHU (in Mandarin): The Exclusion Act singled out this one ethnic group, and discriminated against them due to their skin color and race. It went entirely against American principles.

L. LING-CHI WANG: Up until 1882 America's open to everybody who wanted to come. We welcome everybody. The only people that we excluded by law at that time were the prostitutes, lepers and morons. And in 1882 we added Chinese to that list of people to be excluded.

MOYERS: Denis Kearney never realized his political ambitions: he became a real estate speculator in California.

James Blaine tried repeatedly to reach the White House but failed each time.

Leland Stanford joined the U.S. Senate, where he supported Chinese Exclusion.

Yung Wing was stripped of his U.S. citizenship under the Exclusion laws, but managed to slip back into America as an illegal alien. He ended his days in a Connecticut boarding house, though he had to move when other boarders objected to sharing quarters with a Chinese.

Back in China, one of Yung's students, New Shang-chow, followed baseball scores for the rest of his life.