

## RACISM AGAINST JAPANESE IN THE UNITED STATES AND THE JAPANESE RESPONSE (1905-1924)

Prof. Dr. Kadhim Hailan Mohsin<sup>1</sup>, Noor Emad Swady<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Al-Karkh University of Science

<https://orcid.org/my-orcid?orcid=0009-0000-2112-4115>

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Lecturer, College of Education for Human Sciences, University of Basrah, <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-5323-3392>

kadhim.hailan@kus.edu.iq<sup>1</sup>  
noor.swady@uobasrah.edu.iq<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

The United States was founded as a homeland for immigrants from diverse races and cultures. However, its social and political history has remained burdened by systematic racial discrimination. Rather than becoming a true melting pot, American society was constructed on a hierarchical foundation based on racial standards, placing white Europeans at the top while marginalizing other races such as Africans, Asians, and Latinos. Among the groups subjected to long-term institutional discrimination were Japanese.

Americans, who emerged as a unique case combining legal and social exclusion with escalating security suspicion. Since the early 20th century, they faced increasing waves of racism, sometimes manifested in mass protests against their presence—especially by labor organizations that viewed them as a threat to their economic status and job opportunities—and at other times through societal demands to isolate them socially and segregate their children into separate schools.

Moreover, efforts to marginalize them included a special law enacted in 1913 that prohibited them from owning property. These discriminatory policies culminated in the Immigration Act of 1924, which not only completely banned Japanese immigration but also officially labeled them as an undesirable element within the structure of the American nation. This act gave legal legitimacy to the discrimination they had endured for decades, closing the doors to immigration and preventing the reunification of thousands of Japanese families both inside and outside the United States.

**Keywords:** Japanese immigration to the United States, anti-Japanese racism, Immigration Act of 1924, Gentlemen's Agreement, racial discrimination in America.

### Introduction

Because of racial prejudice fostered by generations of European settlers who carried with them a traditional European view of Asia as a strange land with backward and barbaric peoples, American leaders began to fear Japanese expansion as a potential threat to American national security as Japan became an empire in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.<sup>(1)</sup>

Discriminatory policies targeting Japanese Americans were not isolated from the general framework of racial discrimination in the United States, but rather came as an extension of a long-standing tradition of legal and social exclusion of non-white groups. African Americans were placed under a Jim Crow regime that enforced segregation and denied them civil rights.<sup>(2)</sup> Mexicans, Native Americans, and Eastern European immigrants have also been subjected to multiple forms of economic and cultural exclusion, fueled by

---

(1) Brandon J. March, *Fear, Racism, Agriculture: The drive for Japanese Internment*, A published Dissertation, Department of History, College of Arts and Sciences, Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia, 2024, P. 5.

(2) Richard Wormser, *The rise and fall of Jim Crow*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 2003, P. 14.

white supremacy, fear of economic and demographic threats, and the political use of national security concepts.<sup>(3)</sup>

The migration of Chinese labourers to the western United States during the California Gold Rush is one of the major factors contributing to racism in the country.<sup>(4)</sup> which sparked growing resentment among white workers, who demanded that Chinese workers be excluded from the country, using racist stereotypes that portrayed them as traitors and uncivilized. Trade unions were among the most powerful groups that worked to exclude Chinese from the labor market<sup>(5)</sup> and with the imposition of the first Chinese exclusion law in 1882, and Chinese immigration stopped, employers began to rely on Japanese workers<sup>(6)</sup> to meet their needs for cheap labor.

There were three reasons why Japanese people immigrated to the United States of America. The first was economic; the average wage in Japan was only fourteen cents per day, which led to a severe food shortage and forced the population to leave. The second was that the wages in the United States of America were two dollars per day, which made the Japanese leave their country. In fact, the majority of immigrants came from prefectures with the worst agricultural conditions and the highest rates of poverty. Second, California's labour need led to Japanese immigration. This resulted in part from the legislation of 1882 and 1892 that prohibited Chinese labour, as California farmers sought lower-paid foreign workers; third, Japanese immigration was only permitted by the Japanese government in 1885. However, every Japanese immigrant was obliged to leave the country only with the approval of the authorities and to receive a passport on the condition that they return within three years, with the specific proviso that immigrants should never lose their loyalty to the homeland. The Japanese government tried to assure that its foreign immigrants should reliably represent their motherland and that in case of destitution they should return home, and with this objective in mind, The "Migrant Protection" Act, passed by the Japanese government in 1896, required that each worker departing the nation have a responsible guarantor at home who might be forced to take care of him while he was unwell and, if needed, upon his return.<sup>(7)</sup>

Systemic racism became more prevalent in American culture after the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed in 1885 and Japanese immigration started. By the early 1900s, this type of racism was widely featured in the media and daily news reports. Human existence

---

(3) Roger Daniels, *Coming to America : a history of immigration and ethnicity in American life*, Perennial, New York, 2002, Pp. 245, 265, John Kuo Wei Tchen and Dylan Yeats, *Yellow peril! : an archive of anti-Asian fear*, Publisher Verso, New York, 2014, P. 228.

(4) The California Gold Rush was a major wave of immigration that occurred in the years (1848-1855), beginning with the discovery of gold in the town of Coloma in the state of California in 1848, and this event attracted hundreds of thousands of wealth-seekers from inside and outside the United States, and led to major demographic and economic changes, which accelerated California's accession to the American Union in 1850. For expansion, see:

H. W. Brands, *The Age of Gold: The California Gold Rush and the new American dream*, Publisher Folio Society, 2015 .

(5) Beth Lew Williams, *The Chinese Must Go: Violence, Exclusion, and the Making of the Alien in America*, Harvard University Press, 2018, Pp. 154-156.

(6) U. S., 47th Congress, Sess. 1, Ch. 117-120, 126, May 4, 1882, Pp. 58-61.

(7) Raymond Leslie Buell, *The Development of the Anti-Japanese Agitation in the United States*, *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 37, No. 4, Dec. 1922, Pp. 605-606 .

was governed by evolutionary rivalry between races, they asserted, and the Japanese, who were now the target of racism and hostility like the Chinese before them, were naturally antagonistic towards those of European ancestry.<sup>(8),(9)</sup>

The Treaty of Amity and Trade between the United States and Japan was signed in 1894, which regulated the conditions for Japanese immigration to American territory and defined their rights and duties in the United States of America, including affirming their loyalty to the Japanese homeland by returning and performing military service for each age group eligible for service and urged the maintenance of friendly relations between the two countries<sup>(10)</sup>.

Thus, from the beginning of their arrival in the United States, the Japanese worked in agriculture, and some also held jobs in logging, mining, and factories. By 1900, the Japanese population was about 25,000, mostly concentrated in Hawaii, California, and especially San Francisco<sup>(11)</sup>.

Because of this increased immigration, racial tensions escalated and tens of thousands of white workers and activists rallied in San Francisco on May 7, 1900, demanding the enactment of legislation to prevent the immigration of Chinese and Japanese, amid racist rhetoric from prominent figures such as Edward Ross, a professor of sociology at Stanford University, who considered Japanese and Chinese incompatible with American society and a threat to national employment<sup>(12)</sup>.

As Japanese immigration continued, labor unions and white supremacist organizations intensified their efforts to curtail the rights of Japanese, including depriving them of citizenship, calling Japanese "cunning," "tribal," and "intent on undermining white society," calling Japanese women prostitutes, and identifying Japanese art and artifacts that were once desirable in their culture as "nothing more than pieces of a strange race that can never assimilate into American society<sup>(13)</sup>."

In 1901, the Industrial Commission<sup>(14)</sup> declared that the Japanese were "more submissive than the Chinese, but less obedient and far less attractive, and have most of the

---

(8)"John Kuo Wei Tchen and Dylan Yeats, Op. Cit., Pp. 16-17.

(9) U. S. Constitution, Article 1, Section 8, Clause 4, Early U.S. Naturalization Laws, Constitution Annotated.

(10)) Authenticated U.S. Government Information, Treaty between the United States of America and the Empire of Japan, Commerce and navigation, Concluded at Washington, November 22, 1894; By the President of the United States of America, A Proclamation, Pp. 848-854

(11)) Ronald Takak, Strangers from a different Shore: A history of Asian Americans, University of California Press, 1998, Pp. 13, 180-181.

(12) Brandon J. March, Op. Cit., P. 52; Roger Daniels, , Asian America: Chinese and Japanese in the United States since 1850, University of Washington Press, Seattle, 1988, P. 33".

(13)" Brandon J. March, Op. Cit., P. 45.

(14) Industrial Commission: A federal commission formed by the U.S. Congress (1898-1902) to investigate railroad pricing policy, industrial concentration, and the impact of immigration on the labor market, and the committee consisted of nineteen members, ten of whom were members of Congress, and the other nine appointed by the President. times, and reducing Asian immigration, especially Japanese ones. For expansion see:

vices of the Chinese but have none of their virtues<sup>(15)</sup>, they belittle the Chinese in all things and are like them in class, deceitful, unreliable, and dishonest."

Organized labor unions went so far as to accuse the Japanese of working to destroy the lives of American workers, and an article in *The American Federation*, the official magazine of the labor union, stated that "white workers, even the ignorant and newcomers from southern and eastern Europe, possess qualities that enable them to join and contribute to the labor movement. They can be taught the basics of unionism, and they will stand side by side with loyal workers... Because the Japanese are incapable of integration, they will not be able to become trade unionists<sup>(16)</sup>." Therefore, most ordinary white citizens believed that ethnic Japanese should never be allowed to become American citizens, labor unions continued their fight against immigrants, and law firms were used to terminate employment contracts and eliminate the possibility of obtaining citizenship, and despite the unions' attempts to eliminate the right to citizenship, several court cases proved that birth on American soil confers citizenship, according to the principle of the right to land, which This has made the legal struggle complicated<sup>(17)</sup>

Politicians also used this incitement against Japanese and Chinese immigrants as an election platform, arguing that an increase in the number of Japanese would change the political balance in the United States, and called on Congress to extend exclusion laws to Japanese immigrants, considering their growing numbers a threat to U.S. industrial interests, and with the encouragement of the American Federation of Labor, which called for similar exclusion laws to be imposed on Japanese immigrants<sup>(18)</sup>. However, it was not until 1905 that a strong movement against the Japanese on the West Coast began

#### **Apartheid against the Japanese and the Masters' Convention (1905-1906)**

As labor demands to exclude the Japanese due to economic competition increased, racist aggression and incitement against them escalated, especially after Japan's victory in its war against Russia in 1905, which reinforced American concern about Japan as a rising power. <sup>(19)</sup> The Japanese and Korean Exclusion League, renamed the Asian Exclusion League in 1907, called for a complete halt to Asian immigration and a ban on Japanese from working, living, or even studying with white Americans<sup>(20)</sup>.

The Japanese government responded in an attempt to calm American public opinion, by announcing a reduction in the number of immigrants to Hawaii and temporarily suspending immigration to Hawaii, but the American demands escalated, so the Association began to pressure local politicians and Congress, and presented a list of five demands,

---

E. Dana Durand, *The United States Industrial Commission; Methods of Government Investigation*, *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol. 16, No. 4, Aug., 1902, Pp. 564-586.

(15)) Report of the Industrial Commission on the Condition of the Foreign Legislation upon matters Affecting General Labor, Vol. XVI, Government Printing Office, 1901, P. 77.

(16) Quoted in: Devon W. Carbadot, *Yellow by Law*, *California Law Review Magazine*, vol. 97, No. 3, June 2009, Pp. 641-642.

(17)) Lon Kurashige, *Two Faces of exclusion: the untold History of Anti-Asian Racism in the united states*, University of North Carolina Press, 2016, P. 93".

(18)" Izumi Hirobe *Japanese pride, American prejudice : modifying the exclusion clause of the 1924 Immigration Act*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2001, P. 7; Raymond A. Esthus, *Op. Cit.*, P. 129.

(19) John Kuo Wei Tchen and Dylan Yeats, *Op. Cit.*, P. 222.

(20)) Izumi Hirobe, *Op. Cit.*, P. 4, Raymond A. Esthus, *Op. Cit.*, P. 130.

including: expanding exclusion laws to include Japanese and Koreans, boycotting all those who employ them, segregating Asian students in private schools, intensifying media campaigns against them, and forming a united front in the Western States to Pressure the Federal Government<sup>(21)</sup>

On April 18, 1906, a devastating earthquake struck the city of San Francisco, followed by a fire that affected hundreds of buildings in the city, killed and injured hundreds of people, and caused property damage worth approximately \$350 million. Japan also sent a scientific expedition led by seismologist Fusakichi Omori to study the effects of the disaster, and gifted a state-of-the-art seismometer to the University of California<sup>(22)</sup>.<sup>(23)</sup>

The attack was a prelude to rising anti-Japanese racism, but the city's reconstruction revived anti-Japanese sentiment, as 10,000 Japanese were affected by the fire, and in an attempt to find new homes and workplaces, many moved to the western parts of San Francisco that had until then been the "land of the white man."<sup>(24)</sup>

In the midst of reconstruction, thousands of Japanese moved to the western neighborhoods of the city, which were considered the exclusive domain of whites, which exacerbated the hostile feelings against them, and the newspapers took advantage of this period to incite, describing the Japanese as a demographic danger,<sup>(25)</sup> and that if the next Congress did not take action in this regard, it would bear very serious responsibilities. When the Exclusion League failed to prevent its entry under the slogan "White men and women, take care of your race," it resorted to vandalism and violence in all Japanese workplaces, and in an atmosphere of tension, the issue of Japanese presence became a central focus of local election campaigns during the fall of 1906, with Republicans and Democrats competing to put forward programs calling for their<sup>(26)</sup> exclusion.

As part of the continuation of the racist policy against the Japanese, the San Francisco School Board of Directors issued a special decision on October 11, 1906, which included the dismissal of Japanese students and their placement in the "Mongolian School" in Chinatown, and based on the legal right to separate white school children from children of (Mongolian) schools, as the Japanese were called. In this way, to a school law that allowed school boards to establish separate schools for Indian, Chinese, and Mongol children, at their own discretion, however, the law did not mention the Japanese by name, although the law did not specifically mention the Japanese, the council justified its decision by easing overcrowding after the earthquake, and by protecting the "psychological impressions" of white children from mixing with those they described as "Mongolians").<sup>(27)</sup>

The decision to dismiss Japanese students angered the Japanese government, as it was considered a violation of the 1894 treaty that guaranteed Japanese the same treatment as

---

(21) Izumi Hirobe, Op. Cit., P. 5".

(22)) "F. R. U. S., Message from the president of the United States. To the Senate and House of Representatives, Earthquake and fire at San Francisco, the White House, May 3, 1906.

(23) Brandon J. March, Op. Cit., P. 60.

(24) Roger Daniels, Asian America..., P. 120.

(25)) Raymond A. Esthus, Theodore Roosevelt and Japan, University of Washington Press, Seattle, P. 133.

(26) Roger Daniels, The politics of prejudice : the anti-Japanese movement in California and the struggle for Japanese exclusion, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1977, P. 35; Raymond A. Esthus, Op. Cit., P. 133".

(27)" Ronald Takak, Op. Cit., P. 643; Raymond A. Esthus, Op. Cit., P. 137.



American citizens. On October 23, 1906, the Japanese ambassador sent a telegram of protest to U.S. Secretary of State Elihu Root, expressing the Japanese government's and people's rejection of the San Francisco Board of Education's decision, and that Tokyo had restored it. The measure is a national insult."<sup>(28)</sup>

In the face of the escalating crisis, President Theodore Roosevelt intervened, declaring his rejection of racial discrimination, and in his speech to Congress on December 3, 1906, he noted that the exclusion of Japanese from public schools was "uncivilized," asserting that the Japanese treated Americans with respect in their own country, and should be treated the same in the United States.<sup>(29)</sup>

In an attempt to contain the escalation, President Roosevelt sent Secretary of Commerce and Labor, Victor Metcalf, to California to investigate and try to persuade the Board of Education to back down, but the latter insisted on his position, so Roosevelt then took the case to federal court through a lawsuit filed by a Japanese parent, but to no avail.<sup>(30)</sup>

President Roosevelt of California and the city of San Francisco had no choice but to stick to their decision, so he invited a delegation of representatives of the state of California and the mayor of San Francisco to the White House on January 3, 1907, to discuss ways to ease tensions in the state, avoid any international escalation with Japan, and succeeded in reaching a tacit agreement to repeal the apartheid decision in exchange for a federal commitment to restrict Japanese immigration.<sup>(31)</sup>

In parallel with the diplomatic effort, Roosevelt sought to codify restrictions through the Immigration Act of 1907, which gave him broad powers to deny entry to certain categories of foreigners who might upset the "economic and social balance" and enabled him to issue executive orders to protect the U.S. labor market, which was passed by Congress on February 20, 1907.<sup>(32)</sup>

On the basis of that law, Roosevelt issued Executive Order No. 589 on March 14, 1907, which imposed severe restrictions on the entry of Japanese workers, whether coming directly from Japan or through third territories such as Hawaii, Canada, or Mexico, and justified<sup>(33)</sup> the decision by the existence of evidence that the Japanese government was issuing passports to alternative destinations used as a means of circumventing U.S. restrictions.

However, the U.S. administration was careful not to deteriorate relations with Japan, so in April 1907, Roosevelt and Japan's ambassador to Washington, Takateru Kogoro, reached an unwritten understanding that stipulated that the issuance of passports to workers wishing to emigrate to the United States would be stopped in exchange for San Francisco's reversal of

---

(28) F. R. U. S., Telegram From The Japanese Ambassador to the Secretary of State, File No. 9087-88, Washington, October 23, 1906.

(29) F. R. U. S., With The Annual Message Of The President Transmitted To Congress December 3, 1906, (In two Parts), PART I, Annual, To the Senate and House of Representatives, P. 41-44.

(30) Roger Daniels, *Asian America...*, P 121; Raymond A. Esthus, *Op. Cit.*, Pp. 134, 139, 143.

(31) Roger Daniels, *Asian America...*, P. 125.

(32) "U. S., 59th United State Congress, Sess. 11, Ch. 1134, An act to regulate the Immigration of Aliens into the United State, 34 state. 898, Public Law 59-96, 20 February, 1907, Pp. 898-911.

(33) Constitutional Amendments, Treaties, Executive Orders, and Major Acts of Congress Referenced in the Text, Immigration and Naturalization Policies, Executive Order 589.

the separation decision and the reunification of Japanese families, which was historically known as the Gentlemen's Agreement.<sup>(34)</sup>

Thus, the Masters' Agreement was enshrined as an unwritten diplomatic measure, allowing the U.S. administration to control immigration without violating international obligations, and without issuing a formal exclusion law similar to that imposed on the Chinese

Public opinion in the United States turned in his attack against President Roosevelt, as they found in his defense of the Japanese in the United States, and his attempt to appease the Japanese government, nothing but a feeling of weakness of the United States of America in front of Japan, and the American newspapers attacked him<sup>(35)</sup>, and the magazine "Puck" published in its issue of October 23, 1907, an article entitled "War with Japan" with a picture of President Roosevelt wearing Japanese uniform and defending Japan with a weapon in front of the newspapers The American criticized his handling of Japan, accusing him of favoring Japan's interest over his country.<sup>(36)</sup>

The Asian Exclusion League was at the forefront of the attack on President Roosevelt in his handling of the classroom crisis, and also attacked the mayor of San Francisco, and in a letter from the Asian Exclusion League to the mayor, saying that Roosevelt was trying to humiliate the American flag and that he "could not force free Californians to submit to the will of the Mikado—a nickname given to Japanese workers— and that Roosevelt's power would not turn all Japanese in the Japanese Empire into a white man. California is the country of the white man, not the graveyard of the Caucasians."<sup>(37)</sup>

Roosevelt, who was aware of the dangers of escalating hostility between the two countries, in light of Japan's rise as a world power and in light of his diplomacy, tried to balance things in his favor, especially after widespread speculation prevailed in the United States and Europe about the possibility of war between the two countries, due to Japan's resentment of the mistreatment of its citizens in the state of California. Roosevelt said that the time was right to show off his naval military power, on December 20, 1907, by sending the "Great White Fleet", consisting of sixteen battleships with their accompanying ships, which visited Japan as part of its trip around the world, with the intention of creating an impression in Japan of the power possessed by the United States, and silencing the repeated talk about Japan's feeling of being humiliated by racism within the United States against its citizens, and its intention to respond militarily to the That, and this is what has already happened<sup>(38)</sup>.

Despite the reduction in immigration under the Gentlemen's Agreement, there was still a legal loophole that the Japanese exploited, namely allowing family reunification, which led to the recruitment of thousands of wives through what were known as picture brides, where the marriage was carried out by proxy in Japan after exchanging photos, and then the wife was sent to the United States with a notarized passport as the wife of a resident immigrant<sup>(39)</sup>.

---

(34) F. R. U. S., The Secretary of State Charles E. Hughes to President Coolidge, Vol. 2, File No. 150.01/886, Washington, May 23, 1924, Pp. 392-393.

(35) Raymond A. Esthus, Op. Cit., P. 148".

(36)"Puck Magazine, L. M. Glackens, The War with Japan, Vol. LXII, No. 1599, October 23, 1907.

(37) Raymond Leslie Buell, Op. Cit., P. 629.

(38)) Whitney Griswold, The far Eastern Policy of the United States, Harcourt Brace and Company, New York, 1938, Pp. 128-129; Raymond A. Esthus, Op. Cit., Pp. 139-141.

(39)) Lon Kurashige, Op. Cit., P. 99; Roger Daniels, Asian America., P.126".

This action raised objections from the U.S. Department of Labor, which held that some women only provide photos of their husbands without a clear legal basis, and that proxy marriages do not meet U.S. legal standards.<sup>(40)(41)</sup> After lengthy negotiations, an agreement was reached whereby the Japanese government would issue official marriage certificates added to the family record (Koseki), so that they would be officially recognized and allowed to join their spouses in the United States<sup>(42)</sup>.

As a result of this arrangement, the number of Japanese in the United States increased significantly during 1907 and 1908, particularly in California and Hawaii, leading to the formation of closed Japanese communities and new fears among Americans who viewed this population expansion as a silent invasion<sup>(43)</sup>.

On the other hand, racist rhetoric has grown again, especially from the Asian Exclusion League, which saw this expansion as a breach of the agreement and an indirect return of mass immigration, and the Association, along with a number of newspapers, launched an organized campaign against Japanese immigrants, describing them as a "yellow danger" that threatens American culture and economy<sup>(44)</sup>.

### **Japanese Immigration Treaty and California Land Law (1909-1920)**

During the first decades of the twentieth century, the Japanese made up a large proportion of the labor force in Hawaii and California, with a concentration in the sugar cane plantations of Hawaii and vegetable and fruit plantations on the West Coast of the United States. Although this presence helped them to consolidate their cultural and social communities and to open their Japanese schools, they faced unfair wage and treatment conditions, which led to increased racial tension against them.<sup>(45)</sup> Their presence in Hawaii and California was met with opposition from the public, which found in them that they were a race (non-assimilable) and that they were taking the place and work of the white man, and their presence and work faced the greatest opposition from the Association of Supporters of Farm Workers, which consisted of the country's elite businessmen, religious leaders who found their religion to be a threat to Christianity, as well as journalists who found in the Japanese a threat to the country and were only a fifth column for their country to facilitate Japan's mission to invade the coasts of the states United States<sup>(46)</sup>.

Because of all that the Japanese faced in 1909, some 7,000 Japanese workers in Hawaii staged a major strike that lasted for four months to protest low wages and poor working conditions<sup>(47)</sup>, describing themselves as living in a "slave situation", as their homes were "like pigs' houses", and their wages were only \$18 per month, while the rest of the workers were paid (22). But the strike ended without positive results at the end of May 1909, and

---

(40)"F. R. U. S., Telegram From The Assistant Secretary of Labor to the Secretary of State Department of Labor, File No. 894.4054/11, Washington, April 24, 1917.

(41) F. R. U. S., Telegram From The Japanese Ambassador to the Secretary of State, File No. 894.4054/12, Washington, April 28, 1917.

(42) F. R. U. S., Telegram From The Japanese Ambassador to the Secretary of State, File No. 894.4054/21, Washington, August 25, 1917.

(43) Raymond A. Esthus, Op. Cit., P. 169.

(44) Izumi Hirobe, Op. Cit., P. 5, Lon Kurashige, Op. Cit., P. 99.

(45) Lon Kurashige, Op. Cit., Pp. 99-100; Ronald Takak, Op. Cit., Pp. 136-137".

(46)" Izumi Hirobe, Op. Cit., P. 6, 16.

(47) Hawaiian star Newspaper, Seven Thousand Idle Japanese, Vol. XVII, No. 5349, May 24, 1909, P. 1.



was met with threats from the police and dismissal from their jobs <sup>(48)</sup>, as well as from their residences, and the Japanese consul contributed to pressuring the workers to end it on the grounds that the strike harmed Japan's image and their loyalty to the Emperor. It coincided with a large wave of Japanese immigration to the United States between 1900 and 1924, when the number of immigrants exceeded 100,000. They worked in agriculture, mines, and factories, and over time some of them were able to establish their own businesses, with the help of Japanese cooperatives, began to own small farmland, and succeeded in implementing high-yielding agricultural patterns that helped them settle down and achieve some prosperity<sup>(49)</sup>.

This economic and social progress alarmed racist currents on the West Coast, especially in California, especially with the conclusion of the Treaty of Commerce and Navigation between the United States and Japan, signed on February 21, 1911, which granted the Japanese the right to own and rent for residential and commercial purposes<sup>(50)</sup>, which was considered a direct threat to the idea of "white supremacy" It also angered local politicians, who saw it as legal support for Japanese settlement<sup>(51)(52)</sup>.

In 1912, California Democratic Senator James Phelan stated in a letter to presidential candidate Woodrow Wilson that "the Japanese have invaded the valleys of California... The white man was driven off the ground... The Japanese are a stain on our civilization," he said, asking Wilson for support against the Japanese presence and immigration in the country, stressing that they are a danger to American culture and values, James Phelan not only did that, but he also raised his campaign slogan for Congress with the slogan "Keep California White<sup>(53)</sup>", at the same time, a wave of Japanese moving from cities to rural agricultural areas began in states such as Idaho, Utah, and Colorado, where they were able to lease thousands of acres of land and contributed decisively to the development of sugar beet cultivation, which raised greater concern among their white opponents<sup>(54)</sup>.

Consequently, political and labor pressures in the state of California began to pressure legislation that prohibited the ownership of land for those who could not obtain citizenship, that is, indirectly, the intention was for the Japanese, and this was already done by the passage of the California Legislature on May 19, 1913, the law known as the California Alien Land Law of 1913.) stated, among other things: "All aliens eligible for citizenship are permitted to acquire, own, and transfer land as U.S. citizens do... Foreigners who are not eligible for naturalization are prohibited from owning land or real estate interests... They are allowed to lease agricultural land for a period not exceeding three years only."<sup>(55)</sup>

---

(48) Raymond Leslie Buell, *Op. Cit.*, P. 610.

(49) Ronald Takak, *Op. Cit.*, Pp. 150-152, 186.

(50) F. R. U. S., With The Annual Message of the President Transmitted To Congress December 7, 1911, By the President of the United States of America Wm. H. Taft, a proclamation, February 21, 1911, Pp. 319-320.

(51) John Kuo Wei Tchen and Dylan Yeats, *Op. Cit.*, P. 242, Lon Kurashige, *Op. Cit.*, P. 101."

(52) Roger Daniels, *The politics of prejudice...*, P. 74.

(53) *Ibid.*, P. 57.

(54) Roger Daniels, *Asian America...*, P. 133.

(55) F. R. U. S., With the Address of the President to Congress December 2, 1913, *Statutes of California*; chapter 113, An act relating to the rights, powers and disabilities of aliens and of certain companies, associations and corporations with respect to property in this state,

On May 9, 1913, the Japanese ambassador in Washington sent an official letter of protest to the U.S. Secretary of State, expressing the Imperial Japanese Government's "painful disappointment" with the legislation passed by the California State Legislature on land acquisition by foreigners, which he considered "intrinsically unjust and discriminatory" and specifically directed against Japanese nationals. The Ambassador stressed that the law not only violates the acquired rights of Japanese people in American territory, but also contradicts the provisions of the 1911 Treaty of Commerce and Navigation between the two countries, in particular the first and third clauses of Article I, which guarantee the right of Japanese to own, lease, and transfer ownership on an equal basis with American citizens, as well as the utmost protection of their persons and property. He also protested the restrictions imposed by the law on companies and institutions that include Japanese shareholders, considering that they place their investments at risk of arbitrary confiscation, which undermines commercial confidence and violates the principle of the most favoured country stipulated in Article XIV of the Treaty.<sup>(56)</sup>

In his reply on May 19, 1913, the U.S. Secretary of State expressed his government's regret over Japan's understanding of California land law as a hostile act, stressing that the matter stemmed from local economic considerations that did not represent a national policy, and noted that the federal government sought to persuade state authorities to back down, but their powers were constitutionally limited, and stressed that the law did not violate the existing treaty, and that U.S. courts were available to foreigners to ensure their rights, stressing his country's continued commitment to friendship and cooperation with Japan, even in the event of the expiration of formal agreements.<sup>(57)</sup>

The correspondence shows a clash between two perspectives: Japan, which sees the law as a clear violation of existing conventions and deliberate racial discrimination, and the United States, which seeks to justify the legislation as domestic and not directed against the Japanese, in an attempt to separate federal relations from state decisions, reflecting the gap between the formal legal principles that Washington invokes and the realistic concerns expressed by Tokyo about protecting the rights of its citizens.

The California law drew great anger from Japan, and the Japanese ambassador to Washington expressed his anger in a letter to the U.S. Secretary of State, stating: "The Imperial Government considers this measure to be intrinsically unjust and discriminatory, and it cannot be ignored that it was primarily directed against my countrymen... It is not only injurious to the existing rights of Japanese nationals, but also contrary to the provisions of the treaty in force between Japan and the United States, and also contrary to the spirit and principles of friendship and understanding on which the traditional relations between the two countries are based."<sup>(58)</sup>

President Woodrow Wilson responded to Japan's protest and sent his Secretary of State William Bryan to California to negotiate with local authorities in an attempt to contain the tension that occurred between the two countries, but the state of California did not respond to

---

providing for escheats in certain cases, prescribing the procedure therein, and repealing all acts or parts of acts inconsistent or in conflict herewith., May 19, 1913, P. 628.

(56) F. R. U. S., Telegram From The Japanese Ambassador to the Secretary of State, Imperial Japanese Embassy, Vol. 1, File No. 811.52/164, Washington, May 9, 1913.

(57) F. R. U. S., Telegram From The Secretary of State to the Japanese Ambassador, Vol. 1, File No. 811.52/164, Washington, May 19, 1913.

(58) F. R. U. S., The Japanese Ambassador to the Secretary of State, Imperial Japanese Embassy, Washington, May 9, 1913, File No. 811.52/164, Pp. 630-631.

the President's demands to repeal the law, so President Woodrow suggested that they not implement the law quickly that might cause clashes with Japanese nationals or their government, and that they should not withdraw land from Japanese farmers until after a period of time and inform them of this in advance so that they could find <sup>(59)</sup>Thus, the U.S. response was diplomatically contained, based on the fact that the legislation came from a local authority, not a federal one.

The Japanese, as usual in adapting to the conditions imposed on them by American racism, have resorted to another option, which is that the law has been imposed on them in the state of California, where nearly two-thirds of the Japanese are gathered, not to own those who do not have the right to naturalize, but their children who have acquired citizenship by birth in the United States can own property, so they have put their real estate in the name of their minor children, and install themselves as their legal guardians<sup>(60)</sup>.

It was not only that the Japanese were deprived of the right to own the lands that Washington had pursued, but the anti-Japanese led a campaign to Americanize the Japanese, and led a campaign against them since the beginning of 1915 to stand against Japanese education and reject education in Japanese, claiming that by studying in Japanese schools, this would prevent them from integrating into American culture and continuing their loyalty to their home country. Anglo-American life while remaining in the lower socioeconomic classes of American society, insisting that by continuing to use their language and practice their cultural and social customs they were giving allegiance to their home country, Japan, and at the same time in their continued rejection of their existence through an American newspaper editor in Hawaii who described to the Japanese that "practically all Oriental races are of short stature, small physique, yellow or brown in color, and, in the case of the Japanese, characterized by flat features, protruding teeth, and short legs, we have the right to ask ourselves Whether we want to incorporate such characteristics into the American body Many Americans have claimed that the Japanese are adhering to Japanese customs, language, and racial pride in order to turn the American states into Japanese territories."<sup>(61)</sup>

The Japanese immigrants responded to this racism by doing nothing, but it went naturally at first as long as the Japanese had formed their own communities, away from the white man's communities, but when in 1916, the Japanese citizen Jokichi Harada bought a house in a suburb of California, far from the Japanese housing group imposed on them by racism, and registered the property in the name of his three children, and because his family was the first Japanese family to move in such an upscale area, he was attacked by the residents of the neighborhood. They filed numerous complaints against him, and attacked the real estate agent who sold the house, who in turn submitted what happened in a report to the Attorney General of the State of California, Ulysses Webb, and the latter's response to this, that there was nothing illegal in selling the house to Harada, but the Attorney General, who acknowledged the legality of this, rejected Harada's action, and tried to threaten him to move out of the house, and pointed out that this purchase circumvented the law, in that how could a Japanese have enough money to buy such a house, and that the house belongs to Harada and

---

(59)) Herbert P. Le Pore, *Prelude to Prejudice: Hiram Johnson, Woodrow Wilson, and the California Alien Land Law Controversy of 1913*, *Southern California Quarterly Magazine*, Vol. 61, No. 1, Spring 1979, Pp. 101,103.

(60) Roger Daniels, *Asian America...*, P. 147.

(61)) Eileen H. Tamura, *The English-Only Effort, the Anti-Japanese Campaign, and Language Acquisition in the Education of Japanese Americans in Hawaii, 1915-40*, *Magazine Of History of Education Quarterly*, Vol. 33, N o. 1, Spring 1993, Pp. 45-46.

that by registering the property in the name of his children is a fraud on the state because the house belongs to him because his family is the one who occupies the house, and Webb tried to offer Harada money to move out of the house, but the latter rejected all those attempts, and refused to sell his house, and so the case was filed before the Supreme Court of California<sup>(62)</sup>.

Webb argued before the court that if she had approved of Haradha's action, "land laws would be useless, any Japanese citizen could own land, property could be purchased in the name of Japanese children, cultivated by their parents, or leased to other Japanese for agricultural purposes, there was nothing to prevent California from becoming Japanese!"<sup>(63)</sup>.

The case went before the court for more than two years until the verdict was finally handed down in September 1918 in favor of Harada, asserting in his decision that "the argument of the plaintiff's counsel was directed almost exclusively to the discussion of Jokichi Harada's connection with this property, but it slightly overshadowed the interests of these children, who are the defendants, they are American citizens of a rather modest status, perhaps so, but they are still entitled to the equal protection of the laws of our country, no relation to attribute to them their rights to possess property, it depends on their status as U.S. citizens."<sup>(64)</sup>

The Harada case was only an expression of the extent to which racism permeated American society towards the Japanese, and it proved to them that Japanese immigrants began to adapt to the policies of restricting ownership, by registering real estate in the name of their citizen children, thus pushing the (white) community, and as the Harada case continued in the courts, to push for political pressure to pass a federal law that would restrict their immigration more broadly.

The Federal Immigration Act of 1917 represented a strategic shift in the instruments of racial discrimination against the Japanese, which was passed by Congress on February 3, 1917, defying the presidential veto used by President Woodrow Wilson in the first rare exercise of the veto power on an immigration law, and the law provided for the creation of what is known as the "Asiatic Barred Zone."), a region that included most of Asia, including India, the Arabian Peninsula, parts of Russia, Southeast Asia, and most of the islands of the Pacific. Although Japan was not officially included in this zone due to the understandings in the Masters' Agreement and the 1911 Treaty, the law represented a clear hostile message, imposing new immigration requirements such as foreign-language literacy tests, barring all illiterate immigrants over the age of 16 from entering the United States, and barring entire categories such as "the poor, the insane, the infected, anarchists, prostitutes, alcoholics, people with mental and physical defects...", which was interpreted to be specifically aimed at groups representing the majority of Asian migrants.<sup>(65)</sup>

This was the first law that affected European immigration as well, and although the law defined the Asian Restricted Zone and Japan was one of these countries, but the Japanese objection to this law was in the article about the literacy test that is imposed on every immigrant, Japan through its ambassador to the United States demanded that (photo brides) who join their husbands of Japanese workers in the United States, be excluded from that test,

---

(62)) Mark Howland Rawitsch, *The house on Lemon Street : Japanese pioneers and the American dream*, University Press of Colorado, Boulder, 2012, Pp. 1, 11, 113-115.

(63) Ibid., P. 125.

(64)) Brandon J. March, *Fear, Racism, Agriculture: The drive for Japanese Internment*, A published Dissertation, Department of History , College of Arts and Sciences, Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia, 2024, Pp. 12-13.

(65) 64th United States Congress, Sess. 11, Ch. 27-29, February 3, 1917, Pp. 874-898.

because they are not immigrants for work but are joined by their husbands residing in the states<sup>(66)</sup>.

The response of the United States Administration, through the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Labour, was to agree to this and to require the wife to be provided with all the necessary documents proving that she is married to the person with whom she is joining.<sup>(67)</sup>

This approach expressed Tokyo's keenness to avoid political escalation between the two countries, which had always been keen to preserve the dignity of its citizens everywhere and the limited rights of its citizens in light of the growing American racism against Asians, and more importantly, the law was passed at the height of World War I, when Japan was busy expanding its influence in the Pacific through its participation in World War I (1914-1918), which made the de-escalation affect the escalation in order to preserve its international gains.

Although the Immigration Act of 1917 represented an important shift in U.S. federal policy by imposing literacy tests and excluding Asians from the "Prominent Asian Line" area, its application was not sufficient to satisfy rising racial currents on the West Coast, especially in California<sup>(68)</sup>. However, this acceptance led to a new wave of domestic hostility, with the Japanese accused of circumventing legal restrictions by establishing families that would allow them to stabilize in the United States, especially by buying land in the names of their American-born children<sup>(69)</sup>.

Accusations began to mount that Japanese immigrants were taking advantage of these exceptions to circumvent the law, forming complete families by exempting their marriages from immigration laws, and then using their children born on U.S. soil – who are citizens by birth – to buy and register agricultural land in their names. Foreigners who are not eligible for naturalization (i.e. Asians in particular) from land ownership<sup>(70)</sup>.

In 1920, California passed a substantial amendment to the 1913 law, which was more stringent and detailed, including prohibiting the registration of land in the names of children if it was proven to be intended to evade the law by exploiting their U.S. citizenship, prohibiting proxy contracts or using U.S. citizen intermediaries or shell companies as a front for Japanese land ownership, and it imposed strict legal obligations on Japanese parents who registered land in their children's names, including prosecuting them if the intent to circumvent was proven, and expanded the state's powers to investigate and immediately confiscate any property that is found to be fraudulent<sup>(71)</sup>.

The amendment was not just a legal step, but a structural shift toward an institutionalized policy of discrimination against the Japanese, and it became clear that the racist rhetoric that had previously been used in election campaigns was finding its way into practical legislation.

---

(66) F. R. U. S., Telegram From The Japanese Ambassador to the Secretary of State, Imperial Japanese Embassy, Vol. 1, File No. 894.4054/19, Washington, July 25, 1917.

(67) F. R. U. S., Telegram From The Secretary of State to the Japanese Ambassador, Vol. 1, No. 21, File No., 894.4054/11, Washington, April 28, 1917; F. R. U. S., Telegram From The Assistant Secretary Louis F. Post of Labor to the Secretary of State, Vol. 1, File No. 894.4054/15, Washington, May 23, 1917.

(68) F. R. U. S., Telegram From The Japanese Ambassador to the Secretary of State, Vol. 2, File No. 894.4054/21, Washington, August 25, 1917.

(69) Lon Kurashige, *Op. Cit.*, Pp. 124-125.

(70) *Ibid*; Ronald Takak, *Op. Cit.*, P. 205.

(71) California, Statutes and Amendments to the Code, Ch. 50, Sec. 1-7, Cal. Stat. 79, 1920. P. 79.



### **Japanese exclusion in the National Quota Laws of 1921 and 1924**

Public opinion has expanded to establish comprehensive national restrictions on immigration, not limited to Japanese only, but also immigrants from southern and eastern Europe who were also considered "culturally and ethnically foreigners."

Congress signed the Emergency Quota Act of 1921 on May 19, 1921, which limited the number of immigrants admitted from any country annually to 3% of the number of residents of the United States as of the 1910 census. To promote white Protestant supremacy in Gal-Saxony, congressional officials have made clear their desire to reconstruct American identity on the basis <sup>(72)</sup> of Anglo-Saxon ancestry, making the law part of a racist legislative system intertwined with state laws such as California's land laws.

Although the law did not explicitly exclude Japanese, its adoption of the principle of quotas based on national origin, and its operation in the 1910 census – before the great expansion of Japanese immigration – made it a tool to effectively restrict them and prepare the legal ground for stricter legislation later.

With this federal transformation, the U.S. judiciary began to redefine the boundaries of American affiliation along racial lines, as was evident in the 1922 case of *Takao Ozawa v. United States*, Takeo Ozawa, born in 1875, a Japanese immigrant to the United States since 1894 who studied and graduated in the United States, settled there, raised a family, and found himself worthy of U.S. citizenship because, as he describes himself, "one of the most assimilated Japanese in American society" because he speaks fluent English, converts to Christianity, dresses and lives just like Americans, so he applied for citizenship <sup>(73)</sup>.

However, on November 13, 1922, the Supreme Court ruled in his case that the Japanese were "not of Caucasian race" and therefore could not acquire American citizenship, despite their years of residence, service, and professional dedication, and that the term "free white persons" <sup>(74)</sup> did not apply to Japanese citizens, regardless of their good character or the extent of their integration.

The following year, 1923, the states continued to escalate through further amendments to land ownership laws. In states such as Oregon, Washington, Hawaii, and Montana, stricter versions of the Alien Non-Naturalization Laws were adopted, including not only the prohibition of ownership, but also the imposition of fines and penalties for any attempts to circumvent property by registering property in the name of the children of Japanese American citizens. In Washington state, for example, the law was amended to prohibit even land leases and criminalize the legal guardianship of Japanese parents over their American children <sup>(75)</sup>, a blatant racist interference in the family system.

Thus, it appears that the 1921 Act was not just an organizational move, but the spark that launched a sweeping campaign against Japanese identity and presence in America, moving from immigration to citizenship, from monarchy to family dismantling.

In the midst of the rapid escalation of legislative discrimination against the Japanese in the United States, especially after a series of judicial rulings issued in 1923 that enacted laws prohibiting agricultural ownership and lease in states such as California and Washington, the Japanese government took the initiative to send a strongly worded diplomatic memorandum to the U.S. Department of State through its embassy in Washington on December 4, 1923. This memorandum came as a result of the accumulation of previous diplomatic demands

---

(72) 67th United States Congress, Sess. 1, Ch. 8, May 19, 1921, P. 5.

(73) Ronald Takak, *Op. Cit.*, Pp. 206, 208.; Devon W. Carbadot, *Op. Cit.*, P. 635.

(74) U. S. Law, U. S. Supreme Court, *Ozawa v. United States*, Vol. 260, No. 1, 1922, P. 178.

(75) Ronald Takak, *Op. Cit.*, Pp. 206-207.

dating back to 1913, in which Japan repeatedly called for a review of the land laws targeting its citizens who are legally residing in the country, and the Japanese government considered, in that telegram, that the decisions of the Supreme Court did not provide the Japanese with any exemption, but rather further entrenched the strict restrictions on them, and deprived them of the most basic civil rights enjoyed by immigrants from other countries that do not even have friendship treaties with Washington. Deeply concerned that these precedents would encourage what it called the "anti-Japanese element" on the West Coast to further invent more means of persecution against the Japanese community, and that this impact might even extend to other states later, the Japanese government reaffirmed its position that its citizens residing in the United States are peaceful, hardworking, law-abiding individuals, who have contributed their efforts to the development of local communities, especially in the agricultural and commercial sectors. However, they are, in the words of the telegram, are forced to endure "unbearable hardship" in the name of the legislative freedom of the states, and are targeted collectively on the basis of race or nationality, not on the basis of individual acts.<sup>(76)</sup>

In a soft but clear diplomatic warning, the Japanese government made it clear that the continuation of this discrimination, and the absence of any "non-judicial remedial measure", could undermine the friendly relations between the two countries, stressing that Japan's patience over the past years stemmed from its deep keenness to avoid any confrontation with a friendly country, however, it urgently called for "serious steps" to alleviate the suffering of the Japanese, armed with what it described as "American justice", which must prompt the American people to support any honest endeavor by their government to remedy this injustice."<sup>(77)</sup>

The next day, on December 5, 1923, the American Chargé d'Affaires in Tokyo, Caffrey, conveyed a telegram to Washington, in which he confirmed that the Japanese press was dealing with these judicial decisions with increasing tension, although no violent tone had been adopted, and that a number of Japanese associations had called on the Japanese government to invite the United States to form a joint high committee to study these issues<sup>(78)</sup>.that such decisions of the Supreme Court are final, and that the laws of the States "do not go beyond what is provided for in the 1911 treaty, but merely restrict the rights of incompetent aliens."<sup>(79)</sup>

These developments reflected a deep rift in trust between the two countries, outlined the ultimate failure of diplomacy to contain the racial impasse imposed on the Japanese community, and led directly to the enactment of the Immigration Act of 1924, which would mark the height of institutional discrimination against Japanese in modern American history.

At the end of 1923, the most prominent proponents of Japanese exclusion in Congress, Senator Albert Johnson, one of the most prominent proponents of eugenics in the United States, and Senator David Reed, introduced a bill to exclude Asian immigration in general and Japanese immigration in particular, who described this bill as "a bulwark against the flow

---

(76)) F. R. U. S., Telegram from The Japanese Embassy to the Department of State, substance of instructions received by the Japanese ambassador from his government, Vol. 2, File No. 811.5294/414, 811.5294/414.

(77) Ibid.

(78) F. R. U. S., Telegram From The Chargé in Japan (Caffery) to the Secretary of State, File No. 811.5294/413, Tokyo, December 5, 1923.

(79) F. R. U. S., Telegram from The Secretary of State to the Chargé in Japan(Caffery), File No. 811.5294/411, Washington, December 23, 1923.

of foreign blood" and that through it they would be able to establish an American identity by maintaining racial homogeneity<sup>(80)</sup>.

California Governor Hiram Johnson, California Attorney General Ulysses Webb, and Senator James Flynn, the most prominent members of the Japanese Exclusion League, who stated in his testimony before the Senate Immigration Committee in early 1924 in an attempt to press the passage of the bill proposed by Johnson and Reid, stated that " The Japanese are less assimilating and more dangerous as residents of this country than any of the other peoples who are not eligible under our laws... They don't come here with any desire or intention to lose their racial or national identity... They never stop being Japanese... In their quest to achieve their intention to colonize this country with this ethnicity, they seek to secure the land and establish large families... They have more energy, more determination, more ambition than the Yellow races and other structures that are not eligible for citizenship, and with the same low living standards, working hours, and the use of women and child labor, they naturally become more dangerous competitors economically."<sup>(81)</sup> This bill included the prohibition of immigration of any foreigner who was not eligible for citizenship, and the reduction of quotas for immigrants to 2% according to the 1890 census, which meant the complete end of Japanese immigration.<sup>(82)</sup>

The US administration was aware of the danger of passing this law on relations between the United States of America and Japan, so in a telegram from US Secretary of State Charles Hughes on February 8 to the Chairman of the House Immigration Committee, Albert Johnson, after reading the draft law, he criticized Johnson's immigration project, stressing that the bill contradicts the 1911 treaty, which guarantees Japanese commercial and housing rights. Hughes also raised the possibility of amending the clause to exclude those entitled to enter under the 1911 treaty, especially that under the proposed quota system, the number eligible for immigration will not exceed approximately 246 people per year, which makes the exception less diplomatic. importance to maintaining international relations and American standards of justice."<sup>(83)</sup>

In the midst of the legislative escalation against the Japanese in the United States during the early 1920s, the telegram of the American Chargé d'Affaires in Tokyo, Jefferson Caffrey, dated January 11, 1924, came to highlight the extent of the internal boil in Japan regarding the decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court, especially those that upheld the land laws in California and Washington. The government has indicated that it has already initiated unannounced diplomatic contacts with Washington, demanding a review of these legislations because of their "serious" effects, while continuing to wait for the US response by voluntarily renouncing their Japanese citizenship<sup>(84)</sup>, a remarkable development that shows the diplomatic flexibility that wanted to reassure the American side.

---

(80)) Desmond king, *Making Americans Immigration, Race, and the Origins of the Diverse Democracy*, Harvard University Press, 2009, P. 206.

(81) Roger Daniels, *Asian America....*, Pp. 99-100.

(82) 68th United States Congress, Sess. 1, Chs. 185,190, Pub. L. 68-139, May 24, 1924, Pp. 153-170.

(83) F. R. U. S., Telegram From The Secretary of State Charles E. Hughes to the Chairman of the Committee on Immigration and Naturalization of the House of Representatives (Johnson), Vol. 1, File No. 150.01/778, Washington, February 8, 1924.

(84) F. R. U. S., Telegram From The Chargé in Japan (Caffrey) to the Secretary of State, Vol. 2, File. No. 811.5294/430, Tokyo, Tokyo, January 11, 1924; Telegram From The

What is striking in that cable is the fact that Japan's Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Interior, War, and Navy all agreed to these policies, and for the first time recorded their willingness to waive their demand for the conscription of these American-born people. Japanese.

In January 1924, as the proposed immigration law was about to pass in the U.S. Congress, the Japanese government, through its embassy in Washington, submitted one of the most protesting memos ever addressed to the U.S. Secretary of State. "To rid the U.S. government of the painful embarrassment" of racial pressures in California. The ambassador also recalled the statements of the U.S. Secretary of State at the time, in 1911, that the trade treaty does not contradict immigration laws as long as it does not discriminate between peoples, and asserts that any exception for Japanese in the new bill is a clear violation of these treaties between the two countries. The Japanese were included in the 1922 Supreme Court decision in the Takao Ozawa case, which was included in the categories barred from entering the United States, represented arbitrary and unfair discrimination against "a friendly people with an honorable record in peaceful relations," and added that the issue was not a question of material benefits or the number of immigrants, but a question of national dignity, rejecting the justifications of the bill as "discrimination on the basis of race or nationality, not on the basis of individual qualifications." The note concluded with an indirect warning that the passage of this law would be interpreted in Japan as a deliberate insult to the Japanese nation, threatening to collapse the friendly framework of bilateral relations, and denying any point of continuing economic or cooperative partnership under explicit and directed legal discrimination against Japan<sup>(85)</sup>.

In the context of the controversy over the 1924 immigration bill, the letter from the Japanese ambassador in Washington to the U.S. State Department played a crucial role in changing the attitude of a number of senators who were inclined to calm down and preserve the gentlemen's agreement. The Japanese letter, which expressed "serious consequences" if the law passed, was seen as a veiled threat to U.S. sovereignty. Senator Henry Cabot Lodge expressed his deep displeasure with this tone, considering that the United States For his part, Senator Moussa saw that the expression "dire consequences" is not alien to diplomatic language, but he acknowledged with Lodge that the letter tipped the scales in favor of the option of completely excluding the Japanese instead of relying on quotas or bilateral agreements. Senator Reid expressed regret that he had to vote against the amendment that respects the gentlemen's agreement, but he saw that the content of the Japanese ambassador's letter embarrassed the committee and forced them to take a defensive stance to preserve the American legislative sovereignty, while Senator Pepper stressed that the agreement between the two parties was not based on threat or pressure, and therefore Japan's message practically ended the spirit of the gentlemen's agreement, and turned the issue from a diplomatic matter to a cold legislative necessity to resolve the situation in this sense. The Japanese letter marked a turning point in the atmosphere of debate within the Senate, as many saw it as evidence of an unacceptable "diplomatic blackmail" attempt, which led to new voices joining in favor of voting on the Total Exclusion Act, which carried an overtly racist character against the

---

Ambassador in Japan (Bancroft) to the Secretary of State, Vol. 2, File No. 894.012/15, Tokyo, March 24, 1925.

(85) F. R. U. S., Memorandum From the The Japanese Embassy (M. Hanihara) to the Department of State, Vol. 2, File No. 711.945/1063, Washington, January 15, 1924.

Japanese. A new situation" that leaves no room but to confirm that migration policy is a purely internal affair and that no foreign country has the right to intervene in it.<sup>(86)</sup>

Thus, the Immigration Act of 1924 was passed on May 26, which completely prohibited the entry of Japanese into the United States, marking the official end of the Masters' Agreement and the 1911 Treaty, and the Japanese people's response to this law was a clear and deliberate affront to the dignity of the Japanese nation, as a wave of popular anger began across the country, ranging from public political protests and fiery newspaper articles, to violent popular expression, including the burning of the American flag, and the throwing of the American flag<sup>(87)</sup> In a remarkable escalation that highlights the depth of the national wound, a Japanese citizen, in a symbolic move, committed suicide in front of the American Embassy, leaving a message in which he expressed his feeling that the American law insults the honor of the whole of Japan<sup>(88)</sup>.

This was accompanied by an immediate deterioration in diplomatic relations between the two countries, as the Japanese ambassador in Washington was summoned for consultations, and the Japanese government refused to send a new ambassador for a period of time, in an implicit expression of diplomatic anger, and prominent political figures such as Prime Minister Kato Takaki and Foreign Minister Matsui Hirano denounced the US decision, considering it a serious setback for the course of friendly relations between the two powers in the Pacific<sup>(89)</sup>.

Within the United States, the law has had a significant psychological and economic impact on Japanese Americans living legally, as they are officially treated as undesirable, subjected to further social harassment, additional restrictions on land ownership, increased discrimination in educational institutions and the labor market, and many Japanese Americans feel deprived of their most basic rights despite their economic contributions and commitment to public order. It paved the way for the consolidation of the image of the "yellow danger" in the American discourse, which culminated in the Second World War with the policies of mass detention<sup>(90)</sup>.

## Conclusion

This study showed that the racism directed against the Japanese in the United States was not just a passing social phenomenon, but was based on a central idea of consolidating the dominance of the white race and preserving the economic and social privileges of Americans of European origin, in light of the firm conviction that Asian races – especially Japanese ones – are incapable of full integration into American society, and this idea was reinforced by the political and media discourse that fueled fears of the "Asian danger" and linked the existence of the Japanese to the threat to the identity of the nation and its economic security.

This racist tendencies have been reflected in the daily lives of Japanese people in America through the enactment of laws restricting their immigration, preventing them from

---

(86) F. R. U. S., Telegram From The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Japan (Woods), Vol. 2, File No. 711.945/1043, Washington, April 15, 1924.

(87) Yuji Ichioka, *The Issei: The World of the First Generation Japanese Immigrants, 1885-1924*,

Collier Macmillan Publishers, London, 1988, P. 247.

(88) Izumi Hirobe, *Op. Cit.*, Pp. 33, 42-43.

(89) *Ibid*, P. 10.

(90) Ronald Takak, *Op. Cit.*, P. 213, Yuji Ichioka, *Op. Cit.*, Pp. 251-254.



owning property, excluding them from naturalization pathways, as well as pushing them to work in marginal sectors such as farms and service businesses, which has entrenched their social isolation and weakened their chances of integration.

Although U.S. policies have been partially successful in reducing Japanese immigration and limiting their economic expansion, they have failed to eliminate their presence or weaken their ability to cope, as the Japanese have demonstrated an ability to build strong economic and social networks within their communities, and to achieve levels of relative stability and prosperity despite the restrictions imposed on them.

In terms of international relations, this legal and societal discrimination has been a constant source of tension between Washington and Tokyo, as the Japanese government considers it a direct insult to its national dignity and a violation of bilateral treaties, which has damaged its confidence in American intentions.

These findings reveal that racist policies do not remain confined to their domestic sphere, but extend to have far-reaching effects on international relations, and reshape the attitudes and behavior of states in the world order.

## References

- Treaty between the United States of America and the Empire of Japan, Commerce and navigation, concluded at Washington, November 22, 1894. A Proclamation by the President of the United States of America, pp. 848-854.
- Williams, B. L. (2018). *The Chinese Must Go: Violence, Exclusion, and the Making of the Alien in America*. Harvard University Press.
- March, B. J. (2024). *Fear, Racism, Agriculture: The Drive for Japanese Internment*. (Doctoral dissertation). Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia.
- Daniels, R. (1988). *Asian America: Chinese and Japanese in the United States since 1850*. University of Washington Press.
- California Statutes and Amendments to the Code, Ch. 50, Sec. 1-7, Cal. Stat. 79. (1920.)
- U.S. Congress. (n.d.). *Constitutional Amendments, Treaties, Executive Orders, and Major Acts of Congress Referenced in the Text, Immigration and Naturalization Policies, Executive Order 589*.
- King, D. (2009). *Making Americans: Immigration, Race, and the Origins of the Diverse Democracy*. Harvard University Press.
- Durand, E. D. (1902). The United States Industrial Commission; methods of government investigation. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 16(4), 564-586.
- Tamura, E. H. (1993). The English-only effort, the anti-Japanese campaign, and language acquisition in the education of Japanese Americans in Hawaii, 1915-40. *History of Education Quarterly*, 33(1), 45-46.
- U.S. Department of State. (1924). Telegram from the Secretary of State Charles E. Hughes to the Chairman of the Committee on Immigration and Naturalization of the House of Representatives (Johnson). F. R. U. S., Vol. 1, File No. 150.01/778, Washington, February 8.
- U.S. Department of State. (1924). Memorandum from the Japanese Embassy (M. Hanihara) to the Department of State. Vol. 2, File No. 711.945/1063, Washington, January 15.
- U.S. Department of State. (1906). Message from the president of the United States to the Senate and House of Representatives: Earthquake and fire at San Francisco. The White House, May 3.
- U.S. Department of State. (1917). Telegram from the Japanese Ambassador to the Secretary of State. F. R. U. S., Vol. 1, File No. 894.4054/19, Washington, July 25.

- U.S. Department of State. (1917). Telegram from the Assistant Secretary of Labor to the Secretary of State. F. R. U. S., Vol. 1, File No. 894.4054/15, Washington, May 23.
- U.S. Department of State. (1923). Telegram from the Chargé in Japan (Caffery) to the Secretary of State. F. R. U. S., File No. 811.5294/413, Tokyo, December 5.
- U.S. Department of State. (1924). Telegram from the Chargé in Japan (Caffery) to the Secretary of State. F. R. U. S., Vol. 2, File No. 811.5294/430, Tokyo, January 11.
- U.S. Department of State. (1925). Telegram from the Ambassador in Japan (Bancroft) to the Secretary of State. F. R. U. S., Vol. 2, File No. 894.012/15, Tokyo, March 24.
- U.S. Department of State. (1906). Telegram from the Japanese Ambassador to the Secretary of State. F. R. U. S., File No. 9087-88, Washington, October 23.
- U.S. Department of State. (1917). Telegram from the Japanese Ambassador to the Secretary of State. F. R. U. S., File No. 894.4054/12, Washington, April 28.
- U.S. Department of State. (1917). Telegram from the Japanese Ambassador to the Secretary of State. F. R. U. S., File No. 894.4054/21, Washington, August 25.
- U.S. Department of State. (1913). Telegram from the Japanese Ambassador to the Secretary of State. F. R. U. S., Imperial Japanese Embassy, Vol. 1, File No. 811.52/164, Washington, May 9.
- U.S. Department of State. (1924). Telegram from the Japanese Embassy to the Department of State. F. R. U. S., substance of instructions received by the Japanese ambassador from his government, Vol. 2, File No. 811.5294/414, 811.5294/414.
- U.S. Department of State. (1924). Telegram from the Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Japan (Woods). F. R. U. S., Vol. 2, File No. 711.945/1043, Washington, April 15.
- U.S. Department of State. (1923). Telegram from the Secretary of State to the Chargé in Japan (Caffery). F. R. U. S., File No. 811.5294/411, Washington, December 23.
- U.S. Department of State. (1913). Telegram from the Secretary of State to the Japanese Ambassador. F. R. U. S., Vol. 1, File No. 811.52/164, Washington, May 19.
- U.S. Department of State. (1913). The Japanese Ambassador to the Secretary of State, Imperial Japanese Embassy, Washington, May 9. F. R. U. S., File No. 811.52/164, pp. 630-631.
- U.S. Department of State. (1924). The Secretary of State Charles E. Hughes to President Coolidge. F. R. U. S., Vol. 2, File No. 150.01/886, Washington, May 23, pp. 392-393.
- U.S. Department of State. (1913). With the Address of the President to Congress, December 2, 1913, Statutes of California; Chapter 113, An Act Relating to the Rights, Powers, and Disabilities of Aliens and of Certain Companies, Associations, and Corporations with Respect to Property in This State, Providing for Escheats in Certain Cases. F. R. U. S., May 19, pp. 628.
- U.S. Department of State. (1906). With The Annual Message of the President Transmitted to Congress, December 7, 1911. By the President of the United States of America, Wm. H. Taft, A Proclamation. F. R. U. S., February 21, pp. 319-320.
- Brands, H. W. (2015). The Age of Gold: The California Gold Rush and the New American Dream. Folio Society.
- Hawaiian Star Newspaper. (1909). Seven Thousand Idle Japanese. Vol. XVII, No. 5349, May 24, p. 1.
- Le Pore, H. P. (1979). Prelude to Prejudice: Hiram Johnson, Woodrow Wilson, and the California Alien Land Law Controversy of 1913. Southern California Quarterly Magazine, 61(1), 101-103.

- Hirobe, I. (2001). *Japanese Pride, American Prejudice: Modifying the Exclusion Clause of the 1924 Immigration Act*. Stanford University Press.
- Tchen, J. K. W., & Yeats, D. (2014). *Yellow Peril! : An Archive of Anti-Asian Fear*. Verso.
- Kurashige, L. (2016). *Two Faces of Exclusion: The Untold History of Anti-Asian Racism in the United States*. University of North Carolina Press.
- Rawitsch, M. H. (2012). *The House on Lemon Street: Japanese Pioneers and the American Dream*. University Press of Colorado.
- Puck Magazine. (1907). L. M. Glackens, *The War with Japan*. Vol. LXII, No. 1599, October 23.
- Carbadot, D. W. (2009). *Yellow by Law*. California Law Review Magazine, 97(3), 641-642.
- Buell, R. L. (1922). *The Development of the Anti-Japanese Agitation in the United States*. Political Science Quarterly, 37(4), 605-606.
- Esthus, R. A. (1998). *Theodore Roosevelt and Japan*. University of Washington Press.
- Report of the Industrial Commission on the Condition of the Foreign Legislation upon Matters Affecting General Labor. (1901). Vol. XVI, Government Printing Office.
- Wormser, R. (2003). *The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow*. St. Martin's Press.
- Daniels, R. (2002). *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life*. Perennial.
- Daniels, R. (1977). *The Politics of Prejudice: The Anti-Japanese Movement in California and the Struggle for Japanese Exclusion*. University of California Press.
- Takaki, R. (1998). *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans*. University of California Press.
- 59th United States Congress. (1907). *An Act to Regulate the Immigration of Aliens into the United States*, 34 State, 898-911, Public Law 59-96.
- U.S. Constitution. (n.d.). Article 1, Section 8, Clause 4. *Early U.S. Naturalization Laws*, Constitution Annotated.
- U.S. Supreme Court. (1922). *Ozawa v. United States*, 260 U.S. 1.
- 47th Congress, Sess. 1, Ch. 117-120,126. (1882). Pp. 58-61.
- Griswold, W. (1938). *The Far Eastern Policy of the United States*. Harcourt Brace and Company.
- Ichioaka, Y. (2001). *The Issei: The World of the First Generation Japanese Immigrants, 1885-1924*. APA.