**Immigration Across the Disciplines**

**Week 3 Notes**

**Questions**

Ngai makes a statement (p. 6) that there are conditions under which illegal aliens can become legal aliens and gain access to citizenship. What are these circumstances, and how easily is this accomplished?

We normally think of the South when we hear about Jim Crow laws. Ngai, however, mentions their applications to Mexican populations in the southwest. Were these segregation ideas applied to Mexicans in the Southwest like they were to blacks in the South?

Beginning around p. 50, Ngai mentions Mexicans as having Indian blood. Is she referring to true Indians (of Asia) or using the general term for the natives of the Americas?

**Somewhere Between White & Black: The Chinese in Mississippi**

Most Chinese arrived in Mississippi between 1910-1930.

**Finding a Place**

Beginning with a group of indentured workers brought from Cuba in mid 1800s to substitute black labor, Chinese in America have existed socially between the two racial groups, sometimes “switching” between them.

**Creating a Community**

There were significant differences between Western Chinese immigrants (those in California) and Southern Chinese immigrants (Mississippi).

Southerns were respected more because they could speak Spanish (from working in Cuba).

In the West, Chinese faced severe opposition to their immigration, probably due to economic forces. However, in the South, they entered an already segregated racial system with an inferior class, unlike the West where they WERE the inferior class.

In the West, the Chinese created Chinatowns for political, economic, and social protection. In the South, these did not exist, and the rise of Chinese Baptist churches and similar structures made them more acceptable to the Southern population.

Because Chinese institutions in the South paralleled White institutions, they were viewed as less of a cultural threat and more as a people willing, indeed desiring, to become more American.

**A Politicized Economy**

Many Southern Americans attempted to use Chinese labor to undermine the influence of the freed and voting blacks; the Chinese could not vote.

Though intended to be a cheap source of labor, the expenses of transporting Chinese workers to the South, even from near locales like Cuba, meant that relatively few of them entered the South.

The Chinese were initially to be of the same social rank as the blacks they were to replace, but entering into the grocery business gave them financial success beyond anything even the freed blacks had come to achieve, elevating them.

Chinese did, however, live with blacks and suffered similar racial attacks, thus making them friendlier toward blacks than whites. This eventually gave the Chinese control of most business in the Mississippi Delta region.

**Wanting More**

Due to the contemporary laws, Chinese children were eventually denied access to white schools because they were technically “colored,” and at this point they began to object to such an association with the blacks.

Chinese wanted to educate their children, placing that desire over financial success and refusing to assimilate into black culture.

White ideology in the South did not allow for any “in-between” races, so the presence of Chinese challenged the standing system. The real fear of allowing Chinese children into white schools was that children of both Chinese and black descent (“hybrids”) would gain admittance also, and no white wanted any child of black descent in a white school.

As a result, leaders in the Chinese community concluded that the judgment against their entire race was hinged upon those who lived with blacks, and decided they must become socially separate from all blacks.

**Making a Choice**

Interracial ties, including marriage and children, were strongly discouraged by the Chinese community.

By 1940, Chinese children were granted legal admittance to white schools and noted as highly scholastic individuals.

Consequently, the separation of the Chinese race from the black race resulted in support for the white argument that blacks were largely incompetent and required repression.

**In Between and Invisible**

In order to have any kind of social existence, the Chinese had to choose; they could no longer continue to be an in-between race.

**Crossing National Borders: Locating the US in Migration History**

Many forces influenced the purpose and necessity of migration, and where one migrated to and how long one stayed there.

**Economic Ties**

Information regarding the cost of land, living, and wages travelled across national boundaries, attracting the attention of many.

These migrants, depending on nationality, may have had to face discrimination of various sorts, leading to their failure.

**Family Ties**

Many women in rural areas had little economic and marriage prospects; as a result, international marriage become prevalent.

**Focus on Culture**

Rather than focus on national boundaries (not all migrants remained in the same country, but often kept moving), it helps to focus on the contact between cultures that occurred as a result of migrant movement (money, ideas, beliefs, values, and people).

Prior to its independence, the US was connected to Europe and to Africa.

Connection to Africa ceased in the 1800s. The 1840s saw a small connection to Pacific cultures, particularly Asia (Chinese & Japanese).

Europe, especially Germany and Ireland, remained the largest cultural migration connection to the US.

The shift from agriculture to industry coincided with cheaper passage to the US and the arrival of more migrants, particularly from southern Europe (recall Italy).

1900s saw greater connection to Pacific cultures, but also enforced limitations that set a precedent for the quotas system of the 1920s.

Progression of the 1900s saw greater connection to Mexico (still US’s largest migration connection).

The Hart-Cellar Act (1965) stressed family reunification and skills preferences that further changed the pattern and differentiated between skilled and unskilled migrants.

**Recent Approaches to Migration**

Transnationalism became a common term, referring to the connections that migrants retained to their families in the homeland.

In Europe, “American” referred to those migrants that returned, often with different behaviors as a result of their time in the United States.

**Impossible Subjects: Intro. – Ch. 2**

Is it possible that illegal immigrants contribute to society on more than an economical level (cheap labor)?

Minority groups pursue inclusion, assimilation into the nation and all the other cultures present. Good or bad?

The illegal alien became a totally new entity with the advent of restriction laws; prior to that, no concept of them existed.

Race and racial hierarchy are social constructs that vary with time and are influenced by multiple factors.

**Regulation to Restriction**

Prior to the 1920s, immigration was largely unrestricted into the US as the nation continued to become a growing industrial and economic power. Immigrants provided the labor necessary to continue this evolution.

The sole exception was Asians (especially Chinese and Japanese).

As the 1920s began, industry was not in need of continual labor sources; rather, it began to focus on technological advancements.

**Johnson-Reed Act, 1924**

Nativists desired a more homogenous mixture of cultures within the US.

Leading into the 1900s, eugenics took hold 🡪 p. 24 “…intelligence, morality, and other social characteristics were permanently fixed in race.” 🡪 genetically and biologically

If the things that made certain races inferior were fixed biologically, then assimilation was impossible.

The introduction of scientific findings granted support to nativists and restrictionists, fueling the case against immigration.

As the 1920s advanced, ideas regarding race superiority/inferiority began to be replaced with the idea of racial difference, period; those different from whites (meaning Americans descended from northern and western Europe and immigrants from those countries).

**National Origins**

Quotas were determined based on the percentage of the Americans that traced their origins, either from immigration or descending from immigrants, to those nations.

Any individuals descending from non-white countries (Africa, Asia, even natives of Hawai’i and Alaska) were not counted as part of the population.

The development of the quotas system listed people of black, mulatto, Chinese, Japanese, or Indian) as colored, and they held no national origin🡪 no origin meant no citizenship was possible.

The idea arose of an American race, which would be achieved by ceasing to allow immigration and allowing the whites to breed amongst each other. Eventually, everyone would be of mixed white descent.

**Asians: Unassimilable**

Asians were viewed as incompatible with the ideas of American citizenship.

The Japanese were eventually given special consideration due to the necessity to maintain good relations with Japan.

Indians nearly came under the same provision, in order to maintain good relations with Great Britain, but Britain was unwilling to stand up for its subjects.

The judicial system struggled to establish true division of races and apply these categories to make judgments.

Eventually, the courts abandoned “scientific” methods of race classification and supported social constructs.

In reaction to the 1924 act, Japan imposed tariffs on American goods, ruining American business in Japan.

**Race, Citizenship, and Conquest**

Under the 1924 act, Mexicans were not barred from immigration or citizenship.

No countries in the Western Hemisphere had quotas imposed upon them.

Terms like “white” and “negro” gradually came not to me skin color, but ancestry.

The cutoff of European immigration resulted in Mexicans filling the necessary labor roles.

**Deportation Policy and Illegal Immigrants**

**Making Illegal Aliens**

Laws for identifying excludable aliens and removing such aliens that had entered the country became harsher just before the 1920s and continued to become harsher.

Most deportations occurred upon hospitalization, arrest, etc. 🡪 did illegal immigrants avoid healthcare in fear of being deported?

The onset of prohibition created a new class of illegal aliens, those that smuggled liquor.

**Border Patrol**

Originally, Mexicans were not required to cross the border at specific points; this did not occur until 1919.

The Border Patrol was created from dubious characters, and its enforcement of laws was somewhat suspect.

Many Mexicans gained irregular entry as weekly or weekend workers, or seasonal agricultural hands.

**Legal Reform and Unmaking Illegal Aliens**

Many deportations were unjust or conducted in such a way as to deny civil rights.

Debate continued on whether or not sexual misconduct constituted an offense worthy of deportation.

Moral lapses were common to all people, so should they be read differently regarding immigrants?

In the 1930s, petty crimes were no longer considered grounds for deportation.

Illegal entry into the country, however, was an absolute offense.