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**“Go, Going, Gone”:
Anti-Chinese Sentiment in Washington Territory, 1885-1886**

**Naomi Eide
HIS 490 History Honors Thesis**

**Department of History
Providence College
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INTRODUCTION

On the evening of February 8, 1886, General John Gibbon presented the “Tribute of Merit” award to the University Cadets of Seattle in Washington Territory. The Cadets were part of the militia who kept the peace on the night before when rioters rose up against the Seattle Chinese. General Gibbon, a man present at the surrender of General Lee at Appomattox, made a speech to the cadets supporting law and order over any other American Freedom. Gibbon touted that without “Law, Liberty, [and] Safety, all is lost. It is...the rudder without which our Ship of State would inevitably be wrecked in the storms through which every vessel has to struggle.” Gibbon’s poetic rhetoric praised the response of the militias but also revealed in the lawlessness of the territorial citizens inciting violence against their fellow residents. Gibbon explained that “if the life of the State is threatened or turbulent violence raises its hand against supremacy of the Law...it is our bounden duty to sacrifice human life...in the defense of our Lord and King – the Law.”¹

That month General Gibbon, summoned by Governor Watson C. Squire had declared martial law and brought troops to Seattle to quell the uprising of anti-Chinese agitators in their attempt to eject the Chinese population from the Territory. Gibbon’s fiery speech was a response to establishing law and order after territorial citizens ignored the demands for peace in their struggle to rid Washington of the Chinese. The anti-Chinese riot in Seattle on February 7, 1886,

¹ “Anti-Chinese Riots, 1885-1186,” Spring 1886, Letter Box 2, Folder 2, Thomas Burke Papers, University of Washington Special Collections, Seattle.

was the final culmination of Sinophobic agitations in Washington Territory after an extensive campaign demanding that “the Chinese must go.”² White residents hoped to oust the minority Chinese population, allowing more ethnically European residents to have increased access to jobs and more economic growth in the Territory. Ignoring the negative effects on Washington’s national reputation, residents forcibly removed the Chinese from the region, throwing Washington Territory into a lawless frenzy.

Historians largely have ignored the violence against the Chinese in Washington Territory, events that occurred during the formative years of economic growth, both regionally and nationally. Though the anti-Chinese riots offer a significant example of labor’s anxiety over immigration, only regional historians have truly undertaken the story. Even with the narration of the riots, historians primarily have placed the events in the context of regional history with little emphasis on the causes and effects that motivated the agitation. Other historians, specializing in race relations and immigration in late nineteenth century America often neglect Washington Territory in their studies and instead focus on the Chinese populations found in California.

Historians studying the agitation against the Chinese in 1885 and 1886 used the Washington riots as part of the historical narrative of the major cities.. There is agreement among scholars that the riots in Seattle and Tacoma were the result of a national economic downturn where local residents blamed the Chinese as the cause of their labor disputes. Most of the scholarship speaking to Sinophobia in Washington Territory in the 1880s occurred in a fifteen-year period from the 1970s and 1980s. The scholarship involving anti-Chinese sentiment focused more on labor disputes and racism, not using the riots to illustrate the negative effects of the tumult on the fledgling Territory’s reputation. Work on labor, immigration, or racism rarely includes the anti-Chinese agitation in Washington Territory as an example of labor turmoil,

² “The Chinese Must Go,” *The Seattle Daily Call*, September 17, 1885.

relegating the events to regional narratives. Even in recent scholarship, historians barely touch on Chinese abuse in Washington Territory, researching instead on Sinophobic examples in more bustling areas of the United States of the late nineteenth century. Those scholars who do examine the racism in Washington undertake the task of documenting the events without advancing a further argument that does not focus solely on labor. Scholarship devoted to the Chinese presence in Washington Territory should research further the effect of the minority Chinese populations, inquiring whether it was the labor force or a deep-seated anxiety about Territorial representation in the national government that motivated the ethnic cleansing. Contrary to previous research, anti-Chinese promoters in Washington failed to realize that their xenophobia would have political ramifications and deter their bid for statehood after they attempted the elimination of the ethnic minority they saw as racially inferior. Using the Pacific Northwest as a case study, historians should analyze further what effect the Chinese had on the region and how the conscious ejection of an ethnic minority, present in the United States legally or not, further shaped the political landscape.

Before the agitation in Washington accelerated to Chinese population exclusion, an opinion piece in the *New York Herald-Tribune* warned of “A Dangerous Precedent” where nationally, racial prejudices evoked violence. Citing a labor massacre between the white and Chinese laborers in Wyoming, the article explained that “because of strikes or disagreements, labor of any kind is substituted for labor of any other kind.” Arguing that laboring populations always had replacements, the article illustrated that if violence against populations continued it would create problems for any minority. Because of a pattern of racial disputes in laboring communities “there is no guarantee against race conflicts” if the “Government, local or national, cannot or will not interfere with the mobs.” Though racial agitation caused disputes between

populations, the article condemned the “mob tyranny exercised” believing justice was not swiftly served, further destabilizing racial conflicts. Foreshadowing the riots in Washington Territory just months later, the article stated that promoters of violence “[seemed] destined to escape all penalties, and no one need be surprised if so gross and flagrant a failure of justice emboldens ruffians and bullies....to try similar experiences upon weaker races.”³ The only failing of the article was the inability to see Americans as the instigators of violence and “foreigners” as victims of racial prejudice. The promotion of racial unity over law and order further complicated the inactivity of the Washington government, questioning if the “ruffians and bullies” were the governmental bodies in charge of keeping the peace.

While General Gibbon encouraged the impressionable, young cadets that the “patriotic fires” burning in their hearts “were inspired by the fact that the life of [the] Sovereign King, the Law, was in peril,” anti-Chinese leaders ignored the law in favor of racial purity in Washington Territory.⁴ Lawyers, politicians, and local business owners keen on eradicating the Chinese presence led the movement. Anti-Chinese sentiment was initially led by the Knights of Labor, but regional politicians trying to unify the Territory capitalized on the anti-Chinese rhetoric. Blaming the Chinese and un-American monopolies, white residents united to eject the offending populations and regain their independence from the business barons of the East. Unwilling to conform to the pressure set forth by the national government, the citizens of Washington Territory united to purge the region of the Chinese through a systematic ethnic cleansing of two major territorial cities. Motivated by the desire to become active members of the federal government, Territorial leaders ignored the negative effects of population exclusion and led an

³ “A Dangerous Precedent,” *New York Herald-Tribune*, September 25, 1885.

⁴ “Anti-Chinese Riots, 1885-1186,” Spring 1886, Letter Box 2, Folder 2, Thomas Burke Papers, University of Washington Special Collections, Seattle.

active movement rallying around the cry that “the Chinese must go.”⁵ Not until the lawlessness of the rioters shut down the territorial government, did the political agitators acknowledge how outsiders perceived their drastic actions, realizing that the anti-Chinese agitation negatively affected Washington’s government and further postponed their bid to become a state in the union.

⁵ “The Chinese Must Go,” *The Seattle Daily Call*, September 17, 1885, Seattle, Short Calls.

“GO”

The United States, a nation of immigrants, has always struggled with its own ethnic changes. After the settlement of the Eastern seaboard, there became a distinction between colonization and immigration. Colonists embodied the American work ethic while immigrants tarnished the national reputation until their assimilation. Even if immigrants were present legally, political movements tried to keep America “American,” and inhibit the attempt to further settle the land. In the West much of the political uneasiness came from the increased Chinese immigration to the United States, which was readily apparent to local populations as they lacked the European ancestry dominant in America. Once the Chinese arrived, Americans thought them foreigners forever, and banished them from fully assimilating or associating with American culture.

Beginning in the 1860s with increased efforts of the United States to trade with China, the American government enacted legislation to promote a relationship between the two countries and establish boundaries for their interaction. Designed to offer protection for both China and America, the Burlingame Treaty of 1868 protected merchants, traders, and settlers from both countries and limited the interference of one country over another. The United States Minister to China, Anson Burlingame, worked to promote China to Americans as an “equal actor in international affairs” and to “influence diplomatic, commercial, and religious interests, the

three major groups that determined America's Chinese policy."⁶ Burlingame promoted the treaty to increase profitable trading opportunities and allow Christian missionaries increased access to China. Burlingame had to show Chinese and American interests as mutually compatible, while also promoting China as a positive addition to American diplomatic relations.⁷

Prioritizing the Chinese presence in America motivated many of the articles of the Burlingame treaty, acknowledging the "inherent and inalienable right of man to change his home and allegiance, and also the mutual advantage of the free migration and emigration of their citizens and subjects respectively from the one country to the other, for purposes of curiosity, of trade, or as permanent residents." The treaty guaranteed that "Citizens of the United States visiting or residing in China shall enjoy the same privileges, immunities or exemptions in respect to travel or residence as may there be enjoyed by the citizens or subjects of the most favored nation" and in turn Chinese residents in the United States would receive similar privileges.⁸ Previously prohibited by legislation, there was also a stipulation that the Chinese could become naturalized American citizens legitimizing further their immigration to the United States.

The protections offered for Chinese citizens encouraged immigration from China to various parts of the United States, but proximity to China concentrated settlement on the West Coast. Uncertain of the influence of the Chinese, a climate of panic surrounded the increase of Chinese immigration to the western United States. By the 1870s Congress took action to limit the agreement between the United States and China, fearing the Pacific Coast would become "either

⁶ John Schrecker, "'For the Equality of Men – For the Equality of Nations': Anson Burlingame and China's First Embassy to the United States, 1868," *Journal of American-East Asian Relations* Vol. 17, no. 1 (2010): 18-19.

⁷ *Ibid*, 27.

⁸ "Burlingame-Seward Treaty of 1868," July 28, 1868, U.S. Statutes at Large 22.

American or Mongolian.”⁹ A joint congressional committee reported there was “not sufficient brain capacity in the Chinese race to furnish motive power for self-government and that there is no Aryan or European race which is not far superior to the Chinese.”¹⁰ The Burlingame Treaty became an inherent threat to western stability, and congressional action urged modification of the treaty to halt the flow of Asiatic immigration.

While Congress became increasingly concerned over the Chinese threat, President Rutherford B. Hayes attempted to show that “the principal feature of the Burlingame treaty was its attention to and its treatment of the Chinese immigration and the Chinese as forming, or as they should form, a part of our population.” Hayes continued, saying that “our civil freedom, and our religious toleration had made all comers welcome, and under these protections the Chinese in considerable numbers had made their lodgment upon our soil.” Hayes sought a reexamination of the treaty stipulations to help promote continued relations between China and the United States. Acknowledging that the treaty was an “experiment of immigration,” Hayes wanted to replace provisions that would “[secure] the Chinese and ourselves against a larger and more rapid infusion of [their] foreign race than our system of industry and society can take up and assimilate with ease and safety.”¹¹ Hayes’ veto message tried to temper Congress’ emotion and encouraged them to proceed with political caution, fearing they might act emotionally instead of diplomatically.

⁹ Roger Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door: American Immigration Policy and Immigrants Since 1882* (New York: Hill and Wang, A division of Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004), 18.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ James D. Richardson, “Veto Message: March 1st, 1879,” *Messages and Papers of Rutherford B. Hayes: A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents* (Project Gutenberg, 2004), <http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/1/3/0/2/13021/13021.txt>.

Following the implementation of the Burlingame Treaty, there was a marked increase of Chinese immigration to the United States. As the railroad industry expanded, companies imported workers to finish the railroad quickly. Some companies sought European and Scandinavian populations, while other companies like the Central Pacific Railroad sought cheap labor from China and brought almost 10,000 Chinese laborers to the West Coast in the 1860s.¹² Following the 1870 Census, there were 63,000 Chinese recorded in America with almost seventy-five percent living in California.¹³ Even before the Page Law of 1875, almost all of Chinese immigrants were male because men would immigrate as laborers to send money back home to support their families. Considered too costly for women to follow their husbands, the families remained in China often serving as motivation for the men to return.¹⁴

In 1880 the census recorded a total of 105,000 Chinese in America with more than seventy percent in California, and only three percent east of Denver, a drastic increase from the 1870s.¹⁵ Even with the increase of 40,000 Chinese residents, the Chinese were only less than one percent of the total United States population.¹⁶ The accessibility the Chinese had to the Pacific Coast regions caused a constant fear that still, one day the Asiatic race would outnumber those with European heritage.

In Washington Territory the 1870 census recorded only 234 Chinese living in the Territory, increasing thirteen-fold by 1880 to 3,186 Chinese residents and white territorial

¹² Leonard Dinnerstein, Roger L. Nichols, and David Reimers, *Natives and Strangers: Ethnic Groups and the Building of America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 196.

¹³ Daniels, 12.

¹⁴ Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1989), 36-37.

¹⁵ Daniels, 16.

¹⁶ Takaki, 110.

residents began to fear the Chinese would continue to immigrate at the same rate. With the total Washington Territory population at 75,116, the Chinese concentrated in the two major cities, Seattle and Tacoma, accounting for less than four percent of the total population. By 1885, at the height of the anti-Chinese agitation, there were only 3,300 Chinese among the 123,000 white residents in Washington Territory but because of the Chinese concentration in urban areas, places like Tacoma had seven percent Chinese residents, making them increasingly prominent.¹⁷

Congress passed legislation to restrict Chinese immigration to the United States, without fully limiting the Chinese American access before enacting the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. Maintaining the Burlingame Treaty, various laws subtly restricted Chinese access and made it difficult for entire families to relocate from China. One such provision was the Page Law of 1875, which prohibited the immigration of Chinese prostitutes to America. Its strict enforcement discouraged all Chinese women from going to America, as Americans saw every Chinese female as a potential prostitute, contributing to the stereotype of Chinese men as members of a bachelor society.¹⁸ From 1876 to 1882, the immigration of Chinese women decreased 68% and only 136 women were among the total 39, 579 Chinese who immigrated to America.¹⁹

As anti-Chinese sentiment grew, Congress passed the Angell Treaty in 1880 to revise the Burlingame Treaty and limit drastically Chinese immigration opportunities. The treaty called for a renegotiation of previously enacted treaties “because of the constantly increasing immigration of Chinese laborers to the territory of the United States, and the embarrassments consequent

¹⁷ *Statistics of the Population of the United States at the Tenth Census, 1880* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), XXXVIII-XXXIX, 378-379.

¹⁸ Takaki, 40.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

upon such immigration.”²⁰ The Angell Treaty specified that Chinese laborers in the United States “shall be accorded all the rights, privileges, immunities and exemptions which are accorded to the citizens and subjects of the most favored nation.”²¹ The treaty also clarified that if any Chinese were met with ill treatment “the Government of the United States [would] exert all its power to devise measures for their protection.”²² The government tried to stop the immigration of Chinese laborers, but the United States hoped to continue amicable diplomatic relations with China.

Though China and the United States maintained amicable relations, American citizens saw the Chinese as a constant threat to national integrity, and pushed for complete exclusion. Unlike other immigrants to the United States, whites thought there was an inability to “Americanize” the Chinese. To many, “a Chinaman never becomes a respectable, taxpaying, useful member of society and that part of a city where they reside is a filthy place.”²³ Americans saw inherent differences between themselves and the Chinese, convinced that “two races of different color and at the same time different civilization cannot exist together in the same community.”²⁴

As the Chinese populations concentrated on the West Coast, increased tensions and the threat of economic downturn motivated the government to pass the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. The act suspended the immigration of Chinese laborers, both skilled and unskilled, to the

²⁰ “Angell Treaty,” November 17, 1880, U.S. Statutes at Large 22.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ “The Chinese Question,” *The Seattle Daily Call*, October 2, 1885, Seattle.

²⁴ “Why the Chinese Should Go,” *The Seattle Daily Call*, October 24, 1885, Seattle.

United States for a period of ten years.²⁵ Because of economic fears, the government wanted to keep cheap, foreign laborers out of work in favor of American citizens or other ethnically pleasing European populations.

Vetoing Congress from enacting the Chinese Exclusion Act for twenty years, President Chester A. Arthur instead contended “it may be that the great and paramount interest of protecting our labor from Asiatic competition may justify us in a permanent adoption of this policy; but it is wiser in the first place to make a shorter experiment.”²⁶ Arthur’s veto made the Exclusion Act law for ten years, with the option of future renewal. The economic advantage of associating with China deterred the United States from severing relations entirely, as numerous merchants and missionaries involved found the relationship profitable. Arthur acknowledged the advantage of associating with China as the “experience has shown that the trade of the East is the key to national wealth and influence. The opening of China to the commerce of the whole world has benefited no section of it more than the States of our own Pacific Slope.”²⁷

By 1885 the citizens of the Washington Territory saw Chinese populations as a direct threat to the integrity of their political establishment. As the Chinese became more visible to the public, there was a powerful movement to emphasize the negative effects of the Chinese living in the Territory. The conclusion was that “the Chinese must go” because of their importation as slaves to monopolistic power, which was a direct threat to the independence settlers cherished. A Seattle newspaper, *The Daily Call*, followed territorial injustices and the rhetoric used to motivate the Chinese to leave Washington Territory. Editorials explained that “every Mongolian

²⁵ “Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882,” May 6, 1882, U.S. Statutes at Large 15.

²⁶ James D. Richardson, “Veto Message: April 4, 1882,” *Messages and Papers of Chester A. Arthur: A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents* (Project Gutenberg, 2004), <http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/1/2/7/5/12754/12754.txt>.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

that comes to this country is in effect a slave. He is under contract to some powerful Chinese company which owns him body and soul until his debt is paid off.”²⁸ *The Call* alluded to the control the “Six Companies” maintained over Chinese immigrants, as most went to the United States as indentured or bond servants and reported to local Chinese governing bodies.²⁹ Given no instruction on how to adapt culturally, the Chinese entered American society, and took up menial labor for dismal wages. Convinced that Chinese employment meant the “utter degradation of White Labor,” citizens of Washington Territory objected to the Chinese presence because of “their innate viciousness, filthiness, immorality and lack of all decency.”³⁰

With the increased presence of the Chinese, whites believed that the supposed limited stay of the Chinese was unrealistic and created a conflict between class and race. The Chinese were competing with white members of the laboring class for the same jobs and would work for cheaper wages causing anxiety over their continued presence in the United States. Believing that America should be a homogenous white society, it “should be [no] wonder at all if the copper of the Pacific yet becomes as great a subject of discord and dissension as the ebony of the Atlantic.”³¹ Viewing the Chinese as competitive and sinister in their intentions to steal jobs from white citizens, Americans saw the increase of the Chinese as a threat to racial purity.

Following the completion of the Northern Pacific and the Canadian Pacific Railroads, a severe depression created a labor vacuum and flooded the market with workers.³² The “discovery

²⁸ “The Chinese Must Go,” *The Seattle Daily Call*, September 25, 1885, Seattle.

²⁹ Dinnerstein, *Natives and Strangers*, 193.

³⁰ “The Chinese Must Go,” *The Seattle Daily Call*, September 25, 1885, Seattle.

³¹ Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore*, 100.

³² Carlos A. Schwantes, *The Pacific Northwest: An Interpretive History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 258.

of unemployment” became a national crisis, especially in Washington Territory where workers thought the Chinese would take the remaining jobs from whites.³³ While the Chinese threatened jobs among laboring classes, local businesses continued to employ cheap Chinese labor. The movement to eject the Chinese from Washington Territory progressed because of the idea that Chinese laborers were threatening the livelihood of Americans but also because the reliance on Chinese labor for household tasks proved “that the American race [was] degenerating.” The fear that the “white family [would become] absolutely dependent on a Chinamen” furthered the movement to eject the Chinese from Washington Territory.³⁴

After establishing the Chinese as a “heathen horde,” areas of Washington Territory began using the Chinese as scapegoats for their ills. By 1885, with the increased pressure to eject the populations from the Pacific Northwest, newspapers focused on the “utter dishonesty of the Chinamen.”³⁵ Painting them as untrustworthy, laboring classes demanded that it was impossible for the “awe-inspiring spirit of Confucius [to] be wrested from the flowery kingdom and transmuted to the courts of America.”³⁶ Slanderous newspapers attempted to sway the public interest against supporting any facet of the Chinese presence in Washington. Fearing the “baser and cheaper [would] drive out the better and dearer race” spurred the anti-Chinese sentiment to affect non-laboring members of society, and caused the movement to grow.³⁷

Realizing the Chinese were nevertheless joining the labor market, newspapers worked to release a barrage of anti-Chinese rhetoric to rally the public against the Chinese. Articles often

³³ Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore*, 111.

³⁴ “A Contrast,” *The Seattle Daily Call*, September 21, 1885.

³⁵ “Chinese Witnesses,” *The Seattle Daily Call*, September 17, 1885.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ “Why the Chinese Should Go,” *The Seattle Daily Call*, October 24, 1885.

worked to show them as foreigners with little comprehension of their surroundings or social custom. Negatively portraying the Chinese justified the public anxiety over their increased presence in Washington. Territorial residents viewed the Chinese as practically inhuman because “the beef-fed American cannot work or even live on the same wages as the rice-fed Chinamen.” Creating noticeable differences and concern for the residents of the Territory, political agitators were in the position to rally people behind the cause of ejection. Falling in line with the national opinion that the “Chinese must go,” Washington Territory attempted to prove that the Chinese were not present legally and should leave just as the Chinese Exclusion act demanded. Territorial citizens believed that a continued Chinese presence tarnished white populations as “the yellow of Asia and the White of America [could] not blend.”³⁸

³⁸ “Why the Chinese Should Go,” *The Seattle Daily Call*, October 24, 1885.

“GOING”

Founded as a national labor union in 1869, the Noble and Holy Order of the Knights of Labor intended to uplift the rights and culture of the workingman and unite all gainfully employed persons.³⁹ In 1885, Daniel Cronin, an unemployed carpenter, moved from California to Seattle and began to organize the local chapter of the Knights of Labor in Washington Territory. In an attempt to promote membership to the Knight of Labor, Cronin used anti-Chinese sentiment to gain popularity. In the Northwest the Chinese had worked on the railroad and in mines, but after the completion of Pacific railroads linking the east to the west, workers flooded the labor market. Some Chinese moved to rural fishing villages, coal mining towns, lumber camps, or farms, but the majority of the Chinese moved to Seattle or Tacoma. Once in the cities, the Chinese lived in small huts and worked for low wages waiting tables or running laundry services.⁴⁰ Cronin realized he could use the Chinese presence in the major territorial cities to the Knights of Labor's advantage and began a campaign to eject the Chinese.⁴¹ Personally blaming them for the lack of jobs in the Territory, Cronin rallied politicians, lawyers, and an unemployed laboring class to unite against the Chinese presence in the Territory. Cronin

³⁹ Robert E. Ficken and Charles P. LeWarne, *Washington: A Centennial History*, (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1988), 38.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 69.

⁴¹ Carlos A. Schwantes, "Protest in a Promised Land: Unemployment, Disinheritance, and the Origin of Labor Militancy in the Pacific Northwest, 1885-1886," *The Western Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (October 1982): 377.

saw the Chinese willingness to accept low wages as depriving the white working class of employment and sparked a Territorial campaign to eject the Chinese. The Chinese became a scapegoat for the national economic downturn and provided disenfranchised workers a visible enemy to rally against.

Though Cronin was the engineer of the anti-Chinese movement in Washington Territory, just as he hoped, the agitation progressed quickly beyond the influence of the Knights of Labor, and became a unifying battle for the people of Washington. *The Seattle Daily Call* closely followed labor related events in Washington Territory, but as anti-Chinese rhetoric became popular the newspaper preoccupied its publication with the cause against the Chinese. The paper promoted itself as “the People’s Paper. Sparkling, Spice, Fearless unto a fault... [and] an earnest exponent of the leading issues of the Day,” acting as one of the most extreme news sources in Western Washington for promoting anti-Chinese sentiment.⁴²

Because the *Call* grounded its publication in anti-Chinese rhetoric, they followed the Knights of Labor closely, working to promote their common cause. In an ode to the rise of the Knights of Labor, the paper shed light on the conflicts between labor and monopolistic power and how the Knights would free workers from oppression. The Knights, it said, were “studying the social problems of life” because “the people could not expect to always be slaves to the instrumentalities of *capital* and *corrupt monopolies*.”⁴³ Associating monopolistic powers with the use of Chinese labor, they considered the business barons “*non-producers*” whose “sympathies were never with the productive classes.”⁴⁴ Ejecting the Chinese from the Territory

⁴² “The Daily Call,” *The Seattle Daily Call*, February 8, 1886, Main Page.

⁴³ “6000 Strong,” *The Seattle Daily Call*, October 7, 1885.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

became a way for workers to deter monopolies and take control of their employment. The Knights of Labor were a “potent power in civilization because they were the masters of the situation in economic science” and understood the intrinsic conflict between” Labor and Capital.”⁴⁵ Explaining the Knights of Labor’s role in the territory, *The Seattle Daily Call* associated itself with the union determined to end Chinese territorial presence.

The *Call* synthesized major articles associated with the Chinese from around the Pacific Coast, sometimes even nationally, happily publishing any documented incidents that negatively portrayed the Chinese. Highlighting the errors in industry and the various ethnic laboring populations, the *Call* directed readers’ focus toward a common cause. Mainly read by unemployed laborers, the paper attempted to further the cause of the workers and “enable them to share in the gains and honors of advancing civilizations.”⁴⁶ Targeting the Chinese allowed the newspaper to create a villain who maliciously intended to take away rights and jobs from the working middle class. Conditioning its readership to loath the Chinese, as the already resented monopolistic forces that left them unemployed, “the heathen horde” became the tool of capitalist intervention in Washington Territory. Misunderstanding the Chinese culture and their lack of families in the perpetual bachelor society, “only the Chinaman [could] survive the establishment of an industrial system which measures the wants of a man by the food he consumes and the clothes that conceal his nakedness.”⁴⁷ Because the Chinese did had to send funds to their families left behind in China, the Chinese bachelor society was seen as an economical entity more inclined towards saving, promoting the idea that they needed less to survive and were therefore inferior. Claiming they wanted labor reform for all workers, the *Call* feared that “western

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ “The Eight Hour Law.” *The Seattle Daily Call*, October 6, 1885.

⁴⁷ “Survival of the Fittest,” *The Seattle Daily Call*, October 30, 1885.

civilization [was] going to revert back to barbarism,” and to stop the demise of Washington culture, motivated workers to rally against the Asian instigators of the dissolution. Hoping to unite all of the laboring classes with a common cause, the *Daily Call* explained that “all alike will be happier, the better, the richer for it.”⁴⁸

Citizens of Washington Territory sought a solution to “fix labor” and were keen on expelling the Chinese as a first step. Directly affected by the working class, the “labor issues” connected all Territorial citizens whether they were business owners or unemployed laborers. A motivating editorial in the *Call* exclaimed that “labor [had] a great battle to fight, and it is one largely of watchfulness, of vigilance, [and] of intelligent activity.”⁴⁹ The principal solution to the battle of labor was to protect “local and intelligent labor, against alien servile invasion from China” by both public opinion and legislative policy.⁵⁰ The article claimed that public opinion alone supplied enough justification to allow defense from the “servile invasion of China.” Creating a unified understanding of the negative effects of the Chinese presence in Washington encouraged Territorial leaders to take advantage of the rhetoric and create a movement intending to expel the Chinese without the restrictions of the law.

As the anti-Chinese movement developed local business owners showed an obvious change in their advertising. Using the most popular events of the day to increase their appeal, businesses shifted from a neutral to an openly anti-Chinese marketing scheme. With the statement “the Chinese Must Go” bolded across the top of their advertisement, the Seattle Restaurant boasted that because they were under new management they would only employ

⁴⁸ “The Eight Hour Law.” *The Seattle Daily Call*, October 6, 1885.

⁴⁹ “The Labor Issue,” *The Seattle Daily Call*, February 6, 1886.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

white help.⁵¹ Other restaurants and hotels followed suit and made statements on who they employed. The Gold Bar Hotel explained that “a full crew of white help [was] recently engaged from Chicago” to ensure customers would receive the best service because “No Chinese [were] Employed.”⁵² Businesses declared that they were anti-Chinese just to fall in line with the sentiment of the time and avoid a boycott of their institution. Stating “No Chinese Employed” and similar anti-Chinese statements in advertisements aligned businesses with the common sentiment of the day and encouraged patronage.

Other businesses, like the Great I. X. L. Clothing House reprinted a popular cartoon depicting a suited gentleman with a stick chasing a Chinese man with exceptionally long hair and non-Western clothing. Their ad declared “War! War! War! THE CHINESE MUST GO,” promising customers that only white labor created the products featured in the store.⁵³ Days before the I.X. L. had advertised that their “War” for affordable goods “and the inevitable downfall in prices would strike their competitors “like a thunder bolt.”⁵⁴ In just two days the clothing company shifted its advertising from competitive pricing to sales honoring efforts to purge the Chinese from Washington. The I. X. L. Clothing House directly tied the success of their store to the Chinese exodus as a way to promote further action in Seattle.

Rather than simply speaking ill of the Chinese presence, companies like R. Merchant & Co’s Wholesale Candy Works creatively advertised by crafting poems to resonate with readers. Following the events in Seattle on February 7, 1886, Merchant’s Wholesale Candy published an advertisement disguised as a witty poem justifying the action against the Chinese. Entitled “Go,

⁵¹ “The Seattle Restaurant Advertisement,” *The Seattle Daily Call*, September 17, 1885.

⁵² “Gold Bar Hotel,” *The Seattle Daily Call*, December 8, 1885, Miscellaneous.

⁵³ “I. X. L. Column,” *The Seattle Daily Call*, December 10, 1885, Miscellaneous.

⁵⁴ “I. X. L. Column,” *The Seattle Daily Call*, December 8, 1885, Miscellaneous.

Going, Gone,” the poem represented the three phases of anti-Chinese sentiment in Washington Territory. In response to the severity of the riots, and acknowledging the casualties, Merchant’s Wholesale Candy spun their product as a cure for the animosity and anxiety Seattle felt. Merchant’s candy advertisements openly critiqued the government’s response to the anti-Chinese agitation and criticized the volunteer militias and local law enforcement for inhibiting the complete ejection of the Chinese. Their advertisements encouraged readers that not only did their business support the Chinese leaving, but showed they were critical of the martial law and the establishment of restrictions on the rights of Seattle citizens. Merchant’s candy viewed itself as the solution to the racial turbulence because “Merchant’s Candies are the boss; they’re all that you desire, to take the whole militia from the “guards” to Governor Squire.”⁵⁵

R. Merchant & Co.’s advertising showed a deep animosity for the government infringement on individual rights. Accusing the Territorial Government and the pro Law and Order party in a follow-up poem called “Seattle,” the company admonished the government of the “fairest city in the Puget Sound” and showed concern that “you can talk about your martial law, and all about your battle, but it’s a terror to prosperity – a black eye to Seattle.” Remaining critical of any person condemning the rioters, Merchant’s Candy shamed Chinese supporters that “after all this trouble, some still keep up the strife, by hiring a leprous Chinaman to help his darling wife.”⁵⁶ Hostile toward people openly employing Chinese labor, the candy company declared it would be better to “have a white girl there” to help with the household rather than continuing the charade of using cheaper, more “leprous” labor.

⁵⁵ “Go, Going, Gone,” *The Seattle Daily Call*, February 10, 1886.

⁵⁶ “Seattle,” *The Seattle Daily Call*, February 26, 1886, New Today.

Ignoring candy until the very end with a short plug for taffy, the ad dwelled on how Eastern people must have known that the white men of Seattle did everything in their power to eject the “heathen horde.”⁵⁷ The people of Seattle and successful businesses sought justification for their actions through approval from the East Coast. More than wishing to simply eject the Chinese, the rioters and local business wanted acknowledgement that ridding the Territory of the Chinese was something other, more established communities would have done. R. Merchant & Co.’s Wholesale Candy believed that “the greatest advertisement that Seattle has yet seen was the leaving of the Chinese on the famous steamship Queen.”⁵⁸

Merchant’s candy was not the only company that believed the Chinese exodus would improve business. A “prominent” banker from Lowell, Massachusetts, declared that “the Chinese agitation at Seattle has advertised the place more than an army of real estate operators could in ten years.”⁵⁹ The banker’s impression was that the exodus had positively advertised Seattle, but similar to Merchant’s candy, he was under the false impression that the ethnic cleansing would improve the area and did not understand that territorial actions would incite pressure from the federal government and delay the advancement to statehood for the Territory.

As the concern over the Chinese presence increased, and the Knights of Labor promoted the agitation against the Chinese, factions developed to either encourage the Chinese exodus or demand the preservation of law and order. The more supporters gathered, the more political legitimacy the movement gained. Anti-Chinese sentiment became the battle for the common man and the preservation of American labor. The anti-Chinese party began to seek a solution for the

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ “Quietly Leaving,” *The Seattle Daily Call*, March 10, 1886.

⁵⁹ “A Splendid Advertisement,” *The Seattle Daily Call*, February 20, 1886.

Chinese presence and established the Anti-Chinese Congress of the Pacific Northwest, keen on regaining Territorial control of the economy and of the immigration to the region. In a little over a month the anti-Chinese Congress organized committees and formed a plan to eject the Chinese population of Tacoma.

On September 21st, 1885 between 700 and 800 people filled the seats of Seattle's Yesler Hall to discuss the "lack of judicious congressional legislation" required to limit Chinese access to Washington Territory. Operated by the Liberal League, a premier organization entirely focused on purging the Territory of its Chinese, and a few representatives of the Knights of Labor, the anti-Chinese meeting set out for a night of speeches meant to empower the locals. The organization was intent on tying labor to Territorial integrity because they believed that Chinese immigration to the Pacific Coast was a result of monopolies and "to check the evil [they] must strike at the fountainhead." M. McMillan, a representative of the Knights of Labor, was the first to speak after D. M. Crane, the president of the Liberal League, opened the meeting. McMillan maintained that the Knights of Labor had taken little action, but "when the people show a disposition to get rid of the nuisances, [he did] not sanction bloodshed, riot or mobism, but [believed] the removal of the Chinese [could] be accomplished peacefully." McMillan mentioned that the movement had reached a point where the people were ready to eject the Chinese in a peaceful manner. Through the entirety of the agitation, both in Seattle and Tacoma, the leaders of the movement and the citizens involved maintained their innocence and believed the action taken against the Chinese was not only legal but necessary for integrity of the state. In the opinion of the anti-Chinese leaders the only people at fault were the Chinese present in the Territory as everyone else was simply a victim of the "heathen horde."⁶⁰

⁶⁰ "The Chinese Question: A Rousing and Enthusiastic Meeting at Yesler's Hall Last Evening," *The Seattle Daily Call*, September 21, 1885.

The early anti-Chinese Congress predictably placed all blame for the presence of the Chinese on the eastern monopolies responsible for importing labor. Anti-Chinese leaders said that monopolistic factions abused the lack of legislation and forced the Chinese on the innocent citizens of Washington. When John Keane took the stage at Yesler's Hall he explained that every country had its factions that worked to destabilize the government and for the United States it was "her monopolies whose exactions from the laboring classes would in the course of time cause the downfall of the government and her Chinese, who were impoverishing and enslaving the laboring man." Ejecting the Chinese would not only free the laboring class, but also give the government the strength to limit monopolistic power. Keane warned, as many other anti-Chinese citizens believed, that if the Chinese were not ejected it would cause "[their] sons to be tramps in search of work" and drive "[their] daughters into disrepute and houses of ill-fame."⁶¹

Setting the course for the rest of the movement against the Chinese, the meeting at Yesler's Hall passed multiple resolutions that "if carried out in full, there wouldn't be a Chinaman on the Puget Sound inside of two weeks."⁶² While passing resolutions, a committee elected delegates in charge of promoting later gatherings as well as facilitating and further representing the citizens of Seattle in the agitation of Tacoma. Resolving that all trade unions and labor organizations provide delegates in addition to every town and city, the congress began to expand and worked to publish accounts of the meetings. The congress resolved to pressure the Chinese populations and attempted to eject them from the Territory through organized intimidation, hopefully in the confines of the law. By establishing the anti-Chinese congress, the leaders of the movement justified their actions having united for political order.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

The following week the anti-Chinese congress called another “Labor and Capital” meeting, expanding the number of citizens, creating fanfare to help legitimize the anti-Chinese movement. Using a band as the signal to start the meeting, a welcoming committee greeted delegates from Tacoma, and a procession marched through Seattle, attracting more followers on the way to Yesler’s Hall. While the previous anti-Chinese Congress met to initiate the movement, the meeting of September 28th established a plan to eject the Chinese. The second meeting also marked the participation of committee members who held great sway in Western Washington communities. The delegates elected George Venable Smith Chairman. A prominent territorial lawyer, Smith established himself as one of the key leaders of the anti-Chinese movement. Like many other leaders, he thought actions promoting the movement to rid Washington of the Chinese would help the cause of both laborers and the government alike.

One of the other prominent citizens at the meeting was Jacob Weisbach, the mayor of Tacoma. Elected as a chairman of the Tacoma movement, Weisbach explained the reasons for the movement and the false impressions people had about the presence of the Chinese in the Territory:

Some believe that under the treaty the Chinese are full-fledged citizens. They are on the Coast unlawfully. Legislation has failed. We as a people are in duty bound to protect ourselves. The question is how to protect ourselves. If Puget Sound succeeds in ridding herself of the Chinese, she will in ten years outgrow San Francisco.⁶³

As Tacoma’s highest elected officer he nonetheless incited vigilantism and violence.

There was a consensus among the agitators favoring peace if possible, but with force if necessary to rid the cities of the Chinese. Explicitly saying that force was an option, the second

⁶³ “The Chinese Must Go: A Large Delegation from All Points on the Sound Assemble in Yesler’s Hall this Afternoon and Take Preliminary Action Against the Heathen Horde,” *The Seattle Daily Call*, September 28, 1885.

meeting changed the tone of the anti-Chinese turmoil. The anti-Chinese congress settled on a boycott of all Chinese businesses and the discharge of all Chinese workers from service, but the goal was to encourage the Chinese to leave Washington Territory, whether they were bound for Canada or China. By November 1st, the Chinese faced mandatory ejection from Tacoma and if they did not do so by then the Congress threatened their forced removal.⁶⁴

Governor Watson C. Squire made a report to President Grover Cleveland through the Secretary of the Interior, Lucius Q. C. Lamar. Summarizing the events in the Territory, Squire depicted the meetings as containing “violent and incendiary speeches” with the “expression of a determination to rid the country of the Chinese by forcible means, if those people find it necessary to use force in so doing.” The report updated the President on the Territory but also was an admission that Washington Territory faced utter turmoil and possible dissolution. Alluding to the increased aggression, Squire mentions that “at times it seemed that we were on the point of having serious trouble in preserving the peace,” but he does so shyly, afraid of the backlash from the federal government if Washington succumbed to riotous forces. Hesitating to employ the service of federal troops, Squire claimed the peace will be kept by his urging the “better class of citizens” to help prevent any outbreak of violence. Squire remained determined to maintain the law, but relied too heavily on his “better class of citizens” who arrayed themselves “under the law for the preservation of peace and order.” The peace-loving citizens Squire spoke of were not nearly as powerful as the aggressive leaders behind the anti-Chinese movement. Trying to pander to the federal government, Squire further doomed Washington to outbursts of violence that would sully the reputation of the Territory. Squire was certain that “the good name of the territory requires that our civil authorities should preserve order if they can

⁶⁴ Ibid.

possibly do so,” but by not calling on federal assistance the anti-Chinese agitation spun out of control, resulting in violence in both Tacoma and Seattle.⁶⁵

Just before the November 1st deadline for the Chinese to leave Tacoma, anti-Chinese rhetoric reached its most aggressive stage. The anti-Chinese resolution of October 24 at Frye’s Opera House in Seattle declared why the Chinese should be forced from the region. Using the resolution to shift the emphasis away from Chinese labor toward the negative effects of the Chinese populations, it exposed “the many evils of Mongolian immigration which [were] subversive” to Territorial institutions and should not “be tolerated by [the] civilized, free, white race.” The resolution invited the “co-operation of all classes of fellow citizens” in their goal of “wisely directing public sentiment...to the laudable end of excluding the Mongolian curse from the land.”⁶⁶ Inviting the press to publish the resolutions and document the attempts to purge the Chinese from Washington, the anti-Chinese Congress gathered as much publicity as possible to show a more unified movement, and hopefully earn more followers.

Citing dangers that justified the anti-Chinese congress’ action against the Chinese, the “calamitous,” “humiliating, and “blighting evil” required harsh measures, undertaken by a people determined to end the Chinese invasion, which was “to be dreaded...more than a hostile invasion by armed men.” Apprehensive over the increase in Chinese immigration because a “fear of hunger” could drive “the calamity forth in prodigious number in a quest of food,” the citizens of Washington Territory saw the potential for the Chinese to hold the land rather than the Caucasians. Though Washington’s population only touted four percent Chinese, regional anxiety created an imagined contest for land that drove people to join the anti-Chinese movement.

⁶⁵ “Gov. Squire’s Report to the President Concerning the Present Chinese Trouble,” *The Seattle Daily Call*, October 23, 1885.

⁶⁶ “Resolutions,” *The Seattle Daily Call*, October 26, 1885.

Whites thought the Chinese presence increased their “death grip” on institutions, promoting a system of labor that many equated to slavery. Because the Chinese “[were] an aggressive people with the greatest love of money,” and “the best money makers in the world,” their system of sending money back to China would cast the economy into a greater downward spiral, condemning Washington to further disaster.⁶⁷

The most important reason the anti-Chinese congress cited for ejecting the Chinese was the threat to the integrity of Western Civilization. The resolution moved beyond the simple anxiety over labor relations, and progressed to rhetoric that showed undeniable differences between cultures. Holding on to “mysterious language and alien customs” the Chinese from the interior of China were thought to misunderstand the basic motivations of civilization. Considered “generally destitute of moral principle...they [were] incapable of patriotism, and...utterly unfitted for American citizenship,” posing a threat to the very institutions that make up American government. To the anti-Chinese Congress their very presence, in any form, threatened cities and the health of citizens:

In our cities they live crowded and herded like beasts, generating the most dangerous diseases. They introduce the ancient, infectious and incurable malady called leprosy the germs of which, when once distributed, can never be eradicated, but fasten themselves upon the people as an eternal, consuming rot, and if not sooner distributed will, by only a generation of Chinese blood, mixed in half-breed offspring, diffusing the leprous taint in the white blood and plant it in permanent veins of the Caucasian race.⁶⁸

The anti-Chinese movement in Washington increasingly began to promote an ethnic cleansing of the Territory. Citizens hoped to regain the independence they feared lost to Chinese loving, monopolistic factions. By early November, anti-Chinese agitators rid Tacoma of all its Chinese,

⁶⁷ “Resolutions,” *The Seattle Daily Call*, October 26, 1885.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

leaving the Territory simultaneously stunned yet motivated to further eradicate the Chinese from Washington Territory.

On November 3, 1885, 197 Chinamen were sent from Tacoma by the organizational efforts of the Committee of Fifteen, the leaders popularly voted to rally the citizens of Tacoma and work to eject the Chinese. Gathering evidence for the prosecution of agitators of the Chinese expulsion of Tacoma, Prosecuting Attorney Fremont Campbell assembled a timeline of the events for Governor Squire. Campbell made his assessment to help legitimize Governor Squire's actions during the Tacoma riot communication misled him over the severity of the events and would have taken action had he known the "true state of affairs." Campbell condensed the Chinese expulsion at Tacoma into a brief analysis of the events, which began with the "short blast of the car shop and iron foundry whistles" that organized more than 500 men on Pacific Avenue to march toward C Street where the Chinese resided. Having previously informed them that they were to leave Tacoma, the men gathered the Chinese and forced them on trains, with or without their possessions, south to Lake View, near Portland, Oregon. Campbell claimed that "Mayor Weisbach [was] directly responsible for the agitation and expulsion of the Chinese at Tacoma," as he did little to temper the behavior of the Tacoma citizens actively promoting anti-Chinese rhetoric.⁶⁹

The rioters of Tacoma were accused not just of upsetting law and order by ejecting the Chinese populations but also interfering with the duties of officers of the law and attempting to manipulate the governing of the Territory. Recognizing the increase in agitation before the events of November 3rd, the Pierce County Sheriff swore in an extra 300 deputies to maintain peace in Tacoma and nearby Puyallup. On the day of the expulsion, only about eight of the

⁶⁹ Fremont Campbell to Watson C. Squire, June 10, 1886, Letter Box 1, Folder 56, Watson C. Squire Papers, University of Washington Special Collections, Seattle.

officers sworn in reported to the Sheriff to help stem the agitation. Campbell suspected that the newly sworn in deputies remained unmotivated to help the cause as many believed the Chinese should face ejection. The citizens of Tacoma wrote Governor Squire and ensured him that there would “be no occasion whatever for the presence of troops or the employment of an organized force under the Sheriff. The Sheriff will be able to preserve the peace and enforce the laws,” with the assistance and support of the citizens.⁷⁰ Those very citizens were the aggravating powers that helped unite the movement, hoping to force the Chinese out of Tacoma.

On November 5th after agitators emptied the Chinese Quarter of Tacoma a fire broke out and burned all remaining shanties to the ground. Though there were rumors over the origin of the fires, *The Seattle Daily Call* reported that four Chinese men were arrested “on suspicion of having committed the act out of revenge for being fired out.”⁷¹ The citizens of the Territory continued to blame the Chinese, even after their ejection from Tacoma. An official inquiry in 1886 investigated the burning of the Chinese property, and listed numerous Chinese homes and businesses completely consumed by the fire.⁷² The Territorial government intended to make reparations for property losses, but by the time investigations occurred many of the Chinese had already left Washington.

Squires’ response to the events of Tacoma consisted of a proclamation to the citizens of Washington Territory, though the promotion of anti-Chinese agitation by Tacoma’s Mayor Weisbach diminished the effect. Squire proclaimed that “all acts of violence and intimidation against Chinese residents are plainly against the laws of Washington Territory...[and] every

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ “More Buildings Burned,” *The Seattle Daily Call*, November 5, 1886.

⁷² “List of Chinese businesses burned in Tacoma during anti-Chinese unrest,” 1886, Digital ID number PNW00466, University of Washington Digital Collections, Pacific Northwest Historical Documents Database.

power of law should be bent to secure the Chinese from assault.”⁷³ Squire was one of the few voices openly supporting law and order, when many of the citizens of Tacoma and Seattle agreed with the anti-Chinese rhetoric and the attempt to eject the “heathen horde.” Trying to get citizens to “array themselves on the side of law and order,” Squire declared that all those “who aspire to soon become a great and self-governing State, to assert their power of self-control and self-preservation as against a spirit of lawlessness, which is destructive alike to immigration, to labor and to capital” should stop the influence of anti-Chinese agitators.⁷⁴ Though Squire warned that Washington was destined to require speedy interference by United States troops if the agitation did not stop, anti-Chinese proponents did not halt their efforts. Even after prominent Territorial citizens began to step forward in favor of the preservation of law and order, the anti-Chinese factions continued to incite violence in an effort to rid Washington Territory of the Chinese.

After the agitation in Tacoma, pro law and order groups became more prominent to help maintain the integrity of Washington Territory. Groups like the Loyal League of Seattle formed to “inculcate and foster a spirit of loyalty to the government” and assist the government in “sustaining and enforcing the laws of the land.”⁷⁵ By the time law and order groups emerged, though, public sentiment had already swayed toward anti-Chinese agitation. The Loyal League did little in comparison to the anti-Chinese Congress. Motivated to cleanse Washington of the Chinese, Territorial citizens believed Washington could not become an effective political entity with a Chinese presence. White citizens saw the Chinese as an ever expanding threat, especially when they believed that there were more than 400 ejected from Tacoma, though the number was

⁷³ Proclamation by the Governor, Washington Territory,” November 4, 1885, Digital ID number PNW00347, University of Washington Digital Collections, Pacific Northwest Historical Documents Database.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Loyal League of Seattle Constitution and By-Laws, 1885, Loyal League of Seattle Records, Manuscript Collection Number 4680, University of Washington Special Collections, Seattle.

less than half that. Residents idolized the Committee of Ten and the Committee of Fifteen, of Seattle and Tacoma respectively, seeing them as purveyors of American idealism throughout the Territory.

In response to the events of Tacoma, there was a lull in action against the Chinese, but continued rhetoric supporting the movement as leaders deemed the threat ever present. Though the leaders of the anti-Chinese movement heightened their efforts, with Seattle as the next target, people promoting law and order began speaking out against the “lawlessness” and denounced the reputation Washington would earn if the agitation continued. As “Anti-Chinese Heroes” were arrested and charged with conspiracy of the government, Roger S. Greene, Judge of the District Court, explained they ignored “some simple and elementary principles of law,” resulting in the arrest of leading Territorial citizens. Though they were eventually proven innocent, the charges leveled large amounts of guilt on movement leaders, showing that the Territorial government would not stand for the lawlessness. Yet Washington’s efforts came too late, as dissenters had already caused damage to the Territory’s political stability. Explaining the qualifications for conspiracy, Greene illustrated the boundaries of Constitutional law and who the government protected:

All rights in political society are related to and complementary of the rights of others. Government is for all men, indiscriminately. A free government is no respecter of persons. It cannot give to one class more rights than to others without abridging the rights of those others. It cannot allow one class to take to itself more rights than other classes, without allowing that class to oppress those others...A citizen cannot divide his allegiance and give it partly to his government and partly to some society or league or committee...to attempt to deprive a man of his “life” by force or fright is manifestly an unlawful act.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ “Arrested for Conspiracy, Supplementary Report,” *The Seattle Daily Call*, November 11, 1885.

Greene tried to rally the more patriotic instincts of the Washington citizens, hoping that their inclination for action in the future would be in favor of the law, both constitutional and local. Greene, like many others related to the working class and shared his experience with “the common people.”⁷⁷ The “common people,” however, were not as convinced by the challenge to maintain law and order, instead in favor of the popular idea that expelling the Chinese would most effectively return rights to the working man. No matter the attempts by law and order supporters, the popular sentiment in Washington was that by ejecting the Chinese, the Territory could garner favor with the federal government, stabilize the economy, and regain its rights.

Law and order parties saw that the preservation of the law was of the highest importance to maintain the integrity of the state. But instead, they supported legislation and political action against the Chinese, hoping to legalize the efforts to remove them. Judge Thomas Burke spoke at a mass meeting in Seattle’s Frye’s Opera House on the lawlessness that resulted in the Chinese expulsion. Burke, as the leader of the law and order movement, agreed that the time had arrived to renegotiate a treaty on Chinese immigration to America, but questioned whether citizens should act “as becomes free, law-abiding and justice-loving Americans or as turbulent and lawless foreigners.” Comparing the lawlessness and action of the rioters to foreigners, Burke condemned what he considered the manipulation of Tacoma by the German-born Mayor Weisbach who “encouraged” the Tacoma “mob” to drive out the Chinese in “mid winter to perish of cold, exposure, and hunger.” Burke upheld the need for legislation reform, believing that “you would not treat your dog or the dumb beast of the field with such pitiless cruelty.” Because of the Chinese invitation to immigrate to America by the United States government, Burke cried out in his speech that “Americans bound by duty, by patriotism, by the love they

⁷⁷ Ibid.

cherish for American traditions...[should] uphold the law of the land and do simple justice to the handful of defenseless people whom [the] government induced to come” to America. Burke thought that if Territorial residents pursued lawful measures to answer the “Chinese Question,” the “mirage of passion” would dissipate and “vanish like a bad dream.”⁷⁸

George Venable Smith also responded to the events of Tacoma, but as a leader of the Anti-Chinese agitation, Smith saw the movement as almost completely successful, with the exception of the few Chinese remaining in Seattle. Smith saw the actions of the law and order movement as contradictory to what the people desired, as he had worked to promote “the methods of informing the public mind of what it wanted...[bringing] together in compact form all laboring men” with similar interests at heart. Accusing the law and order movement of materially interfering with people’s pursuit of happiness, Smith portrayed the agitation as a constitutional right of the people to prevent the invasion of the country. Smith said he did not want a pro-Chinese man to misconstrue the meaning of his speech, but “the Asiatic hordes” would not invade the country because the “white race [was] equal” to the threat.⁷⁹ Considering the right of self-protection the first law of nature, Smith justified all action against the Chinese as necessary for the preservation of American civilization. Blaming the pro-Chinese factions as responsible for the federal government interference of sending troops after the events of Tacoma, Smith saw the inalienable right of citizens to organize and eject the threat of the Chinese.

Aspiring to end the Chinese presence in Washington, Seattle followed the Tacoma Method in February 1886 and residents rioted against the Chinese population. The February riot was the culmination of the agitation that began in September and ended with an organized mob

⁷⁸ “Burke’s Speech at the Mass Meeting Held in Frye’s Opera House,” November 5, 1885, Letter Box 2, Folder 2, Thomas Burke Papers, University of Washington Special Collections, Seattle.

⁷⁹ “Mass Meeting at the Standard Theater Last Evening,” *The Seattle Daily Call*, November 21, 1885.

driving the “heathen horde” from Washington. Though there was a lull in the agitation from December to January, by February the Washington Territory anti-Chinese Congress worked to eradicate the Chinese presence from all towns and coastal cities. After passing the Cubic Air Ordinance, members of the anti-Chinese Congress entered the Chinese quarter of Seattle to enforce the law in the shanty-town that every dwelling had to have an allotted amount of air space available. The Ordinance declared that should the Chinese not pass standards, the government would have the right to send the Chinese to the docks and board the Queen of the Pacific, south to San Francisco. The Air Ordinance law served as an excuse to remove the Chinese, allowing Territorial agitators to visit every “wash-house, tea store, junk shop, and opium joint” and demand that the Chinese leave. *The Seattle Daily Call*, in its account of the agitation on February 7th, claimed that “not a hair of the heathen was harmed,” and the Chinese “en masse said they would go if their fares were paid.” In reality the rioters told the Chinese to pack and took wagons down to the Chinese quarter to drive them down to the dock. The agitators saw the Chinese “as leaving on their own accord,” but the rioters acted outside the bounds of the law, so by the early afternoon Seattle was in the hands of a mob. The United States Prosecuting Attorney William H. White attempted to stop the ejection, but his efforts were in vain as he told citizens “they were violating the law” and reportedly “got mad and heaped profanity on their heads.”⁸⁰

As agitators spread throughout Seattle, Governor Squire ordered the rioters to stop their violence, disperse, and return to their homes. Squire wanted “all persons to desist from breaches of the peace” and assist the Sheriff and the “duly constituted civil authorities in maintaining law

⁸⁰ “Chinese Crisis in the Queen City of the Northwest,” *The Seattle Daily Call*, February 8, 1886.

and order.”⁸¹ Yelling and howling in defiance to the proclamation, rioters ignored Squire’s orders. Squire then ordered military companies to report to the Sheriff of the County, and assist the enforcement of law.⁸² By the time the Governor’s Proclamation was read, more than 350 Chinese crowded the Ocean Dock awaiting transportation out of Seattle. Seattle citizens offered to pay the fare of all the Chinese who immediately could board the “Queen” out of Seattle to assist the quick exodus of the Chinese. Stopped by a writ of *Habeas Corpus* from Judge Roger Greene, the Chinese could not leave until the next morning so they could be brought to court and informed of their legal rights.⁸³

On February 7th, the agitation largely worked to displace the Chinese to places they could easily depart from by either train or by boat. By that night, after militias Company D, The Seattle Rifles, the University Cadets, and the Home Guards were dispatched, members of the mob attempted to drive the guarded Chinese down to the trains. The militias dispersed the mob, but by the next morning the mob gathered once again, attempting to take the militia’s weapons. The mob’s main intention was to ignore the law and proceed with the Chinese ejection, at whatever costs. On the morning of February 8th, the rioters sprang at the guards and attempted to take their weapons. Not knowing of the loaded guns, shots rang out leaving one rioter dead and four severely wounded. Infuriated by the shooting the pack of “raving, howling, angry men

⁸¹ Governor Watson C. Squire to the People of Washington Territory, “Call to Cease Insurgent Activities,” February 7, 1886, Letter Box 2, Folder 17, Watson C. Squire Papers, University of Washington Special Collections, Seattle.

⁸² “Anti-Chinese Riots, 1885-1186,” Spring 1886, Letter Box 2, Folder 2, Thomas Burke Papers, University of Washington Special Collections, Seattle.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

[threatened] those who were interfering with their lawlessness” and began to fire on the militia, though no one else was injured.⁸⁴

After the mob violence against the militia Governor Squire, Chief Justice Greene, and United States Attorney White contacted President Cleveland to invoke martial law in Seattle and return the city to peace. President Cleveland allowed the declaration of martial law because it had become “impracticable to enforce by the ordinary course of judicial proceedings the laws of the United States at Seattle.” Cleveland proclaimed that the situation justified the “employment of militia force to suppress domestic violence.” The command quelled the uprising, but also gave federal justification for Governor Squire’s actions in his attempt to disperse the rioters and uphold the law. Cleveland commanded all insurgents to desist, disperse, and return peaceably to their duties and granted military forces government power limiting the organizational rights of citizens to assemble.⁸⁵ Martial law placed sanctions on the city of Seattle closing all saloons, closing businesses between 7 pm and 6 am, and gave written consent to arrest any person found on the streets after 7 pm and before 5 am.⁸⁶ By the end of the anti-Chinese sentiment in Seattle, the Federal Government had completely withdrawn many of the rights of the citizens of the Territory through martial law, punishing agitators for their lawless action.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ President Grover Cleveland to Governor Watson C. Squire, February 9th, 1886, Letter Box 1, Folder 42, Watson C. Squire Papers, University of Washington Special Collections, Seattle.

⁸⁶ “Anti-Chinese Riots, 1885-1186,” Spring 1886, Letter Box 2, Folder 2, Thomas Burke Papers, University of Washington Special Collections, Seattle.

“GONE”

General John Gibbon, stationed at Fort Vancouver in Washington Territory, awaited the order from President Cleveland to move the troops into Seattle. Once Gibbon arrived in Seattle on February 10th, he found everything “perfectly quiet and peaceful.” Giving Squire a report on the events of Seattle, he extolled the actions of the “citizen soldiery” in repelling the mob violence, especially since “the citizen who acts on the side of law is doubly armed, and he who acts in opposition to it takes his life in his hands.” After the declaration of martial law, Seattle quickly became peaceful once more. The harsh sanctions demanded by the Territorial government and delivered by President Cleveland squelched the anti-Chinese movement. The efforts of the anti-Chinese movement were not immediately successful, but most of the Chinese still chose to leave Washington Territory though the Chinese could opt to remain in Seattle. The violence prompted the Chinese to go south, to either Portland or San Francisco, some even back to China. General Gibbon denounced the rioters as “the persons responsible for the shedding of the blood in the streets of Seattle are the leaders, who in defiance of the highest law in the land undertook deliberately and with “malice aforethought” to violate that law” and induce others to assist them.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ General John Gibbon to Watson C. Squire, February 12, 1886, Letter Box 1, Folder 41, Watson C. Squire Papers, University of Washington Special Collections, Seattle.

Gibbon suggested that every known leader of the outrages be arrested as a way of alleviating the “disgrace of martial law.”⁸⁸ For Gibbon the “welfare of society” demanded that the leaders of the violence be arrested at once to both help civil authorities and the enforcement of the law.⁸⁹ By February 17th, Governor Squire, with the assistance of General Gibbon, ordered the leaders of the movement arrested, leaving more than twenty people charged with crimes against Washington Territory and the preservation of law and order. Charges were levied for “using loud and treasonable language” about the martial law to keeping a saloon open contrary to the orders dictated by General Gibbon.⁹⁰ Even the most prominent fomenters, like George Venable Smith, were arrested but for most they were simply fined and reprimanded for their actions but not charged for their treasonous activities.

Many believed that the declaration of martial law was too extreme of a measure taken by the federal government in response to the agitation. The citizens of the Territory promoting turmoil remained convinced that their actions would increase the integrity of the Territory and earn respect from the rest of the United States. Agitators thought their actions fit within the confines of constitutional law, protecting man’s inalienable right to self-preservation. The future Governor of Washington Territory, Eugene Semple, who led Washington Territory into statehood, said that “no necessity existed for declaring martial law; that the law abiding people of Seattle were numerous enough, vigilant enough, and brave enough to enforce the processes of the courts.”⁹¹ Semple understood that the declaration of martial law was a costly blemish on the

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ List of persons arrested during Martial law in Seattle, February 10-17, 1886, Letter Box 2, Folder 26, Watson C. Squire Papers, University of Washington Special Collections, Seattle.

⁹¹ “Martial law at Seattle, W.T.: An inquiry into the Necessity Therefore,” March 8, 1886, Letter Box 14, Eugene Semple Papers, University of Washington Special Collections, Seattle.

reputation of the fledgling Territory, but he failed to acknowledge the need for military control of the Territory. In an attempt to preserve law and order, Governor Squire called in the only forces that could immediately suppress the rioters and maintain peace. Asking for Federal Government intervention doomed Squire's career but also stopped any further anti-Chinese aggression.

On February 22nd in Governor Squire's Civil Law proclamation, nearly two weeks after the start of the agitation in Seattle, he declared the restoration of civil authority. The Seattle Mayor had determined that "many evil disposed persons have gone away, thereby scattering and weakening the disturbing element."⁹² Squire asked for the most "vigilant and patriotic efforts" to assist in the maintenance of civil law. The threat of mob rule had dissipated after the declaration of martial law in Seattle, but the recent memory of the events caused anxiety over any continued insurrection. The anti-Chinese fervor quickly died, as the goal of ejecting the Chinese was accomplished, but the Territory was also harshly reprimanded for the riots that resulted in a death, multiple injuries, and extensive property damage. The Federal Government made it clear that the actions of the citizens of Washington Territory were lawless and motivated by a false interpretation of the boundaries of Constitutional law.

By March 2nd, when President Cleveland addressed Congress about violence in Washington, the "Chinese Question" had been answered. The citizens of Washington Territory were no longer crying out for a Chinese Exodus, but instead attempted to justify the violence used for ethnic cleansing. Cleveland's address to Congress mainly focused on the relations between China and the United States, tarnished by the forced move of native born Chinese. Cleveland acknowledged the agitation that persisted and noted the apprehension "lest the bitterness of feeling against the Mongolian race on the Pacific Slope may find vent in similar,

⁹² "The End of Martial law," *The Seattle Daily Call*, February 23, 1886.

lawless demonstrations. Cleveland blamed the outrages on the “lawlessness of men” on the “inoffensive subjects of China.” The Chinese should have been entitled “to the same measure of protection from violence and the same free form for redress of their grievances as any other aliens.”⁹³ Cleveland asked for the further measures to be enacted to preserve peace in the future. And just like many others trying to answer the “Chinese Question,” Cleveland was unsure of what rights the Chinese citizens explicitly had. Passing judgment on the actions of the Territory, Cleveland did not levy sanctions against Washington as the only thing they had done specifically wrong was succumb to lawless forces, to the extent that civil authority could no longer preserve the peace.

An editorial from the *New York Herald* responded to Cleveland’s address to Congress, condemning the position he took in response to the outrages against the Chinese that the *Herald* could not commend because “it [was] not just. It [was] not creditable to the nation. [And] it [was] not manly.” Believing that Cleveland should have punished Washington Territory, they explained that “a Territory, unlike a State, [was] under national rule. Its laws [were] made by authority of Congress and subject to Congressional Control.” Because the National government governed Washington, “the responsibility of the Territory for lawlessness, mob violence and brutal treatment of innocent persons is the responsibility of the general government.”⁹⁴ Washington Territory, having shirked its duties to maintain law and order and the preservation of peoples, negatively affected the reputation of the national government.

The anti-Chinese sentiment between September and March in Washington Territory marked a drastic departure from governmental enforcement of law and order. The actions of the citizens of Washington Territory in purging the Chinese from the region resulted in both a loss of

⁹³ “The End of Martial law,” *The Seattle Daily Call*, February 23, 1886.

⁹⁴ “A Matter of National Honor,” *The New York Herald*, March 3, 1886, New York.

respect, and delay in the Territory's advancement to statehood. An optimistic editorial in the *Seattle Daily Call* promised that Washington had a great future in store "when it shall have attained the dignity of statehood."⁹⁵ The Territory had boomed because of the completion of its Cascade division of the railroad and of its agricultural and environmental development, and would continue to grow. The anti-Chinese sentiment that tore through Washington dampened the energy of venturing to a distant territory for a promise of new opportunities.

Musings over admitting Washington to statehood began in the early 1880s, when residents realized the territorial population and access to resources equaled that of states already admitted to the Union. An article appearing in the *Morning Oregonian* in 1882 promoted that cause for Washington's statehood, acknowledging that upon Nevada's entrance into the union the Territory had less than half of Washington's population, and one-tenth of the business and wealth. More than a dozen other states had fewer resources and "several [had] less brains," increasing the appeal of Washington Territory's advancement and representation in the national government.⁹⁶

White residents of Washington believed that "no set of men from a well established state of society [would] immigrate into a Territory and be continually subjected...to political iniquity."⁹⁷ No matter Washington's attractive attributes, only after the Chinese left Washington could the Territory achieve national recognition as a prime region for settlement. Discouraged by the statehood process, many in Washington saw the Territorial status as "the whirligig of political partisan jealousy and wire-pulling for all time to come."⁹⁸ To become a state,

⁹⁵ "A Demand for Statehood," *The Seattle Daily Call*, January 14, 1885.

⁹⁶ "Statehood for Washington," *Morning Oregonian*, November 18, 1882.

⁹⁷ "The Territories," *The Seattle Daily Call*, October 10, 1885.

⁹⁸ "The Admission of the Territory," *The Seattle Daily Call*, October 30, 1885.

Washington had to prove its clout as a responsible Territory, something it failed to do with the Chinese expulsion. The *Oregonian* had seen the people of Washington to be “nearly unanimous in their desire for admission” to the Union. Ready to take on the burdens and responsibilities of statehood as early as 1880, Washington saw the “injustice of a situation which virtually excludes them from a voice in the general government but still binds them firmly to obedience.” Until Washington became an official member of the United States, it was the “begging child, taking whatever it got through the generosity of voting law-makers and without standing to enforce its rights.” Even with the greater responsibilities of statehood, the people would “naturally prefer to have a voice.” Washington was also seen as part of the future of western politics that could help give the Pacific coast “an influence that would more frequently make itself felt in legislative halls of the nation.”⁹⁹

Attempts at achieving statehood began in the early 1880s, and by 1886 with the end of the anti-Chinese movement, there were still no gains for Washington’s advancement to statehood. The events of Seattle and Tacoma, though initially inspired by anxiety over the cause of white laborers, were a result of the dissatisfaction with Territorial status and a general desire to show Washington’s political importance. The resolution of the Chinese question meant Washington could achieve prominence, both ethnically and politically, creating the opportunity for advancement to statehood. Status anxiety motivated widespread agitation in both of the major cities of the Territory because whites thought that “the Chinese must go” to once again give Washington a chance of admission into the Union.

In 1868 Eugene Semple, governor of Washington Territory from 1887 through 1889, wrote an anti-Chinese Resolution for the Democratic Club of the 1st Ward of Portland, Oregon,

⁹⁹ “Statehood for Washington,” *Morning Oregonian*, November 18, 1882.

just 150 miles south of Seattle. Consistent with common anti-Chinese rhetoric, Semple preached that if the Chinese continued to advance upon the land that “such a destruction of the balance of power [would] result, as [would] enable the hordes of barbarous Asia to throw down and overwhelm the standards of Christianity and civilization which Caucasian faith and valor have borne thus far to the west.” Semple continued that the welfare of the State “demands that this great evil not be allowed to fasten itself upon life.” The State could not prosper with the presence of the Chinese, whether a fledgling Territory or a member of the Union.¹⁰⁰

Semple was vocal through the anti-Chinese period of Washington Territory, condemning the Territorial government for its handling of the riots, and remaining critical that the Territory had little control over its own governance, save for the Governor Squire’s pleas to President Cleveland to halt the uprisings. Semple illustrated to the public the discrepancy between the blight of the Chinese on the land and the inability of the government to act logically when utter turmoil took over the Territory. Promoting the action, Semple saw the violence as the first step towards achieving unified goals, eventually hoping for Washington’s Statehood.

Washington earned a reputation for vigilante actions, creating a precedent for violent reform, beginning with shaping the Territory’s Statehood. The national government was already hesitant to admit new states into the Union, and the lawlessness of Washington did little to convince them the rabble-rousers out West deserved national membership. In November 1889 Washington officially earned Statehood, after years of political efforts to become part of the Union. Enough time had passed to allow the national government to largely forget the riots and lawlessness of Washington Territory. Washington still faced political opposition from Democrats controlling Congress who did not want to increase Republican representation in Congress

¹⁰⁰ “Anti-Chinese Resolution,” April 17, 1868, Letter Box 14, Eugene Semple Papers, University of Washington Special Collections, Seattle.

through the admission of new states, but on November 11, 1889 Washington officially became a state. Processing to the capitol building in Olympia, banners flew recognizing the history of the region, but one carried the Indian words *Chinook quanism ancotty alta chee chaho alki*, translated to “living hereto in the past we now begin to live in the future.”¹⁰¹ Washington entered a new era of its history, able to forget the past that so tarnished its national reputation. As soon as Washington achieved statehood, all riotous actions were justified and the white handling of the Chinese was forgotten. Citizens of Washington achieved their goal of admission to the union and distanced themselves from the past that backfired against them, and delayed their national aspirations.

¹⁰¹ Ficken and LeWarne, *Washington*, xxi.

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