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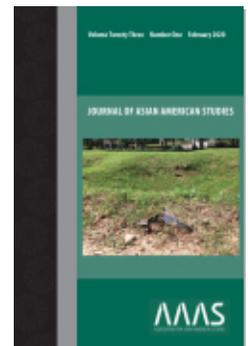
The Chinese Must Go: Violence, Exclusion, and the Making of the Alien in America by Beth Lew-Williams (review)

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analysis of her subjects' interviews is an example that undergraduates and graduate students alike will be able to follow and appreciate.

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***The Chinese Must Go: Violence, Exclusion, and the Making of the Alien in America*, by Beth Lew-Williams. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2018. 360 pp. \$39.95 cloth. ISBN: 978-0-6749-7601-6.**

Racial violence has always been fundamental to the formation of the United States, argues Beth Lew-Williams in the early pages of *The Chinese Must Go*. When we consider this fact, we often think about the Middle Passage and slavery, or the atrocities committed against indigenous peoples. However, as Lew-Williams points out, we rarely consider the violence done against the Chinese. *The Chinese Must Go* seeks to excavate this history of violence and its connections to the often-overlooked restriction acts that were passed prior to exclusion laws, while also demonstrating the different forms that violence takes.

Perhaps the book's strongest intervention is Lew-Williams's primary consideration of the attitudes, events, and policies that led up to the passing of the Exclusion Act in 1882 and the expanded Exclusion Act of 1888. While many histories focus on exclusion, Lew-Williams instead unpacks the growing desperation and violence in the U.S. West in response to weak federal attempts at appeasement through mostly ineffective restriction laws. Part 1, "Restriction," demonstrates the ways that paradoxical nationalist fears grew on the West Coast—beliefs that the Chinese would destroy American values through their docility and inability to adapt and/or that the Chinese would take over America through their cunning. *The Chinese Must Go* further illustrates how the federal government didn't actually want to pass anti-Chinese laws, viewing them as a threat to the United States' commercial, diplomatic, and missionary-based relationship with China. However, as violence and pressure grew on the West Coast, the federal government passed ineffective restriction laws that were never adequately implemented. The result was an even worse pressure-cooker environment in the U.S. West since restriction laws were on the books to limit Chinese immigration, but they weren't being enforced—which led to locals taking enforcement into their own hands. All of which, of course, led to greater violence against the Chinese.

In part 2, "Violence," Lew-Williams innovatively engages with these painful histories of violence without overly privileging the stories and experiences of the white instigators. She wisely highlights the difficulties of focusing on

the “victims” of anti-Chinese violence “because the story of racial violence is, inevitably, a narrative of action and reaction” (93). She points out how “searching for cause and effect, history favors stories of people who instigate events over those who suffer the aftermath” (93). Lew-Williams, who is refreshingly explicit about these challenges, avoids the risks of casting the Chinese as just agency-less victims and furthering the “long and troubling tradition . . . that renders the history of Chinese in America as primarily a history of white oppression” by instead “attend[ing] to what these spectacular events reveal about their everyday lives” (95).

It’s difficult to do adequate justice to the benefits of Lew-Williams’s polyphonic approach, particularly in part 2, which starts with stories of “The Banished” before moving to stories of the perpetrators of violence (“The People”). This section concludes with tales of the so-called “Loyal” white merchants who advocated for the Chinese, but generally only because they viewed them as a means of expansion or profit. This careful consideration of different, and at times divergent, voices reaps many rewards. For example, exploring a variety of narratives that go beyond just the moments of violence uncovers “aspects of the Chinese American experience that usually remain hidden,” such as the “critical divisions between workers and merchant-contractors . . . within a seemingly unified Chinese community” (95). Indeed, Lew-Williams explores white violence as it relates to each person’s power and influence. In one story, she effectively compares the expulsion of a low-paid laborer named Kee Low with the story of Chin Gee Hee, a wealthy, established merchant who was able to use his local connections to forestall expulsion and also communicate with Washington and the Chinese consulate about the atrocities taking place. In the end, they are both victims of violence, but their experiences and the forms of violence differ greatly: “Chinese remembrances of this time make it clear that each story of survival was highly personal and specific to the individual, to the time, and to the place” (111). Lew-Williams also reveals that the low-paid laborer Kee Low later became a wealthy merchant and indicates that this may account for why he was ultimately able to tell his story—a harsh reminder of the silencing that has occurred to countless others due to language barriers and limited or no access to power.

Throughout the book, Lew-Williams is careful about separating strands of experience from the personal to the local to the national and to the international, while also demonstrating the way each strand could affect the others. In the chapter on “The Loyal,” she points out how “violence changed what the Chinese represented to the elite. As expulsions multiplied, the Chinese came to mean a widening class divide, a decline in profits, and a divided congregation. Where Chinese remained, there was sure to be labor unrest, economic instability, and white violence” (139). Just as Lew-Williams highlights the dif-

ferences in Chinese American experiences, she highlights differences in all of these groups—and the gray areas in their motivations—effectively refuting our ability to think of any group as being monolithic or its aims uncontested.

The passing of the later Exclusion Act in 1888 (The Scott Act) is given a rather brief, cursory overview in part 3 that lacks the rest of the book's detail. This truncation is understandable given that her main goal is to examine the lead-up to the expanded exclusion laws of The Scott Act. Much more effective is the final chapter, "Afterlives Under Exclusion," which debunks any claims that exclusion was successful while also carefully considering the emotional, physical, and psychic toll of the Exclusion Acts on the Chinese. What also becomes clear is the ways that U.S. immigration policies remain deeply informed by this history of violence, restriction, and exclusion. Lew-Williams is careful to not make overt, perhaps simplistic, connections between the Chinese American immigrant experience at the end of the nineteenth century and other immigrant histories. As readers, however, it is nevertheless difficult to avoid the painful similarities and the contemporary hauntings of Chinese restriction and exclusion laws.

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