



Hacettepe University Graduate School of Social Sciences

Department of American Culture and Literature

**THE CHINESE AMERICAN AND JAPANESE AMERICAN
EXPERIENCE IN GRAPHIC NOVELS AND VISUAL
NARRATIVES**

Kaan GAZNE

Master's Thesis

Ankara, 2019

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KABUL VE ONAY

Kaan Gazne tarafından hazırlanan “The Chinese American and Japanese American Experience in Graphic Novels and Visual Narratives” başlıklı bu çalışma, 12 Haziran 2019 tarihinde yapılan savunma sınavı sonucunda başarılı bulunarak jürimiz tarafından yüksek lisans tezi olarak kabul edilmiştir.



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Yukarıdaki imzaların adı geçen öğretim üyelerine ait olduğunu onaylıyorum.

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Kaan Gazne

ETİK BEYAN

Bu çalışmadaki bütün bilgi ve belgeleri akademik kurallar çerçevesinde elde ettiğimi, görsel, işitsel ve yazılı tüm bilgi ve sonuçları bilimsel ahlak kurallarına uygun olarak sunduğumu, kullandığım verilerde herhangi bir tahrifat yapmadığımı, yararlandığım kaynaklara bilimsel normlara uygun olarak atıfta bulunduğumu, tezimin kaynak gösterilen durumlar dışında özgün olduğunu, **Doç.Dr. Bilge Mutluay Çetintaş** danışmanlığında tarafımdan üretildiğini ve Hacettepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Tez Yazım Yönergesine göre yazıldığını beyan ederim.



Kaan Gazne

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my thesis supervisor Assoc. Prof. Dr. Bilge Mutluay Çetintaş for her immeasurable support and guidance. She has expanded my vision by sharing her knowledge and enriched my study with her constructive feedback.

I would like to thank Prof. Dr. Meldan Tanrısal and Prof. Dr. Tanfer Emin Tunç for their invaluable encouragement, advice and strong belief in me. I want to thank all members of the Department of American Culture and Literature for enabling me to see things from a different perspective.

Finally, I would like to thank my mother and my friends for always being there for me with every decision I have made. Without their unconditional love and endless support, the completion of this thesis would not have been possible.

ABSTRACT

Gazne, Kaan. *The Chinese American and Japanese American Experience in Graphic Novels and Visual Narratives*, Master's Thesis, Ankara, 2019.

The place of the Chinese and Japanese immigrants in America has always been in flux, ever-changing and always in competition with one another. When one group was sidelined, the other was favored. This thesis argues that to cope with their unjust treatment in the United States, Chinese and Japanese Americans have turned to the genre of the graphic novel to express personal and group histories, retell events from their perspective, correct the injustices of the past, and work through their collective trauma.

This thesis is divided into two chapters, one for each immigrant group. The chapter on Chinese Americans focuses on Gene Luen Yang's *American Born Chinese* (2006), David H. T. Wong's *Escape to Gold Mountain: A Graphic History of the Chinese in North America* (2012), and The Stanford University Graphic Novel Project's *American Heathen* (2015). The chapter on Japanese Americans focuses on Henry Yoshikata Kiyama's *The Four Immigrants Manga: A Japanese Experience in San Francisco, 1904–1924* (1931), Miné Okubo's *Citizen 13660* (1946), and Laura Atkins' and Stan Yogi's *Fred Korematsu Speaks Up (Fighting for Justice)* (2017).

As can be observed through the analysis of the works in this thesis, graphic novels are effective tools to discuss controversial subjects such as race, ethnicity and gender. The genre itself is continuously evolving, indicating that it will adapt to deal with serious issues in the future.

Keywords: Japanese Americans, Chinese Americans, graphic novels, immigration, discrimination, racism.

ÖZET

Gazne, Kaan. *Grafik Roman ve Görsel Alıntılarda Çinli Amerikalı ve Japon Amerikalı Deneyimi*, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Ankara, 2019.

Çinli ve Japon Amerikalıların Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'ndeki konumu tarih boyunca değişkenlik gösterir ve bu iki grup birbiriyle sürekli bir rekabet halindedirler. Bir grup gözden düştüğünde, diğeri kazanır. Bu tez, Amerika'daki mağduriyetleriyle başa çıkabilmek için, Çinli ve Japon Amerikalıların kişisel ve kolektif tarihlerini kendi perspektiflerinden anlatmak, geçmişte yapılan haksızlıkları düzeltmek ve kolektif travmaları üzerinde uğraşmak için grafik roman türüne yöneldiğini ortaya koymaktadır.

Bu tez, her bir azınlık grup için bir bölüm olmak üzere, toplam iki bölüme ayrılmıştır. Çinli Amerikalılar üzerindeki bölüm Gene Luen Yang'ın *American Born Chinese* (2006), David H. T. Wong'un *Escape to Gold Mountain: A Graphic History of the Chinese in North America* (2012), ve The Stanford University Graphic Novel Project'in *American Heathen* (2015) grafik romanları üzerine odaklanmıştır. Japon Amerikalılar hakkındaki bölüm ise Henry Yoshikata Kiyama'nın *The Four Immigrants Manga: A Japanese Experience in San Francisco, 1904–1924* (1931), Miné Okubo'nun *Citizen 13660* (1946), ve Laura Atkins ve Stan Yogi'nin *Fred Korematsu Speaks Up (Fighting for Justice)* (2017) grafik romanları üzerine odaklanmıştır.

Bu tez kapsamında analizi yapılan kitaplardan da görüldüğü gibi, grafik romanlar ırk, etnik köken ve cinsiyet gibi hassas konuların tartışılmasında verimli bir araç görevini üstlenmektedir. Grafik romanlar ve resimli anlatılar daha ciddi konularda ürün vermeye devam ettikçe, bu türün anlatı olanaklarının daha da etkili olacağı öngörülmektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Japon Amerikalılar, Çinli Amerikalılar, grafik romanlar, göç, ırkçılık.

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INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW OF GRAPHIC NOVELS

Although using sequential art to record one's life has been around for centuries, dating back to parietal art (cave paintings) and Ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics, only recently has it been recognized as a literary art form in the academic world. According to Randy Duncan, "as an art form, a comic book is a volume in which all aspects of the narrative are represented by pictorial and linguistic images encapsulated in a sequence of juxtaposed panels and pages" (4). Graphic novels and comics are both an art form as well as a literary device, utilizing elements from both genres. Will Eisner states that, "The first comic books (circa 1934) generally contained a random collection of short features. Now, after almost 50 years, the appearance of complete 'graphic novels' has, more than anything else, brought into focus the parameters of their structure" (7).

In 1978, American cartoonist Will Eisner published a book of short stories featuring Jewish characters using sequential art as its medium. Harvey explains that "the stories were set in the 1930s tenements of the Bronx where Eisner grew up, and Eisner had been mulling over this material for at least twenty years" (176). Eisner's work was different from previous comic works in the sense that it focused on serious racial problems rather than creating a superhero universe. Since it was different than other comic books, it needed to be called something else. However, according to Robert Petersen,

The problem stemmed from the fact that the term "comic book" was already in use for material that was less substantial than a magazine, so there was no accepted term for describing comics when they were actually compiled into book form. This issue had been around for some time: a number of long-format comics from after World War II had called themselves variously a picture novel, novel in pictures, illustrated novel, comic novel, graphic album, and graphic story. Although not the first to employ the term, Will Eisner gave the term 'graphic novel' greater circulation and stature with his 1978 collection of four stories on urban Jewish life in the 1930s entitled *A Contract with God and Other Tenement Stories: A Graphic Novel*. (222)

While Will Eisner popularized the term "graphic novel" and enabled the medium to earn the attention it deserved, similar graphic novels that portrayed the suffering of ethnic groups were already in existence. Japanese American author Miné Okubo's

autographic novel *Citizen 13660* (1946) is the first graphic illustrated memoir to portray Japanese American internment during World War II (Zhou 51). Japanese Americans were not allowed to take photos during the internment, and all of their valuable possessions were taken away. Therefore, while raising their voices against this racial injustice, they had to create unorthodox methods. In Miné Okubo's case, she started drawing pictures of her daily life in the camp. The images she uses in her work trace back to her time in the internment camps as citizen 13660 and serves as the foundation of her narrative (Robinson 70). Okubo's work provides a first person point of view of the Japanese American experience in internment camps after the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 (Fig 0.1). The combination of drawings and texts enhances the narrative and helps the author to provide a more accurate description of the internment experience.

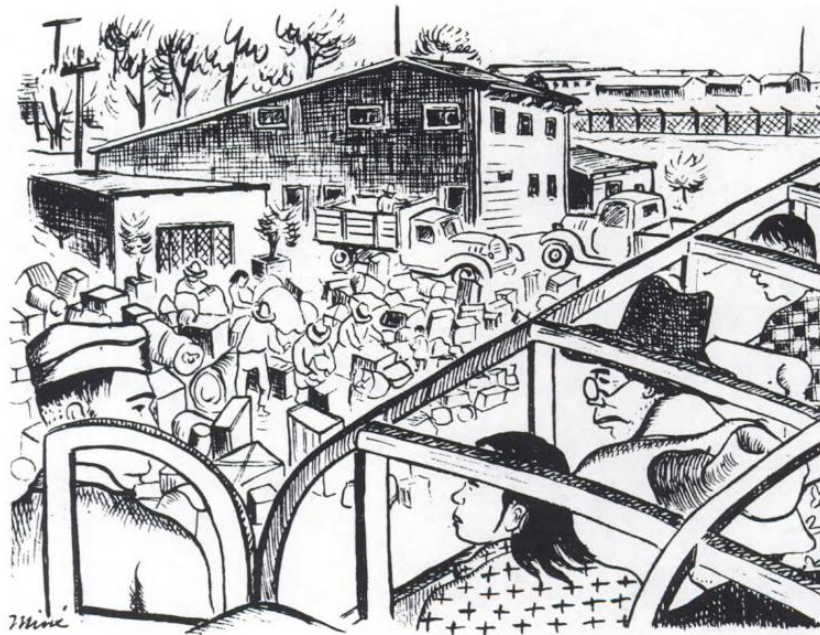


Fig. 0.1. Miné Okubo's first arrival to the internment camp (*Citizen 13660* 28).

The aim of this thesis is to analyze how Chinese and Japanese Americans are portrayed in graphic novels while being compared to each other in social, political and economic ways by dominant narratives. These graphic novels provide insight into how the lives of these oppressed groups changed as a result of certain historical events in the United States. The power of graphic novels bypasses the limitations of traditional literary novels through their visual components. Human brain can process images 60,000 times faster than text, and ninety percent of information transmitted to brain is visual which

shows that humans respond to visual data faster than any other type of data (Eisenberg n.p.).

The increasing popularity of comic books can be credited to changes in marketing strategies. Stephen Weiner explains that “The American comic book landscape changed dramatically in the 1970s and 1980s primarily because of two factors: first, the creation of the ‘direct market,’ a system where publishers sold comic books directly to specialty comics stores, and second, challenges to the Comics Code Authority that regulated the newsstand comic book industry” (3). This direct market contributed to the growth of industry and made the medium accessible to broader audiences. While the direct market increased comic book and graphic novel sales in the United States, they still lag behind in sales when compared to their Asian counterparts. According to Nate Hoffelder “The All Japan Magazine and Book Publisher's and Editor's Association (AJPEA) released a report on February 24 that estimated that the combined physical and digital sales of the manga industry in Japan amounted to 445.4 billion yen (about US\$3.91 billion) in 2016” (n.p.). On the other hand, according to ICv2's report, “Total comics and graphic novel sales to consumers in the US and Canada reached \$1.085 billion in 2016” (Miller n.p.). It should be kept in mind that the combined population of Canada and United States is three times more than Japan's. Therefore, despite its population being three times larger, the United States is earning a quarter of the revenue that Japan earns from sales. As Randy Duncan and Matthew J. Smith state

Unfortunately, this still reflects the common conception of comic books. It is not even that misguided an idea. The majority of comic books produced in America have been quickly created, lowest-common-denominator, mass media products targeted at eleven-year-olds. Nowadays, the average person has to go out of their way to even see a comic book, and if they do it will likely be of the costumed superhero variety. But, these books do not accurately represent the variety or potential of the medium. A medium is a channel for communicating, and includes familiar favorites such as radio, television, or the printed page. (1)

Despite using sequential art, mangas and comic books are different from each other, which makes each of them a unique medium. While manga's origins date back to *Chōjū Jinbutsu Giga* (Scrolls of Frolicking Animals) from the mid-twelfth to mid-thirteenth centuries, the word “manga” began to be commonly used after the end of the Meiji (1868–1912) and the beginning of the Taishō (1912–1926) era (Hirohito 39). The first difference the reader would notice is that comics and graphic novels are read from left

to right, whereas mangas are read from right to left like other Japanese texts. According to Johnny Kilhefner, the thematic difference between western comics and manga comes from Japan's religious roots.

While Western comics have explored dark topics and concepts for quite some time now, the medium is still more known for its family-friendly superhero genre. Manga, however, is more comfortable exploring risqué material such as sex, violence and scatology. The reason for this freedom in exploring such concepts is cultural, as the primary religious affiliations of Japan is Shinto and Buddhism—religions that do not equate sex with shame. This allows the Japanese to be more liberal in exploring sexuality than most Americans. (n.p.)

Sexuality, race and gender are still considered gray areas and artists may be reluctant to handle such issues due to their controversial nature. Some may feel uncomfortable about these topics because of public criticism that would eventually impact the marketing and sales. Since mangas do not suffer from these concerns in the west, they appeal to both juvenile as well as adult consumers. This is the primary reason why mangas are sold more in eastern countries compared to comic books in western countries.

In the United States, the two largest comic book publishers, Marvel and DC, are responsible for more than sixty percent of sales worldwide. Yet, despite being the leading force in the comic book industry, they are lagging behind when it comes to the representation of women, and racial minorities, both as characters and creators. Christopher H. Sterling states that

Throughout much of the twentieth century, characters who were racial minorities were either underrepresented in comics, or were presented in negative stereotypes. Prior to World War II, African Americans and Asians appeared infrequently in comics and when they did they were depicted as almost subhuman, unable to participate in the social system, and in service roles. The appearance of minorities in comic strips diminished after World War II, perhaps because of an unwillingness to be reminded of societal inequalities after a war fought for freedom and equality and in a booming postwar economy. Gay characters have been largely absent from mainstream newspaper comics, but when they appear they are male and depicted as assimilated into heterosexual culture. (325)

About the current state of Asian representation in comics. Jonathan Tsuei from Image Comics (the third largest comic book publisher in the United States after Marvel and DC) says “It's important to see people of Asian descent work on these characters because it moves us beyond simply ‘diversity’ for the sake of, but inclusion in the

storytelling process. It's not just seeing characters who might share physical features with us, but it's really an example that our voices and our perspectives are worth supporting" (Cuzman n.p.). *Heroine Complex's* author Sarah Kuhn adds "I think it's important that we get to tell our own stories-seeing Asian-American creators take control of the narrative of an Asian-American superhero will never not be exciting to me. It makes me feel like our voices are finally getting out there, like we can bring our own experiences and pride in our identities to the page of something very iconic" (Cuzman n.p.).

Another reason behind the rise in popularity of graphic novels is related to the themes they cover. The comic book industry is dominated by Marvel and DC and primarily deals with the superhero genre because it targets a very specific audience. According to Stephen Weiner, "Eisner observed that children who had read comics in the 1940s would be in their thirties in the mid-1970s. Those people hadn't given up on comics, but the comics field had given up on them" (1977). Although there were important comic book artists such as Will Eisner during the 1930s, they did not receive enough attention until 1970s. The children of the 1940s had a new medium that they could enjoy in the 1970s, a new medium that moved beyond the superhero genre to topics such as race, gender and sex that every adult reader can relate to. Moreover, "for creators, labeling their work a graphic novel allows them to distance themselves from the commercial and periodical connotations associated with comic books. For publishers, *graphic novel* is a term that helps elevate the status of their product and has allowed them entree into bookstores, libraries, and the academy" (Duncan 4). Since the name "graphic novel" carries a serious tone compared to "comic book," adult readership was secured. According to Stephen Weiner, serious themes was not the sole reason behind the increasing popularity of graphic novels: "Not only the subject matter was new to comic book readers, the presentation was fresh as well. Rather than crowding the pages with panels detailing character movements, the drawings were large, focusing on facial expression, and the panels opened outward, almost beyond the page" (1977).

Graphic novels are more than just sequential alignments of different images. They are novels that utilize both drawings and writing which enables critics to approach and

analyze the medium from two different angles. Eisner explains that “the reader is thus required to exercise both visual and verbal interpretive skills. The regiments of art (eg. perspective, symmetry, brush stroke) and the regiments of literature (eg. grammar, plot, syntax) become superimposed upon each other. The reading of the comic book is an act of both aesthetic perception and intellectual pursuit” (8). Like close readings of traditional literary works, comics and graphic novels require their own analytical approach. Due to the medium’s nature, graphic novels found a place both in art classes and in the literature curriculum. According to Will Eisner, “the manner of their creation has evolved from a work written and drawn by a single individual to a wedding between writer and artist. This has established a creative process that employs the skills of an accomplished writer and an artist of great sophistication. All of which has attracted critical approval and elevated the standards of the medium” (Eisner Foreword).

Each graphic novel or comic strip has a unique style of its own; some are drawn in a simple “cartoony” style, like Henry Yoshitaka Kiyama’s work *The Four Immigrants Manga* (1931) which allows readers to pay more attention to catastrophic events such as the San Francisco Earthquake of 1906, World War I, and the Spanish Flu Pandemic of 1918–1919. According to Will Eisner’s definition, in the cartoony style characters are drawn using simple lines, such as dots for eyes or single brush strokes for noses and mouths (Fig. 0.2). Simply drawn characters enable readers to separate themselves from the characters and focus more on the ongoing issues.



Fig. 0.2. Arrival in San Francisco (*The Four Immigrants Manga* 30).

Others, however are drawn in a more realistic manner like David H.T. Wong's *Escape to Gold Mountain* (2012) and enhance the cruelty of racial injustice during the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad. Realistic drawings mean showing things exactly the way they are which often portrays the inhumanity of certain events such as the lynching of Chinese immigrants during the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad. Realistic drawings enable artists to document unspeakable truths. Realistic drawings convey emotions better, and in the following figure, a teardrop drawn on a dark background with visible marks of oldness and tiredness around her eyes, shows how much Chinese Americans suffered (Fig. 0.3).



Fig. 0.3. Iron Chink (*Escape to Gold Mountain* 29).

Most artists, however, tend to focus on personal and/or historically traumatic events, like Miné Okubo's *Citizen 13660* (1946) which revolves around the life in internment camps after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

In contemporary world politics, media blackouts still remain the single biggest weapon for the manipulation of public opinion with respect to controversial and traumatic events. Images of catastrophes, such as the Iraq War or 9/11, are too grotesque for the

public eye, and often, facts, such as the number of casualties, are minimized or falsified to manipulate the masses. For instance, in the case of 9/11, New York's Mayor at the time, Rudolph Giuliani, banned cameras from entering Ground Zero after the attack on the World Trade Center. Moreover, "the dissemination of images from the Iraq war and from the area around ground zero immediately after 9/11 [were] carefully controlled, and these restrictions shape[d] a new and urgent context for the sustained discussion of words and images" (Whitlock 965).

Unlike photography, using drawn images, comic books and graphic novels can reach beyond the barrier of censorship. As Edward Said states in the introduction of Joe Sacco's graphic novel *Palestine* (1994), comics "say what couldn't otherwise be said, perhaps what wasn't permitted to be said or imagined, defying the ordinary processes of thought, which are policed, shaped and re-shaped by all sorts of pedagogical as well as ideological pressures. I knew nothing of this then, but I felt that comics freed me to think and imagine and see differently" (ii). As a result, comic strips like Art Spiegelman's *In the Shadow of No Towers* (2004) became increasingly popular in the aftermath of 9/11. Marianne Hirsch identifies the importance of comics in meditating on the conjunction of visual and verbal texts, and has called the distinctive verbal-visual connections that frequently occur in comics "biocularity": She says, "*In the Shadow of No Towers*, Art Spiegelman's reflections on 9/11... is both a manifestation of this kind of visual-verbal biocularity and a meditation on traumatic seeing" (1213).

While graphic novels and comic books bypass traditional media censorship, up until the development of the direct market, they had to deal with a different kind of censorship. Stephen Weiner explains that "following allegations the comic book industry caused juvenile delinquency, several major comics publishers formed the Comics Magazine Association of America (CMAA) in 1954, an industry body established to govern the content of comic books" (Weiner 3). As Amy Kiste Nyberg summarizes:

Under the old system, still in place, wholesalers deliver comics to retailers along with other magazines. These wholesalers served as the enforcement arm of the Comics Code Authority by agreeing to handle only those comics with the seal. With direct market distribution, distributors who specialize in comic books solicit orders and distribute directly to retail outlets. Distributors and retailers willing to handle comics without the Seal of Approval opened the door for publishers who

sought to bypass the CMAA and its censors. Freed from code constraints, new publishers experimented with material—including adult-oriented comics—in order to expand the audience. (n.p.)

Using graphic narratives to speak about otherwise unspeakable political, racial and social events revealed another potential use for comic books and graphic novels, which eventually became the subgenre called Comics Journalism or Graphic Journalism. Maltese American cartoonist and journalist Joe Sacco became the focal point of Comics Journalism with works on Bosnia and Palestine. On this issue, Paul Williams comments, “Sacco’s work is closer to traditional journalistic practices, and more than any other creator, Sacco self-consciously redefines journalism for the comic book medium. He uses comics not just to create a new kind of journalism, but also to question the orthodoxies of more traditional reporting” (69). Traditional reporting can be manipulated by the people on top according to their needs. Certain groups of individuals can be portrayed as hostiles if it fits their agenda and such comics and graphic novels can provide a counter narrative. Tristram Walker says “Sacco had become disillusioned by what he saw as the misrepresentation of Israel and the Palestinians in the American media” (67).

Similar mistreatment can be observed in Miné Okubo’s work *Citizen 13660* (1946). Executive Order 9066 remains as a dark chapter in American history, especially for Japanese Americans who lost everything when they were forced to live in internment camps and had to sell their property below their original value. Through its visuality, Miné Okubo’s work portrays how power relations were enforced at the time. Throughout the memoir, drawings of guards carrying guns to patrol isolated internment camps, and Japanese Americans trying to save as much of their belongings as possible before confinement, are reoccurring images. In Fig. 0.4, the soldier is placed towards the middle of the frame which is the major location of attention. Plus, the soldier with his gun takes up more space in that frame than any other character, which shows that the main focus is on the soldier. Since most photos from the internment camps were taken by whites, Okubo’s drawings provide a description of camp life through the eyes of the oppressed instead of manipulated media.



Fig. 0.4. Presence of guards with guns (*Citizen 13660* 29).

This thesis will be divided into three chapters. The following chapter will outline the social reasons, economy and history of the Chinese and Japanese American experience in the United States as well as the hardships they encountered. The second chapter focuses on Chinese American graphic novels. Gene Luen Yang's *American Born Chinese* (2006), David H.T. Wong's *Escape to Gold Mountain* (2012), and the Stanford University Graphic Novel Project's *American Heathen* (2015) will be examined. The last chapter will concentrate on Japanese American Experience. Henry Yoshitaka Kiyama's *The Four Immigrants Manga* (1931), Miné Okubo's *Citizen 13660* (1946), and Laura Atkins' and Stan Yogi's *Fred Korematsu Speaks Up* (2017) will be examined to show the reasons why this experience is unique.

According to Gillian Whitlock, comics and graphic novels have extraordinary potential as autobiographical narratives of trauma that reflect violence, censorship, and war (1966). Whitlock coined the term "autographics" for graphic memoirs that deal with such events. Marjane Strapi's autobiographical work *Persepolis* (2000) is an example of a graphic novel that deals with a traumatic childhood event, the Iranian Islamic Revolution of 1979. A more recent example is Lila Quintero Weaver's first graphic novel, *Darkroom: A Memoir in Black and White* (2012), which is an autobiographical

story of her family's immigration to America's Black Belt, in Alabama, from Buenos Aires, Argentina in 1961. Ethnic minorities living in the United States have frequently used memoirs and autobiographies to raise their voices against racial injustice, and some of them have looked to (auto)graphic novels to frame their experiences. Consequently, Chinese and Japanese American graphic novels have distinctive features. They effectively narrate the experiences of Chinese and Japanese Americans who constantly faced discrimination by society and the legal system. The visuality of graphic novels and memoirs have enabled these artists to reach a broader audience since visual images can convey stronger messages than words alone. Each panel, symbol, and image can have different meanings, opening up personal and historical events to endless interpretation by contemporary audiences.

CHAPTER 1

CHINESE AND JAPANESE AMERICANS IN THE UNITED STATES

Although each ethnic group had its own reasons to immigrate to the United States, common incentives were the pursuit of the American dream, the desire to improve the quality of life, and economic and political reasons. Not every group came to the United States willingly; African Americans, for example, were forced, and even kidnapped, into the slave trade that brought them to the New World. On the other hand, Native Americans, the only non-immigrant group in the United States, have always been treated as “strangers from within” and were forced to assimilate into white American society to survive. Asian immigrants, on the other hand, were voluntary immigrants who mostly came to the United States seeking employment and economic opportunities.

The Chinese, the original “yellow peril” since they came to the United States before the Japanese, first landed on American shores in the mid-nineteenth century, mostly originating from the Pearl River Delta of Guangdong Province (Yung 1). Chinese people often referred to San Francisco as Gam Saan, which translates as “Gold Mountain” in Cantonese, and the inspiration for David H. T. Wong’s graphic novel *Escape to Gold Mountain*. Wong’s historical graphic novel narrates the journey of Chinese immigrants, starting from their decision to leave the mainland to their arrival in the United States. According to David Wong, many of Gam Saan’s early Chinese immigrants originated from the four counties—Hoy Ping, Sun Wui, Toisan, Yen Ping—located at the Pearl River Delta area (Fig. 1.1). The journey from Hong Kong to Gam Saan took up to four months (Wong 22). Most of the first Chinese immigrants came to the new continent in hopes of finding gold and to turn their lives around during the California Gold Rush of 1848–1849. According to Erika Lee’s study “three hundred twenty-five Chinese forty-niners made their way to California in 1849. In 1850, 450 more came. Within a year, numbers grew exponentially: 2,716 Chinese came to California in 1851 and 20,026 in 1852” (59). However, not all of them were interested in staying in the United States for the rest of their lives. Known as “birds of passage”

many of those immigrants just came to acquire wealth and return to their families or to their hometowns to buy their own land.

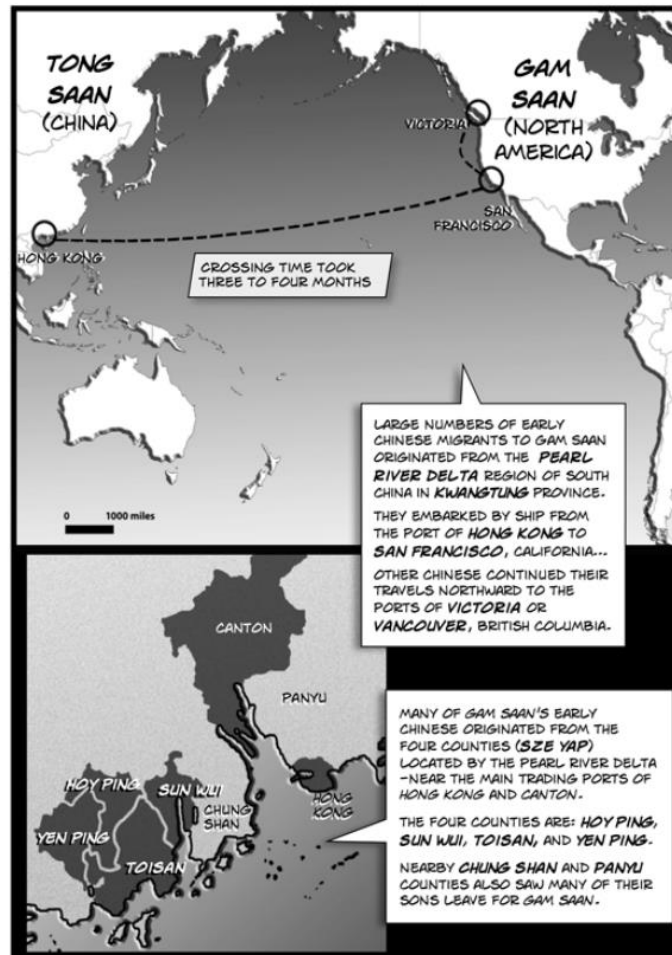


Fig. 1.1. Travel Map (*Escape to Gold Mountain 22*).

As Roger Daniels notes, “Chinese workers soon gained a reputation among employers of being quick and adept learners and, even more important, of being dependable and not prone to strike. In addition, they also worked more cheaply than did white labor” (19). They became the main driving force behind the construction of the First Transcontinental Railroad, a project that lasted between 1863 and 1869. Even though their labor was needed, they immediately became the victims of white physical violence and legal restrictions, such as the Naturalization Act of 1870, which denied citizenship to anyone who was not of Caucasian or African heritage. According to Mark Kanazawa “by 1860 the Chinese were the single largest foreign-born ethnic group in California and comprised from 12 to 23 percent of the population of various mining counties”

(781). The increasing number of Chinese immigrant workers meant increasing violence towards the Chinese by racist groups, and many Chinese workers were lynched by angry white mobs. As R. Scott Baxter states “in the latter half of 19th century, a strong anti-Chinese sentiment influenced U.S politics and newspapers. Driven by a number of factors, the anti-Chinese movement expressed itself against Chinese immigrants through legislation, organized boycotts, hostile news stories, violence and general harassment” (29). Chinese workers were in demand mainly because they worked harder than white workers for significantly less amounts of money. Since they were outsiders, they were given dangerous tasks. They were expendable and even if some of them perished, there were others who could fill their position. The increasing number of Chinese workers caused an uneasiness among white workers because they feared the loss of their jobs. At first, the arrival of Chinese workers meant no hard labor for white men, however, they soon realized that no hard labor was slowly turning into no labor. In order to drive them back home and regain their jobs, white mobs started lynching Chinese men. Physical violence and racial slurs towards Chinese became a common occurrence during this era. They organized unions and started a campaign under the slogan “Chinese Must Go.” The movement took place in many different forms, one of which was Henry Grimm’s play *The Chinese Must Go*. According to Hsin-Yun Ou “Henry Grimm’s *The Chinese Must Go* appeared at the peak of the vitriolic anti-Chinese sentiment that broke out in California in the 1870s. This racial drama touched on the national debate over ‘the Chinese question’ and used theatrical performance as a persuasive ideological force to advocate exclusion of Chinese Immigrants from the United States” (63). As it can be seen in Fig. 1.2, white workers not only attacked Chinese workers, but also attacked companies who hired “chinamen.” Chinese workers are drawn while running away, symbolizing how they were forced out of towns. In Fig. 1.2, every panel involving Chinese workers are surrounded by panels that have white men, showing the mob mentality that white workers had towards Chinese immigrants.



Fig. 1.2. Chinese Must Go (*Escape to Gold Mountain* Chapter 91).

Their main aim was to drive the Chinese out and to prevent them from getting profitable employment opportunities, and eventually out of the country. The anti-Chinese laws also restricted the kind of labor they could do. They were only allowed to do menial jobs like doing laundry or working at restaurants. Since domestic jobs were dominated by male labor, women struggled to find jobs. Chinese women were all assumed to be prostitutes. The reason behind this assumption was, as Ronald Takaki states, the sheer number of prostitutes that were present at the time in California. “In 1870, of the 3,536 Chinese women in California, 2,157, or 61 percent, had their occupations listed as ‘prostitute’ in the population census manuscripts” (41). The situation worsened with the Page Act of 1875 which prohibited Chinese women from entering to the United States. The Page Act aimed to drive Chinese immigrants to extinction since they were not allowed to marry white women. A group of opportunistic politicians who were against Chinese workers pressured Congress to pass the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 which severely limited Chinese immigration (Yung 4).

The Chinese Exclusion Act was the first major law that limited immigration to the United States. California Senator John Miller was one of the frontrunners of Chinese Exclusion Act. He stated that America belonged to white people and white people only. According to John Miller, civilizations of the East and the West were like oil and water, they couldn't be mixed together and if they had been allowed to stay in the United States, they would not be able to assimilate into American culture, and instead would remain as changeless, fixed, and unalterable. Originally, Senator John Miller intended to ban Chinese immigration for twenty years. He looked down on Chinese workers, as it can be seen from the following figure. He is drawn from a position of power with his eyes filled with hatred. Furthermore, Chinese worker's plight is also boxed in by two white males, representing the oppression Chinese workers experienced (Fig. 1.3). With the overwhelming public support towards Chinese Exclusion, the bill passed the Senate and House of Representatives easily, but it was vetoed by President Chester A. Arthur. However, on May 6, due to public pressure, the act was finally signed by President Arthur after the ban got shortened from twenty years to ten years.



Fig. 1.3. The Chinese Exclusion Act (*Escape to Gold Mountain* Chapter 111)

According to the documents, “The Chinese Exclusion Act required the few non-laborers who sought entry to obtain certification from the Chinese government that they were qualified to immigrate” (Pluralism n.p.). Furthermore, false accusations such as Chinese

people looking like and eating rats became increasingly popular to destroy the public perception towards the Chinese immigrants. Takaki states the Chinese men “seemed to become ubiquitous in American cities, he became the object of ridicule and stereotyping. He talked ‘funny’ and was fond of eating a strange delicacy - ‘dead rats’” (241). The act not only prevented new immigrants from entering to United States, but also made life significantly harder for the already existing Chinese workers in the United States. Chinese workers who had been working there since California Gold Rush were denied citizenship and if they left they had to go through the same process again to re-enter the country.

The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 marked the beginning of the next wave of Asian immigration, Japanese immigration to the United States in the late nineteenth century. In 1884, the first large scale Japanese immigrants arrived in Hawaii. Rogers Daniels states that the “Japanese were brought to Hawaii not only for their labor but also to serve as a counterweight to the relatively large number of Chinese in the islands” (101). They were mostly farmers and laborers from Hiroshima, Yamaguchi and Kumamoto. Similar to Chinese laborers, they came to the United States for better economic opportunities. Despite being brought to balance the numbers of Chinese immigrants, Japanese immigrants also suffered from the same fate of Chinese immigrants.

In 1905, the Japanese and Korean Exclusion League—the first official organized group against Japanese and Korean immigrants—was formed in San Francisco to prevent these immigrants’ entry into the United States. Also known as the Asiatic Exclusion League, the Japanese and Korean Exclusion League was mostly comprised of labor union members and leaders who wanted Asian immigrants out because their presence lowered wages. Congressman E. A. Haynes, who was known for his anti-Asian campaign, stated that Japanese immigration was an evil influence (Erhart n.p.).

While dealing with internal issues such as racism, and lynching, Asian immigrants also suffered from external sources, the biggest of which took place on the morning of April 18, 1906:

A massive earthquake shook San Francisco, California. Though the quake lasted less than a minute, its immediate impact was disastrous. The earthquake also ignited several fires around the city that burned for three days and destroyed nearly 500 city blocks. Despite a quick response from San

Francisco's large military population, the city was devastated. The earthquake and fires killed an estimated 3,000 people and left half of the city's 400,000 residents homeless. (archives.org)

The earthquake destroyed parts of Chinatown which meant the rebuilding of homes and businesses. "San Francisco suffered the earthquake by which all subsequent urban American earthquakes have been measured. Rightly or wrongly, most contemporary observers felt that the earthquake somehow contributed to an atmosphere in which a large number of extralegal attacks on Japanese and other Asians occurred" (Daniels 120). In Henry Yoshitaka Kiyama's work, *The Four Immigrants Manga* (1931), two of the four friends Frank and Charlie are seen walking around the crumbled buildings. In the background, flames can be seen near the collapsed buildings (Fig 1.4). In the last frame, Frank asks Charlie if he can hear the screams of other people, which indicates that there are still people buried alive under the collapsed buildings.



Fig. 1.4. The San Francisco Earthquake (*The Four Immigrants Manga* 20).

Following the earthquake, the San Francisco Board of Education ordered all Japanese students to attend schools in Chinatown, which was a type of *de facto* racial

segregation. This immediately turned into an international scandal when the Japanese press covered what was happening to Japanese students. Theodore Roosevelt invited local officials to the White House to discuss the matter and eventually came to an agreement: the Board would revoke the segregation order of 1906 and in exchange, the government would limit Japanese immigration. In late 1907 and early 1908, six secret notes were exchanged between the United States and Japan. This exchange was called the Gentlemen's Agreement, and "the Japanese agreed not to issue passports valid for the continental United States laborers, skilled or unskilled. Laborers who had already been to America might return, however, and passports might be issued to the 'parent, wives and children of laborers already resident there'" (Daniels 125).

Despite discrimination towards Asian immigrants in the United States, many still tried to come to the United States in hopes of a better future since the situation in their home countries was not improving. With Geary Act, the Chinese Exclusion Act was extended in 1892 and in 1902 it was made permanent until it was repealed with Magnuson Act in 1943 during World War II when the Chinese Americans were compared to Japanese Americans from within and became the favored group.

In 1910, a new immigration station was built at Angel Island in San Francisco Bay expressly to accommodate Chinese and other Asians immigrating to the United States. They were singled out for long detentions and intense cross-examinations to prove their right to enter the country according to the Chinese Exclusion Act (Yung 118). Every Asian was subjected to this intensive cross-examination no matter who they were, or what they were here for, and all of them were detained on Angel Island. According to Roger Daniels, "Even elite Chinese arriving with student visas, whose right to enter was guaranteed by both statute law and Sino-American treaties, endured long delays...For those claiming derivative American citizenship, both 'father' and 'son' would be grilled intensively about even minute details of their biographies and of the putative village of their origin" (8). Since the process took so long, there was overwhelming number of Asians staying in Angel Island at the time. "The buildings were, the man in charge of the San Francisco immigration district wrote on 19 December 1910, dangerous firetraps, unsanitary, and vermin infested" (Daniels 5). There was no limit to how long

those interrogations would continue, and some last for weeks or months and in rare cases, for a year.

While new Asian immigrants were detained at Angel Island, Japanese immigrants who were already working in the United States suffered domestically. With the increasing number of Japanese immigrants who were pursuing agricultural land ownership in California, many white Americans feared that the Japanese were slowly taking their land away. With the 1913 California Alien Land Act, those who were ineligible for American citizenship—in other words Asians—were banned from owning or leasing agricultural land, basically rendering them permanent sharecroppers and seasonal laborers. Moreover, to prevent Asian immigration to the United States after World War I, and as a response to the growing anti-Japanese movement, Congress passed the Immigration Act of 1924. Also known as the Johnson-Reed Act, the act included the National Origins Act and Asian Exclusion Act, and according to Judy Yung “it was aimed at excluding ‘undesirable’ immigrants, namely Southern and Eastern Europeans and all aliens ineligible for citizenship—a category that applied only to those of Asian descent” (129). While the act put a quota on the number of immigrants allowed to enter to the United States based on 2% of the number of immigrants living in the United States in 1890, it completely excluded Asians.

The situation worsened after the Japanese attacked the naval base at Pearl Harbor in 1941. With the attack, the United States declared war on Japan, which led the country into World War II. There were immediate changes after Pearl Harbor. Overnight, Japanese Americans became “bad Asians,” while Chinese Americans were elevated to “good Asians.” Posters, magazine articles, and other forms of media, including radio, “educated” people on how to differentiate between an ally and enemy, in other words, how to tell a Jap from “your friend.” Such racist propaganda would place a Chinese face next to a Japanese one and compare their physical features in much the same way Nazis compared Jews to Aryans. A Japanese was considered a Japanese no matter what and it did not matter whether or not that person was an American citizen. Many racist slurs were used towards Japanese Americans, denouncing them as “the enemy” from within (Fig. 1.5). Miné Okubo fills the background with some of the phrases that were dominant at the time. Those racial slurs are boxing her in, symbolizing the public

pressure that people of Japanese descent faced. According to Alison Dundes Renteln, General John L. Dewitt said “A Jap’s a jap. They are a dangerous element, whether loyal or not. There is no way to determine their loyalty. It makes no difference if he is an American; theoretically he is still a Japanese and you can’t change him” (634).



Fig. 1.5. Racial Slurs Towards Japanese Americans (*Citizen 13660 6*).

Chinese Americans were able to find jobs for the first time in private companies, civil service, and professional fields outside Chinatowns. In contrast, after Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, Japanese Americans were regarded as “enemy aliens,” stripped of their civil rights. In December 1943, as a goodwill gesture to China and to counter Japanese propaganda in Asia, Congress repealed the Chinese Exclusion Act which marked the end of exclusion era (Yung 106).

While Chinese Americans were favored, Japanese Americans were marginalized. Civilians and politicians argued that as a matter of safety, all people of Japanese descent should be detained and isolated from rest of society. In 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 which forcefully evacuated all people of Japanese heritage to internment camps, mostly located in remote places in the West and Midwest. It did not matter whether these people were born in the United States or whether their families had been in the country for generations. As long as they were of

Japanese descent, they were regarded as potentially dangerous citizens. As Miné Okubo narrates “We had not believed at first that evacuation would affect the Nisei, American citizens of Japanese-born mothers and fathers who were denied naturalization by American law, would be interned in case of war between Japan and the United States. It was a real blow when everyone, regardless of citizenship, was ordered to evacuate” (17). Most Japanese Americans lost everything—their belongings, homes, business, jobs, and honor—and some looked to escape internment either through evasion—like Fred Korematsu (whose story will be analyzed further in another chapter) who refused to go to an internment camp, changed his name and underwent minor plastic surgery to look less Japanese—or by taking a loyalty oath, which would allow young Japanese American men to serve as combat soldiers and women to serve as nurses and in the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps. Internment camps were overcrowded (Fig. 1.6) and not well built. Many people got sick due to harsh weather conditions and lack of materials, especially clothes. Due to overcrowdedness, diseases spread quickly among internees. Most of internees did not have because they were from California and they thought that the internment would not last as long. When they were forced out of their homes, they did not have enough time to pack everything, and some of the items they packed were lost due to overcrowded facilities and lack of proper transportation.



Fig. 1.6. Food line at the internment camp (*Citizen 13660* 38).

When the war came to an end in 1945, were freed to rebuild their lives as best as they could. However, they faced many social and economic difficulties. Many of them were forced to sell their businesses, properties, and occupations therefore, they did not have a home to return to. Another problem was lingering prejudice towards Japanese Americans. Despite re-earning their freedom, in the eyes of the public, they were still the enemy. Many employers refused to give jobs to Japanese Americans.

Life for Japanese Americans changed during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. Instead of being the common enemy, they were now the “model minority” who, despite internment, had managed to rebuild their lives with great success. In this context, there are two ways of interpreting the term “model minority”: “first, as a way of praising the superior performance of Japanese Americans; and second, as a way of suggesting that other ethnic groups should *emulate* the Japanese American example” (Daniels 318). Due to their work ethic, and educational and occupational achievements, Japanese Americans became categorized as a deserving and hard-working minority, with Chinese Americans a close Asian second, and both were contrasted with other groups, such as Hispanics, for example, who were supposedly “good for nothing” and “lazy.” George T. Endo also states that “in terms of education and annual income, Japanese Americans rank among the top of all ethnic groups” (46). The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 marked a new beginning for all Asian immigrants since it relaxed quotas, making it much easier to enter the United States. The main aim of the act was to attract “elite” minorities to the United States instead of unwanted ones.

The place of the Chinese and Japanese in America has always been in flux, ever-changing and always in competition with each another, more so than any other two ethnic groups in the United States. This eco-system will remain intact as immigrant identities and perceptions are constantly changing in the United States. However, despite their elevation, one of the reasons why Asians even if they are born in the US, will always be the strangers or enemies within is because they are phenotypically different. In other words, no matter how much they try to assimilate, they will always look non-white and therefore foreign.

Chinese and Japanese American graphic novels express personal and group histories, retell events from their perspective, recollect the injustices of the past, and work

through their collective trauma. Moreover, during times like the implementation of Executive Order 9066, they were not allowed to document life in the internment camps. Graphic novels as a medium combines visuality as well as literary narratives which enhances the depiction of racial injustice. Following the chronological order of the arrival of the Asian immigrants, the next chapter will focus on how Chinese immigrants were marginalized, and became the original “yellow peril” through Gene Luen Yang’s *American Born Chinese* (2006), David H. T. Wong’s *Escape to Gold Mountain: A Graphic History of the Chinese in North America* (2012), and the Stanford University Graphic Novel Project’s *American Heathen* (2015).

CHAPTER 2

CHINESE AMERICAN GRAPHIC NOVELS

The history of Opium Wars can be traced back to nineteenth century when China and Great Britain had a trade agreement. British merchants were buying Chinese materials such as tea and silk in exchange for gold and silver. The problem was that this was a one-sided trade deal, because while British merchants kept buying different products from Chinese merchants, Chinese merchants were ignoring the products sold by British merchants, which meant valuable gold and silver was flowing towards one direction. To stop this outflow of silver and gold coins, British merchants introduced opium to China, and soon, Opium addiction became a serious problem for Chinese citizens. Many people sold their belongings, and even their children in order to obtain more opium. The ongoing economic chaos combined with opium made China “the sick man of Asia.”

In order to escape from that chaotic environment with the hopes of a better future, many Chinese people immigrated to the United States during California Gold Rush of 1848-1849. Chinese workers suddenly gained the reputation among employers for accepting low wages and working hard. They became the driving force behind the construction of Transcontinental Railroad in 1863-1869. However, their cheap labor meant less work for white people, which resulted in the “Chinese Must Go” movement to drive out Chinese immigrants.

To tell their stories on the new continent that began with the California Gold Rush, or to tell stories of their families, many authors have turned to graphic novels as a medium. At the time of the “Chinese Must Go” movement, there were several incidents of murder and lynching. Through visuality, contemporary authors capture the inhumane conditions such as prejudice against Chinese immigrants. The juxtaposition of textual explanations and drawn pictures enables readers to comprehend fully the racial injustice they experience. Visually seeing hanged Chinese workers has a bigger impact than just reading words that tell the same story.

2.1. GENE LUEN YANG'S *AMERICAN BORN CHINESE* (2006)

The Chinese, who were called the original “yellow peril” since they came to the United States before the Japanese, first landed on American shores in the mid–nineteenth century, mostly originating from the Pearl River Delta of Guangdong Province (Yung 1). Many of the first Chinese immigrants came to the new continent in hopes of finding gold and turning their lives around during the California Gold Rush of 1848–1849. People who were born in the United States to Chinese families are often referred to as American-Born Chinese. ABCs are “born and raised in the Unites States, America [is] their only home: few emotional or personal bonds link them to their parents’ old country. As a result, no matter how distraught they might [feel] about being excluded by American society, their lack of familiarity with [a] China they [have] never seen [makes] them feel ambivalent about seeking their future there” (Yin 213). Despite being born in the United States, and their efforts to blend into society, they are never regarded as “Americans” and often face discrimination. Similar to contemporary Chicano/a writers, Chinese American writers, including American-born Chinese such as Erika Lee, Lisa Lowe and Sue Fawn Chung, have looked to the ancient myths of Asia to establish a connection to their home countries and enhance the narrative of living as a minority in the United States.

Being an ABC himself, Gene Luen Yang portrays the reality of living as a minority in the United States through his graphic novel *American Born Chinese* (2006). He juxtaposes three different stories that dwell on discrimination by the majority. Since *American Born Chinese* is drawn in a cartoon-like manner, readers pay more attention to transformation the characters undergo and the racism they endure.

The graphic novel begins with the story of Sun Wukong, or the Monkey King, which is a reoccurring mythical figure in Asian literature. The Monkey King is the ruler of his kingdom, but he wants to ascend to the heavens, where the gods and goddesses dwell, and live among them. However, they do not accept him as one of their own because he is a monkey and not a god. In that sense, the Monkey King’s lack of belonging is similar to what many Chinese Americans experience in American society.

The second story in the graphic novel involves Jin Wang. Like early Chinese immigrants who came to the United States during the California Gold Rush, his parents came to the US with hopes for a better life. Historically, San Francisco was the central location for Asian immigrants, and Wang's parents initially chose to live there. However, to provide Jin with better educational opportunities, the family moved from one city to another. As a result, Jin constantly experiences racial stereotyping towards Asians. No matter how hard he tries, he is never accepted by his peers due to his Asian appearance.

Danny and Chin-Kee's story, on the other hand, shows how racial color metaphors like "yellow peril" and "model minority" are used as derogatory terms in daily life. Chin-Kee's name is a derivative of the word "Chinkie" which was a popular racial slur commonly used to describe Chinese people during nineteenth century. Drawn in a way that resembles a sexual predator with two sharp front teeth, drooling over Danny's white, blonde American girlfriend, Chin-Kee says: "Such pletty Amellican girl wiff bountiful Amellican bosom! Must bind feet and bear Chin-Kee's children!" (Fig 2.6). Chin-Kee represents a stereotypical "Chinaman" character. While the image of "yellow peril" is evident in this scene, "contradictorily, Chin-Kee also plays the role of "model minority." He excels academically beyond his American peers in math, history, biology, literature, and every other subject in school, having ready answers for any inquiry. But being a successful student does not make him popular with his cousin Danny and other peers. Instead, they resent his extraordinary performance in class (Liu 117).

American Born Chinese starts with the story of the Monkey King. According to Kuilan Liu "In Chinese culture, *Journey to the West*, from which the Monkey King hails, is regarded as one of the four great classical novels of Chinese literature, and thus the Monkey King is a household name" (112). The Monkey King in Yang's graphic novel lives on Flower Fruit Mountain, which is located below Heaven, where all kinds gods and goddesses dwell. In that sense, Flower Fruit Mountain can be compared to Chinatowns in the United States where Chinese people live separately in ethnic neighborhoods. From the lower ranks of the social hierarchy, Monkey King's inferiority is often emphasized throughout the graphic novel. As Kuilan Liu states "Yang's Monkey King often looks like an angry and uncivilized young man with knitted

eyebrows, dull eyes, and wild hair untamed by a golden hoop. Furthermore, his rebellious nature is downplayed, while his lowly status and his degraded identity as a monkey are emphasized” (115). This Americanized version of the Monkey King is drawn from the racist perspective of how whites view Asians or Asian Americans, as uncivilized, savage beasts who cannot be assimilated.

The Monkey King realizes that he is different than other deities (or gods/goddesses) when he tries to join the party where they are all gathered. While waiting in line, he keeps thinking of how much he likes dinner parties. The Monkey King’s discussion with the guard summarizes the life of Chinese Americans and other minorities in the United States. As the Monkey King says “I, too am a deity!” (Yang 14) which is similar to how American-born minorities feel. Even though they were raised in America and have not even been to their parents country of origin, they are still regarded as Chinese and discriminated against. On the following page, the guard replies to the Monkey King by saying “Look. You may be a king—you may even be a deity—but you are still a monkey” (Yang 15). This remark is reminiscent of how whites see minorities. It does not matter if they are American born citizens, as long as they look Asian, they are regarded as foreign. Yang uses panels to enhance the feeling of isolation. As seen in Fig 2.1, the Monkey King is drawn alone in the bottom right panel. His position and loneliness symbolizes how Chinese Americans feel in a country that supposedly accepts immigrants without prejudices. Moreover, the guard standing in front of the gates of heaven is a symbolic representation of the immigration officers at Ellis and Angel Islands, denying entry to Asian immigrants. He is there as a gatekeeper to the new world, in this case Heaven.



Fig 2.1. You are still a monkey (*American Born Chinese* 15)

The overwhelming racist pressure from society towards Chinese immigrants causes an inferiority complex since they are constantly reminded of the fact that they came from another continent, do not speak the language properly, and do not understand American culture. Kuilan Liu connects this phenomenon to *American Born Chinese*:

In Yang's work, the Monkey King, like many underrepresented minority children in the United States, suffers from an inferiority complex... After returning to his home, Flower Fruit Mountain, he suddenly finds the thick smell of monkey fur unbearable, and, ashamed of his subjects' nakedness, orders them to wear shoes. That which warrants no mention in Chinese versions because it is natural to monkeys—fur and non-shod feet—is highlighted as culturally unacceptable in Yang's version, heightening the Monkey King's self-loathing. (115)

The comparison of the Monkey King to minorities does not end with just his shoes. After his training, the Monkey King's figure changes, and he assumes a more human-like figure. This is similar to minorities' attempts to try to change their physical appearance to look more American through plastic surgeries. The Monkey King constantly tells others that he is not a monkey (62). However, he is confronted with reality when Tze-Yo-Tzun, the creator of all beings, tells him that he is a monkey (69).

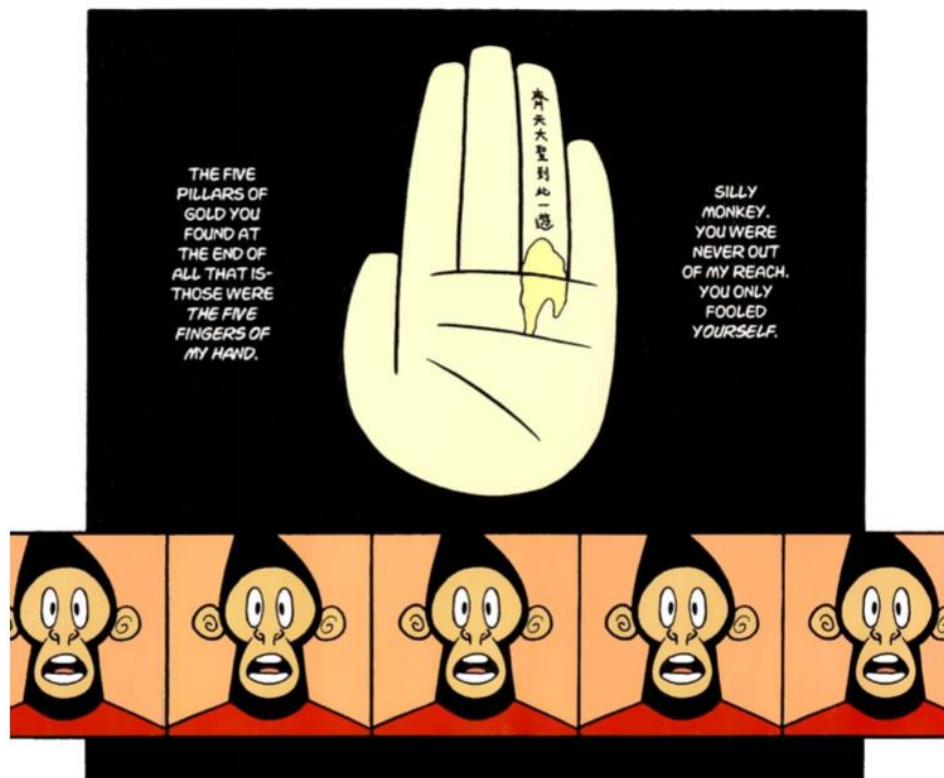
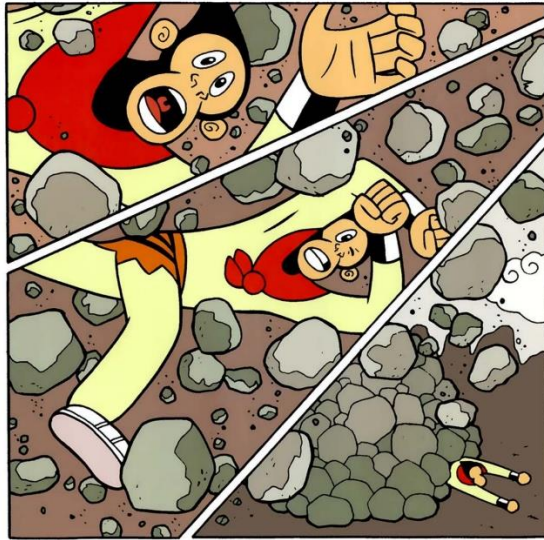


Fig 2.2. Tze-Yo-Tzun's Reach (*American Born Chinese* 77)

In order to prove that he is not a monkey as Tze-Yo-Tzun claims, he tries to escape. Unfortunately, there is no escape from God's (or Tze-Yo-Tzun's) reach (Fig. 2.2). No matter how far he goes, he is still within the domain of Tze-Yo-Tzun and is still regarded as a monkey. The experience is similar to the Asian Americans experience in the United States. The harder they try to assimilate into American culture, the less they are accepted and the more they are viewed as "the other." To enhance Tze-Yo-Tzun's strength, Yang places a large hand on a separate standalone page. This emphasized the extend of Tze-Yo-Tzun's power, symbolizing that he has control over all of his creations.

Tze-Yo-Tzun traps the Monkey King under a pile of rocks to teach him a lesson about self acceptance, the only way to escape these rocks is to embrace his true monkey form (Fig. 2.3). Embracing their Chinese origins is a problem for American-born Chinese since they do not have any ties to their mother country and they are not regarded as Americans. As a result, they are trapped in between two cultures. Here, symbolically, the pile of rocks can be regarded as pressure from American society, and the only way

to escape it is to embrace Asian/Chinese American identity instead of denying one's nature.



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Fig. 2.3. The Monkey King Trapped Under the Rocks (*American Born Chinese* 83)

The second story in *American Born Chinese* narrates the life of Jin Wang. Jin Wang is conceived as a stereotypical Chinese American youngster whose parents came to San Francisco in search of better living conditions. Chinese immigrants entered California through San Francisco and many of them worked as miners, construction or agricultural workers. Jin's family lived near San Francisco Chinatown for nine years and were thus part of this immigrant culture in the United States (Yang 25). Although his family shaped his Chinese identity, his parents are never fully presented in the graphic novel, which enables readers to focus their attention on Jin Wang. They are either drawn from behind or text covers their faces and they are only there to shape Jin's story (Fig. 2.4). This absent-present existence is similar to Mammy Two Shoes in the cartoon series, *Tom & Jerry*, human presence is felt but it is never fully shown to the readers. According to Brian D. Behnken and Gregory D. Smithers, Mammy Two Shoes was "in essence an animated version of black black-face representation of the popular Mammy archetype" (83). Jin's parents have a similar function in the sense that they play into same social norms of hard-working Japanese parents.

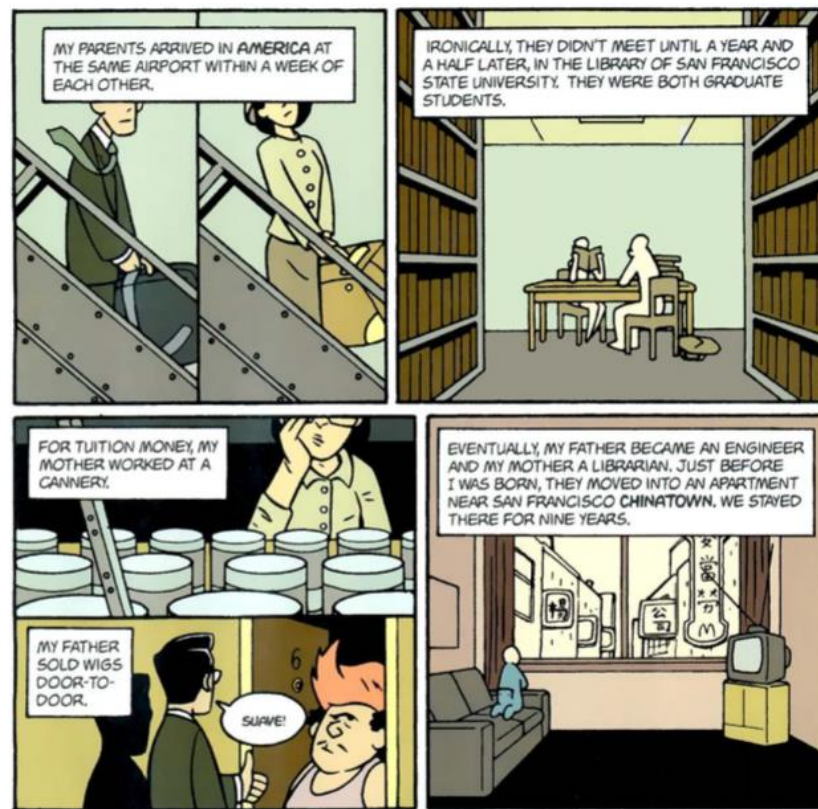


Fig 2.4. Jin's Parents (*American Born Chinese* 25)

Jin's family moves from Chinatown to a neighboring suburb where his school is located. Jin's schoolmates consist of mostly European American students who represent mainstream white middle-class culture (Schieble 51). At school, Jin struggles to deal with alienation and shame caused by his Chinese ancestry which results in discarding his own identity and assimilating into American culture.

When Jin first arrives in the classroom, he is introduced in a racist and discriminating way (30). His teacher pronounces his name wrong by saying Jing Jang instead of Jin Wang and claims that Jin and his family moved there all the way from China although Jin was coming from San Francisco. This emphasizes the fact that regardless of where one comes from, if the individual has an Asian physical appearance, he or she will be considered Asian rather than American. Yang drew this page in a very specific fashion (Fig. 2.5). Jin is placed in front of his classmates as if he is an item waiting to be sold at an auction house or circus freak show like an oddity. All eyes are observing his movements and Jin's classmates' facial expressions summarize his situation.

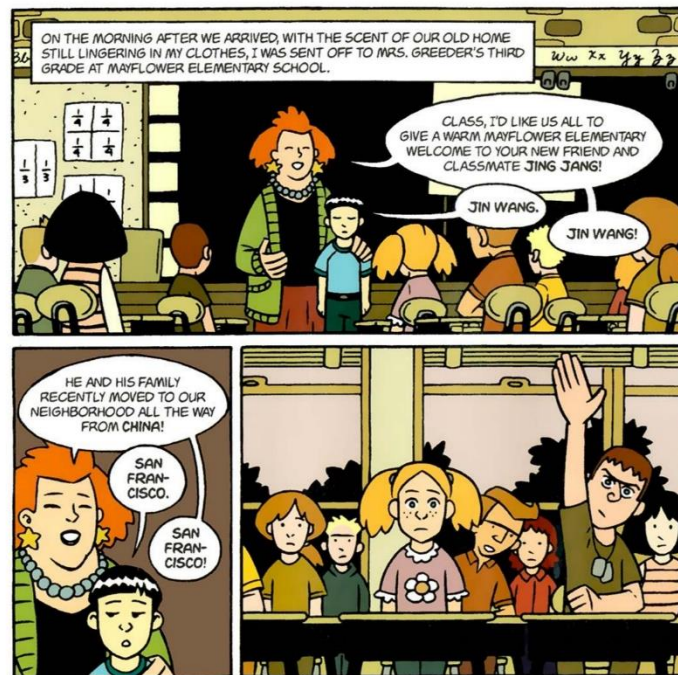


Fig. 2.5. Jin Wang's introduction to class (*American Born Chinese* 30)

Assimilation begins with the old lady at the herbal store. Every Sunday, Jin's mother visits the Chinese herbalist for her allergies. In a conversation, the old lady tells Jin "It's easy to become anything you wish...so long as you're willing to forfeit your soul" (Yang 29). She is basically telling Jin that he can become an American as long as he is willing to give up his Chinese identity. Jin tells her that he wants to become a transformer which is a metaphor for transforming into a true American boy, just like his peers. The effects of this transformation can be seen in his behavior at school. When he meets Wei-Chen, he tells him to speak English since they are in America. He uses American slang words such as "fresh out of boat." FOB was a derogatory term often used for immigrants who just arrived to the new continent and did not know the culture of the society. According to Albert Qian "Asians, specifically American-born Asians use it as a way to condescendingly put down other Asian immigrants" (n.p.). Jin sees Wei-Chen as a FOB who failed to adapt to social norms of American society. Moreover, cultural difference between Wei-Chen and Jin-Wang can be seen in their clothes (Fig. 2.6). While Jin dresses like a standard American boy, Wei-Chen is wearing Asian clothes. Jin wants to blend in with the rest of his peers, acts like an American, speaks like an American and dresses like an American. He even has trouble reading

Chinese. Eventually, he transforms into a white American boy and changes his name to Danny.



Fig 2.6. You are in America. Speak English. (*American Born Chinese* 37).

When Wei-Chen reminds Jin of his Chinese identity, he feels threatened because Wei-Chen represents what he is trying to avoid. Wei-Chen is introduced to the class in a similar manner as Jin Wang. Wei-Chen is placed at the center, which is the prime location of attention. He is drawn as a small and powerless character (Fig. 2.7). Like Jin Wang, the teacher introduces Wei-Chen by pronouncing his name wrong and tells the class he came all the way from China instead of Taiwan. These remarks present the school's perception of Asians. They have the notion that all Asians are from same place and they look the same and therefore, interchangeable. In the bottom right panel, Yang places Jin together with other white classmates staring at Wei-Chen in an empty way because Wei-Chen is now "the other" (Schieble 51). While looking at Wei-Chen, Jin says that something made him want to beat Wei-Chen up. This self-hatred of Asian immigrants stem from the stark cultural, physical, and social differences between them and Euro Americans. These differences resulted in comparisons and value judgments which made Asian immigrants ashamed of their ethnic identities (Wang 196).

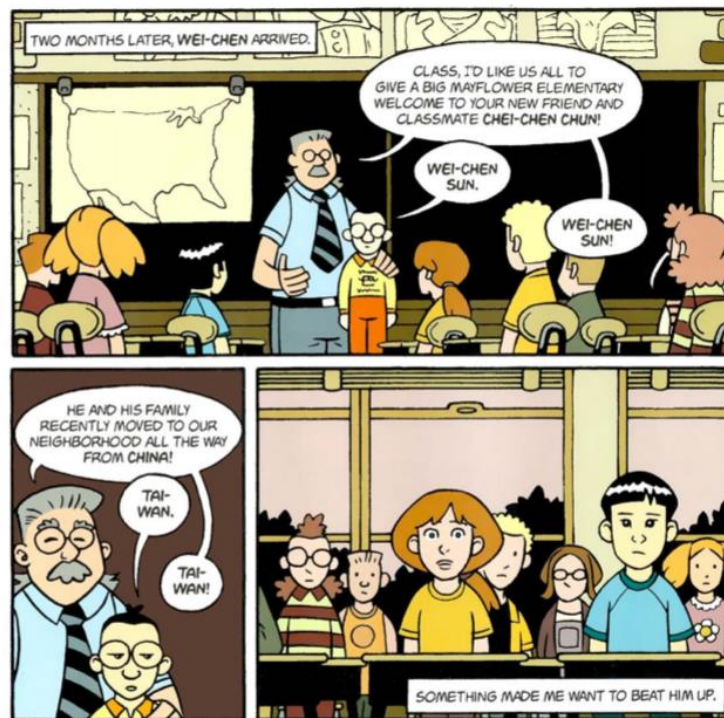


Fig 2.7. Wei-Chen's introduction to class (*American Born Chinese* 36)

The last story in *American Born Chinese* is the story of cousin Chin-Kee. Cousin Chin-Kee is the stereotypical representation of how Americans view Chinese people. As stated before, the place of Chinese Americans has constantly been in flux. When they first arrived in the United States, they were regarded as hard-working model minorities. However, overtime they became the ugly “yellow-peril” that Americans detested. According to Min Hyung Song,

More than any other racial minority in the United States, Asian Americans have found their status as a racial minority complicated by claims of their many apparent economic successes. At the same time, they remain battered by perceptions that they are somehow alien to the nation. This tension between success and alienation has become especially acute since 1965, when passage of Immigration and Nationality Act began to alter the Asian American population dramatically by, among other things, bifurcating it between a professional-managerial class and a class of largely blue-collar service workers... Gene Luen Yang's *American Born Chinese* stands out as a particularly focused on this problem. In this work, past and present ways of thinking about Asian Americans collapse into each other. (73)

Drawn in a stereotypical nineteenth century way, cousin Chin-Kee is a combination of both and represents historical and cultural Chinese stereotypes. He symbolizes past and present ways of thinking about Asian Americans Min Hyung Song mentions.

With his heavy Chinese accent, references to outdated cultural practices such as foot-binding, “bountiful amellican bossom,” and with his physical appearance that resembles a rat with his two front sharp teeth and big ears, Chin-Kee is depicted as the stereotypical mouth watering Chinese sexual predator (Fig. 2.8). Rat is an important symbol in ABC literature because in the nineteenth century, it was thought that the Chinese ate rats and used it in their restaurant food. This depiction is similar to how Chinese workers were seen during the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad which eventually resulted in the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. Image of bucktooth Coolie Chinaman, which was used in “Chinese Must Go” posters, was the reason behind the Chinese Exclusion Act.



Fig 2.8. Foot Binding (*American Born Chinese* 50)

Even though it is no longer practiced, foot-binding was a common practice in China for years. As Tiffany Marie Smith explains, “Footbinding [was a] cultural practice, existing in China from the 10th century until the establishment of the Peoples Republic of China in 1949, that involved tightly bandaging the feet of women to alter their shape for aesthetic purposes...Footbinding was viewed as a rite of passage for young girls and was believed to be preparation for puberty, menstruation, and childbirth...It ensured a girl’s marriagability in patrilineal Chinese culture and was a shared bond between daughters, mothers, and grandmothers” (n.p.). Yang juxtaposes this old Chinese

tradition and western tradition to emphasize the duality of two different cultures. It also suggests that what makes the Chinese different is their retention of outdated gender codes and social norms.

Yang's usage of dualism to compare Danny and Chin-Kee summarizes the segregation between Chinese Americans and white Americans. Danny is a good-looking American boy whereas Chin-Kee is an annoying, ugly looking Chinese boy who is drooling all the time. In order to elevate one, the other has to be demoted. Whenever Chin-Kee assumes his model minority persona and answers every question correctly, as seen in Fig 2.9, Danny becomes upset and angry. Yang uses gushers to emphasize how much fun Chin-Kee is having; words like "haha haha" run outside of the panel. Gusher is a term used to describe words that go beyond the borders of a panel. For example, every time Chin-Kee is smiling, Danny is placed right next to him ashamed of his cousin's behavior (Fig. 2.9).



Fig 2.9. Chin-Kee and Danny (*American Born Chinese* 113).

At the end of the work, all characters transform into their original identities. Cousin Chin-Kee reveals that he is actually the Monkey King, and Danny transforms back to

Jin Wang. This transformation symbolizes characters' willingness to embrace their ethnic identities instead of Americanizing it. In the end, their "true" identity prevails. Asians will never be fully accepted in American society because as non-whites, they will always look like "the other."

Yang uses three different stories to show different reflections of the lives of Chinese immigrants in the United States. He enhances his narrative by using Chinese cultural and mythological figures like the Monkey King. The story of Monkey King symbolizes the westernization of Chinese traditions, Jin Wang's story on the other hand, is the story of a Chinese American trying to fit into American society. He tries to speak English in front of others, and dresses like an American but nevertheless, he is still regarded as "the other." Chin-Kee is the sum of how Chinese Americans are viewed through white Americans' eyes. He is drawn in a fully racist way, and is the epitome of the negative intonations about Chinese people from an American perspective. By connecting three different stories, Yang presents different versions and perceptions towards Chinese people. While Yang's work *American Born Chinese* takes place in the contemporary times and gives examples from daily life, David H. T. Wong's work, *Escape to Gold Mountain*, which will be analyzed in the following section, acts as a graphical and historical documentation of Chinese immigrants, portraying historical events through different generations of Wongs.

2.2. DAVID H.T. WONG'S *ESCAPE TO GOLD MOUNTAIN* (2012)

The title of David H. T. Wong's graphic novel *Escape to Gold Mountain* comes from the California Gold Rush, which marks the beginning of Chinese immigration to the United States, when California was colloquially known among the Chinese as "Gold Mountain." Wong's graphic novel acts as a visual history of Chinese immigrants in the United States and Canada, and is full of references to historical events. Wong recounts the suffering of Chinese immigrants in the United States and Canada and the institutionalized racism towards the Chinese through different generations of Wongs. As David H. T. Wong states in the preface of the book, *Escape to Gold Mountain* is a fictional story based on facts and his family's own experiences in Gam Saan (Wong Preface).

In an interview with Tyee Books, David H. T. Wong explains his reasons behind choosing the graphic novel as his medium. His love of drawing cartoons as a child and his aim of making the material more accessible were his motives. Wong wants his novel to act as a catalyst between younger and older generations. He wants young people to learn more about their ancestors, what they had to endure when they first came to the new continent, and why they had to migrate in the first place (Wong Interview). Imogene L. Lim, who is a founding board member of the Chinese Canadian History Society, further supports this claim, explaining that

The graphic novel is a way to make such history accessible to people who might find the subject “dry,” or who don’t like reading or find it difficult. *Escape to Gold Mountain* offers perhaps the perfect vehicle to reach that wider audience, for “a picture is worth a thousand words.” This format also allows the reader to visualize individuals as just plain folks—they are your relatives, your neighbors—not people to be suspicious of or feared. There are no caricatures of the slant-eyed, buck-toothed, or conical-hatted individuals that have been frequently used to stereotype Asians; in Wong’s drawings, we see real people. (Wong Introduction)

David H. T. Wong’s realistic drawing style further enhances the Chinese immigrant experience. As seen in Fig. 2.10, characters are drawn in a realistic manner with their facial features that convey emotion effectively. Since the characters are based on real people, this realistic style enables readers to connect with the characters.



Fig. 2.10. Teary eyes and the Mother’s Sadness (*Escape to Gold Mountain* 45)

Wong zooms in on the eyes to show us the character's sadness. The character's face is highlighted for readers to focus on white-drawn tears which conveys the emotions expressed effectively through graphic novels. This juxtaposition of black and white colors is evident throughout the graphic novel. Wong uses shadows to direct the readers' focus into specific areas.

Before introducing "Gam Saan," or "Gold Mountain," Wong tells us the backstory of how and why Chinese people decided to migrate to the United States in the chapter entitled "China, The Sick Man of Asia." The chapter talks about how opium affected the lives of the Chinese, which eventually resulted in the Opium Wars and how China eventually became the "Sick Man of Asia."

As seen in Fig. 2.11, the introduction of opium swayed the trade balance in Britain's favor. As the British soldier says, this meant "No more British silver for Chinese riches! No real payment for China's silk, tea or spices!" (Wong 17).



Fig. 2.11. The introduction of Opium (*Escape to Gold Mountain* 47).

In the right panel, a big black British merchant ship is blocking the sun, which foreshadows the upcoming events that would destroy China from within.

On the following page, while talking about the effects of opium on Chinese people, Wong uses a black background behind his panels. This directs the readers' attention to what is going on inside the panels and presents the dark and gloomy mood during the nineteenth century China. A close up shot on the mother's face, whose husband sold their daughter for opium, conveys emotions of despair and pain. The mother's face is highlighted and viewers can focus on her emotions and facial features. The page layout features an irregular panel pattern which summarizes China's situation; many families were destroyed due to the excessive use of opium (Fig. 2.12). The mother who could not bear to lose her daughter commits suicide. The panel below shows how such scenes were common sights. The man on the boat does not pay attention to the floating body in the water.



Fig. 2.12. Father sells his daughter (*Escape to Gold Mountain* 48).

Since opium started to destroy the country from within, the Chinese wanted to get rid of opium which resulted in the First Opium War of 1839. However, due to Britain's superior and more advanced military power, China was defeated easily and was forced to pay two million taels of silver each to Britain and France as an indemnity. This marks the beginning of Wong Ah Gin's journey to the United States. In order to pay the debt, China increased the farming taxes. Wong Ah Gin decides to work at the port, and one day, he boards one of the ships sailing to the new continent.

The third chapter, which is the basis of the novel's title, explores how Chinese immigrants first arrived to Gam Saan. When gold was discovered in California, rumors spread quickly throughout Southern China and many Chinese immigrants came to the new continent in hopes of finding gold and turning their lives around during the Gold Rush of 1848–1849. As more men joined in search of gold, competition and greed increased exponentially. Many Americans did not want to share the potential gold with Chinese immigrants (Fig 2.13).

Even though Chinese men were not wanted during the Gold Rush, their labor was needed to complete the First Transcontinental Railroad. At first, Charles Crocker, who was one of the founders of Central Pacific Railroad, was against the idea of hiring Chinese workers due to their slim and weak bodies. In 1865, he agreed to hire fifty Chinese men. After seeing how efficiently Chinese men worked, three thousand more workers were hired. They worked harder than white men, also learned quickly, and were not prone to strike. Eventually, they became the main driving force behind the construction of the First Transcontinental Railroad consisting of eighty percent of the workforce. However, the increasing number of Chinese meant a decreasing number of available jobs for white men. In many places, propaganda campaigns to get rid of the Chinese began.

As seen in Fig. 2.13, “with a deteriorating situation in their homeland, the Chinese overseas were easy scapegoats for politicians on the new continent” (Wong 33). Many politicians advocated against the Chinese stating that they were stealing jobs from their countrymen. Wong's usage of common racial slurs such as “yellow peril, heathen Chinese, and moon eyes” shows the graveness of the situation.



Fig. 2.13. The Chinese Must Go! (*Escape to Gold Mountain* 85)

Wong uses spiky speech bubbles to distinguish normal speech from shouting. Furthermore, spiky bubbles effuse outside of the panels which enhances the shouting effect. Newspaper pictures in the middle of the page are reminiscent of Anti-Chinese pictures that were used in the nineteenth century. Lynching became a common occurrence during that time. White workers not only attacked Chinese workers, but also attacked companies who hired them.

Wong uses visual elements of graphic novels to its maximum potential by drawing things exactly as they were. He does not hold back while showing the brutality of the time. For instance, he portrays the lynching of Chinese workers by angry white mobs with great accuracy and without censorship. He draws the blood and the scars of Chinese workers along with facial expressions of the white mob in graphic detail. (Fig. 2.14).



Fig. 2.14. Lynching of Chinamen (*Escape to Gold Mountain* 88)

As Sean Carleton states “Readers of *Escape to Gold Mountain* must piece together the details of the difficult experiences of early Chinese immigrants by relying on gruesome and gory images of the comic book. In interpreting such frames...readers are given the opportunity to confront historical acts of racism and develop an awareness and appreciation for immigrants’ past sacrifices” (511). In Fig. 2.14, a hanged Chinese man is placed in the biggest frame, which immediately captures the readers’ attention. The hanged man is covered in blood with a broken leg. On the left side of the page, the victim is still alive, however, in the panels located on the right side, both Chinese men are dead. The location of dead Chinese man towards the end of the page symbolizes the end of the Chinese as well. If Wong had only used words and not pictures, the effect would have been different. Observing this brutal act of murder enables readers to fully visualize and understand the atrocities at the time.

After the completion of the First Transcontinental Railroad, Americans did not have any need for Chinese labor. To create jobs for white men, they wanted to send the Chinese

back to China. It started with lynching and mobbing, and eventually resulted in the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.

After the Chinese Exclusion Act, many Chinese workers were left alone since they were not able to bring their friends and families to the United States. Chinese Exclusion Act prohibited the entry of Chinese women even if their husbands were laborers in the United States. Unable to bring their wives and marry white women, the law created an isolated and predominantly male Chinese community

On the morning of April 18, 1906, a massive earthquake took place in San Francisco, California. The earthquake was short but catastrophic. It destroyed almost five-hundred city blocks in less than a minute, parts of Chinatown which meant a lot of rebuilding of homes and businesses.



Fig. 2.15. San Francisco Earthquake and Paper Sons (*Escape to Gold Mountain* 166).

In Fig. 2.15, Wong uses dark gray and black colors to emphasize on the destruction that the earthquake had brought. While the parts of the city that the earthquake destroyed are drawn in primarily black colors, Chinamen located on the right side of the page are

drawn on a white background, using light colors. This color choice symbolizes a new hope for the Chinese. Although this earthquake destroyed houses in Chinatown, it also gave a new opportunity for Chinese people to create fake documentation since the city hall, where all birth records and documents were stored, was destroyed by the earthquake. People who used fake identity papers were called “Paper Sons.” The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 prevented entry to Chinese immigrants. However, as Wong summarizes “Chinese men could return to China as US citizens and request documents for their sons (or sell them to relatives, friends, or strangers—hence ‘paper sons’). These documents offered hope for entry to North America, and thus led to a black market and a number of forgeries” (Wong 66).

The attack on Pearl Harbor and World War II was yet another defining moment for Chinese people living in the United States. On December 7, 1941, the Japanese Navy Air Force attacked Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, which marked the beginning of United States’ involvement in World War II. As Wong shows in his work, many of the Chinese in the United States were without relatives or dependants and were at the right age and category for combat therefore, they were accepted into the army. A century of racism, discrimination and violence towards the Chinese was now directed to the new common enemy, the Japanese (78). More than ten thousand Chinese Americans fought in the Second World War.



Fig. 2.16. The invasion of Normandy (*Escape to Gold Mountain* 197).

Wong uses different perspectives throughout the novel to tell the story. For instance, as seen in Fig. 2.16, while presenting the invasion of Normandy, Wong uses a reader-inclusive perspective by drawing the soldiers at the bottom left side and creating the feeling of being on the same boat with the rest of the crew. This technique allows Wong to include the readers into the story. He uses dark colors to emphasize the brutality and darkness of the war.

In conclusion, Wong describes the brutality that Chinese immigrants experienced in North America with great accuracy and honesty. Graphic novels provide another dimension through visuality. Wong presents the harsh reality and enhances his narrative using black and white drawings. Readers are able to understand a different perspective than they already know. As Bettie Luke explains in the preface of Wong's graphic novel, "Escape to Gold Mountain is a seminal example of how the power of images can convey often forgotten events more deeply than words alone. The reader is immediately engaged—visually, cognitively, and emotionally—captivated by a deep and long-lasting impression" (Wong Preface). *Escape to Gold Mountain* is a fictional story based on real events and as Connie C. So states, "Using historical documents, excerpts from interviews with elderly residents, and finely detailed illustrations, Wong captures the pain, frustration, and courage of early Chinese pioneers and their contemporaries and makes it understandable for readers of many age groups" (Wong Preface).

2.3. THE STANFORD UNIVERSITY GRAPHIC NOVEL PROJECT'S *AMERICAN HEATHEN* (2015)

In 1882, while banning Chinese immigration to the United States, the Chinese Exclusion Act also reinforced the Naturalization Act of 1870 which prevented Asians in America from becoming naturalized citizens. The suffering of Chinese immigrants during the aftermath of the Chinese Exclusion Act has been well documented. However, few of them focus on how Chinese people fought against the act in the United States. Since history is usually distributed through dominant discourses, or in this case, the oppressors, Chinese activists like Wong Chin Foo remain understudied. *American Heathen* corrects this by providing a bio-graphic narrative of the life of Wong Chin Foo's experiences.

Wong Chin Foo was a Chinese American journalist and activist who predominantly fought against Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and Geary Act of 1892. After his family lost its wealth, he was taken care of by American Baptist missionary Sallie Little who arrived in Shandong Province in 1860. Proficient in American English, he was baptized at the age of twenty and was sent to the United States in 1867 by his benefactress to complete his education and become a preacher. Foo returned to China in 1870 and married. However, he got into trouble due to his attempts to overthrow the Manchus, which was the last imperial dynasty in Chinese history. After his failed attempt, he had to leave his wife and son behind and return to the United States. He was, what Martin Luther King Jr. was to African Americans: the unsung hero for Chinese immigrants of that time.

American Heathen was written and illustrated by the Stanford University Graphic Novel Project Group in 2015. Unlike *Escape to Gold Mountain*, the group used elaborate colors to put emphasis on certain emotions for certain characters. For instance, on the cover page of the book, Foo is leaning on the wall, chased by an angry mob. Mob is colored in red, symbolizing their blood-thirst (Fig 2.17).

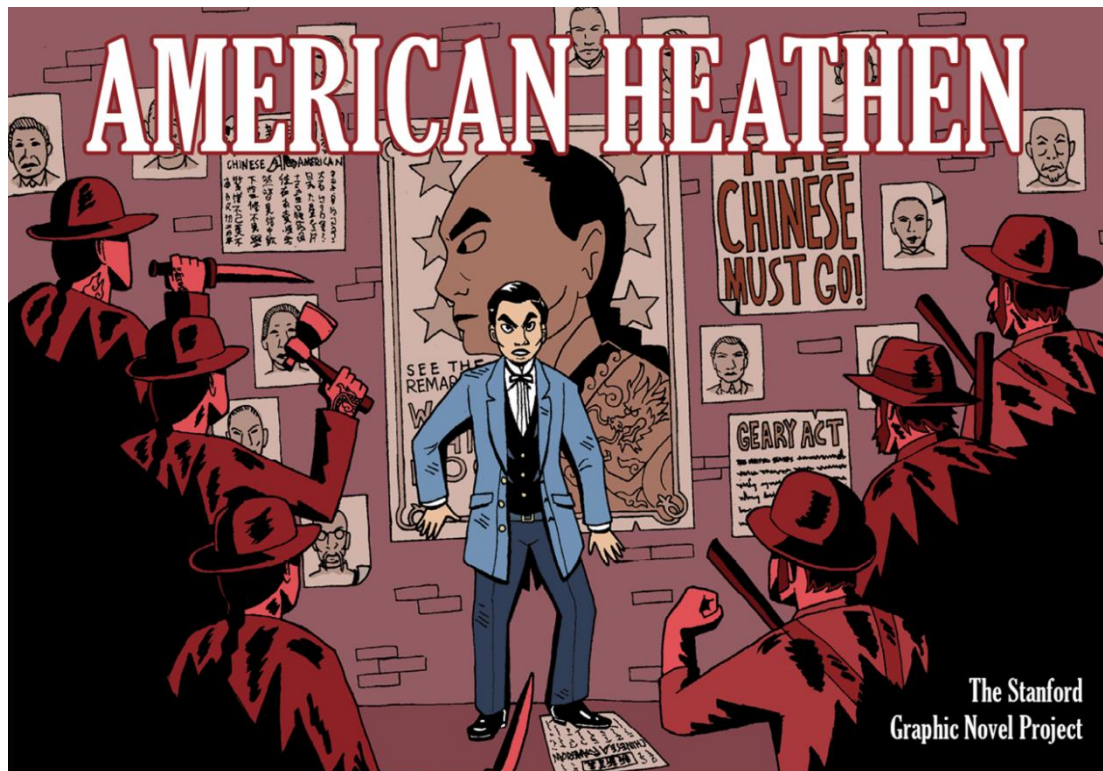


Fig. 2.17. *American Heathen* Red Cover Page (*American Heathen* Cover).

American Heathen does not follow the chronological order of events, it goes back and forth between the past and the present. The novel follows this consistent structure of juxtaposition between present and past, and chapters dealing with the present are immediately followed by Foo's past. On the first page of the novel, to list the important dates of events in his life, the group used Wong Chin Foo's long queue. Each braid corresponds to a different event in time. Using Foo's queue instead of a standard chronological list is important because for Chinese people, their queues represent their Chinese inheritance. Chinese men without braids or queues were considered outcasts, and often faced discrimination.

The story begins with a scene in which Wong Chin Foo cuts his queue, which is a metaphorical representation of him cutting his ties to China in order to become an "American." Chinese queues remained as a symbol of obedience and submission to Qing dynasty until Chinese Revolution of 1911. While he is walking in Chinatown, other Chinese people ask him if he is in the right part of the town due to the absence of his queue (Stanford 12).

The group uses different techniques throughout the novel. For example, Foo's long queue extends outside the panels on the page. This is called "bleed" which is often used to emphasize the size or magnitude of the objects that go beyond the borders of the panels. His queue continues to the following page, which is a "splash." Splashes are large full-page illustrations that introduce a new scene or story in a graphic novel. Here, the splash shows readers the two biggest events for Chinese people in the United States. The first half of the splash shows us the California Gold Rush and "Gam Saan." Most of the Chinese immigrants came to the United States during the California Gold Rush in hopes of finding gold and sending it back to their families. The second half of the splash shows the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad which was completed utilizing cheap Chinese labor (Fig 2.18).

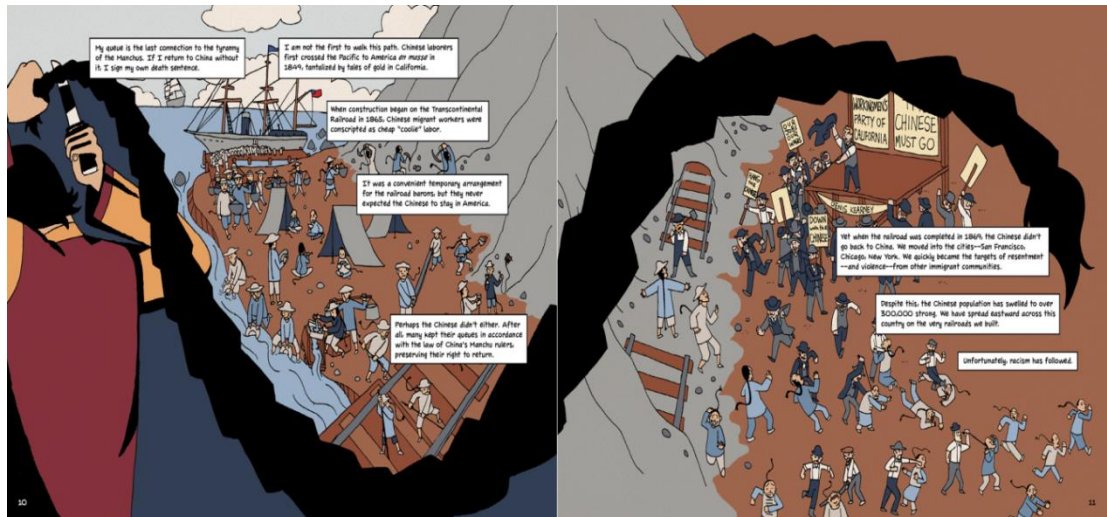


Fig 2.18. California Gold Rush and Transcontinental Railroad (*American Heathen* 10-11).

Despite being Chinese, Chinatown is not a safe place for Wong Chin Foo because of the Chinese gangs, the Tongs. Historically, Tongs are known for their illegal activities such as the opium trade, gambling and prostitution. The original Tongs in United States first came to San Francisco in 1850s after the first wave of Chinese immigrants during California Gold Rush. In Chinese language, “tong” means “gathering place” (Zhang 113). Originally, Tongs formed these communities in order to protect themselves against discriminating white merchants. This discrimination and the Chinese Exclusion Act eventually led the way to isolation. Many Chinese people isolated themselves from the rest of the society by creating Chinatowns. As Bill Lee states in his interview with Michael Zelenko, “At the time, there was a lot of discrimination against the Chinese. Because of the Exclusion Acts it was difficult to immigrate here. While they were here, men were not allowed to bring their families, you had a ‘bachelor society.’ With the creation of these bachelor societies, there was suddenly a market for prostitution” (n.p.). Illegal activities grew exponentially in Chinatowns. According to Seligman’s data, “the key player in the importation of sex workers was a triad organization called the Hip Yee Tong, which by one reckoning was responsible for bringing 6,000 women into the United States between 1852 and 1873, nearly 90 percent of all the Chinese women who arrived. The underground organization’s estimated earnings for that period were about \$200,000” (40).

Wong Chin Foo is disliked by the Tongs because of his intervention with their sex trafficking. The second chapter of *American Heathen* starts with Wong Chin Foo's time on the steamer S. S. MacGregor. On his way to the United States, Foo encounters the girls the Tongs are auctioning as sex workers. Each girl has a different story to tell, and some of them have agreed to the journey with false promises of finding jobs in the city. Some are sold by their parents to Tongs because of economical reasons. The boat arrives in San Francisco at half-past midnight, and the girls are to be auctioned in the morning. In order to help the girls, Foo writes a letter to his former friend who has connections in San Francisco. The next morning, San Francisco police officers arrive at the harbor to escort the girls to the police station. The police send Reverend Gibson, who used to work as a missionary in China, to convince the MacGregor girls to testify against the Tongs. However, the Tongs follow the girls to the station to scare them. While Reverend Gibson is trying to convince the girls, the Tongs are intimidating them. In all of the panels, the Tongs are placed behind the Reverend to give the impression that they are omni present, watching every move the girls make. They are colored in blue to blend in with the background as if they are part of the background scenery of society. The group drew the reverend in the middle of the panels so that readers can pay attention to his everchanging facial expressions (Fig 2.19).



Fig. 2.19. Reverend Gibson, MacGregor girls and Tongs (*American Heathen* 39).

According to Scott Seligman Reverend Gibson offers the girls multiple options.

They could come to the mission, which would arrange, through private philanthropy, for their return to China. They could stay at the mission until they learned a skill or got married. Or they could leave the station with their mistresses and ply the trade for which they had been brought over. Several of the girls insisted they had come of their own free will, although their stories were not credible. Some claimed they were looking to be united with husbands or parents, but were unable to provide names of their loved ones. In the end, eight of the girls opted to go to the mission and the remainder left the station with their keepers. (41)

In Fig. 2.19, Reverend Gibson visually resembles the great emancipator Abraham Lincoln, who abolished slavery with Emancipation Proclamation in 1865, with the way he is trying to save the MacGregor girls.

The MacGregor girls are not the only ones Wong Chin Foo tries to help. Throughout his life, he continuously fights for Chinese American rights. Wong Chin Foo is the first person to proclaim a “Chinese American” identity. He constantly tries to change certain stereotype prejudices, such as referring to Chinese people as godless heathens or that the Chinese people eat rats and dogs.

In his famous speech “Why Am I a Heathen?” Wong Chin Foo compares Christian beliefs to Chinese beliefs and tries to show people through Confucianism why the Chinese way of life is better than Christianity. He bases most of his arguments on Christianity being a money-centered religion because of capitalism and the puritan work ethic. He compares how a Christian preacher makes twice the money of a heathen banker. He tries to teach people how the Chinese were superior in “social administration and social order.” Foo states that “Among 400,000,000 of Chinese there are fewer murders and robberies in a year than there are in New York State” (Foo 174). Furthermore, he adds, despite building great churches and holding ceremonies, there is more corruption in a single neighborhood of a thousand people with a church than there is among one million churchless heathens. There are more suicides per year in New York compared to suicides in all of China (Foo 176).

To focus readers’ attention on Wong Chin Foo during his speech, the background and other drawings are in blue while Wong Chin Foo is placed in the center of the frame. Despite the blue color, the faces of the people in the crowd are visible. This gives the

impression that each person in the crowd is an individual and not just part of a random mob. However, only three of the viewers who are shouting at Foo are colored to distinguish them from the remaining characters. The group uses “bleeds” in an unorthodox way. Instead of going from the inside of the panel to the outside of the panel, they do the opposite. Foo is shouting at the mob from outside the panel, which gives the impression that he does not belong to that group, he is “the other” in every sense (Fig 2.20).

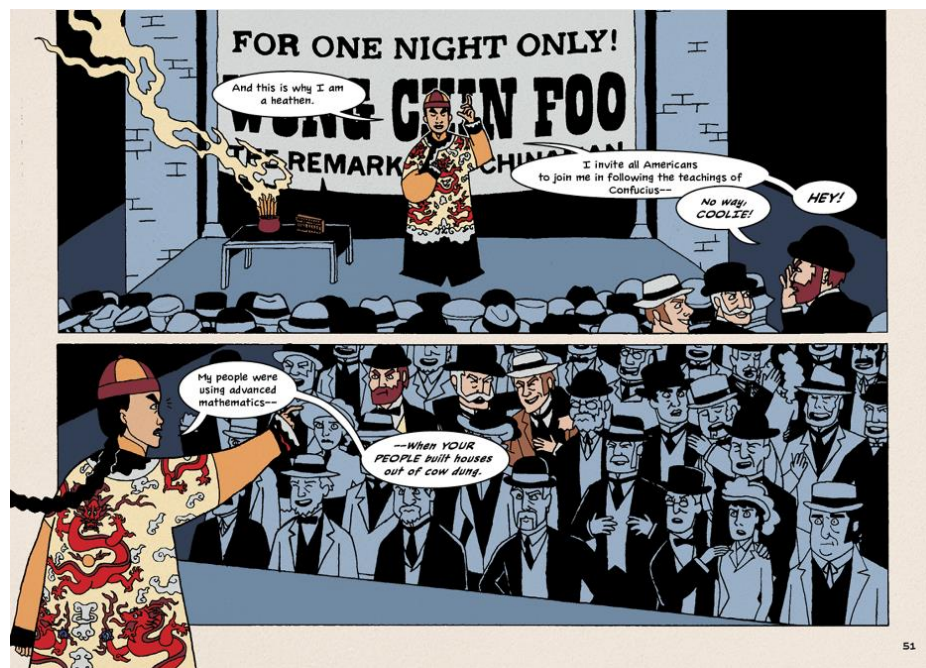


Fig. 2.20. Wong Chin Foo’s speech (*American Heathen* 51).

To spread his ideas even further, Foo becomes a journalist and creates his own newspaper called the *Chinese American*, in 1883. According to Scott Seligman, “California’s first Chinese-language paper had been published by Presbyterian missionaries beginning in 1851, and several others were in print in San Francisco during the 1870s and 1880s, but there had never been one in the East” (90). Foo tries to change this situation with his short-lived newspaper. He believes that it is his duty to expose the wrong-doings of the Tongs and other criminal groups to rid Chinatowns of illegal activities. He not only fights racist white Christians but also challenges atrocities among the Chinese. His newspaper ceased publication because of financial problems.

Another person Wong Chin Foo opposes is Denis Kearney who was influential during the “Chinese Must Go” campaign. He was a well known public speaker and always ended his speeches with the declaration “Chinese must go.” He believed that Chinese workers were ruining the United States with cheap labor, and eliminating job opportunities for other people. Denis Kearney always had an active role in labor movements and in 1877, he founded the Workingmen’s Party of California which denied voting rights for Chinese immigrants that eventually led to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. He was a very gifted public speaker, and in October 1877 organized a rally of 2,000 people to San Francisco’s Nob Hill where wealthy capitalists and railroad barons were located. He also threatened employers who provided hired Chinese immigrants (Seligman 112).

Since Kearney was seen as the leader of the Anti-Chinese movement, Foo wanted to challenge him to a public debate. Foo was confident in his abilities and believed that he could outsmart Kearney. On July 18th, he sent a provocative letter to Kearney. However, Kearney refused Foo’s offer by saying that Wong Chin Foo was not someone he recognized. In response, Foo challenged him to a duel with the choice of chopsticks, Irish potatoes (because of Kearney’s Irish descent), or a gun. Older immigrants oppress the newer ones, treating them like they were treated. The Irish were able to reinforce their whiteness in the process.

While Denis Kearney’s Workingmen’s Party of California was trying to get rid of Chinese workers, Wong Chin Foo was trying to get Chinese Americans to participate in politics so that they could fight for their rights. In 1892, Congress passed the Geary Act which extended the Chinese Exclusion Act for ten years. Furthermore, the Act also required Chinese people to carry identification documents even if they were American citizens. To protest against Geary Act, Wong Chin Foo called for a meeting in New York City and outlined their plan of action. This meeting was the foundation of the Chinese Equal Rights League which aimed to fight for and protect Chinese Americans, especially their voting rights (Ko 2). He organized a rally at Cooper Union calling the congress to reconsider the decision. The rally was successful and Wong Chin Foo was selected to testify at the hearing in front of its creator, Congressman Thomas J. Geary. During the hearing, Foo stated that Chinese people should not be forced to carry

photographs of themselves like criminals but Congressman Geary answered that this was necessary to prevent the smuggling of illegal immigrants. He supported his claim by saying that number of Chinese people in the United States increased by 60,000 in a few years (Stanford 79). During this confrontation, Geary is drawn in a position of power. He is located above Wong Chin Foo in panels, like a giant wall that he has to overcome (Fig. 2.21).



Fig. 2.21. Congressman Geary and Wong Chin Foo (*American Heathen* 80).

Wong Chin Foo tries several other methods to challenge the negative perception of the Chinese, but without much success. He tries revolting, appealing to the lawmakers, and fighting for rights, but these tactics do not work. He plans to demonstrate the exquisite skills of Chinese craftsmen and artisans at the Omaha World Fair (Stanford 100). He writes a letter to his partners in China and tells them to bring the best artisans they can find, along with his son. Foo has two goals for the Omaha World Fair: first he wants to present the Chinese concept of art and craftsmanship, and second, he wants to reunite with his son whom he has not seen for more than twenty years. Both aims fail miserably. The people he pays to bring his son to the United States never deliver on their promises. To seek revenge and to see his son again, on June 1, he boards the SS

Empress of India and sails for Hong Kong. After reuniting with his family, he dies of heart failure in 1898.

His death is illustrated in an unorthodox way. In the last chapter of the graphic novel, old Wong Chin Foo is having a conversation with his younger self (Fig. 2.22). His child self asks the older Foo why he has short hair, and older Foo replies by saying:

Because I wanted to be American and I was—but in name only, never fully accepted. I devoted my life to the betterment of my fellow Chinese in America and I did save the MacGregor girls but vice persisted in Chinatown. I fought for Chinese American Civil Rights with little result. My newspaper was successful, the Omaha Fair was not. Maybe I had it wrong. I'm not Chinese American, I'm neither Chinese nor American. (Stanford 140)

This conversation with his younger self acts as a summary of Foo's life. In order to become an American, he cuts his ties with his life in China and his Chinese heritage. However, he is still viewed as "the other." On the other hand, he is also not fully recognized by his own countrymen. With his short hair and western clothes, nobody considers him Chinese, even in Chinatown. He is not accepted and remains in the middle of both worlds. At the end of his life, he is neither an American, nor Chinese.

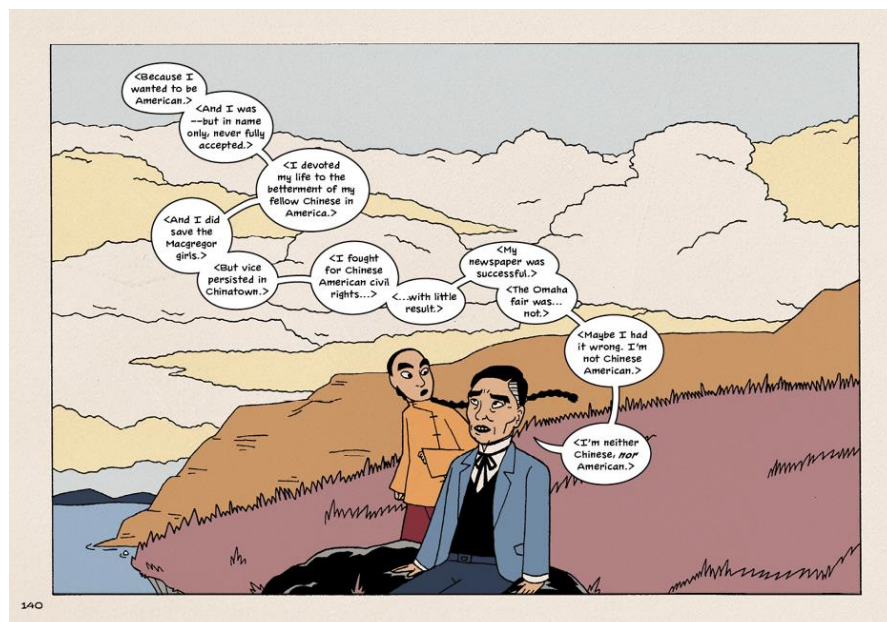


Fig. 2.22. Conversation with his younger self (*American Heathen* 140).

Many immigrants from different ethnic groups experience this paradox and try to discard their ethnic identities to become part of American society. However, after

arriving in the United States, most of them do not fight racial injustice or try to help their community like like Wong Chin Foo. Although he was a civil rights activist in many respects, Wong Chin Foo remains unknown to many. This graphic novel thus is also a tribute to unknown activists from immigrant communities.

CHAPTER 3

JAPANESE AMERICAN GRAPHIC NOVELS

Japanese immigration to the United States largely began with the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. The first large group of Japanese immigrants arrived in Hawaii in 1884, and were sought for their cheap labor and to counteract Chinese laborers. When they came to the United States, they were quickly regarded as a model minority due to their unrelenting work ethic.

Nevertheless, they were still subjected to racism and discrimination. Elevation of one group meant the downfall of the other. For instance, when the Japanese first came to the United States, they were held in higher esteem than Chinese immigrants. However, after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the tide changed drastically. Documents and media pamphlets contained information on how to differentiate an ally Asian, in this case Chinese, from an enemy Asian, Japanese. Many Americans of Japanese descent were forced to live in internment camps after Executive Order 9066. During this time, some Japanese activists, such as Fred Korematsu, whose experiences will be discussed in this chapter, tried to fight against racial injustice and inhuman treatment. In more contemporary times, Japanese immigrants are often viewed as the polite, hard-working and smart model minority compared to their Chinese counterparts. Yet, this predicament can easily be reversed since the United States is known to switch allies depending on its political stance at any given time.

To fight against their unjust treatment in the United States, some Japanese immigrants have used the genre of the graphic novel to voice their concerns and to retell the events from the eyes of the oppressed. They retold their own accounts, their relatives and their friendships through graphic novels. Manga has existed for centuries in Japan, so, using the graphic novel as a medium was a natural progression. Many Japanese American artists have incorporated certain elements of American comics into their works, resulting in a hybrid mixture of Eastern and American styles.

The biggest strength of the graphic novel is its visuality. Graphic narratives are accessible to people of different age groups, which enables authors to reach broader audiences. Often, writers are able to tell stories which could not have been conveyed

without the visual aids that graphic novels possess. Visual images create a bigger impact on readers.

One of the earliest examples of graphic novels, Henry Kiyamata's *The Four Immigrants Manga* tells the story of four friends who came to the United States for new opportunities in 1904 and stayed there until 1924. *Citizen 13660* and *Fred Korematsu Speaks Up* predominantly focus on the internment experience, which still remains as the most devastating incident in Japanese American History. *Citizen 13660* is an autobiographical work, narrating Miné Okubo's and her brother's experience in an internment camp. On the other hand, Laura Atkins' and Stan Yogi's, *Fred Korematsu Speaks Up* focuses on the experiences of Fred Korematsu, who refused to go to an internment camp and fought against the unjust treatment towards Japanese Americans.

3.1. HENRY YOSHITAKA KIYAMA'S *THE FOUR IMMIGRANTS MANGA* (1931)

In the United States, comic books and graphic novels have moved beyond their previous status of young adult literature. While graphic novels are progressively being included as a field of study, in reality, serious comic books have been around for a long time. According to Gretchen Schwarz,

The history of the graphic novel marks it as an “outsider” force or alternative medium in the United States. The comic book, out of which the graphic novel has grown, was long considered “trash,” mere kids’ stuff, or, at best, the obsession of geeks. In truth, most comic books in the first half of the 20th century were cheap pulp material, quickly produced by committee, and not great literature. (71)

Will Eisner popularized the term “graphic novel” but he was not the first one to use it. Published in 1931 in San Francisco, Henry Yoshitaka Kiyama's *The Four Immigrants Manga* is one of the earliest examples of graphic novels in the United States. Originally, it was created as a newspaper publication, featuring a two-page layout with six frames on each page, adding up to fifty-two episodes. After being translated into English by Frederick L. Schodt, in 2017, it was adapted into a musical by Min Khang.

The Four Immigrants Manga follows a traditional panel pattern. Unlike the previous works, *The Four Immigrants Manga* has the same panel pattern on each page. Kiyama preferred a cartoony drawing style over a realistic one. While realistic drawings are

more effective at projecting the reality to readers, this cartoony style has its own benefits. On the usage of cartoony style, Scott McCloud says “when you look at a photo or realistic drawing of a face, you see it as the face of another. But when you enter the world of the cartoon, you see yourself” (36). For instance, if visuals were drawn in a realistic style, it would have been harder for non-Asian readers to view the events through the eyes of the oppressed. Another advantage of the cartoony style is to assure the universality of the visuals. Drawings have the potential to represent multiple ethnicities (McCloud 31). In Kiyama’s work, Chinese immigrants, Japanese immigrants, and Americans are all drawn in a similar fashion, with few distinguishing facial features (Fig. 3.1).



Fig. 3.1. Kiyama’s drawing style (*The Four Immigrants Manga* 41).

Kiyama’s work lacks the traditional stereotypical drawings that readers are used to seeing in comic books or graphic novels. Instead of slanted eyes, all characters—regardless of their ethnic origin—have eyes in the shapes of two little dots (Fancher n.p.). When all characters look alike, readers are able to concentrate more on the events and less on the ethnicity of the characters.

The Four Immigrants Manga tells the story of four Japanese friends who came to San Francisco in 1904 with hopes for a better future. Kiyama's semi-autobiographical work portrays Henry and his friends' experiences in the United States. Throughout the novel, they witness historically notable events such as the San Francisco Earthquake of 1906. The novel begins with the characters' arrival in San Francisco. First two pages introduce the characters, their origins and their aims (Kiyama 31). Although all four friends come from the same place, they all have different ideals and aims. Henry, the writer/artist, comes to the United States to study art, Fred wants to become a successful California farmer, Frank wants to become rich and import goods from Japan, and Charlie wants to study diplomatic relations (Fig. 3.2). This technique is a reminiscent of the "info-dump" technique that is often used in science fiction works. The author often provides information about the characters and the setting before the action progresses.



Fig. 3.2. Arriving in San Francisco (*The Four Immigrants Manga* 31).

Settlers who came before the four friends created their own communities, mainly to ease their adaptation to the new continent. These communities became places where they could practice their religious and social activities and help new immigrants by providing jobs for them. As soon as they arrived in the United States, immigrants

adopted American names to avoid discrimination and to blend in easily. Many Japanese immigrants also preferred wearing Western clothes instead of traditional clothing. Americanization remains a reoccurring motif throughout the novel.

Japanese immigrants entered San Francisco through Angel Island, located in San Francisco Bay. Angel Island was colloquially referred to as “the Guardian of the Western Gate.” Between 1910 and 1940, there were more than 80,000 Japanese immigrants detained at Angel Island, the second highest number of immigrants after the Chinese (Din n.p.).

San Francisco has historically been a major settlement area for Japanese immigrants. Masakazu Iwata explains the reason behind this choice:

Figures indicate that among the Japanese entering the various Pacific Coast ports a large percentage of them drifted to and eventually settled in California. Hence the proportion of all Japanese in continental United States settled in California increased from 42 percent in 1900 to 57 per cent in 1910 and 65 per cent in 1920. The Chinese in contrast were in the beginning exclusively in California and later dispersed to other parts of the United States. Obviously the Japanese were drawn to California by its climate and increasing agricultural and business opportunities. (26)

Economic problems were not the only reason behind the sudden rise of Japanese immigration. Many early immigrants wrote and sent photos to their homes about the benefits and advantages of living in the United States, and how it was the land of opportunities. These falsely painted pictures encouraged other Japanese people, who were unhappy in Japan, to immigrate to the United States. In reality, many of them sent ten year old photos or fake photos of themselves, dressed as successful businessmen, advertising a false image (Fig 3.3). According to Fred, the main reason behind the problems were high expectations of life in America. Yet he also decides to go with the flow and get married through the picture bride system because he is afraid that the government will end this opportunity.



Fig. 3.3. Fred's Opinion on the Picture Bride System (*The Four Immigrants Manga* 112).

After their arrival, the local Japanese Buddhist Church helps them settle and find jobs so they can sustain their lives. Most jobs are some form of housekeeping where they are asked to perform menial tasks like peeling onions or potatoes, or cleaning the kitchen. They are mostly laid off and told to “go home” if they fail to do the tasks they are assigned. “Going home” is a common phrase in the dominant discourse, often used as a racial slur towards immigrants, meaning that they should leave the United States. In other parts of the world, the term “Go Home” is often used against Americans in the form of “Yankee Go Home.” Originally, it was a term of disparagement for New Englanders which became popular during the Civil War. Later, other nations started using “Yankee Go Home” for all Americans (Rawson n.p.). During World War II, Japanese people used the term for Americans, asking them to go back to their country.

The term “Go Home” was not only used for workers, but also for students. In May 1905, the San Francisco Board of Education drafted a plan to separate Asian students because they believed that Asian students, especially Japanese students, were vicious and immoral and their presence would impact white students negatively (Carrott 122). This anti-Japanese propaganda lasted for several years in different shapes and forms.

Another event that affected the lives of the Japanese immigrants was the San Francisco Earthquake of 1906. On the morning of April 18 at 5:12 a.m., an earthquake with a magnitude of 8.25 shook San Francisco. Since many buildings were not resistant to such a devastating natural disaster, more than 3,000 people died during the incident. Many immigrants who were already having a hard time became homeless. Charlie and Frank try to turn this unfortunate event in their favor by trying new business ventures. They become chefs and sell food, but this endeavor also fails.

Despite their best efforts, immigrants like Charlie and Frank are always told to “Go Home” which eventually makes them search for other job opportunities. According to Masakazu Iwata, Japanese immigrants ended up in agricultural jobs because they already had farming experiences.

Unable to enter the ranks of the more desirable occupations and unwilling to remain as laborers in non-agricultural employment, the Japanese even prior to 1910 showed a strong inclination to leave their original work for employment in agriculture. This movement into farm work was motivated by a desire for higher earnings in an occupation that had always been looked upon with respect in Japan and for which the Japanese were better fitted through experience. (27)

Charlie and Frank decide to try their luck in agriculture too and end up in rice farming. Historically, rice has been a major part of the Asian diet, and Japanese and Chinese immigrants introduced rice farming to American society. Japanese immigrants were the first to popularize rice farming and to showcase its potential as a profitable investment, which made California the epicenter for rice production (Wei n.p.).

Most of the early Japanese immigrants who worked in farms were called “Blanket Boys” since all of their belongings could fit inside a blanket. “Blanket Boys” did not have any place to stay. Therefore, they would use their blankets as a shelter to protect themselves. Many agricultural workers tried to survive under terrible living conditions, and Charlie and Frank are no exception. When they arrive at Delta Island, one of the prime California farms during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, they are asked to sleep on strawmats laid on the bare ground inside a stable (Fig 3.4). In fact, as Charlie states, animals live in better conditions than they do (Kiyama 54).



Fig. 3.4. The Living Conditions of Blanket Boys (*The Four Immigrants Manga* 53).

After planting the seeds, they water them and decide to take a nap. However, they fall asleep for a long time and end up with a flood, which ends their adventure as agriculture laborers.

Soon after his failed attempt on the farm, Charlie receives the news of his father's death, which causes him to drink. His sadness, combined with his addiction to alcohol, pushes him to try new methods for earning fast and easy money. He decides to go to Chinatown and try his luck with gambling. According to Chrissy Yee Lau,

Gambling was a central facet of life for Japanese male laborers in early 20th-century California. From the late 19th to the early 20th century, labor contractors and Chinese gambling dens offered gambling to Japanese laborers to maintain a consistent cheap labor force and large consumer pool. Many laborers approached gambling as a form of leisure, an opportunity for getting rich quickly and building a sense of community. (Lau n.p.)

Charlie does not realize how much he is losing at the time but after he returns home, he notices his mistakes and decides to sleep. While sleeping, he dreams of Mt. Fuji, a hawk and an eggplant. This specific combination of lucky symbols is called “hatsuyume” in Japanese culture. According to Matthew Coslett, “The Japanese take dreaming a lot more seriously. The subject of hatsuyume (初夢), or the first dream of the new year, is traditionally considered an omen of how the coming year will welcome you. Seeing

certain images or themes in your dreams in the two or three days after New Year's Day is a sign that good luck will be coming your way in the future" (Coslett n.p.). Yet, despite dreaming of these lucky symbols, Charlie continues to lose.

In 1907 and 1908 with the Gentlemen's Agreement, the United States limited Chinese women's immigration while allowing Japanese women to join their husbands who lived in the United States. Many Japanese workers were desperate for companionship, therefore, they sought Japanese wives from the mainland with their grandiose claims to land and riches, and fake pictures of themselves taken in borrowed suits (Lee 28). These Japanese wives were colloquially referred to as "picture brides." This was the continuation of traditionally arranged marriages that existed in Japan where families arranged marriages for their daughters and sons who were single and could not afford to return to Japan to get married (Kiyama 145). In *The Four Immigrants Manga*, Fred's parents arrange a marriage for him, and send pictures of the bridal candidate. However, the bride is too beautiful for Fred, who has a scar on his face caused by an accident in which he was kicked by a horse. Since many immigrants sent old, or fake photos to their families, Fred decides to do the same. He poses for a photograph that makes him look more handsome and does not reveal his scar (Fig 3.5). Fortunately for Fred, even after his prospective wife learns about his scar, their marriage contract continues.



Fig. 3.5. Taking Misleading Photos (*The Four Immigrants Manga* 109).

After many failed attempts at different jobs, Charlie decides that citizenship will solve his discrimination. In 1914, the war starts in Europe. Although the United States does not participate in the war until 1917, the government promises citizenship to those who volunteer to serve in the army. While describing the war, Kiyama uses a caricaturesque style, and enhances the narrative by using Japanese traditional items like Charlie's samurai sword. When Charlie slices an enemy soldier in half with his sword, blood does not appear. This resembles deaths in cartoons designed for juvenile audiences. Furthermore, Kiyama also uses metafictional devices, such as involving himself in the cartoon through his remark "the cartoonist will run out of ideas" (Fig. 3.6).

On his way back from the war, Charlie brings back helmets of enemy soldiers as trophies of war and as that he participated in the war. However, when he applies for citizenship, he is rejected.



Fig. 3.6. Charlie in World War I (*The Four Immigrants Manga* 118).

After the war, in 1918, another catastrophic event happens. The Spanish influenza pandemic killed more than 650,000 thousand people in the United States, and more than fifty million around the world. The influenza pandemic caused the death of more people than World War I. To fight the pandemic, people were forced to wear protective masks in public places. During this dire situation, the friends make fun of each other by commenting that they look better with masks on or how they will receive new marriage opportunities due to the increase of widows (Kiyama 120).

After the influenza pandemic ends, the friends decide to go to Turlock to harvest pumpkins. However, this endeavor also fails because of the local white population. Once again, the local white community wants to get rid of Japanese immigrants and keep the jobs for themselves. When the friends arrive at Turlock, they encounter an angry mob waiting with guns who chase them out of town. This is the first incident of racism that is coupled with physical violence in the novel. At the time of the incident, July 20, 1921, similar encounters took place in California towns where locals chased Japanese laborers out and warned them to return (Kiyama 146).

While many Americans tried to scare Japanese laborers and immigrants out of job opportunities, they could not stop the rapidly increasing Japanese population. Japanese immigrant families started having children to secure a better future. In order to prevent Japanese people from owning more land, the government implemented the Alien Land Act. Since 1907, the California legislature had tried to implement alien land laws. The Henry-Webb Alien Land Law was passed in 1913 which was aimed at Asian immigrants, and above all, Japanese immigrants (Nuys 2). The California Alien Land Act prevented Japanese aliens who were ineligible for citizenship, meaning the vast majority of them, from owning land. Many Japanese immigrants tried to find their way around those laws through loop-holes. Fred's family tries to do the same, and they decide to transfer their titles and possessions to their children. The California Alien Land Act of 1920 became the successor of the 1913 version, with stricter laws for aliens.

The work ends with the Immigration Act of 1924, which placed restrictive quotas on immigration from other countries. This was especially designed to stop Asian immigration to the United States. When all four friends learn about the 1924

immigration law, they have to decide, depending upon their specific circumstances, what to do. Fred has six children and a wife in the United States. Therefore, it is impossible for him to leave everything behind and return to Japan. On the other hand, Frank is single, without much success. In the end, Frank and Henry decide to go back to Japan while Fred and Charlie decide to stay in the United States. They decide to throw a farewell party for those friends returning to Japan. This is the first time all four friends are seen together on the same page since their arrival in the United States. When they first arrive in the United States and introduce themselves, they all raise their arms up in the air and say “Hoorah for the Japanese Empire!” (Fig 3.2). On the last page of the novel, they do the exact same thing with slightly different words (Fig 3.7).



Fig. 3.7. The Goodbye (*The Four Immigrants Manga* 133).

While Henry Kiyama’s work is called *The Four Immigrants Manga*, it tells the stories of four friends through the juxtaposition of Japanese and American culture. The artist uses American dresses and combines Japanese lucky charms and Japanese alphabetical characters. Even the authors’ name is a combination of American and Japanese names, Henry Yoshitaka Kiyama. This is a reoccurring motif in immigrant narratives, many authors are influenced by the American society, and this influence is often reflected in

their works. This combination allows Kiyama's work to appeal to both Japanese and American audiences.

3.2. MINE OKUBO'S *CITIZEN 13660* (1946)

In order to understand the historical relevance of Miné Okubo's work *Citizen 13660*, the events leading up to the United States' involvement in World War II and the underlying reasons behind it need to be summarized. Even today, World War II remains the deadliest and most catastrophic event in the history of humanity. The underlying reasons that caused World War II can be traced back to the aftermath of World War I. With the defeat of the Central Powers, the Allied Powers imposed restrictions and economic sanctions on Germany with the Treaty of Versailles which forced Germany to dismantle its armed forces. In 1933, Adolf Hitler became the Chancellor of Germany and tried to restore Germany's former glory. In September 1939, Germany invaded Poland which officially started the war.

The United States was not directly involved until Japanese warplanes attacked the United States Navy base at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. However, this event did not take place overnight. Japan and the United States had been in conflict for decades, dating back to the "Open Door Policy" of the United States. As Christine Sarikas states, "China was particularly seen as a lucrative prize; so multiple countries built a large presence there, and they began setting up trading stations and deploying troops to different regions of the country in order to have the best access to China's trade" (n.p.). Between 1899 and 1900, in order to maximize these trade routes, Secretary of State John Hay created the "Open Door Policy" to turn China into an open market for Japan and several other European countries. To prevent getting exploited by other countries and to solve its economic and demographic woes caused by Great Depression, Japan followed a very aggressive expansion policy, targeting China (Pruitt n.p.).

Japan had imperial ambitions to extend into the Chinese open market. In 1931, the Japanese army invaded Manchuria which eventually resulted in the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937. Due to pressures from the army, Prime Minister Fumimaro Konoye's government ordered an attack on China (Gompert 93). When Japan declared war on China in 1937, to protect its assets, the United States enforced a trade embargo

and economic sanctions on Japan. This embargo prevented Japan from importing oil, which Japan severely needed for its military.

In order to free itself from the embargo and to continue its expansion, on December 7, 1941, Japan attacked the US Naval Base in Pearl Harbor near Honolulu, Hawaii. The surprise attack killed more than 2,400 men. Although many died and ships were destroyed during the attack, the American army was not crippled because its major aircraft carriers were not at the base at the time. In that sense, Japan severely miscalculated the impact of their surprise attack on the US military (Gompert 93).

Up until the attack on Pearl Harbor, entering World War II remained a polarizing topic throughout the United States. Public opinion on entering the war drastically changed after the attack. On December 8, 1941, Congress approved Roosevelt's declaration of war on Japan. The declaration passed almost unanimously, except for one vote. The only person who voted against going to war was Representative Jeannette Rankin of Montana. She had also voted against the United States' entry into World War I. This attack changed the course of the war. According to David C. Gompert, "Japan's decision to bomb Pearl Harbor was a blunder of the highest order" (93). After the attack, the United States declared war on Japan and officially entered the war. With the declaration, people of Japanese descent living in the United States wondered what was going to happen next and feared for their safety (Fig 3.8).



Then on December 7, 1941, while my brother and I were having late breakfast I turned on the radio and heard the flash—"Pearl Harbor bombed by the Japanese!" We were shocked. We wondered what this would mean to us and the other people of Japanese descent in the United States.

Fig. 3.8. Hearing the news of Pearl Harbor (*Citizen 13660* 8).

Following the declaration of war, certain areas became restricted and several aliens and citizens of Japanese descent were arrested under false pretenses.

Until the attack, Japanese immigrants were seen as the model minority due to their strong work ethic. However, the attack caused pre-existing racial dynamics to change. The oppression of Japanese immigrants enabled the resurgence of immigrants of Chinese descent.

Since China and the United States were now allies, the public had to be educated about how to differentiate Chinese people from the Japanese, colloquially referred to as “Japs.” Iain Burns summarizes this inconceivable event with the following statement:

This shockingly racist American propaganda pamphlet telling soldiers how to spot the difference between their Japanese enemies and their Chinese friends was published in the aftermath of the Pearl Harbor attack. The astonishingly crude – and obviously inaccurate – booklet was created by the US Army for troops sent to fight in China. In comic book-style scenes, soldiers are taught that “the Jap” has many giveaway physical traits—including “buck teeth”, “lemon-yellow skin”, “eyes slanted towards his eyes” and a “wide space” between the first and second toes. (n.p.)

American citizens of Japanese descent—Nisei (children who were born in the United States to Japanese immigrants) and Issei (first generation Japanese immigrants)—had to endure insufferable racial slurs. Their lives completely changed overnight. Most of them had never been to Japan, yet they were regarded as dangerous criminals or potential spies. To prove their innocence, they were required to carry certain identification documents and certificates. Moreover, they were required to turn over their cameras, binoculars, short-wave radios, and firearms to local police officers (Okubo 10).

On February 19, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066, which transferred the problem of immigrants from the Department of Justice to the War Department, ordering the evacuation of all aliens of Japanese ancestry, and restricting German and Italian immigrants (Okubo 12). The government posted evacuation instructions for Japanese immigrants on walls (Fig 3.9). According to Miné Okubo, at first,

Evacuation was voluntary; people of Japanese ancestry were instructed to move out of the region on their own. Several thousand moved out of the vital coast

areas but growing suspicion and general public antagonism caused unforeseen difficulties. On March 27, 1942, voluntary evacuation was halted and the army took over, to bring about a forced and orderly evacuation. (13)

Evacuation happened rapidly, and Japanese communities had little to no time to plan their futures. Similarly, since the evacuation took place in such a swift manner, it did not give the government enough time to prepare the necessary evacuation centers. Some individuals like Fred Korematsu, whose story will be discussed in the following section, refused to go to the internment camps.

The executive order removed more than 100,000 Japanese Americans from their homes and moved them to internment camps. Before going to the camps, they were forced to sell their homes and businesses below their value.



Fig. 3.9. Evacuation instructions (*Citizen 13660* 17).

Japanese American author Miné Okubo's graphic novel *Citizen 13660* is the first illustrated memoir to portray the Japanese American internment experience (Zhou 51). The images she uses in her work trace back to her time in the internment camps as citizen 13660. All the internees were given numbers, just like in Nazi concentration camps. Those sketches laid the foundation of *Citizen 13660* (Robinson 70). Since immigrants of enemy descent were not allowed to carry cameras, Miné Okubo's drawings provide a description of camp life through the eyes of the oppressed. As Xiaojing Zhou comments "Okubo's use of pictorial autobiographical narration and her deft combination of images and words provocatively reveal the process by which Japanese Americans' identity as the 'enemy race' was spatially constructed" (52).

Okubo's work follows a one dimensional, traditional narrative style, illustrated through pen and ink drawings, with a single image at the top of the page, followed by a block of text. Since there is only one drawing per page, *Citizen 13600* does not contain page layouts or panels.

Okubo's story starts with her arrival in the Berkeley region of San Francisco to live with her brother after her mother's death. They hear the news of the attack on Pearl Harbor on the radio. They wait anxiously, not knowing what is going to happen next. With the announcement of the evacuation order, they start to make some preparations, and have three days to pack everything and prepare for the internment camps. Some of the internees did not even have winter coats since they lived in California, which became a problem when they were relocated to cold states like Colorado and Utah. Sickness and complications during pregnancy were common in camps and could result in death. Each person is given a family number, and their number is 13660, which serves as the basis of the novel's title. Armed soldiers escort them to buses that are designated to transport them to the internment camp. Soldiers carrying guns is a reoccurring motif throughout the novel, and they are ever-present. When they enter the camp for the first time, they are separated for medical examination. After the examination, a guide takes them to their new home, "Barrack 16." All barracks are drawn in a simplistic manner because they were actually simple houses built in a short span of time (Fig 3.10).



Fig. 3.10. Barrack No 16 (*Citizen 13660* 34).

Being built hastily meant that the barracks were not constructed properly in order to endure the terrible living conditions. Potential diseases and the cold weather were more intimidating than the armed guards. Many assembly centers were former racetracks and fairgrounds before the attack on Pearl Harbor. Unfortunate families who had been placed in stables had the highest risk of infection (Corley n.p.). Miné Okubo and her brother's room is no exception. She describes the stable as follows:

The place was in semidarkness; light barely came through the dirty window on either side of the entrance. A swinging half-door divided the 20 by 9 ft. stall into two rooms. The roof sloped down from a height of twelve feet in the rear room to seven feet in the front room; below the rafters an open space extended the full length of the stable. The rear room had housed the horse and the front room the fodder. Both rooms showed signs of a hurried whitewashing. Spider webs, horse hair, and hay had been whitewashed with the walls. A two-inch layer of dust covered the floor. (Fig. 3.11)



Fig. 3.11. Miné Okubo's Room (*Citizen 13660* 35).

Since there is nothing they can do, they start to clean their room to avoid potential infectious diseases. A lack of personal space also becomes a major element in the story.

The concept of personal space has a double register. On one hand, it refers to a literal personal space that is filled with dirt and illnesses, and on the other, it refers to a metaphorical personal space that symbolizes their rights as living beings and Americans, which are compromised by Executive Order 9066. The order stripped away their identities as individual beings and turned them into a number. Xiaojing Zhou says that "In 1942 the US military issued a number of civilian exclusion orders, which turned public spaces in the US into spaces of surveillance and containment, while inciting fear

by marking Japanese Americans' raced bodies as a threat. The civilian exclusion orders changed common public spaces to places of exclusion of a particular population" (60).

While Okubo tells the story of the metaphorical invasion of their personal space through her writing, she uses her drawings to enhance the invasion of their physical space. Her illustrations enable her to balance this juxtaposition of narratives. Throughout the work, there are many drawings that portray how clumped up the life in camp is.

Overcrowdedness is a reoccurring motif, and it is introduced during supper time for the first time. As Okubo recalls, the grandstand would serve up to 8,000 people. People had to wait outside in cold and windy weather to fill their stomachs. It was a struggle to find a place to sit since there were too many people and few seats (Fig. 3.12). The supper time rush is drawn as three consecutive images which symbolize how colossal this problem was. This situation turns into a major liability when food runs out before everyone can receive their portion.



Fig. 3.12. Supper time (*Citizen 13660 40*).

The situation worsens as time goes by. Almost three hundred evacuees join the camp every day. The latest group of 274 arrived at Miné Okubo's camp in San Francisco on May 24, 1942. Overpopulation and terrible living conditions created an ideal environment for diseases to spread. Every new evacuee was given typhoid and smallpox

vaccinations. According to Corley, “Japanese physicians who were placed in the centers were paid less than \$25 a month to provide care to their fellow internees, and also forced to live in these conditions” (n.p.).

Illnesses and terrible living conditions were not the only reasons behind Japanese deaths. There were multiple reports of murders committed by guards. The Lordsburg shooting is one of the most controversial events in the history of Japanese internment. During the transportation of a Japanese internee group, two men over the age of fifty were lagging behind the group. Guards thought they were trying to escape and shot them in their backs. Although the guard who shot them was charged with murder, he was not prosecuted.

Mino Okubo’s work remains a crucial historical document that portrays Japanese internment life. She uses simple and easy to understand drawings that do not require much history knowledge. This allows Okubo to reach colloquial readers of all ages. According to Sarah Dowling, the juxtaposition of serious issues and juvenile drawings make *Citizen 13660* different than other texts of its kind (Fig 3.13). As she states,

Although it documents terrible hardship, *Citizen 13660* is a clear instance of an internee exuberantly finding and making life. Okubo documents instances of hate speech, separation from most members of her family, and the manifold humiliations of life in camp, but *Citizen 13660* is ironic, even impish; its most curselike gestures might be drawings of Okubo sticking out her tongue at the guards or holding her nose in a childlike display of disgust. (300)

Reaching younger audiences is especially important since many Japanese families avoided talking about their camp experience. According to Kristine C. Kuramitsu, “Wartime imprisonment constituted a ‘shameful’ episode for the Japanese American community. For years, a heavy silence hung over the 1940s; in many families, parents attempted to keep the fact that they had been interned from their children” (621).

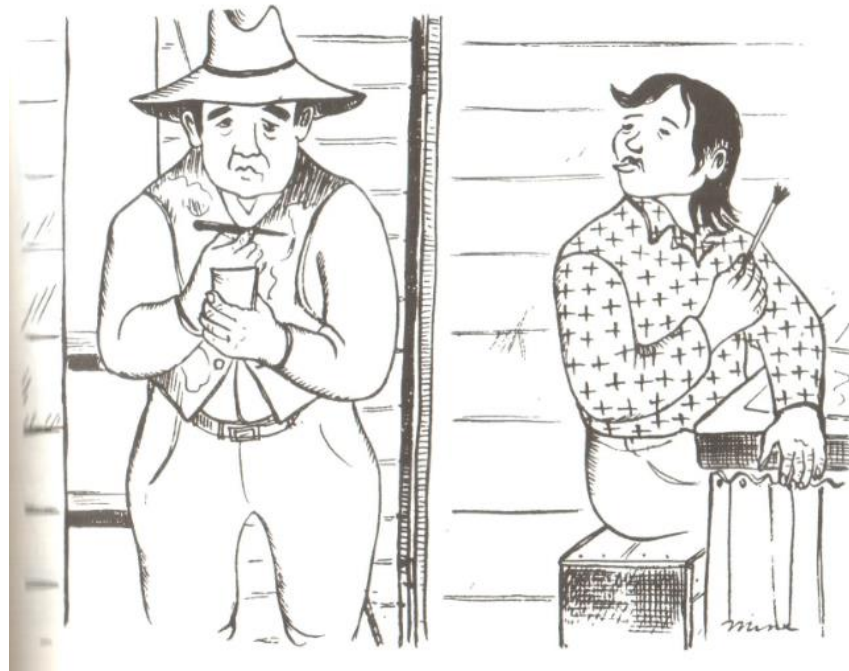


Fig. 3.13. Miné Okubo sticking out her tongue (Okubo 58).

Outside of internment camps, Japan suffered heavy losses during the Second World War. On August 6, 1945, the United States used its first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, which killed more than 80,000 people. Three days after the first atomic bomb, the United States dropped the second atomic bomb on Nagasaki, this time killing 40,000 people. Even though Japan surrendered immediately after the nuclear attacks, there were many long term damages. According to Dan Listwa, “exposure to radiation can cause acute, near-immediate effect by killing cells and directly damaging tissue, radiation can also have effects that happen on longer scale, such as cancer, by causing mutations in the DNA of living cells. Mutations can occur spontaneously, but a mutagen like radiation increases the likelihood of a mutation taking place” (n.p.).

While the physical war between the United States and Japan ended with the atomic bomb, Asian Americans were reluctant to speak openly about their internment experience. It took over forty years for the government to admit its mistake. In 1988, President Ronald Reagan signed the Civil Liberties Act which apologized for the internment and ordered a payment of \$20,000 to each camp survivor as compensation. Miné Okubo’s work reminds Americans what Japanese Americans went through, and what they experienced during the Second World War. It serves as a bridge into historical events for future generations.

3.3. LAURA ATKINS' AND STAN YOGI'S *FRED KOREMATSU SPEAKS UP* (2017)

Born on January 30, 1919 to Japanese immigrant parents who owned a flower nursery, Fred Korematsu was a Japanese civil rights hero. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, Korematsu tried to join the United States military because he felt more American than Japanese. However, he was rejected due to his racial ancestry. His rejection prompted him to try other opportunities. He found a job in Oakland shipyard as a welder which did not last long. He was fired because of his Japanese ancestry.

Executive Order 9066 defined and shaped Fred Korematsu's life and became a turning point. He did not comply with the order because he wanted to stay with his girlfriend. He had plastic surgery in order to look more caucasian and blend into the society. He changed his name to Clyde Sarah and told people he was Spanish-Hawaiian. However, on May 30, 1942, he was arrested after a police officer asked for his identification. While he was imprisoned, lawyer Ernest Besig, who worked for the American Civil Liberties Union, visited him and persuaded him to fight racial discrimination towards Japanese Americans. When he accepted Besig's offer, Fred Korematsu's life took a new direction.

Laura Atkins' and Stan Yogi's work *Fred Korematsu Speaks Up* (2017) narrates Fred Korematsu's experiences from his childhood to his death on March 30, 2005. This graphic novel differs from previous works due to its unique aesthetics. It emulates the structure of a poem, reminiscent of epics that describe the deeds of heroic figures such as *The Iliad* and *Odyssey* (Fig 3.14). Since this work targets younger audiences, this format also allows the authors to portray Fred Korematsu as a great civil rights hero by creating an epic narrative out of his life experiences.

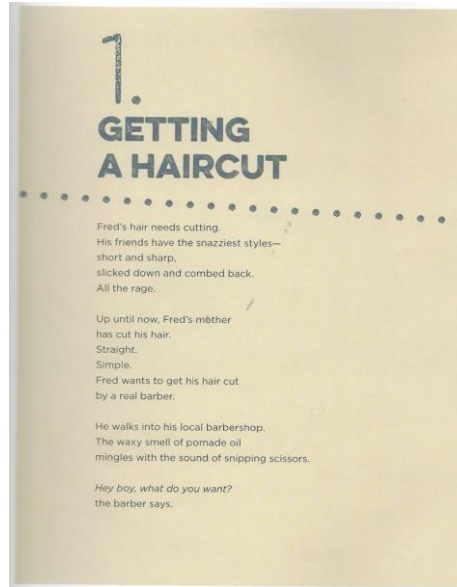


Fig. 3.14. Korematsu's Epic Narrative (*Fred Korematsu Speaks Up* 1).

The work consists of twelve different chapters, each of them featuring a different event in Korematsu's life. It contains twelve drawings, each of which is located before the corresponding chapter's poem (Fig. 3.15). The drawings in *Fred Korematsu Speaks Up* are more like summaries of individual chapters. Although elements such as bleeds or panels are prevalent in other works, they do not exist in *Fred Korematsu Speaks Up*.

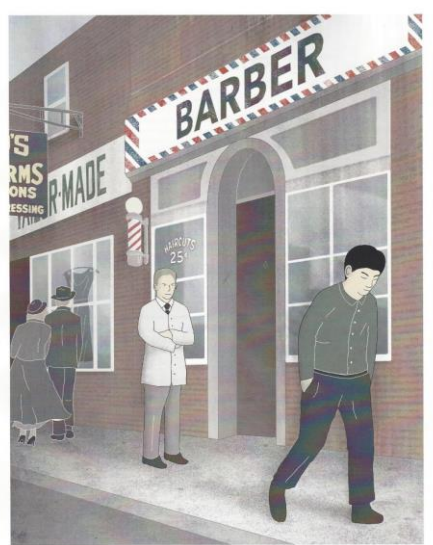


Fig. 3.15. Rejected by the barber (*Fred Korematsu Speaks Up* 0).

Instead, each chapter is followed by sections that explain the events that were discussed in the poems. Laura Atkins' intertextual work is enriched by illustrations from other authors and artists such as Miné Okubo's *Citizen 13660* (Fig. 3.16). Also, this work uses real photographs about the related events to intensify the sense of reality of what was actually happening. Atkins often addresses readers directly to involve them in the work. In this sense, this work can be viewed as a postmodern hybrid of a historical textbook and an illustrated novel, making it a unique example in this genre.

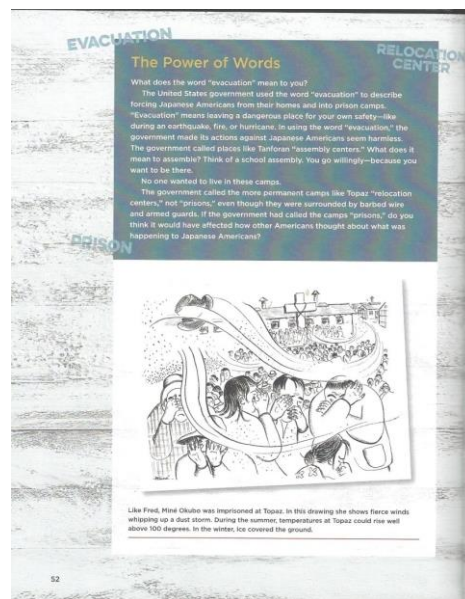


Fig. 3.16. Miné Okubo's Drawing (*Fred Korematsu Speaks Up* 52).

The graphic novel begins with Fred Korematsu's attempt to get a haircut at the barbershop. According to Atkins, up until that moment, Fred's mother had cut his hair. However, he is rejected by the barber who tells Fred that they do not serve his kind there. This kind of discrimination towards ethnic groups was predominant in the United States before the Civil Rights Movement, especially towards African Americans. Many stores would often put up signs saying that they would not serve "colored people." As Steven F. Lawson summarizes, "racial segregation was a system derived from the efforts of white Americans to keep African Americans in a subordinate status by denying them equal access to public facilities and ensuring that blacks lived apart from whites" (n.p.). However, African Americans were not the only racial group that was segregated and discriminated against. During the 1850s, many Americans on the East Coast believed that Irish and German immigrants were dangerous and violent (Atkins

4). People of all ethnic origins had the potential to become unwanted citizens in WASP neighborhoods depending on the circumstances (Fig 3.17).



Fig. 3.17. No Japs Wanted (*Fred Korematsu Speaks Up* 11).

Although Fred experiences racial discrimination, he feels more American than Japanese. When he was born in 1919, Fred's parents named him Toyosaburo but his first-grade teacher could not pronounce his name, and named him "Fred." Fred Korematsu's family moved to the United States during the early 1900s in hopes of a better future, similar to most immigrants. They owned a flower nursery, but Fred wanted a different future for himself. This becomes more evident in the following chapter when Fred's parents want him to speak Japanese instead of English. Fred Korematsu was born and raised in the United States, he never went to Japan and does not feel connected to the country of his parents' origins. At the time, many Issei (first generation Japanese immigrants) parents wanted their Nisei (Japanese Americans born in the United States) children to learn the Japanese culture and customs. Like Fred Korematsu, Nisei had weak ties to Japan since they were assimilated into American culture. According to Eileen H. Tamura "the cultural values the Issei developed as they grew up in Japan, many of which they brought with them when they immigrated, evolved further as they adapted to their American environment. Thus Nisei children

grew up in families that were unlike those in Japan during the same period” (3). Although Fred feels isolated and alienated at home, he feels on familiar grounds at school. He enjoys running, swimming and playing tennis with his close friend Walt. He learns more about American culture and the US constitution at school since school starts with a pledge to the flag. He feels free and equal to other people in school, unlike outside where others alienate him due to his Japanese ancestry and appearance.

When World War II broke out in 1939, the United States tried to remain impartial in the beginning. Many people knew that the country would eventually enter the war due to ongoing conflicts of interest between Japan and the United States that arose from the Open Door Policy. After the war started, Fred tried to join the army, but he was rejected due to his Japanese ancestry. While searching for alternative ways to support his country, he ended up becoming a welder, melting metal to build ships (Atkins 20). His career as a welder was short-lived since he was fired because of his Japanese background. In the novel, the news of the attack on Pearl Harbor in Hawaii is announced on the radio. The scene is depicted in a creative collage style. Four different pictures—Fred’s parents, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, the attack on Pearl Harbor, and Fred and his girlfriend—are juxtaposed into a single drawing with the radio placed in the middle as the harbinger of the catastrophe (Fig 3.18). The thunderbolt splits Fred and his girlfriend, foreshadowing their separation.

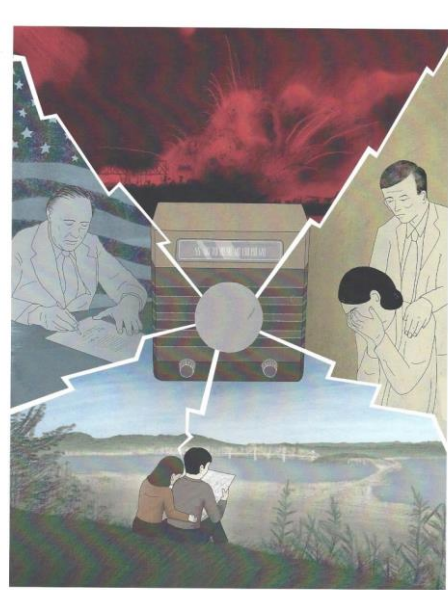


Fig. 3.18. Hearing the news of the attack on the radio (*Fred Korematsu Speaks Up* 18).

According to Laura Atkins, “when Japanese Americans learned about the bombing of Pearl Harbor, they were shocked like other Americans. But they were also nervous about what would happen to them. They feared that the United States government would not trust them because of their Japanese ancestry” (22). Their fears were justified. Soon after the attack, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 which forced people of Japanese descent to internment camps. Many government agents searched the homes of Japanese Americans to find some evidence that they were spies. Japanese families, including Fred Korematsu’s family, were forced to sell their property for outrageously low amounts, which benefitted whites. As Eric Paul Fournier states,

Fred refused to comply with the Executive Order because he knew it was wrong. When his family left for Tanforan, a “staging area” that would temporarily house the Japanese-Americans until they were sent to internment camps, Fred stayed behind and took steps to avoid being discovered. He changed his name and had plastic surgery to change the shape of his eyes. Before he could flee to Nevada, Fred was discovered and arrested for failing to report for relocation. (59)

During his imprisonment, Ernest Besig, who at the time was the executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Northern California, offered to help Fred Korematsu after reading about his case. Dorothy Ehrlich explains that

The ACLU of Northern California agreed to represent Korematsu in 1942, a decision that was intensely controversial inside and outside of the organization. The case, challenging the constitutionality of the executive order that allowed the military to summarily exclude Japanese Americans en masse from the West Coast and eventually imprison them, ultimately went to the US Supreme Court. The high court ruled 6-3 against Korematsu in 1944. (n.p.)

At the Tanforan internment camp, Fred feels like an alien, and an outsider among his family and other Japanese Americans. Many of the internees believed that Fred was risking their lives by fighting against the government. They thought that if they remained loyal to the government by staying silent, the government would eventually realize their innocence. When portraying his life in the Tanforan camp, Fred Korematsu is drawn alone, away from others, symbolizing that he is fighting this war without the help of his people (Fig 3.19). In September 1942, Fred and his family were sent to Topaz camp in Utah where Miné Okubo was forced to stay during the Japanese

internment. Topaz camp, which covered one square mile, was one of the ten largest internment camps (Atkins 50).

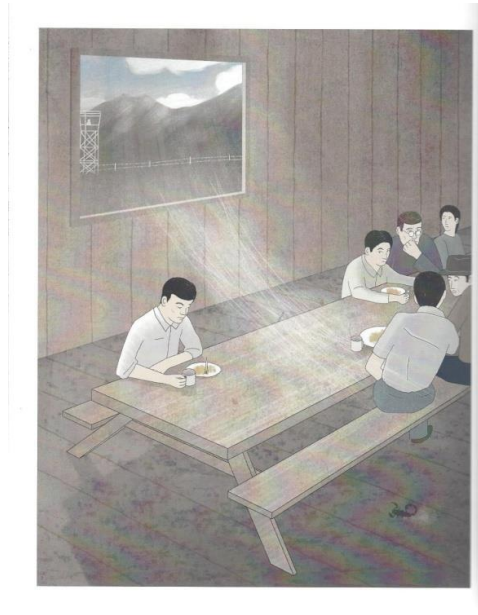


Fig. 3.19. Fred Korematsu, alienated (*Fred Korematsu Speaks Up* 46).

When the war ended, many Japanese Americans had a hard time readjusting to their lives before the war since they had lost most of their property and were regarded as criminals. Like other Japanese Americans, Fred tries his best to reclaim his former life but he has a criminal record. He had broken the law by trying to run away from the internment camp and ended up losing his case against the Supreme Court. Despite the hardships after the war, Fred meets his future wife, Kathryn. They travel to Michigan to marry since it was forbidden for non-white people to marry white people in California. After getting married, they move to Fred Korematsu's hometown, Oakland, and have two children.

Forty years after Fred Korematsu's Supreme Court case, he received a phone call from a lawyer named Peter Irons. During their meeting in 1982, Peter Irons showed Fred Korematsu the Department of Justice records that he and Aiko Herzig-Yoshinaga found in the National Archives through the Freedom of Information Act. According to the records, the government lawyers used falsified evidence in the Supreme Court case in order to convict Korematsu. According to Orville Schell, in his work *Justice at War* (1983), Peter Irons

documents how Government officials not only allowed misstatements of fact to go uncorrected but actually suppressed, altered and even destroyed crucial evidence—such as reports from the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Office of Naval Intelligence that cleared Japanese-Americans of espionage charges—in order to strengthen their own hand when four varied test cases were brought before the Supreme Court in 1942 against the internment order. Had such evidence come before the Court when these test cases on constitutional and procedural aspects of the internment policy were heard, Mr. Irons believes it was quite possible that the Justices would have ruled against, rather than for, Executive Order 9066 and have avoided what he calls “a legal scandal without precedent in the history of American law.” (n.p.)

After reading the documents, Fred Korematsu decides to fight the government one more time. Together with a group of young lawyers who were sons and daughters of people who were imprisoned during Japanese internment, they gathered evidence for two years while building the case.

Reopening a case after forty years carried certain risks. Korematsu had already lost against the government once and losing again would mean be disastrous. Moreover, at the time, Nissei and Sansei (third generation Japanese Americans) activists were trying to secure a law that would pay reparations to Japanese Americans who had lost their belongings during the Japanese internment. Another defeat would put a dent in Nissei and Sansei activists' efforts (Atkins 74).

On November 10, 1983, people gathered at the San Francisco courtroom with great expectations. When Korematsu opposed the wrong-doings and racial injustice of the government, he did not receive any support, but this time, a courtroom full of Japanese Americans came to witness and stand in solidarity. The courtroom was filled with expressions of joy and happiness when US District Judge Marilyn Hall Patel announced that she would vacate Fred Korematsu's conviction (Ehrlich n.p.). This meant that the United States government officially acknowledged the lack of evidence for convicting people of espionage and acknowledged its mistake in imprisoning 120,000 people of Japanese descent. Fred Korematsu's triumph over the federal government was not only a victory for 120,000 people, but also a victory for future generations. The Korematsu case provided an example for those who are wrongfully imprisoned because of their race and color, and also serves as a lesson on what can happen when the federal government discriminates against its own citizens. His case is still relevant today in Trump's America, where Muslim bans and concentration camps are routinely discussed.

After successfully defending his position, Fred Korematsu started traveling across the country to talk about his internment experience. He helped other people who faced racial injustice and encouraged them to speak up for what they believed in. Fred Korematsu was concerned for Middle Easterners and supported them after the 9/11 attack. He wanted to prevent history from repeating itself.

According to Laura Atkins “On January 15, 1998, President Bill Clinton honored Fred Korematsu with the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian award for an American. Later, Fred told Karen [his daughter] he wished his parents could have been there” (82). Fred Korematsu started his journey as an enemy of the nation who was misunderstood by his own people but he eventually became an American Civil Rights hero and received Presidential Medal of Freedom (Fig. 3.20).

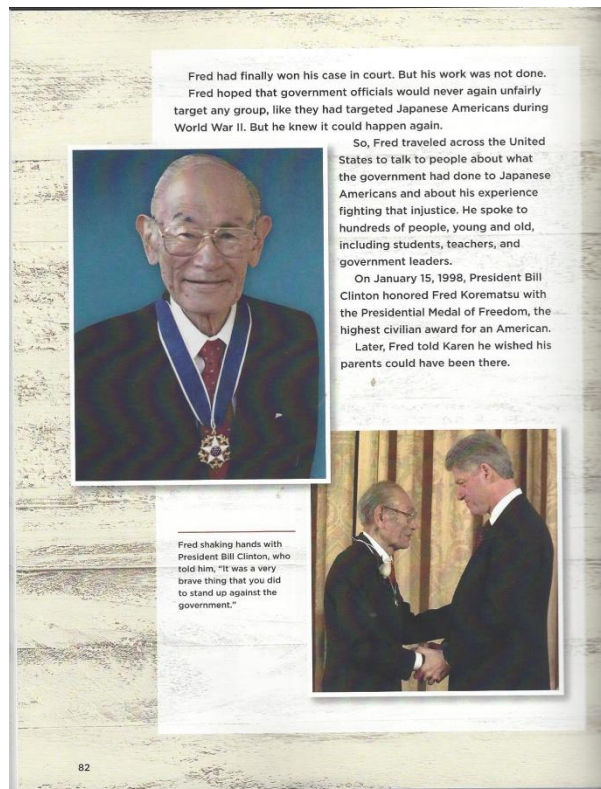


Fig. 3.20. President Bill Clinton giving Fred Korematsu the Presidential Medal of Freedom (*Fred Korematsu Speaks Up* 82)

Throughout the work, Laura Atkins and Stan Yogi ask readers what would they do if they were in Korematsu's shoes or if they have ever stood up against injustices to involve them in Fred Korematsu's story. This becomes an effective way to engage the

readers. They can feel that they are included in the work, and can see events through Fred Korematsu's eyes. Although this work focuses on the racial injustices during World War II, the current discussion of Muslim bans and even Muslim internment camps in the United States, proves that these discussions are still relevant.

CONCLUSION

Comics and graphic novels serve as a barometer of the contemporary world where media bias can happen due to political reasons. Since drawn images can bypass barriers of censorship during such times, comics and graphic novels dealing with political issues often fill in the gap of dissenting voices. Miné Okubo's *Citizen 13660* (1946) deals with the Japanese internment experience after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Marjane Strapi's *Persepolis* (2000) talks about the narrator's experience during the Iranian Islamic Revolution of 1979, Art Spiegelman's *Maus* (1980) discusses the Holocaust, while his *In the Shadow of No Towers* (2004) is about 9/11. These works are some examples of graphic narratives that deal with significant political events. The above-mentioned graphic narratives also focus on the contested or hidden sides of the events in question. The visual power of graphic novels enables many artists and writers to reach broader audiences as these visuals have an everlasting effect on readers.

Joe Sacco, an American cartoonist and journalist, popularized comics-journalism. He is mostly known for his work *Palestine* (1993), which focuses on Palestinian experience during 1991 and 1992. Joe Sacco's work was immediately recognized as a revolutionary work, proving that comic books had the potential of being more than just stories about superheroes. *Palestine* required extensive research under extraordinarily hard conditions. During his time with Palestinians, Joe Sacco interviewed countless people. With respect to his work, David Thompson states,

Approaching such daunting topics with a disreputable and supposedly juvenile medium may seem futile, even absurd, yet Sacco's greatest achievement is to have so poignantly depicted contradiction, oppression and horror in a form that manages to be both disarming and disquieting. *Palestine* not only demonstrates the versatility and potency of its medium, but it also sets the benchmark for a new, uncharted genre of graphic reportage. (n.p.)

Comics have power to illuminate topics that cannot be discussed otherwise. Rebecca Sherr adds that "Sacco's work highlights the ability of comics to intervene in specific ethical debates concerning the politics representing pain and trauma" (184). In this sense, Sacco's work not only enables him to talk about the unspeakable events through the visual power of graphic novels, but also allows him to have ethical, and often controversial, debates about traumatic experiences.

Each graphic novel has different and unique characteristics. While some are drawn in a more realistic manner like David H. T. Wong's *Escape to Gold Mountain: A Graphic History of the Chinese in North America* (2012) that enable readers to understand the true feelings of the characters, others, like Henry Yoshikata Kiyama's *The Four Immigrants Manga: A Japanese Experience in San Francisco, 1904–1924* (1931) are drawn in a cartoony style so readers can focus on events rather than the characters. *The Four Immigrants Manga* is a semi-autobiographical work that narrates the lives of four friends who come to the United States in 1904. Like immigrants who arrived before them, they came to the United States in hopes for a better future. Four friends not only deal with hardships associated with living in an unfamiliar land, but also catastrophic events such as the San Francisco Earthquake and the Influenza Pandemic. As mentioned before, cartoon-like drawings enable readers to project themselves onto the story. This suggests the universality of graphic novels. It is easier to pick up and read a graphic novel compared to tackling a historical document dealing with the same incident.

Graphic novels also provide alternative points of discussion. Their use of language and their narrative approach can be interpreted like prose texts, but this hybrid genre provides more than just a close reading of written messages. The visual aspects of graphic novels can be scrutinized to present how drawings complement or run against the grain of the text in the frames and pages. This is a unique aesthetic that distinguishes graphic novels from traditional text-based novels.

While graphic novels are available to readers of all ages and groups, to fully comprehend the underlying messages, familiarity with the jargon of the genre is helpful. Many artists use techniques to enhance their narratives. Despite their literary qualities, graphic novels remain understudied in academia. As the discussions on the previous chapters reveal, graphic novels poses valid literary qualities that can narrate the stories of the oppressed groups in the United States.

This study focused on Chinese and Japanese immigrants, their history in the United States, and their impact on each other. However, there are other works about Asian Americans and their immigrant experiences, such as GB Tran's *Vietnamerica: A Family's Journey* (2010) and Thi Bui's work *The Best We Could Do* (2017), which narrates a family's journey from Vietnam to the United States. Since the position of

Chinese and Japanese Americans changed constantly depending on the historical events of the time, this study examined only those two immigrant groups. Despite being compared to each other, both groups became victims of discrimination through laws such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the Alien Land Act of 1913, and Executive Order 9066.

Chinese immigrants were the first to come to the United States during the California Gold Rush of 1848–1849. Their aim was to earn money, and help their families back home which is why San Francisco, California was colloquially referred to as “Gold Mountain”–or “Gam Saan” in Chinese–by immigrants. According to Ronald Takaki, many immigrants “dreamed of new possibilities inspired by stories of the ‘gold hills.’ To those hopeful migrants, America possessed an alluring boundlessness, promising not only gold but also opportunities for employment” (33). David H. T. Wong’s *Escape to Gold Mountain* narrates the story of Chinese immigrants in the United States through different generation of Wongs. Shortly after they arrive in the United States, Chinese workers become popular because of their hard-working nature and their willingness to receive low wages. They become the main driving force behind the construction of the First Transcontinental Railroad. However, this popularity caused unrest among white workers. Many of them feared that they would be out of jobs. Throughout the country, Chinese workers were lynched, murdered, or scared out of jobs. To show the brutality the Chinese suffered, David H. T. Wong portrays lynching with great accuracy without withholding details or gruesome scenes that depict the hanged Chinese. Concerns over Chinese immigration resulted in the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.

American Heathen was “researched, written and illustrated by the members of the 2015 the Stanford University Graphic Novel Project” (Stanford 4), and tells the story of Chinese American activist Wong Chin Foo. While banning Chinese immigration to the United States, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 also reinforced the Naturalization Act of 1870 which prevented Asians in America from becoming naturalized citizens. This work revolves around Wong Chin Foo’s attempts to improve the lives of fellow Chinese immigrants and his fight against such unjust laws. He believed that the only way to truly defeat racism was to become a citizen. However, becoming a citizen did not change the

outlook of others, because even when he carried an American identity card, he remained “the other” in the eyes of society.

The Chinese Exclusion Act marked the beginning of Japanese immigration to the United States. The arrival of Japanese immigrants meant that the United States did not need Chinese immigrants. Instead, Japanese immigrants became the model minority, and Chinese immigrants became the “other.”

Japan’s aggressive extension policy aimed to turn China into an open market, which clashed with the United States’ intentions. Japan declared war on China in 1937, which forced the United States to put a trade embargo on Japan in order to protect China. As a response, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor Naval Base in Honolulu, Hawaii on December 7, 1941. With the attack, Japanese and Chinese immigrants changed places in the eyes of American society once again. After the attack, Japanese Americans became “bad Asians,” or “enemy Asians” instead of Chinese Americans. Newspaper articles and posters instructed the public on how to differentiate a “Jap” from their friends. This kind of racist propaganda placed Chinese and Japanese faces side by side and compared their physical features, much the same way Nazis compared Jews to Aryans (Fig. 4.1).

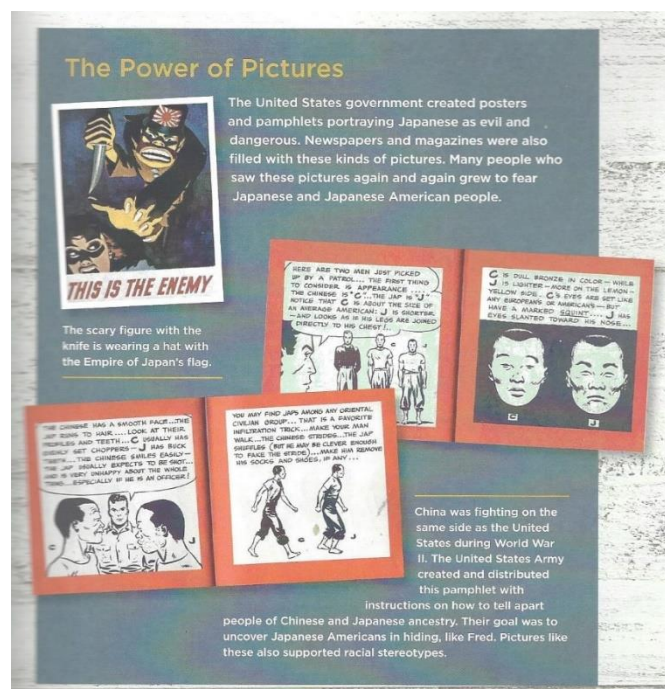


Fig. 4.1. Posters comparing Chinese and Japanese Americans (*Fred Korematsu Speaks Up* 31).

After Pearl Harbor, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which forced people of Japanese descent into internment camps. Cameras or voice recorders were not allowed inside the camps, with the fear that Japanese Americans might spy on American troops and deliver information to their homeland. Some Japanese Americans wrote about their life in internment camps, documenting the inhumane treatment they received. A Japanese American artist and writer, Miné Okubo, was among the internees. To document her own experience, she created 189 drawings which became the basis of her work *Citizen 13660*. Okubo gives a first-hand account of the dire conditions of the internment camps. Camps were built hastily, and most of them were used as stables before the war. Internees had to endure harsh living conditions, and had to sleep on straw mattresses in cramped rooms. Communal showers, sleeping inside the stables, and cold weather created an ideal environment for illnesses. Furthermore, since they were forced to sell their belongings before they moved to internment camps, many people did not see a light at the end of the tunnel. Even if the Executive Order were rescinded, many of them would not have a place to return.

Another civil rights hero was Fred Korematsu whose experiences were discussed through *Fred Korematsu Speaks Up*. This work narrates the life of Fred Korematsu, who fought against Executive Order 9066 and Japanese internment. He had plastic surgery to look more American and changed his name to Clyde Sarah. Despite his attempts, he was arrested on May 30, 1942. An ACLU lawyer named Ernest Besig visited him in prison and persuaded him to join his cause to fight against Executive Order 9066. After accepting Besig's offer, Korematsu started fighting for the well-being of his fellow Japanese Americans. This work is different from the other graphic novels analyzed in this thesis since it engages readers by asking them a series of questions and tries to place them in Fred Korematsu's shoes. Moreover, Korematsu and Okubo spent time in the same internment camp, Topaz, which connects and complements the two works.

While such works focus on specific events or people in history, other works focus on the general immigrant experience and American daily life, like Gene Luen Yang's *American Born Chinese*. Although it has the simple, easy to understand style of a children's book, *American Born Chinese* deals with many important issues related to

race that are relevant today through three different stories. *American Born Chinese* explores contemporary issues such as belonging to American society, and self-acceptance.

The graphic novel begins with the story of Sun Wukong, or the Monkey King, which is a reoccurring mythical figure in Asian literature. The Monkey King is the ruler of his kingdom, but he wants to ascend to the heavens, where the gods and goddesses dwell, and live among them. However, they do not accept him as one of their own since he is a monkey and not a god. The Monkey King's lack of belonging is similar to what many Chinese Americans have experienced in white American society.

The second story featured in the graphic novel involves Jin Wang. Wang's parents came to the United States with hopes for a better life. However, to provide Jin with better educational opportunities, his parents moved from city to city. As a result, Jin becomes a victim of racial stereotyping towards Asians.

Danny and Chin-Kee's story on the other hand, shows how racial slurs like "yellow peril" and "model minority" are applied in daily life in American society. Academically successful cousin Chin-Kee represents the stereotypical Chinese person with his sharp front teeth and traditional Chinese clothes.

Chinese and Japanese Americans, like members of other ethnic, minority, and immigrant groups, have turned to the genre of the graphic novel to express personal and group histories, retell events from their perspective, correct the injustices of the past, and work through their collective trauma. Many immigrants faced racism and discrimination because they phenotypically look different than the rest of the society. The graphic novel becomes the perfect medium for dealing with problems that arise from physical differences between people since it combines visual images with written text. Graphic novels' flexibility also enables them to cover a wide range of topics, such as self-acceptance, racism, and a lack of belonging. They become powerful tools that deal with traumatic experiences while discussing important topics such as race, ethnicity and gender. In art, every brush stroke is different than the previous one, and the same logic applies to graphic novels. Every graphic novel is different than its

predecessor. It is a genre that continuously evolves, meaning that graphic novels will become even more adequate in dealing with serious issues in the years to come.

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APPENDIX 1: ORIGINATILY REPORT



HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
THESIS/DISSERTATION ORIGINALITY REPORT

HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
TO THE DEPARTMENT OF AMERICAN CULTURE AND LITERATURE

Date: 19/06/2019

Thesis Title / Topic: The Chinese American and Japanese American Experience in Graphic Novels and Visual Narratives

According to the originality report obtained by myself/my thesis advisor by using the *Turnitin* plagiarism detection software and by applying the filtering options stated below on 19/06/2019 for the total of 102 pages including the a) Title Page, b) Introduction, c) Main Chapters, d) Conclusion sections of my thesis entitled as above, the similarity index of my thesis is 27%.

Filtering options applied:

1. Bibliography/Works Cited included
2. Quotes included
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I declare that I have carefully read Hacettepe University Graduate School of Sciene and Engineering Guidelines for Obtaining and Using Thesis Originality Reports; that according to the maximum similarity index values specified in the Guidelines, my thesis does not include any form of plagiarism; that in any future detection of possible infringement of the regulations I accept all legal responsibility; and that all the information I have provided is correct to the best of my knowledge.

I respectfully submit this for approval.

19/06/2019

Name Surname: Kaan GAZNE

Student No: N15221079

Department: American Culture and Literature

Program: American Culture and Literature

Status: ☒ Masters ☐ Ph.D. ☐ Integrated Ph.D.

ADVISOR APPROVAL

APPROVED.

Assoc. Prof. Bilge Mutluay Çetintaş



**HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZ ÇALIŞMASI ORJİNALLİK RAPORU**

**HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
AMERİKAN KÜLTÜRÜ VE EDEBİYATI ANABİLİM DALI BAŞKANLIĞI'NA**

Tarih: 19/06/2019

Tez Başlığı / Konusu: Grafik Roman ve Görsel Alıntılarda Çinli Amerikalı ve Japon Amerikalı Deneyimi

Yukarıda başlığı/konusu gösterilen tez çalışmamın a) Kapak sayfası, b) Giriş, c) Ana bölümler d) Sonuç kısımlarından oluşan toplam 102 sayfalık kısmına ilişkin, 19/06/2019 tarihinde şahsım/tez danışmanım tarafından *Turnitin* adlı intihal tespit programından aşağıda belirtilen filtrelemeler uygulanarak alınmış olan orijinallik raporuna göre, tezimin benzerlik oranı % 27'dir.

Uygulanan filtrelemeler:

- 1- Kaynakça dâhil
- 2- Alıntılar dâhil
- 3- 5 kelimedenden daha az örtüşme içeren metin kısımları hariç

Hacettepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimleri Enstitüsü Tez Çalışması Orjinallik Raporu Alınması ve Kullanılması Uygulama Esasları'nı inceledim ve bu Uygulama Esasları'nda belirtilen azami benzerlik oranlarına göre tez çalışmamın herhangi bir intihal içermediğini; aksinin tespit edileceği muhtemel durumda doğabilecek her türlü hukuki sorumluluğu kabul ettiğimi ve yukarıda vermiş olduğum bilgilerin doğru olduğunu beyan ederim.

Gereğini saygılarımla arz ederim.

19/06/2019

Adı Soyadı: Kaan GAZNE
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DANIŞMAN ONAYI

UYGUNDUR.

Doç. Dr. S. Bilge Mutluay Çetintaş

APPENDIX 2: ETHICS BOARD WAIVER FORM FOR THESIS WORK



**HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
ETHICS BOARD WAIVER FORM FOR THESIS WORK**

HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF AMERICAN CULTURE AND LITERATURE

Date: 19/06/2019

Thesis Title / Topic: The Chinese American and Japanese American Experience in Graphic Novels and Visual Narratives

My thesis work related to the title/topic above:

1. Does not perform experimentation on animals or people.
2. Does not necessitate the use of biological material (blood, urine, biological fluids and samples, etc.).
3. Does not involve any interference of the body's integrity.
4. Is not based on observational and descriptive research (survey, measures/scales, data scanning, system-model development).

I declare, I have carefully read Hacettepe University's Ethics Regulations and the Commission's Guidelines, and in order to proceed with my thesis according to these regulations I do not have to get permission from the Ethics Board for anything; in any infringement of the regulations I accept all legal responsibility and I declare that all the information I have provided is true.

I respectfully submit this for approval.

19/06/2019

Name Surname: Kaan GAZNE

Student No: N15221079

Department: American Culture and Literature

Program: American Culture and Literature

Status: ☒ Masters ☐ Ph.D. ☐ Integrated Ph.D.

ADVISER COMMENTS AND APPROVAL

APPROVED.

Assoc. Prof. Bilge Mutluay Çetintaş



HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
TEZ ÇALIŞMASI ETİK KURUL İZİN MUAFİYETİ FORMU

HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
AMERİKAN KÜLTÜRÜ VE EDEBİYATI ANABİLİM DALI BAŞKANLIĞI'NA

Tarih: 19/06/2019

Tez Başlığı / Konusu: Grafik Roman ve Görsel Alıntılarda Çinli Amerikalı ve Japon Amerikalı Deneyimi

Yukarıda başlığı/konusu gösterilen tez çalışmam:

1. İnsan ve hayvan üzerinde deney niteliği taşımamaktadır,
2. Biyolojik materyal (kan, idrar vb. biyolojik sıvılar ve numuneler) kullanılmasını gerektirmemektedir.
3. Beden bütünlüğüne müdahale içermemektedir.
4. Gözlemsel ve betimsel araştırma (anket, ölçek/skala çalışmaları, dosya taramaları, veri kaynakları taraması, sistem-model geliştirme çalışmaları) niteliğinde değildir.

Hacettepe Üniversitesi Etik Kurullar ve Komisyonlarının Yönergelerini inceledim ve bunlara göre tez çalışmamın yürütülebilmesi için herhangi bir Etik Kuruldan izin alınmasına gerek olmadığını; aksi durumda doğabilecek her türlü hukuki sorumluluğu kabul ettiğimi ve yukarıda vermiş olduğum bilgilerin doğru olduğunu beyan ederim.

Gereğini saygılarımla arz ederim.

19/06/2019

Adı Soyadı: Kaan GAZNE

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