

Migration and Xenophobia across the Pacific in the Time of COVID-19 Current Problems in Their Historical Context

A virtual panel discussion with Mae Ngai (Columbia University), Nayan Shah (University of Southern California), Lok Siu (University of California, Berkeley), and Yasuko Takezawa (Kyoto University)

June 11, 2020, 4-5:30 pm PDT / 7-8:30 pm EDT / June 12, 2020, 8-9:30 am JST

RSVP required. To join this zoom event, please register [here](#) by June 11

In this panel discussion, the conveners want to provide a forum for discussing the rise of anti-Asian sentiment and sinophobia across the Pacific. The panel, composed of leading historians and anthropologists, will address current concerns in the time of COVID-19 and examine them in relation to historical antecedents. By offering analysis of the present condition in relation to the past, the aim is to better situate today's dynamics in their historical context and highlight how xenophobic and racist attitudes can be instrumentalized to propagate populist, nativist, and nationalist agendas.

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have witnessed a significant increase in reports of anti-Asian harassment and assaults, particularly in the United States, Canada, and Europe. Moreover, Japan, Singapore, and other Asian states in the region have witnessed a rise in anti-Mainland Chinese sentiments. Migration, health, and the perception of foreigners and immigrants as threats can be identified as being part and parcel of a long-standing tradition of xenophobia, especially in societies built on settler colonialism, imperialism, and colonialism. In the nineteenth century, when Asians came as the first non-white immigrants to the Americas (in parallel with the "coolie" trade), laws and regulations to keep Chinese and other Asians from immigrating were instituted in settler societies around the Pacific Rim. Restrictive immigration policies were usually justified by racial prejudice, which often associated Asian immigration with disease and threats to public health. Such racial stereotypes further stoked fears of a "Yellow Peril." In Southeast and East Asia, current distrust of the PRC's political influence can add to sinophobia, thus deepening existing divides in those area.

This event is a teaser to the conference "Mobilities, Exclusion, and Migrants' Agency in the Pacific Realm in a Transregional and Diachronic Perspective" that will take place in Berkeley next year (June 2021). The panel discussion is organized by the project group of the module "[Interaction and Knowledge in the Pacific Region: Entanglements and Disentanglements](#)" which belongs to the Max Weber Foundation's collaborative research project "[Knowledge Unbound](#)."

Conveners and moderators

Albert Manke (Pacific Regional Office of the German Historical Institute Washington at UC Berkeley)

Yufei Zhou (German Institute for Japanese Studies, Tokyo)



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