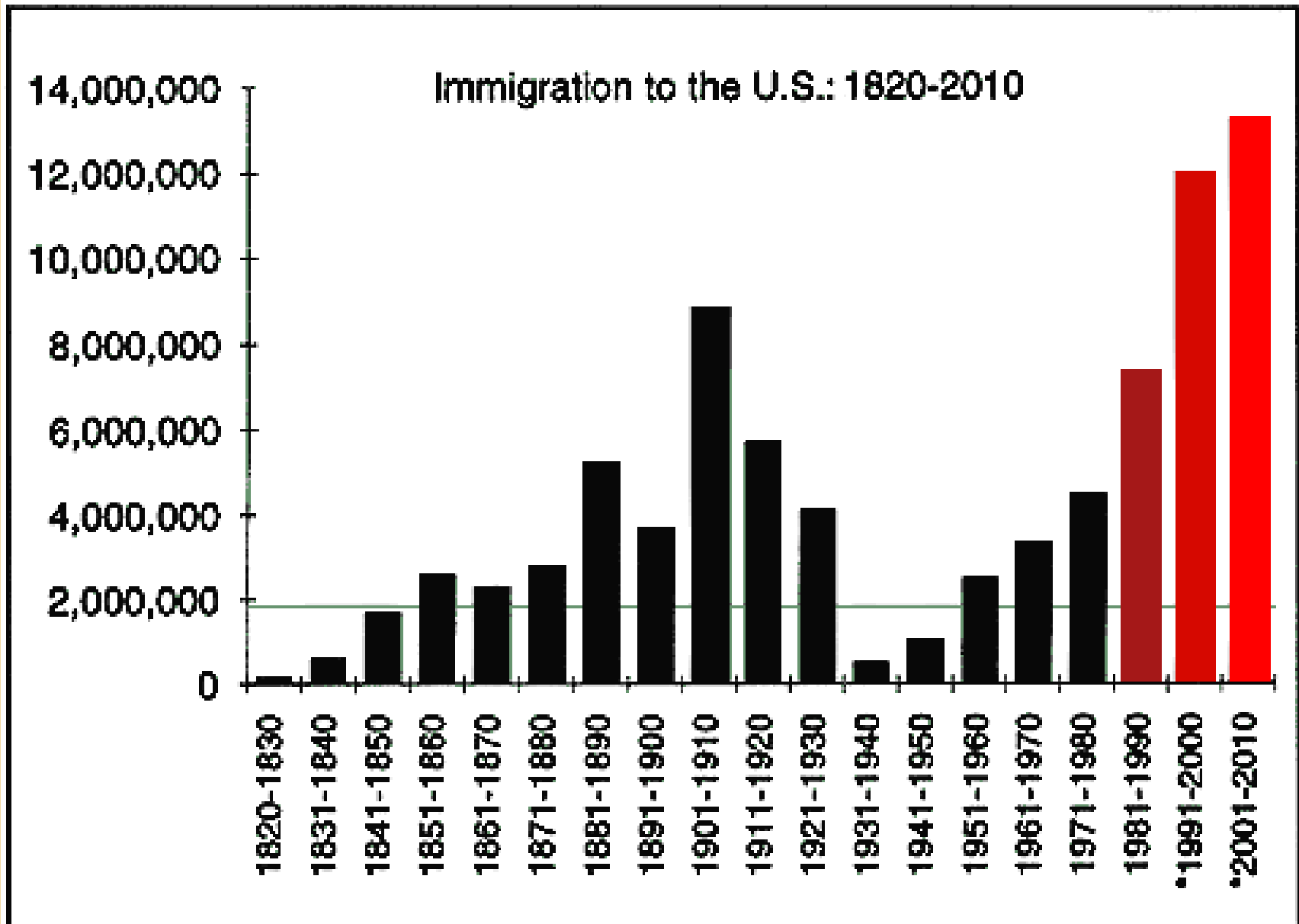


Unit 3: Racial & Ethnic Politics

Asian Americans & Immigration



Overview of US Immigration:



Why do people immigrate to the United States?

Involuntary Immigration

- Many African Americans in the U.S. are descendants of forced immigrants
- Slavery

Voluntary Immigration

➤ **Push Factors**

- Political or Religious persecution
- Refugees
- War
- Economic
- Environmental

➤ **Pull Factors**

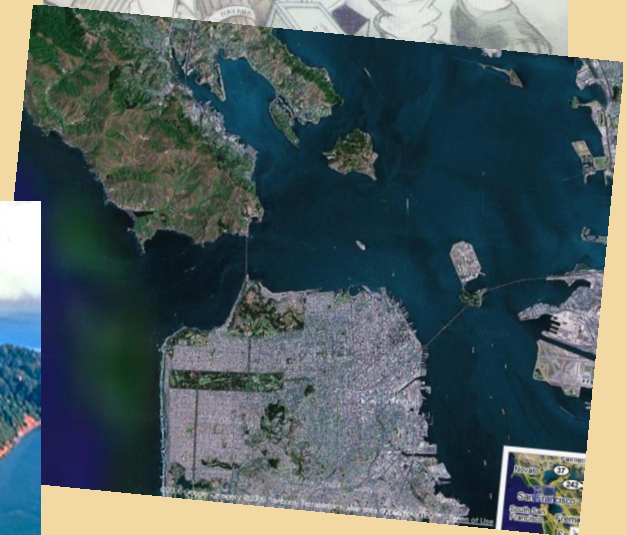
- Work
- Family
- Education
- Quality of Life

Asian Immigration History: the Chinese Experience

- Chinese immigration begins mid 1800s first to Hawaii, then to California (mostly San Francisco)
- **Push factors:**
 - Many were escaping intense conflict in China:
 - British Opium Wars (1839-42 and 1856-60)
 - Peasant rebellions (i.e. Red Turban Rebellion, 1854-64)
 - Bloody wars between the Punti (local people) and the Hakkas (guest people)
- **Pull Factors:**
 - Cheap labour and docile work force:
 - Hopes for economic opportunities:
 - *“Americans are very rich people. They want the Chinaman to come and make him very welcome. There you will have great pay, large houses, and food, and clothing of the finest description. . .It is a nice country. . .Money is in great plenty and to spare in America.”*
 - 1860s, in China a man might earn \$3-5/month while in America he could make \$30/month working for the railroad companies.

Asian Immigration History: the Chinese Experience

- White laborers rose up against the Chinese with racism and violence.
- Because of the pressures of European laborers, the United States enacted the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882.
 - Severely limited the number of immigrants from China
 - From 1910-1940, Angel Island was used to detain those who were trying to come the U.S. from China.



Asian Immigration History: the Japanese Experience

- Japanese first came to Hawaii and the U.S. starting in the 1880s.
- Between 1885 and 1924, over 200,000 Japanese arrive in Hawaii.
- By 1920, Japanese represent 40% of entire population of Hawaii.
- **Push factors:**
 - After the 1868 Meiji Restoration, the Japanese government began to industrialize and modernize. In order to pay for industrialization, Japanese farmers were heavily taxed.
 - During the 1880s, over 300,000 farmers lost their land because they couldn't pay the new tax.
 - Because of the economic hardship they faced in Japan, many farmers and poor Japanese looked to migrate to Hawaii for better economic opportunities (the emigration “netsu” – fever).

Asian Immigration History: the Japanese Experience

- **Pull factors:**

Economic opportunities: “money grows on trees”

- Higher wages - \$1/day (2 yen) vs. .66 yen/day (carpenter)

Divide and Rule Strategy by Plantation owners:

- “Keep a variety of laborers, that is different nationalities, and thus prevent any concerted action in case of strikes, for there are a few, if any, cases of Japs, Chinese, and Portugese entering into a strike as a unit.” George H. Fairfield, manager of plantation.
- After the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, Chinese laborers were restricted to enter the country. Japanese were a replacement for the labor shortage.

Asian Immigration History: Chinese & Japanese Women's Experience:

- Sugar plantation owners saw that Chinese women could be used to control the Chinese laborers.

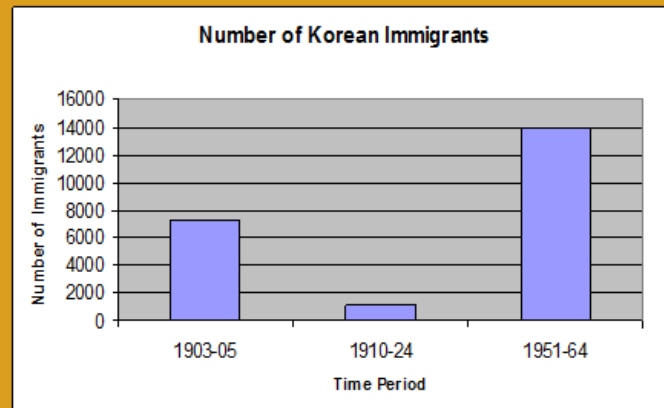
“. . .the thousand possible ills which may arise from the indiscriminate herding together of thousands of men! Let the sweet and gentle influence of the mother, the wife, the sister, and the daughter be brought to bear upon the large and yearly increasing company of Chinese in our midst. . .”
- Picture Brides (shashin kekkon – “photo marriage”)
 - Japanese government (and plantation owners) encourage immigration of women to raise the moral behavior of Japanese men in the U.S.
 - Picture Brides are based on the established custom of arranged marriages (omiaie kekkon)
 - 60,000 enter the U.S. as picture brides.
 - By 1920s, women represent 46% of Japanese population in Hawaii.





Asian Immigration History: the Korean Experience

- By 1888 a small number of Koreans were in America (ginseng merchants, political exiles, and migrant laborers)
- But before 1900 there were fewer than 50 Koreans in the U.S.
- Unlike Chinese and Japanese, Koreans came from all different social classes including farmers, common laborers, government clerks, students, policemen, miners, domestic servants and even Buddhist monks (most were from urban areas).

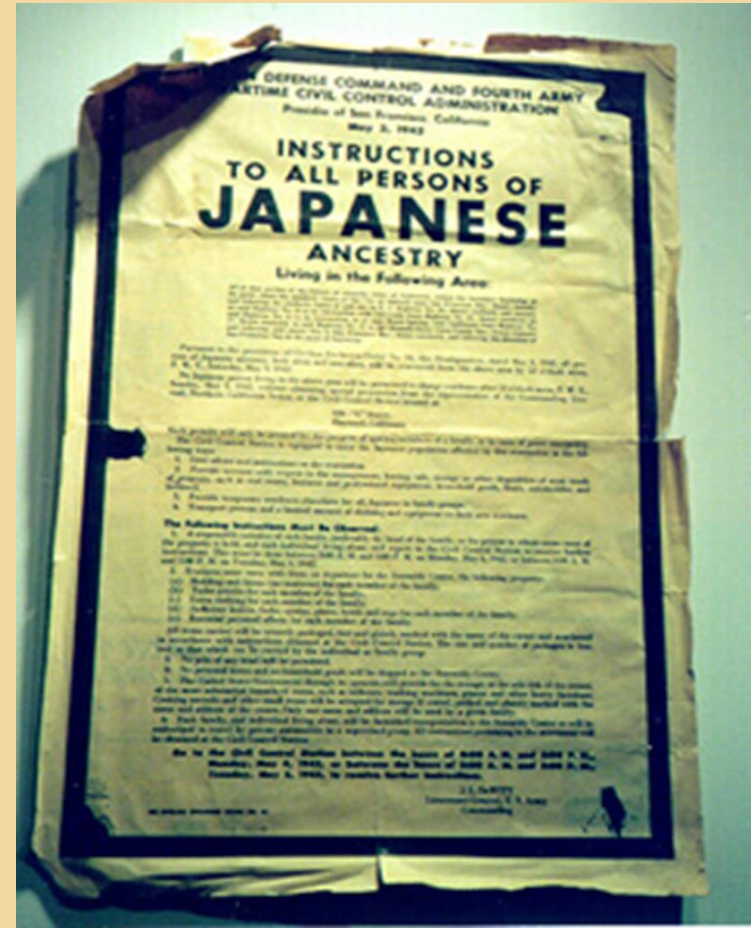


Asian American Civil Rights: Japanese Experience

- Discrimination Against Japanese in America and Coming to America
 - 1906: Law segregates whites and Asians in schools (modeled on “Jim Crow” laws)
 - 1913: denial of right to own land to persons “ineligible for citizenship” (aimed at Japanese farmers)
 - 1924: Immigration Act denies entry to virtually all Asians
- World War II and its impact on Japanese Americans:
 - December 7, 1941: Japanese nation attacks Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.
 - December 8, 1941: U.S. formally declares war on the Imperial Government of Japan.

Asian American Civil Rights: Japanese Experience

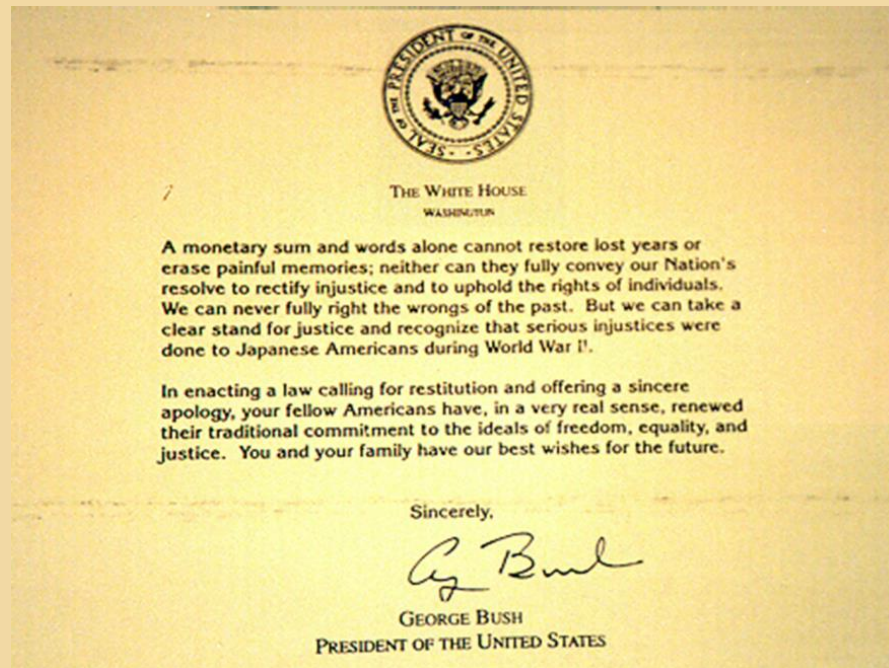
- Japanese Internment:
 - *“all persons of Japanese ancestry” are given 2-5 days notice to dispose of their homes and property and report to the “camps”.*
 - 120,000 Japanese Americans detained in the camps
 - 80,000 were U.S. citizens
 - 40,000 were younger than 19 years of age
 - \$400,000,000 worth of Japanese property lost





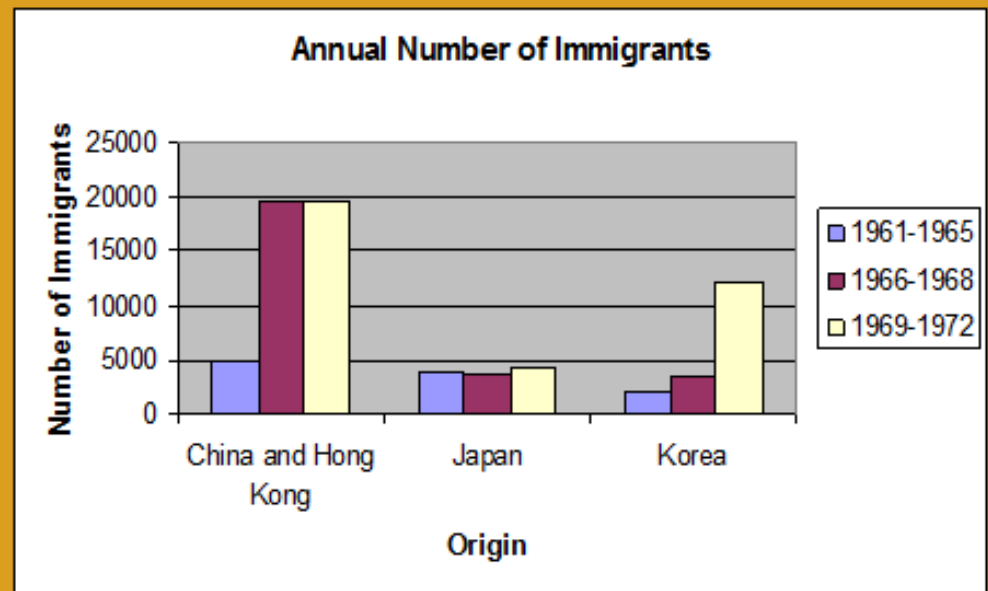
Asian American Civil Rights: Japanese Experience

- Restitution (payback) for Internment
 - 1987: House of Representatives votes (243 vs. 141) to make an official apology to Japanese Americans
 - 1988: U.S. Senate votes (69%) to support redress for Japanese Americans
 - 1989 President George Bush signs into law an entitlement program that pays \$20,000/person to each survivor of the camps.



Contemporary Asian Immigration

- Importance of the 1965 Immigration Act
 - The 1965 Immigration Act dramatically changed the criteria (or categories) for judging immigration applications.
 - Up to 20,000/country were allowed entry per year.
 - National origin *was no longer* a criterion used to influence immigration chances.
 - Because Asian immigration was severely restricted before 1965, this new act helped many Asian groups enter America.



Melting Pot or Salad Bowl?

• Melting Pot (Assimilation)

- Discard old identity
- Adopt American culture, tastes and habits
- No longer feel ethnic or close to immigrant identity



• Salad Bowl (Pluralism)

- Maintain “old” culture and identities
- Share common goals of the nation



Asian American Political Involvement:

- Key events that helped galvanize Asian participation in politics:
 - **Vincent Chin Case (1982)**
 - Chinese American laborer murdered by laborers 5 days before his wedding.
 - Economically motivated – laborers blamed Chin for “taking away their jobs” – they thought he was Japanese
 - Murderers only received 3 years of jail time – very little for the crime committed.
 - Became a martyr of the Asian American movement and brought together various different Asian groups to work together.
 - **LA Riots (1992)**
 - After policemen were acquitted for the beating of Rodney King, many people were upset and began rioting in LA.
 - The main business district that was targeted Korea Town.
 - Mobilization of Korean War Veterans – because police were not stopping the rioters in Korea Town (were protecting more affluent areas like West LA)



Asian American Organisations/Pressure Groups:

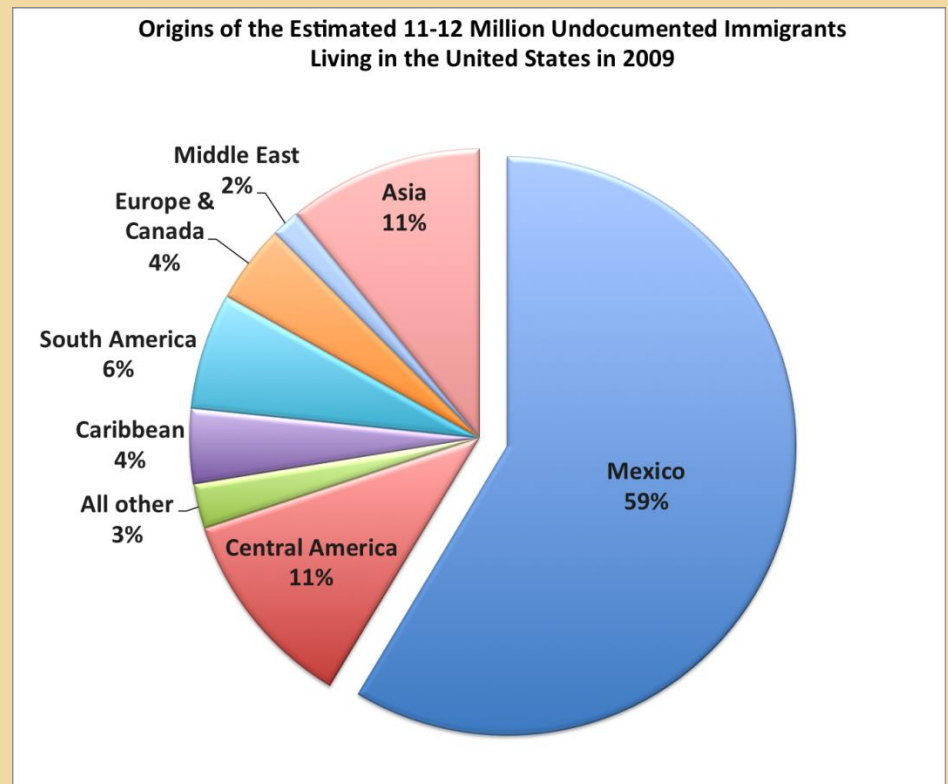
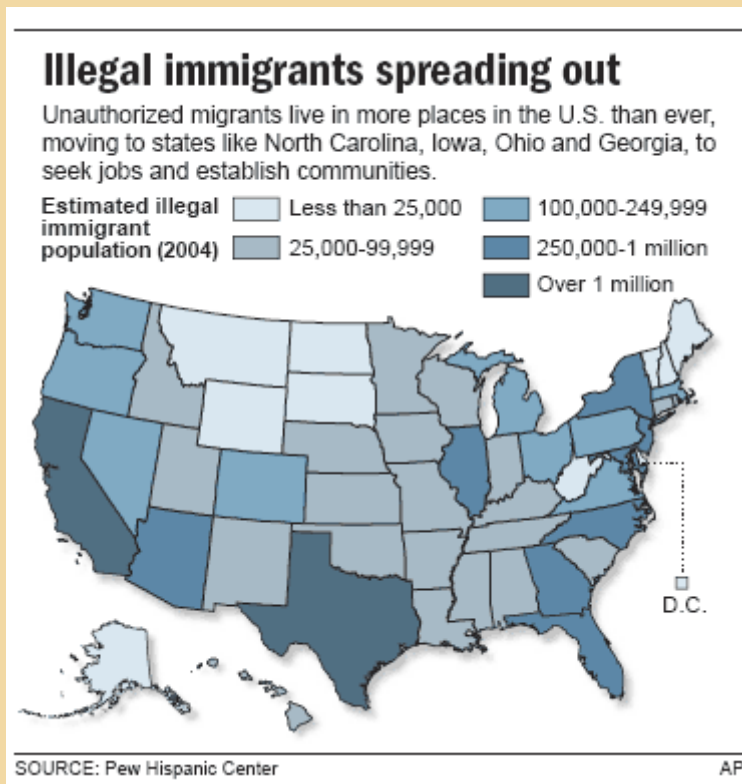
- Asian American Bar Association
- Asian American Journalists Association
- Asian Community Mental Health Services
- Asian Law Caucus
- Asian Professional Exchange
- Asian Business Association
- Asian Pacific Women's Center
- Asian American Government Executives Network
- Asian Family & Community Empowerment Center
- Asian American Youth Alliance
- Asian American Institute
- Asian American Political Association
- Etc. . . .

Politically:

Currently (2014) there are 10 Asian Americans in the House of Representatives & 4 Senators (equating to 2.3% in the HoRs & 2.6% in the Sen.).

Recent Immigration Debate:

- An **estimated 11 million illegal immigrant live in the USA**. This has long been a politically neglected/controversial issue, however economic depression, post-2007/8 have raised it again.
- In 2012 it was a big issue in the Presidential race, not least of which Obama wants to make the this issue a key “legacy” issue of his second term.



How big is the problem?

- About 11.5 million undocumented immigrants in the United States
- Each year some 500,000 to a million more enter the country
- Mostly through the US-Mexico borders
- Many are poorly educated, unskilled workers
- For example, much of California's agriculture relies on migrant labor



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"We need to get tough on illegal immigration. From now on I'm picking my own strawberries."



Two sides of a politically loaded issue...

