

# Example of chinatown and chinese americans essay

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



Chinese began to arrive at the United States in 1850-s following the scent of a gold rush. At first coming by small parties, their numbers gradually increased each year. By 1870, 63, 000 Chinese lived in the United States. Chinese lived predominantly in California, with largest populations in San-Francisco, Sacramento, and Stockton (Takaki). They were store-owners, professionals, farmers, but mainly low-paid wage workers. The life of Chinese was often filled with hardships and obstacles rendering them in unfavorable conditions, they had to struggle for their life in America.

Chinese settlers were greeted and treated like equals in the first years of migration. They were starting to do what they have intended - to claim mines and mine gold. The state of things rapidly changed when the government made a decision that the excess migration must be stopped, and extra taxes for Chinese miners were introduced. Already living a hard life Chinese were forced to work even harder or leave America. The profits decreased with time passing and Chinese were leaving the mining industry seeking for better jobs, and becoming wage workers. One of the greatest deposits of Chinese workers into American economics was the construction of the transcontinental railroad. Starting only with 50 Chinese workers at the start of construction, within 2 years almost all of the laborers were Chinese (Takaki). They worked diligently and honestly while their work costed much cheaper than the work of white men. After finishing construction of the railroad, Chinese workers were forced to seek employment in other sectors of the economy.

At that time, Chinese ethnic businesses specializing in retailing, services and entertainment could not provide sufficient employment opportunities for all

of the seeking. Former miners and railroad workers found jobs in the industry of San-Francisco, producing women's clothes. The Chinese were given only a menial work while their white counterparts were employed on more qualified positions, but even in the same positions, Chinese were paid significantly lower. They worked in the production of women's clothing and shoes.

Chinese played their significant part in developing of California's agriculture.

Chinese who dwelled in rural regions worked as pickers on farms and

plantations, some of them succeeded in starting their own farms. Firstly

regarded as the substitute for the black workforce, which was major in this

field, Chinese laborers became appreciated in this business for their

diligence, honesty and low wages on their work. First and most widespread

attempts of Chinese in entrepreneurship was the open of laundries. Low

starting requirements for this business attracted Chinese into it resulting in

their dominance in this business. By 1900, laundry had become a

predominantly Chinese business (Takaki).

Hard working conditions and extremely low wages were not all the hardships encountered by Chinese settlers. American workers didn't like Chinese

because they agreed to work for a dime, leaving whites without work. Racial

discrimination towards Chinese was rolling on. The government intended to

stop immigration by implementing extra taxes and limitations on non-whites.

Chinese were treated like pagans and barbarians on par with Indians and

blacks. They were thought to pose a danger to the white workforce because

they were more intelligent than blacks and much more numerous than the

Indians. "The Heathen Chinese" became a common word for Chinese after

the publication of Bret Harte's anti-Chinese poem (Takaki). The Chinese were

not allowed to witness against a white person in court. The pressure increased due to the increase of unemployment. The publication of Henry George's *Progress and Poverty*, where he stated the Chinese immigration to be the reason of increasing poverty during overall increasing wealth. He called them "unassimilable" and, therefore, posing a threat to the American economy. This resulted in the law of 1882, prohibiting for 10 years the labor immigration and the denial of naturalized citizenship for Chinese already living in America. The exclusionist legislations became even tougher in 1888 and 1892, resulting in a significant decrease of the Chinese population in America from 1880 to 1920 (Takaki).

Another concern for Chinese immigrants was the total prevalence of men. The ratio of Chinese men to women in the United States was 14 to 1 (Takaki). Married Chinese men were isolated from their families by ocean and bachelors were not likely to marry a white girl. Almost all Chinese women were prostitutes. Seeking for better future, most of them worked off the costs of their housing and journey to America receiving no money for years. Many of them died of diseases and opium addiction. This made it hard for Chinese women to form families, which was only possible after leaving prostitution.

## References

Takaki, Ronald T. *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (Updated and Revised). Boston: Little, Brown, 2012. Print.