



San Francisco and California Pass Anti-Chinese Laws, 1858-1913

The playing field in the U.S. was not level for all immigrant groups. Chinese immigrants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries faced a host of laws that restricted their freedom to emigrate, earn a living, and follow their native cultural practices. Individuals and organizations challenged these laws through the court system, with some success.

1858	California	Chinese Exclusion Law, which prevents the further immigration of Chinese or Mongolians to the state.	Declared unconstitutional in 1862 and repealed in 1955
1862	California	An Act to Protect Free White Labor against Competition with Chinese Coolie Labor, and to Discourage the Immigration of Chinese into California, under which all Chinese people not employed in growing tea, rice, coffee or sugar must pay a \$2.50 license fee each month.	Declared unconstitutional in <i>Lin Sing v Washburn</i> , 1862
1870	California	“Mongolian” women emigrating to California must prove that they are of good character.	
1870	San Francisco	No Chinese workers will be hired to improve Yerba Buena Park Prohibits transporting goods on “yeo-ho” poles slung across the shoulders	
1870-1873	San Francisco	Prohibits ringing of gongs at theatrical performances and bans plays performed between midnight and daylight	
1873	San Francisco	Laundry Ordinance, under which laundries with animal-drawn carts must pay a \$2 fee, but laundries without carts must pay a \$15 fee	Invalidated by <i>People v Soon Kung</i> , 1874



1876	San Francisco	Queue Ordinance, under which Chinese prisoners must have their hair cut immediately after arriving at the county jail	Declared unconstitutional in <i>Ho Ah Kow v. Matthew Nunan</i> , 1879
1880-1883	San Francisco	Prohibits lotteries Illegal to import building materials from China	
1890	San Francisco	Bingham Ordinance, under which Chinese people, including citizens, must not live or work in San Francisco, except in “a portion set apart for the location of all the Chinese.”	Declared unconstitutional in <i>In re: Lee Sing</i> , 1890
1891	California	“The coming of Chinese persons into the State, whether subjects of the Chinese Empire or otherwise” is prohibited	Declared unconstitutional in <i>Ex Parte: Ah Cue</i> , 1894
1900	San Francisco	All Chinese people must be placed under quarantine and inoculated for Bubonic Plague	Declared unconstitutional in <i>Wong Wai v Williamson</i> and <i>Jew Ho v Williamson</i> , 1900
1913	California	Alien Land Law bars “aliens ineligible for citizenship” from owning land or leasing it for more than three years; eight other western states pass similar laws	

Source: All Persons Born or Naturalized . . . The Legacy of *U.S. v Wong Kim Ark*,” University of California Hastings School of Law, <http://traynor.uchastings.edu/library/Library%20Collections/Displays/wkadisplay/index.htm>