

Document A: Roosevelt Public Speech (Modified)

It is unwise to depart from the old American tradition and to discriminate for or against any man who desired to come here as a citizen. We cannot afford to consider whether he is Catholic or Protestant, Jew or Gentile; whether he is Englishman or Irishman, Frenchman or German, Japanese, Italian, Scandinavian, Slav, or Magyar.

The class of Chinese laborers are undesirable immigrants to this country, because of their numbers, the low wages for which they work, and their low standard of living.

Source: Public speech by Roosevelt, December 1905.

Document B: Roosevelt Letter to Friend (Modified)

The California Legislature has the right to protest against the immigration of Japanese laborers. Their cheapness and clannishness make them a challenge to our laboring class, and you may not know that they have begun to present a serious problem in Hawaii—all the more serious because they keep entirely to themselves. Furthermore, I understand that the Japanese themselves do not permit any foreigners to own land in Japan. . . .

I would not have objected at all to the California Legislature passing a resolution, courteous and proper in its terms, which would really have achieved their goal. But I do object to, and feel humiliated by, the foolish offensiveness of the resolution they passed.

Source: Letter from Roosevelt to a friend on May 6, 1905, in which he criticizes the California Legislature's recent move to restrict immigration from Japan.

Document C: Roosevelt to Congress (Modified)

Here and there a most unworthy feeling has manifested itself toward the Japanese [such as] shutting them out of the common schools of San Francisco [and] mutterings against them in one or two other places, because of their efficiency as workers. To shut them out from the public schools is a wicked absurdity.

It's absurd that the mob of a single city may at any time perform acts of lawless violence that would plunge us into war. A city should not be allowed to commit a crime against a friendly nation.

Source: Roosevelt's annual message to Congress, December 4, 1906.

Document D: Roosevelt Letter to Secretary Metcalf (Modified)

My Dear Secretary Metcalf:

I had a talk with the Japanese Ambassador and told him that in my judgment the only way to prevent constant friction between the United States and Japan was to keep the movement of the citizens of each country into the other as restricted as possible to students, travelers, business men and the like. It was necessary that no Japanese laboring men—that is, of the coolie class—come into the United States.

The Ambassador agreed with this view and said that he had always been against Japanese coolies going to America or Hawaii. Of course, San Francisco's action will make it difficult for most Japanese to agree with this view. But I hope my message will smooth over their feelings.

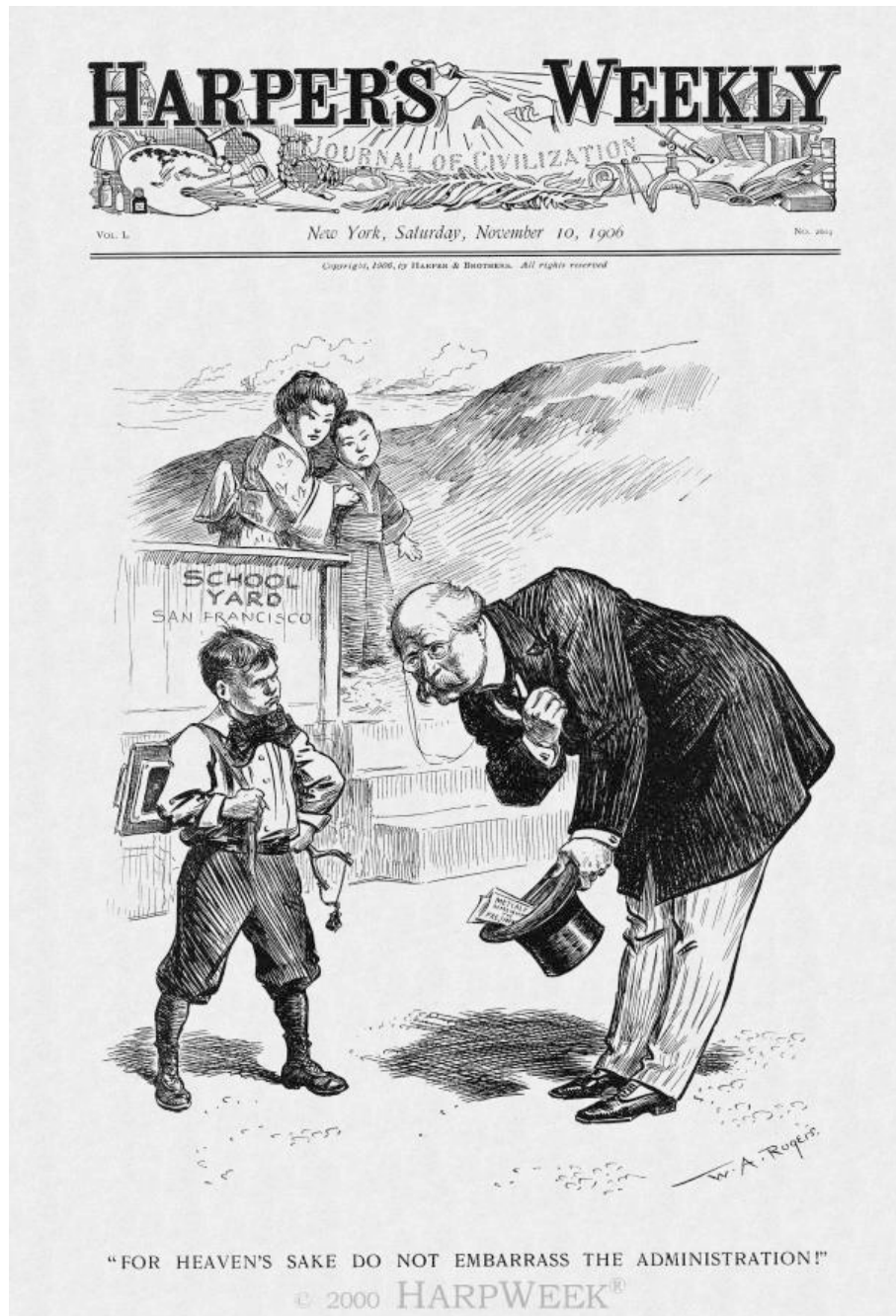
Sincerely yours,
Theodore Roosevelt

Vocabulary

Coolie- derogatory term for unskilled Asian labor

Source: Letter from Roosevelt to Secretary Metcalf, who went to San Francisco to investigate the Japanese segregation crisis, November 27, 1906.

Document E: Political Cartoon



Source: This cartoon was published in Harper's Weekly, a New York-based magazine, in November 1906. It shows Secretary Metcalf speaking to a young schoolboy, who represents San Francisco.

San Francisco Japanese Segregation Crisis Timeline

- 1882** Chinese Exclusion Act prohibits Chinese immigration (in one year, Chinese immigration drops from 40,000 to 23).
- 1884** Japanese government allows Japanese workers to emigrate to Hawaii to work on sugar plantations.
- 1890** Approximately 2,038 Japanese in the United States.
- 1902** President Roosevelt declares victory in the Philippines.
- 1903** President Roosevelt signs treaty with Panama to begin construction of the Panama Canal.
- 1904-1905** Russo-Japanese War between Russia and Japan. Japan surprisingly defeats Russia and establishes itself as a military power. President Roosevelt mediates the treaty and wins a Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts in 1906.
- May 1905** Anti-Asiatic League formed in San Francisco. Supported by 67 labor unions. Pushes for legislation to exclude Japanese, Koreans, Chinese.
- April 1906** San Francisco earthquake destroys 29 out of 72 school buildings.
- Oct. 11, 1906** San Francisco Board of Education passes a law forcing Japanese students to attend the Chinese school. Japan angers when it hears of the law.
- Oct. 26, 1906** President Roosevelt publicly opposes the San Francisco law.
- 1907** President Roosevelt signs “Gentlemen’s Agreement” in which Japan agrees to restrict the immigration of Japanese workers to the United States. In return, San Francisco reverses law and allows Japanese into the public schools.