

# Timely, relevant exhibit on display at OHS

By **Kate Hubbard**  
The Asian Reporter

The Oregon Historical Society (OHS), an Oregon institution since 1898, is currently hosting an exhibit on loan from the New-York Historical Society. "Chinese American: Exclusion/Inclusion" chronicles the complex history of the Chinese in America, including the early days of China trade, the history of Chinese immigration, the life of Chinese Americans, and more. With immigration continuing to be a hot topic, the collection addresses issues that are as pertinent now as they were more than a century ago.

Visitors entering the exhibit are greeted with the sounds of water as well as images of ships and boats of all kinds. You can almost smell the ocean. The jumble of emotions immigrants must experience — fear, adrenaline, hope, sadness — permeate the area. Leaving one's home and country for the unknown can be a terrifying decision and ordeal.

Walking through the display brought home how extensive and extreme prejudice can be. It points out how unfair double standards exist and persist and highlights the incredible amount of strength and resilience needed to persevere in the face of such hatred. "Chinese American: Exclusion/Inclusion" tells the stories of people who left their families behind to try to make a better life in America. And it clearly illustrates what it means to be excluded.

The U.S. claims to welcome all, but for many, access to the American Dream is denied and kept from reach. While



Chinese Historical Society of America

perusing the collection — seeing the stories come to life with photos and artifacts, listening to audio of a re-creation of an immigration interview, viewing artwork, watching an excerpt of the black-and-white film *Stage Door Canteen* (1943) — visitors may consider their own story. Are you an immigrant or related to one? Have you been welcoming to newcomers? Accepting of the natural migration of humans?

A nice thing about "Chinese American: Exclusion/Inclusion" is its interactivity; museum-goers can pull out file-cabinet drawers to read a case history as well as sit on a cot and feel the roughness of the blanket that lonely travellers would curl



National Archives at San Francisco (54-0099)



National Archives, Washington, D.C. (90-G-124-45)

**CHINESE-AMERICAN HISTORY.** "Chinese American: Exclusion/Inclusion," a travelling exhibit that chronicles the complex history of the Chinese in America, from the early days of China trade to the history of Chinese immigration and the life of Chinese Americans, is on view at the Oregon Historical Society Museum through June 1. Pictured are (clockwise from top left) a 1943 advertisement in the Chinese Press, the Certificate of Identity of movie star Anna May Wong, and an image of young Chinese men undergoing a medical examination at Angel Island. (Photos courtesy of the New-York Historical Society and the Oregon Historical Society)

up under. One can see a glimpse of the experience of the approximately 100,000 people of Chinese descent who, between 1910 and 1940, passed through the Angel Island Immigration Station — the west

coast equivalent of Ellis Island.

Chinese Americans have fought for a long time to be included in the American demographic. Immigration restrictions

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**Tiffani Penson, Supplier Diversity Officer**

tiffani.penson@portlandoregon.gov

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