



Significant Dates in Asian/Chinese American History - 5

By Chinese American Heroes

Chinese American Heroes presents this series of significant dates in Asian American and Chinese American history. This is by no means a comprehensive list of events due to our limited time and resources for research. For the same reasons we concentrated on the major Asian American population groups in this country in numbers, the Chinese, Japanese, South Asian, Southeast Asian, and Filipino Americans.

In Installment 5 we go from 1946 to 2012. The modern era brings the full flowering of Asian American immigration and growth in economics, society, and politics as immigration restrictions based upon racial prejudice against Asians are repealed.

Date	Time
1946	The Luce-Celler Act re-established immigration from the Indian subcontinent and the Philippines and granted naturalization rights to individuals from those regions. Each country, however, was limited to only 100 annual immigrants each.
1947	Japanese American Wataru "Wat" Misaka becomes the first to break the color barrier in the National Basketball Association when he plays as a guard for the New York Knicks for three games and scores seven points before being cut. He had helped lead the University of Utah to victory in the 1944 NCAA Men's Division I Basketball Tournament and the NCAA 1947 National Invitation Tournament prior to joining the NBA. At 5'7 he is also remembered for being one of the shortest men to ever play American professional basketball.
1948	To get around the Alien Land Law prohibiting "aliens ineligible for naturalization" from owning land in California, some Japanese farmers had been deeding their farms and property in the names of their US born citizen children. In Oyama v. State of California , 332 U.S. 633, the US Supreme Court upheld the legality of this kind of arrangement but refused to address the Alien Land Law. The California Supreme Court finally overturns the Alien Land Law as unconstitutional in 1952 but the California State Legislature only repeals the law in 1956. Other states followed, Wyoming being the last to keep such nullified laws in their books until 2001.
1948	The Displaced Person Act enables 15,000 Chinese, mostly highly educated professionals fleeing the Chinese Civil War, to legally reside in the United States. The act is further extended in 1950 and in the following years after the fall of China to the communists in 1949 to allow many more Chinese refugees to enter the United States.

Date	Time
1950-1953	The Korean War starts with the invasion of South Korea by North Korea. A UN force made up mostly of Americans pushes the North Koreans back nearly to the Chinese border. Communist China then intervenes and surrounds the US X Corps at Chosin Reservoir. 1st Lieutenant Kurt Lee, the first Chinese American regular commissioned officer of the US Marine Corps, leads his battalion through a nighttime blizzard through the unmapped mountains and Chinese forces to relieve the Americans holding the Toktong Pass controlling the only road leading out. This heroic effort leads to the safe evacuation of over 8,000 Marines of the US 1st Marine Division. the war ends nearly back where it started in a sometimes hostile truce in 1953. As a result of the Chinese intervention in the war Chinese Americans are viewed with suspicion by the American public and many are investigated by the FBI and face employment discrimination due to presumed and unjustified communist sympathies.
1952	The McCarran–Walter Act removes all racial restrictions on immigration but sets up a preference system based on nationality while allowing the exclusion and deportation of "subversives." To nobody's surprise, people coming from Northern European countries are still allowed into the US in far greater numbers than any other group although more Asians are allowed in than in previous years.
1955	James Wong Howe wins the Academy Award for Best Cinematography, the first Asian American and Chinese American to win an Academy Award. He was first nominated in 1938 and came up for the award a total of ten times, winning twice. He is still rated as one of the most influential cinematographers of all time for his innovations in filmmaking.
1957	Dalip Singh Saund of California becomes the first Asian American, Indian American, and so far the only Sikh American, to be elected to the House of Representatives. He wins reelection twice in Congress.
1957	Dr. Chen Ning Yan and Dr. Tsung-Dao Lee win the Nobel Prize in Physics, the first Nobel Prizes for anyone of Chinese descent. Both later became US citizens. Their theories are confirmed in 1956 experiments at Columbia University conducted by Dr. Chien-Shiung Wu , known as the "First Lady of Physics" and the only Chinese known to have worked on the Manhattan Project to develop the first atomic bomb for the United States during World War II.
1959	Hiram Fong of Hawaii becomes the first Chinese American to be elected as a United States Senator. Daniel Inouye of Hawaii, later to become US Senator of that state in 1963 and Medal of Honor winner (awarded in 2000) for his WWII service, becomes the first Japanese American elected to the US House of Representatives. The two men are the first to represent the newly created State of Hawaii in Congress.
1965	Pasty Mink of Hawaii becomes the first Japanese American and non-white woman to be elected to the United States House of Representatives.

Date	Time
1965	The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (Hart-Celler Act, INS, Act of 1965, Pub.L. 89-236) abolished national limits on immigration. The new law introduced a preference system that focused on immigrants' skills and family relationships with citizens or residents of the United States. Asians and non-Europeans begin immigrating to the United States in greatly increased numbers.
1969	Him Mark Lai and Philip Choy begin the first Chinese American studies class at San Francisco State College (later San Francisco State University.) It is the first Asian American course created for the first Ethnic Studies program at a major American college.
1971	Herbert Choy is appointed to the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, becoming the first Asian American and the first Korean American federal judge. He was also the first Korean American to be admitted to practice law in the United States after graduating from Harvard Law School in 1941.
1975	The End of the Vietnam War . Communist governments seize power in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos bringing thousands of refugees annually to America. By 1980 the Vietnamese American population alone stood at nearly 250,000. By 2010 it was nearly 2 million. The Laotian American population of nearly 50,000 in 1980 had grown to about 250,000 by 2010 (325,000 if ethnic Laotians from Thailand are included.) Cambodian Americans by 2010 had nearly 300,000 people.
1982	Vincent Chin , a Chinese American, was beaten with a baseball bat in Detroit by two laid-off autoworkers incensed about the rising Japanese car industry. His hate crime murder, along with the assailants' lenient sentencing (no jail time, three years probation, \$3,000 fine, and \$780 in court costs,) aroused great anger and led to a major organizing movement for pan-Asian American and Pacific Islander civil rights across the country.
1985	NASA astronaut and aerospace engineer Ellison Onizuka becomes the first Asian American and person of Japanese descent to go into space aboard the Space Shuttle Discovery. He is later killed in 1986 in the Space Shuttle Challenger disaster.
1985	NASA astronaut and scientist Dr. Taylor Gun-Jin Wang becomes the first Chinese American and person of Chinese descent to go into space aboard the Space Shuttle Challenger.
1990	The US Census identifies Daly City, California as the first city (defined as having over 100,00 people) in the United States where Filipino Americans make up the largest single ethnic group with 27% of the population. By 2010, that figure had risen to nearly 35%.
1990	The US Census identifies Monterey Park, California as the first city (defined as having over 100,000 people) in the United States with an Asian majority population in the continental United States. Most of these Asians are of Chinese descent. By 2010, Chinese made up nearly 50% of the city's population.

Date	Time
1992	Dr. Eugene H. Trinh , a biochemist and NASA astronaut becomes the first Vietnamese American and person of Vietnamese descent to go into space aboard the Space Shuttle Columbia.
1997	Gary Locke of Washington becomes the first Chinese American state governor. He serves two terms as governor before leaving office in 2005. He later becomes US Secretary of Commerce in 2009 and was appointed as US Ambassador to China in 2011.
1997	NASA astronaut and aerospace engineer, Dr. Kalpana Chawla , aboard the Space Shuttle Columbia, becomes the first Indian American in space and the second of Indian descent (an Indian cosmonaut had been the first into space flying with the Soviet Union.) She is later killed in the disaster aboard the Space Shuttle Columbia in 2003.
1999	General Eric Shinseki becomes United States Army Chief of Staff, becoming the highest ranking Asian and Japanese American to have served in the United States military. In 2009 he became the first Asian and Japanese American appointed as United States Secretary of Veterans Affairs.
2000	Dr. Eleanor Mariano is promoted to Rear Admiral in the United States Navy, becoming the first Filipino American to reach flag rank in the US Navy.
2007	Bobby Jindal of Louisiana is elected the first Indian American state governor.
2011	Nikki Haley of South Carolina is elected the first Indian American woman state governor.
2011-2012	The United States Senate unanimously passed Senator Scott Brown's Senate Resolution 201 (SR 201) on May 26, 2011, apologizing for the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act and other Congressional acts of discrimination against the Chinese. On June 18, 2012, the House of Representatives unanimously passed Congressperson Judy Chu's House Resolution 683 (HR 683) expressing that body's apology.