Introduction

Black Inclusion / Chinese Exclusion: Toward a Cultural History of Comparative Racialization

Published in 1902, the pro-Chinese pamphlet *Truth versus Fiction; Justice versus Prejudice: Meat for All, Not for a Few* marks the last of the great public debates over Chinese exclusion before its indefinite extension in the U.S. and its newly acquired Pacific territories. A stinging rebuttal to the American Federation of Labor’s influential anti-Chinese tract, *Some Reasons for Chinese Exclusion. Meat versus Rice: American Manhood against Asiatic Coolieism. Which Shall Survive?* (1902), *Truth versus Fiction* sought to counteract the alarmist discourse of Yellow Peril, which depicted Chinese labor migrants as deindividualized Asiatic masses threatening to overwhelm American industry and civilization.¹

A flyleaf from *Truth versus Fiction* features a striking unsigned political cartoon depicting Uncle Sam mediating a stand-off between Chinese immigrants eagerly awaiting to disembark from a steamship and a crowd of men figured as “squareheads,” an ethnic slur designating immigrants from Germany, Scandinavia, and the Netherlands, angrily protesting their arrival (see figure 1.1). The Reconstruction Amendments and the extension of nominal citizenship to black freedmen did not break the constitutive link between whiteness and citizenship, as the racial exclusion of Chinese (and later all so-called Asiatic races) from immigration and naturalization helped establish the whiteness (or Americanization) of new European immigrants. The formal processes that produce U.S. citizens entailed the production of American racial identities or racial formations.² By critically figuring the protesting men as ethnicized “squareheads,” the pamphlet reveals how becoming “American” involves assignment to a particular racial identity and internalizing an exclusionary understanding of race and nation.³
Specifically, *Truth versus Fiction* references the work of the largely unsung Jewish immigration reformer Max J. Kohler to distill one of the most lasting racial formations from the era. In defending Chinese immigration and naturalization rights, it critically observed, “Nor can any one explain why the black man should enjoy all the ‘rights of men,’ and the man whose skin is yellow be treated by the law as an outcast because of such difference of shade.” The pamphlet uses the dialectical configuration of black inclusion/Chinese exclusion to critique a failed American racial democracy at the dawn of the twentieth century. In limning the contours of this seeming racial paradox, *Truth versus Fiction*, however, elides the racial policy of Jim Crow and its systematic
undermining of black political rights in advocating inclusion for non-white, nonblack Chinese immigrants. In holding up Chinese inclusion as an unrealized Republican ideal, the pamphlet evades the question of how black inclusion into the category of formal citizenship had neither mitigated racial inequality nor racially subordinated American identities, particularly in the wake of the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896). By upholding the constitutionality of de jure racial segregation, *Plessy* affirmed whiteness as the condition of full citizenship. Black citizens may inhabit the political space of the nation, but they cannot participate fully within it. Inclusion into abstract or formal citizenship did not entail substantive rights, as black Americans faced continued exclusion on the basis of their differentiated inclusion into citizenship. As a rhetorical figure, the dialectical configuration of black inclusion / Chinese exclusion is significant for what it both hides and reveals about U.S. racial formations in the era of emancipation. Dialectic designates “a relationship that simultaneously embodies antagonism and interdependence, that develops over historical time, and that links the small-scale and large-scale (or ‘micro’ and ‘macro’) dimensions of social life,” writes Howard Winant. In thus challenging federal efforts to fix and stabilize U.S. racial identity, the pamphlet marshals one of the most lasting racial formations from the era, marking the limits of Reconstruction race radicalism and inaugurating a fundamental shift in U.S. immigration policies that lasted until the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965.

By the end of the nineteenth century, this dialectical configuration of black inclusion / Chinese exclusion had become an oft-referenced rhetorical figure in popular and legal discourses, structuring persuasive arguments both for and against Chinese political rights and black racial inequality. For example, Justice John Marshall Harlan’s oft-celebrated dissent in *Plessy v. Ferguson* marshaled this dialectic to exemplify the legal inconsistencies of black-white racial segregation. Harlan utilized the metaphor of “color-blindness” and its logic of impartiality—borrowed from the brief of the lead attorney for the plaintiff, Albion Tourgée—to inveigh against the discriminatory intent of “equal but separate” accommodations. In thus disputing the constitutionality of black-white segregation, Harlan imagined a different scene of cross-racial contact to emphasize the contradictions of the Louisiana
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statute. In his now oft-quoted words, “There is a race so different from our own that we do not permit those belonging to it to become citizens of the United States. Persons belonging to it are, with few exceptions, absolutely excluded from our country. I allude to the Chinese race. But, by the statute in question, a Chinaman can ride in the same passenger coach with white citizens of the United States, while citizens of the black race” are banned from the same privilege. Harlan’s counterfactual thought experiment limns the contours of a racial formation that first took shape in the overlapping contexts of the so-called Negro Problem and the Chinese Question. By emphasizing Chinese difference as a “race” reclassified by the 1870 Naturalization Act and reinforced by the Chinese Exclusion Acts as “aliens ineligible to citizenship,” Harlan sought to combat the “sentiment of alienism,” in writer George Washington Cable’s words, directed against black citizens in the wake of Reconstruction. Harlan enfolded black racial difference within the embrace of national identity; yet this romance of black-white national reunification reinforced the exclusion of another proscribed race as he redrew the color line to demarcate U.S. citizens from Chinese aliens who were politically inassimilable to the nation but not (it would appear) to the unstable legal category of “whiteness” at the time. In rejecting racial “caste” legislation, Harlan marshaled the dialectic of black inclusion/Chinese exclusion against black-white segregation, investing this racial formation with new vigor in Jim Crow America.

Racial Reconstruction: Black Inclusion, Chinese Exclusion, and the Fictions of Citizenship explores the cultural genealogies of this dialectical configuration linking together immigration and citizenship struggles in the long shadow of slavery, abolition, and Reconstruction. The end of black chattel slavery did not end racism but “drove it into new terrain, reconfigured it, and inaugurated a new phase in its history,” as Arif Dirlik argues. Resurgent antiblack violence in the Reconstruction South attested to the belated temporality of racial equality in social—if not strictly legal—fact. Black citizenship and male suffrage constituted a dramatic shift from past U.S. racial policy, yet new forms of racialization emerged in its wake. Reconstruction facilitated these monumental shifts with the 1870 Naturalization Act, which amended the 1790 Naturalization Act limiting naturalization to “free white persons.” It added the category of “African nativity and . . . descent” to reflect black
enfranchisement while maintaining the primacy of whiteness for racial eligibility to naturalization. This postemancipation realignment of racial exclusion also reenergized a discourse of Christian civilization, which deemed Chinese and Native Americans as unredeemable heathens and consequently morally unfit for political participation in the future of America's Manifest Destiny. At the end of the century, the Chinese Exclusion Acts and subsequent U.S. Supreme Court rulings on Chinese immigration cases completed the redefinition of the Asiatic as the categorically excluded. Meanwhile, the national debate over the “Chinese Question” further intensified the contradictions of black inclusion in the era leading to *Plessy v. Ferguson* and beyond. The dialectical configuration of black inclusion / Chinese exclusion shaped Reconstruction and its conflicted political and cultural legacies, providing the framework through which black citizens and Chinese immigrants became differentially racialized subjects within the nation.

The complex histories of slavery and Reconstruction influenced the course of Chinese immigration to the U.S., especially at the level of representation. Narration and other representational practices mediate the experiences of nation and nationality. The archive of Chinese exclusion and the debates over Chinese fitness for citizenship became part of the broader story about who did and did not belong to the newly reunited nation. In the wake of the Civil War, emancipation ushered a new paradox into American life and thought: it nullified one kind of property relation—the buying and selling of chattel slaves—to consecrate, according to the historian Amy Dru Stanley, the “market as a model of social relations among free persons” who voluntarily sold their labor as property. The end of the transatlantic slave trade and slavery facilitated wide-scale labor crises in the Western Hemisphere, as the lucrative agricultural economies of the U.S. South and the British and Spanish Caribbean drove demands for easily replaceable workers who were both cheap and plentiful. Labor-strapped planters looked toward China and its teeming population as a source of labor replenishment. The British West Indies first began importing Chinese and South Asian indentured labor in what became popularly known as “coolieism.” By 1847, as the now-contraband slave trade waned, Cuba also began experimenting with Chinese contract labor as a supplemental labor force in addition to legal chattel slavery on the island. Cuban plantation owners—some of
whom were Confederate expatriates such as Eliza McHatton Ripley—sought out Chinese contract labor as emancipation threatened. Chapter 1 discusses how their efforts to represent and control Chinese contract labor resembled the more familiar tactics of managing the representation of slavery as a patriarchal institution while constantly guarding against slave revolt. National debates over the American use of Chinese labor based on the Cuban example intensified as sectional tensions over the future of slavery threatened to erupt into Civil War. Chinese coolieism thus emerged in an Atlantic world that had yet to see the end of black chattel slavery or the racialized legal and political structures that seemed to ensure its indefinite continuation.

In the decades between the end of the Civil War and the heyday of the Progressive era, debates about and representations of Chinese immigrants to the U.S. often identified Chinese labor as a form of servile labor, analogizing it to the black chattel slavery it was supposed to replace. *Racial Reconstruction* unfolds from the analogy embedded in the term “coolie-slave” that came into frequent use in the national debates over the “Chinese Question.” From popular fiction to congressional debates, coolieism came to mark all forms of Chinese labor migration even though Chinese contract labor (common throughout Cuba and Peru) was outlawed in the U.S. (with the 1885 Foran Act, or Alien Contract Labor Law). Anti-Chinese agitators called on the “coolie-slave” to mobilize the patriotic memory and moral indignation of abolitionism for the purpose of protecting and empowering white labor, especially as the Republican Party reformed itself during Reconstruction and as conflicts between labor and capital heightened. They defended Chinese Exclusion as an antislavery, proimmigrant measure in a U.S. committed to freedom, free labor, and free trade. By placing Chinese immigration within the framework of Atlantic slavery and emancipation, this book illuminates how the radical reconstruction of post–Civil War citizenship, geopolitics, and national belonging led to the ratification of America’s first race- (and gender-) specific immigration law. The passage and administration of the Page Act (1875) and the subsequent Chinese Exclusion Acts, which barred the entry of Chinese laborers and prohibited their naturalization, marked the beginning of America’s modern immigration system and its transformation into what the historian Erika Lee calls a “gatekeeping nation.”
Racial Reconstruction focuses on Chinese racialization and its intersections with African American and (to a lesser degree) Native American subject formations. It intervenes in several overlapping fields of interdisciplinary scholarship: Afro-Asian comparative racialization, race and immigration law, and race and labor history. To that end, Racial Reconstruction makes use of materials from multiple archives that are usually not in conversation with each other, including political cartoons, print journalism, legal cases and contracts, official investigations, travelogues, sensational fiction, and sentimental literature. It draws from them a comparative analytic for understanding American race, racialization, and identity formations in the long nineteenth century. Chapter 1 brings the pioneering work of Evelyn Hu-DeHart, Moon-Ho Jung, Walton Look Lai, Lisa Lowe, and Lisa Yun on the figure of the Asiatic “coolie” into critical conversation with U.S. labor histories and the sociological analyses of Michael Omi and Howard Winant. By exploring the Afro-Asian analogy embedded in the term “coolie-slave,” chapter 1 lays the historical groundwork for subsequent chapters examining how nativist labor activists, legislators, jurists, and African American and Chinese American writers drew on Afro-Asian comparisons to shore up and/or contest the links between U.S. citizenship and whiteness. Specifically, Racial Reconstruction follows the “comparative turn” in American race and ethnicities studies and increasingly in gender and sexuality studies.14

Race making and gender control were constitutive of Chinese immigration regulation. Recent work such as Nayan Shah’s Stranger Intimacy: Contesting Race, Sexuality, and the Law in the North American West (2011) has challenged the heteronormative fiction of the nuclear family as a “conceptual crutch that renders any other form of kinship and household structure pathological, aberrant, and incompatible with cultural support and political privilege.”15 Presented as an antiprostitution law, the Page Act controlled Chinese women’s immigration and reproduction under the aegis of Christian morality and paved the way for subsequent class-based racialized restriction measures. It policed Chinese family formation and strengthened perceptions of Chinese men as unnatural bachelors and sexual deviants. This regulation of gender and sexuality provided a central framework for the production of race and racial meaning in the U.S. “Racialized immigration,” as Lowe argues,
“along with American empire, [is] part of a longer history of the development of modern American capitalism and racialized democracy.” In thus situating the phenomenon of Asian immigration as “racial formation, as economic sign, and as an epistemological object,” Lowe’s early theorization of an Asian American critique called for an “inquiry into the comparative history of racialization.”

Race is a relational concept, and immigration law—as it was first forged in relation to the “Chinese Question”—fundamentally shaped the boundaries of race in the U.S. This book emphasizes what the legal scholar Devon Carbado calls the “multiracial social dynamics of inclusion and exclusion” to reveal the significance of immigration law and foreign policy as understudied contexts for understanding African American racial formation on the one hand and slavery and Reconstruction as equally underappreciated contexts for understanding Asian American racial formation on the other. Racial Reconstruction attends to these overlapping and divergent histories of U.S. racial formations in its efforts to reconfigure the black-white binary of the U.S. “color line.” The dominance of the black-white binary often overshadows the complex interrelations between and among other racial formations, perpetuating a racialized hierarchy within our national history. Recent interdisciplinary scholarship such as Leslie Bow’s Partly Colored: Asian Americans and Racial Anomaly in the Segregated South (2010) and Nativia Molina’s How Race Is Made in America: Immigration, Citizenship, and the Historical Power of Racial Scripts (2014) has begun exploring the linked experiences of interstitial ethnic groups, including Mexican Americans, Asian American, and Native Americans located beyond and between the structural logics of black-white segregation and for whom the color line was continually redrawn. In this vein, Racial Reconstruction seeks to understand the necessarily contingent contours of African American and Asian American race relations, law, and cultural production. It tracks the elaboration of black inclusion/Chinese exclusion across a variety of discursive registers as Reconstruction America underwent geographical expansion and bureaucratic consolidation.

Comparative racialization studies have begun to change how we think about race and its multiple and contradictory meanings across different periods of U.S. history. There have been a number of recent contributions to this important trend in thinking about comparative
constructions of race and cross-racial solidarities and antagonisms. In literary studies, the publication of the 2008 *PMLA* special issue “Comparative Racialization” helped forge this critical shift by positioning it against existing frameworks of multiculturalism and interracialism on the one hand and ethnic nationalisms on the other. In particular, earlier work on Afro-Asian comparative racialization, such as Vijay Prashad’s *Everybody Was Kung Fu Fighting: Afro-Asian Connections and the Myth of Cultural Purity* (2001), Bill Mullen’s *Afro-Orientalism* (2004), and Andrew Jones and Nikhil Singh’s special issue of *positions: east asia cultures critique, The Afro-Asian Century* (2003), has focused largely on twentieth-century writers and thinkers, emphasizing revolutionary—indeed, at times utopian—forms of anticolonial transpacific polyculturalism and political collaborations. More recent literary scholarship such as Crystal Anderson’s *Beyond the Chinese Connection: Contemporary Afro-Asian Cultural Production* (2013), Helen Jun’s *Race for Citizenship: Black Orientalism and Asian Uplift from Pre-Emancipation to Neoliberal America* (2011), and Julia Lee’s *Interracial Encounters: Reciprocal Representations in African and Asian American Literatures, 1896–1937* (2011) has begun to offer more critical perspectives on Afro-Asian solidarities and cross-racial identifications. For example, Jun’s provocative study explores how the pursuit of citizenship rights in competition led to the development of two distinct racial discourses, “black Orientalism” and “Asian uplift,” which African Americans and Asian Americans leveraged against each other to prove their fitness for citizenship. And while this book also casts a critical eye on the romance of Afro-Asian alliance, it also builds on the analytics for articulating racial difference—indeed, differential thinking—honed in U.S. race and ethnicity studies to explore cross-racial and transpacific connections and sympathies that resisted reinscribing racially homogenizing stereotypes and misperceptions.

*Racial Reconstruction* adds to and critically intervenes in this cultural scholarship on Afro-Asian comparative racialization. Specifically, the book emphasizes aspects of immigration law and legal culture and inflects its study through comparable developments in critical legal studies under the aegis of critical race theory, an interdisciplinary analytical framework that, among other things, seeks to understand the sociolegal constructions of race and racial power. This book investigates
the varied mechanisms by which citizens and immigrants were assigned and invested with race and racial identities. It also explores how national debates over the “Chinese Question” and the sensationalist cultural materials that it produced influenced a series of U.S. Supreme Court cases, including *Chae Chan Ping v. U.S.* or the Chinese Exclusion Case (1889) and *Fong Yue Ting v. U.S.* (1893), that established congressional plenary power over immigration regulation, as studied in chapter 3. The plenary power doctrine continues to shape federal constitutional authority over immigration today. In this aspect, the book builds on the historian Najia Aarim-Heriot’s *Chinese Immigrants, African Americans, and Racial Anxiety in the United States, 1848–82* (2004) while emphasizing the role of cultural productions in the dissemination of racial ideas about the “Chinese Question” and “Negro Problem” and in resistance to them. Furthermore, by exploring the protest fiction published in China objecting to the extension of Chinese exclusion (in chapter 4), this book extends the national and historical frameworks of current scholarship to consider the global repercussions of U.S. domestic policies on Chinese immigration. In this fashion, *Racial Reconstruction* attends to the complex dynamics of U.S. racial formations at the precise moment at which national debates over black citizenship and Chinese immigration became ideologically articulated with U.S. expansion into the Asia Pacific. The historically contextualized readings that follow reveal broader methodological issues that speak to current theorizations of “comparative racialization” and comparative knowledge productions about race within regional, national, and transnational cultural contexts.

Immigration policies shape American understandings of national membership through specific forms of racial exclusion, as the historian Mae M. Ngai argues in *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (2003). Chinese exclusion—the exception that proved the rule—helped the United States redefine itself as a free nation in the wake of racial slavery. Long-standing Chinese struggles against discriminatory state laws on the Pacific Coast, followed by two decades of battles against increasingly stringent federal exclusion laws, generated a vast archive of Chinese immigration case law, policies, and writings charting the rise of immigration administration and the transformation of the U.S. into a modern bureaucratic state. Such racialized exclusions tempered the liberal ideology of U.S. citizenship founded on
Lockean-based notions of universal natural rights, birthright citizenship, and membership through voluntary political allegiance. The San Francisco circuit court first ruled against Chinese naturalization in the case *In re Ah Yup* (1878), and this racialized ban was later incorporated into the 1880 U.S.-China Treaty (or the Angell Treaty) and the federal Chinese exclusion laws that soon followed.\(^{25}\) Later, in *United States v. Wong Kim Ark* (1898), the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the citizenship of Chinese born on U.S. soil, yet it continued to prohibit Chinese and later Japanese and South Asians from naturalization, deeming all Asiatic immigrants to be unnaturalizable noncitizens.\(^{26}\) By the end of the nineteenth century, U.S. racial exclusions located people of Chinese descent in the liminal position of existing both within and without the political community of the nation, subject to U.S. jurisdiction yet without the protection of its laws and Constitution. Thus, the U.S. simultaneously embraced a broad, universal definition of national membership based on native birth and voluntary allegiance and an exclusionary policy of Asiatic racial differentiation.\(^{27}\)

In arguing for the centrality of race and racial formations in the making of modern America, this book insists that U.S. racial formations should be studied in different registers and through comparative and transnational approaches. Two years after *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the U.S. began its overseas empire with the annexation of Hawaii, followed by Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines in the Spanish-American War (1898), as it brought into alignment white supremacy and imperial rule. Territorial aggrandizement in the Asia Pacific threw into deeper relief the contradictions embedded within and organizing the law and politics of Chinese exclusion in the U.S. In efforts to stabilize the racial-legal borders between the U.S. mainland and its overseas territories, the federal government extended Chinese exclusion to Hawaii (in the 1898 Hawaiian-U.S. Treaty of Annexation) and the Philippines (in 1899 at the onset of the Philippines-American War and as law in 1902). The extension of Chinese exclusion to the Asia Pacific territories further exacerbated the racial cleavages within U.S. citizenship, provoking additional debate over what constituted membership in the expanding republic. In a series of opinions known as the Insular Cases (1901–1922), the U.S. Supreme Court again reaffirmed the uneven, racialized application of the Constitution—indeed, the legal framework established in *Plessy*—as
it judged subjects of these unincorporated foreign territories to be U.S. citizens in matters of discipline and taxation yet ineligible to full protection under the Fourteenth Amendment.\textsuperscript{28} The modern era of U.S. race relations inaugurated by \textit{Plessy}’s doctrine of “equal but separate” was not isolated from the global forces of imperialism and colonialism. \textit{Racial Reconstruction} shifts the prevailing axis of race and freedom from North-South to East-West and argues that Afro-Asian racial formations were transregional and transnational processes that mutually constituted each other in complex relation to an emergent post–Civil War ideology of contract freedom. Thus, the book’s comparative structure is both formal in its exploration of law and literature and geopolitical in its efforts to bring Pacific Rim studies to bear on Black Atlantic studies. Resisting the tendency to plot American history as the movement from slavery to freedom, this book recuperates those overlooked intellectual and cultural forces that propelled historical continuity and change across the divide of the Civil War and Reconstruction.

By emphasizing the relational character of U.S. racial formations, \textit{Racial Reconstruction} explores how black and Chinese writers first began challenging the idea of America and Americanization as radical Reconstruction dismantled and reformulated the foundational narratives of white racialized citizenship and national identity. Specifically, chapters 2 and 4 chart various ways in which African American, Chinese American, and Chinese writers and commentators (often across the English-Chinese language divide) invented new comparative analytics for understanding racial formations within regional, national, and transpacific contexts. Racialization works relationally through association and differentiation, and these writers took on and adapted various ideologically inflected literary forms—travelogue, print journalism, oratory, sensational fiction, and sentimental literature, in which raced and gendered classifications were defined and defied. They sought to account for incommensurability and difference in the processes of comparison, as new forms of relationality between and among long-standing categories, such as slave and free, white and nonwhite, citizen and alien, and the domestic and foreign were forged in the wake of emancipation, increased immigration, and imperial expansion.\textsuperscript{29} American literary culture thus gave powerful expression to the dynamics of contact,
exchange, negotiation, and conflict that attended the social relations between Chinese immigrants and black and white Americans across regional and national borders.30

Chapter 1 mines an underexamined archive of Anglo-American travelogues of Cuba to explore the literary and cultural construction of the Chinese “coolie” as a transatlantic racial formation enmeshed both in the geopolitics of U.S. empire and in national debates over labor versus capital. Controversies over U.S. participation in the lucrative “coolie trade,” involving the transport of thousands of Chinese laborers to Cuba and Peru, intensified as sectional tensions over the future of slavery threatened to erupt into Civil War. During this time, a steady stream of personal narratives recounting travels to Cuba made their way into U.S. print with the great boom following Narciso López’s widely publicized filibustering expedition to the island and culminating in the 1890s with a flood of books by those who went to Cuba to cover the Spanish-American War. American travelers to Cuba, from the abolitionist Richard Henry Dana and Maturin Murray Ballou (editor of the Boston Daily Globe and Ballou’s Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion) to the Confederate slaveholder Eliza McHatton Ripley sought to answer the question of whether Chinese contract labor constituted a form of slavery or a transition to free labor. The unresolved categorical ambivalence in defining Chinese contract labor lay at the heart of the coolie’s figurative significance in the U.S. cultural imaginary. Drawing on Ripley’s collected personal papers held at the University of Georgia’s Hargrett Rare Books and Manuscript Archives, the chapter reads these travel accounts with and against the Chinese testimonies recorded in the 1876 Cuba Commission Report (by a Chinese government-appointed, multinational official investigative commission) and the Chinese American activist and journalist Wong Chin Foo’s narrative of a “fugitive coolie” to investigate how these narratives absorbed, refracted, and influenced changing American ideas about slavery, racial citizenship, and free labor, specifically as they took shape in the ideology of contract and the concepts of self-ownership and free will associated with it. These texts helped disseminate the specter of the Chinese “coolie-slave,” which shaped U.S. debates over slavery and later became a potent symbol of the enduring legacy of slavery in Reconstruction America.
Chapter 2 connects U.S. expansionist desires in the Caribbean to the racial geopolitics of the Pacific Coast after news of the California gold strike catalyzed Chinese labor immigration to the U.S. By broadening Reconstruction to encompass the West and its “Chinese Question,” chapter 2 draws on a diverse range of texts by African American and Chinese American writers, including James Williams, William H. Newby, Frederick Douglass, Yan Phou Lee, and Wong Chin Foo. In juxtaposing lesser-known figures from early African American and Asian American print histories, this chapter investigates the analogization of blacks and Chinese in popular discourse and how these writers negotiated and contested these homogenizing racial representations in oratory and print journalism. As the “Chinese Question” became nationalized in the 1870s, racialization became expressed through an exclusionary discourse of Christian civilization (in opposition to Orientalized heathenism), which came to define the boundaries of acceptable and unacceptable racial difference in the U.S. Shaped by experiences in multiracial California, black writers such as Williams and Newby wrote against Chinese exclusion, representing it as an outgrowth of the racial proscriptions that they had faced during slavery. They acknowledged the complex political histories (and futures) that they shared with indigenous and other racialized groups in the U.S., while Chinese American writers such as Wong and Lee struggled to disarticulate the powerfully racializing discourse of heathenism that helped sustain the dialectic of black inclusion/Chinese (and Native American) exclusion in the wake of Reconstruction.

By the final decades of the nineteenth century, the notion of an Asiatic threat was well established in U.S. culture, in part through the popularization and propagation of Yellow Peril fears in visual and print media. A product of the Pacific Coast anti-Chinese movement, invasion fictions depicting Asiatic aggressors conquering the West first began appearing in print in the 1880s. Chapter 3 teases out the racial fictions and counterfactual imaginings of this popular yet understudied subgenre of Chinese invasion fiction. From legal discourse, including *Chae Chan Ping v. U.S.*, to the once-popular but largely forgotten novels of Pierton W. Dooner, Robert Woltor, Arthur Dudley Vinton, and Marsden Manson and the short stories of more recognized writers, including
Jack London, James D. Corrothers, and Vachel Lindsay, the invasion trope came to dominate U.S.-China relations and public discussions of and federal policies on the “Chinese Question.” In combating negative portrayals of white lawlessness and anti-immigrant violence, these texts projected the anxiety of white displacement from labor markets to displacement from the country. Of all the cultural materials studied in this book, the Chinese invasion subgenre’s Janus-faced depictions of Chinese labor migrants as abject coolie-slaves and villainous fifth-column agents of foreign aggression embodied most vividly the contradictions of American modernity. In linking industrial modernization to national dissolution, the invasion narrative offered a nonteleological vision of American Manifest Destiny as it imagined China as the horizon of industrialized capitalism.

administration and the rise of the modern bureaucratic state reshaped the meaning of race, citizenship, and nation after colonial expansion into the Asia Pacific.

*Racial Reconstruction* ends with a conclusion that delineates, in brief, the promise of historical counterfactualism, ending by way of a critical recasting of the Chinese invasion subgenre studied at length in chapter 3. Serialized in the NAACP’s *Crisis* magazine, the African American writer James D. Corrothers’s two-part tale “A Man They Didn’t Know” (1913–14) turned Yellow Peril on its head, revealing its buried racial histories and ideological forms. Corrothers’s speculative fiction pushed the counterfactual imaginary of Chinese invasion to its limit, plying the disruptive potential of an Asiatic threat to America in his efforts to challenge the meaning of whiteness and existing racial hierarchies in a world reshaped by *Plessy v. Ferguson* and the global diffusion of white supremacist ideologies. In experimenting with historical mutability, Corrothers’s tale reconfigures the relationship between the past and possible futures of race and racialization in the U.S. and suggests some new directions for immigration and comparative racialization studies in the current conjuncture.