



Racial Reconstruction: Black Inclusion, Chinese Exclusion, and the Fictions of Citizenship (America and the Long 19th Century)

Edlie L. Wong

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The end of slavery and the Atlantic slave trade triggered wide-scale labor shortages across the U.S. and Caribbean. Planters looked to China as a source for labor replenishment, importing indentured laborers in what became known as “coolieism.” From heated Senate floor debates to Supreme Court test cases brought by Chinese activists, public anxieties over major shifts in the U.S. industrial landscape and class relations became displaced onto the figure of the Chinese labor immigrant who struggled for inclusion at a time when black freedmen were fighting to redefine citizenship.

Racial Reconstruction demonstrates that U.S. racial formations should be studied in different registers and through comparative and transpacific approaches. It draws on political cartoons, immigration case files, plantation diaries, and sensationalized invasion fiction to explore the radical reconstruction of U.S. citizenship, race and labor relations, and imperial geopolitics that led to the Chinese Exclusion Act, America’s first racialized immigration ban. By charting the complex circulation of people, property, and print from the Pacific Rim to the Black Atlantic, *Racial Reconstruction* sheds new light on comparative racialization in America, and illuminates how slavery and Reconstruction influenced the histories of Chinese immigration to the West.

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