

LOCKE LORD DIVERSITY AWARENESS

May 2016: **Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month**

In the United States, the Asian/Pacific American population is significant and growing. In fact, between 2000 and 2010, the Asian/Pacific American population in the United States increased by 43% (from 10.2 million to 14.7 million). The Asian/Pacific American population includes members of more than 30 ethnic groups who speak more than 300 languages and dialects.

Why is May Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month? The month of May marks two significant milestones in Asian/Pacific American history.



On May 7, 1843, Manjiro Nakahama — also known as John Mung — became the first Japanese immigrant to the United States. Some credit Manjiro's presence in the U.S. as the catalyst in ending Japan's centuries of isolation from the West. Although he was a young fisherman upon arriving to the U.S., Manjiro later became a political emissary between the West and Japan.

On May 10, 1869, the first transcontinental railroad was completed which was accomplished with the substantial contributions from Chinese immigrants. The Central Pacific company relied on the Chinese as they were efficient, reliable, and resourceful. By 1890, there were 12,000 Chinese workers working on the Central Pacific line, making up 80% of their total workforce.



The First Transcontinental Railroad, Golden Spike ceremony (photo from SASE)

More recently in 2015, there was a remediation of a vestige of discrimination against the Chinese in the practice of law in California. With the gold rush underway in California in 1848, laborers travelled to California in droves, including immigrants from China and Hong Kong. Soon thereafter, Chinese immigrants became the chief competition to local Californians for jobs as artisans, mechanics, and laborers. This staunch competition, in addition to the Chinese population's lack of assimilation to American culture, created cultural hostility towards Chinese immigrants and prompted the California Legislature to enact a series of discriminatory laws to disadvantage all Chinese immigrants. Additionally, California's lobbying against Chinese immigrants was instrumental in Congress passing the federal Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882—which suspended immigration of Chinese laborers for a period of 10 years.



It was in this backdrop that Hong Yen Chang — a China-born immigrant with a Yale undergraduate degree and a law degree from Columbia Law School — applied for admission to the California bar in 1890. Despite having been admitted to the New York bar two years prior and becoming the first attorney in the U.S. of Chinese descent, the California Supreme Court denied his admission, relying largely on the federal Chinese Exclusion Act.

Recently, with the help of Hong Yen Chang's descendants and students from U.C. Davis Law School, the California Supreme Court revisited its 1890 decision. In doing so, the Court called the prior discrimination against Chinese immigrants "a sordid chapter of our state and national history" and said, "[I]t is past time to acknowledge that the discriminatory exclusion of Chang from the State Bar of California was a grievous wrong." For these reasons, the Court righted its prior wrong and granted Hong Yen Chang posthumous admission to the California bar in March of 2015.

The heart of Locke Lord lies within our people and the many different experiences and perspectives we share. We recognize, embrace and celebrate our differences and believe we can only provide our clients with the best possible representation if we reflect the diversity of the clients and communities we serve.

Locke
Lord^{LLP}

Practical Wisdom, Trusted Advice.

www.lockelord.com

Atlanta | Austin | Boston | Chicago | Dallas | Hartford | Hong Kong | Houston | Istanbul | London | Los Angeles | Miami | Morristown
New Orleans | New York | Providence | Sacramento | San Francisco | Stamford | Tokyo | Washington DC | West Palm Beach