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****THE MAKING OF**

**ASIAN AMERICA:**

***A History***

**Erika Lee**

**Simon & Schuster | Hardcover | $29.95 | September 1, 2015**

“A sweeping study of the fastest growing group in the United States that underscores the shameful racist regard white Americans have long held for Asian immigrants. … A thorough … powerful, timely story told with method and dignity.” **—*Kirkus Reviews,* starred review**

“Lee's comprehensive treatise on the experiences of Asians in the United States mostly focuses on the 20th century, but the overall scope is broader in both time and space. … An impressive work that details how this diverse population has both swayed and been affected by the United States. Highly recommended for readers interested in this important topic.” **—*Library Journal,* starred review**

“[An] ambitious, sweeping, and insightful survey.” **—*Publishers Weekly***

“*The Making of Asian America* is a path-breaking approach to Asian American history. Professor Lee will challenge and surprise most of her readers. . . . She is clearly now a distinct and important voice in a debate of growing complexity.” **—Roger Daniels, author of *Coming to America* and Charles Phelps Taft Professor Emeritus of History, University of Cincinnati**

“A stunning achievement, *The Making of Asian America* establishes the centrality of Asians to American history, and poses alternatives to US national and immigration histories. Asians, this remarkable text reveals, transformed the face of America, and they locate the US firmly within a hemispheric and global order.”

**—Gary Y. Okihiro, Professor of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University, and former President of the Association for Asian American Studies**

“Erika Lee has written a sweeping yet personal and critical history of Asian Americans across centuries, continents, and diverse cultures without losing sight of the global, racial, and historical contexts of Asian migration, exclusion, and resettlement…*The Making of Asian America* is truly an enjoyable, informative, and insightful read.”

**—Judy Yung, Professor Emerita of American Studies, UC Santa Cruz, and author of *Unbound Feet***

“A fascinating narrative. . . . Deftly weaving together a masterful synthesis of the existing literature with new information culled from hitherto untapped archival sources and with analytical insights on the global currents that have shaped the last five centuries, Erika Lee has created a richly textured tapestry enlivened by vivid stories of hundreds of individuals and groups who played significant, though often unsung, roles in the making of Asian America.” **—Sucheng Chan, Professor Emerita of Asian American Studies, UC Santa Barbara**

**—OVER—**

Asian Americans are the fastest growing group in the United States: the 19.5 million Asian Americans living in the U.S. today comprise nearly six percent of the nation’s population. But most Americans know little about this diverse community and their long history. With astonishing breadth and engaging detail, **THE MAKING OF ASIAN AMERICA: *A History* by Erika Lee (Simon & Schuster; Hardcover; $29.95; September 1, 2015)** is the first book to tell the fascinating history of Asian Americans across five centuries. Timed to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the passage of the United States’ Immigration Act of 1965, a law that remade our “nation of immigrants,” this timely story powerfully contributes to our ongoing debate over what it means to be an American.

The granddaughter of Chinese immigrants who entered the U.S. through both Angel Island and Ellis Island and currently the Rudolph J. Vecoli Chair in Immigration History and Director of the Immigration History Research Center at the University of Minnesota, Lee is one of the nation’s preeminent scholars on the subject. In **THE MAKING OF ASIAN AMERICA**, she introduces readers to the millions of Asian immigrants who crossed the Pacific Ocean to start new lives, including Filipino sailors who arrived in the Americas on the first trans-Pacific ships in the 1500s, indentured South Asian “coolies” who worked alongside African slaves in the Caribbean, Chinese immigrants on Angel Island, and Japanese Americans incarcerated during World War II. Since the end of WWII, a new Asian America has developed from community activism and the arrival of new immigrants from China, Korea, India, and the Philippines, as well as Southeast Asian refugees fleeing war and persecution. Lee examines these new communities to reveal the complicated role that race and immigration continue to play in the United States: no longer a “despised minority,” Asian Americans are now held up as America’s “model minority,” a stereotype that is both inaccurate and misleading.

A much-needed new history of Asian Americans and their place in American life, **THE MAKING OF ASIAN AMERICA** has been called “an impressive work that details how this diverse population has both swayed and been affected by the United States” in a starred review from *Library Journal.* In a second starred review, *Kirkus Reviews* deems it a “powerful, timely story told with method and dignity,” and *Publishers Weekly* praises it as an “[an] ambitious, sweeping, and insightful survey.”

**About the Author**

**Erika Lee** is the granddaughter of Chinese immigrants who entered the United States through both Angel Island and Ellis Island. She grew-up in the San Francisco Bay are and received her PhD from the University of California at Berkeley. She teaches history at the University of Minnesota, where she is also the Rudolph J. Vecoli Chair in Immigration History and Director of the Immigration History Research Center.

**About the Book**

**THE MAKING OF ASIAN AMERICA: A History**

**By Erika Lee**

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**—OVER—**

**Key Statistics**

* 19.5 million Asian Americans live in the U.S. today, making up nearly 6% of the nation’s population. In comparison, there are 55 million Hispanics (approximately 17% of the population) and 42 million African Americans (approximately 13% of the population).
* There are 24 different ethnic groups that comprise the incredibly diverse umbrella population that is Asian Pacific American. The Chinese (except Taiwanese) population is the largest Asian group (4.3 million), followed by Filipinos (3.6 million), Indians (3.5 million), Vietnamese (1.9 million), Koreans (1.8 million) and Japanese (1.4 million).
* Since 1965, new immigration from Asia has transformed the United States. Asians make up about one-third of the one million legal immigrants who enter the U.S. every year. China has just replaced Mexico as the top country of origin for immigrants to the U.S. and Chinese students are the largest group of international students in the U.S.
* California has the largest Asian population (6.1 million), followed by New York (1.8 million). The Asian population alone represents 37.7% of the total population in Hawaii, but Asian Americans are settling in communities all over the country. The Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, for example, have the largest concentration of Hmong people in the country, and between 2000 and 2010, the Asian American population in North Carolina grew by 85 percent.
* Despite the stereotype that Asian Americans are “model minorities,” Asian Americans are represented at both ends of the economic spectrum: over 51% of Asian Americans have a bachelor’s degree or higher and almost 22% have a graduate or professional degree, but almost 12.6% live in poverty, which is slightly higher than the U.S. average of 12.4%. Some groups have persistently much higher rates of poverty, including the Hmong (37.8%), Cambodian (29.3%), Laotian (18.5%) and Vietnamese (16.6%).
* Asian Americans are part of America’s transformation into a majority-minority country by 2044. Mixed-race individuals are projected to be the fastest growing population over the next 50 years. Asian Americans are projected to be the second fastest-growing group, increasing by some 130% to be over 9% of the population by 2060.
* The first Asians arrived in the Americas in the 1500s. By 1870, there were over 67,000 in the United States.
* Half a million immigrants, including 100,000 Chinese, entered the country through Angel Island (in the San Francisco Bay) from 1910 to 1940. Angel Island served as a formidable detention center built to enforce the Chinese exclusion laws and to keep Chinese and other Asians out of the country. On Angel Island, Chinese immigrants made up 70% of the detainees. The longest recorded detention was 756 days.
* During WWII, 120,000 Japanese Americans (including two-thirds who were United States-born citizens) were forcibly rounded up and incarcerated in camps around the country because they were suspected of being loyal to Japan and not the U.S. Japanese Americans were only allowed to return to the West Coast in 1945.
* 1.2 million Vietnamese, Lao, Hmong, and Cambodian refugees have been resettled in the United States following the wars in Southeast Asia. The U.S. has become a place of refuge, but many still struggle with poverty and income and educational gaps with other Americans.

**—OVER—**

**Talking Points**

* **The 50th Anniversary of the United States’ Immigration Act of 1965.** Before 1965, the United States had severely restricted immigration, especially from Asia and Southern and Eastern Europe. As a result, immigration was at a historic low in 1960. The 1965 Act removed discriminatory quotas and put in place the system that we have today that gives preference to immigrants with professional skills and family already in the U.S.. Despite bi-partisan support for changes in our immigration policies today, the 1965 Act remains the last time that the U.S. passed comprehensive immigration reform.
* **The 1965 Act’s Impact on Asian Americans.** It can be argued that no group has benefited more from the 1965 Act than Asian Americans. Asian Americans are the fastest-growing group in the country: there are around 19.5 million Asian Americans in the United States today, making up nearly 6% of the country’s total population. The staggering growth is quite startling given that Asian Americans had largely been excluded from the U.S. beginning in the 1880s through World War Two.
* **America’s First Undocumented Immigrants.** Even though the current debate over undocumented immigration may focus on immigrants from Mexico, America’s first undocumented immigrants were Chinese. After the Chinese were singled out for exclusion by the Chinese Exclusion Laws (in effect from 1882-1943), Chinese immigrants entered without authorization from Mexico and Canada and used fake papers and false identities in their attempts to enter the United States. As a result, they became the first targets of U.S. border security efforts and the first to be detained in immigration detention centers en masse. Today, Asians make up around 12% (1.3 million) of the undocumented immigrant population.
* **Asian Americans as “Model Minorities.”** The most common stereotype of Asian Americans is that they are a “model minority,” most often referring to the idea that Asian Americans are “models” for other minorities because they have achieved academic and economic success by sticking to so-called “traditional” Asian values of hard work and perseverance.This stereotype is both inaccurate and misleading: not all Asian Americans are thriving, with large proportions—sometimes higher than the national average—living in generational poverty.
* **Asian Americans and Current Race Relations in the United States.** Asian Americans have served—and continue to serve —as a way to understand the broader state of American race relations as well as America’s changing place in the world. Race has never been just a matter of black and white, and Asian Americans help us understand the “in-between” space, shifts in race relations, and the changing role that race has played in American life.
* **The Lasting Importance of Asian American History and Immigration Reform.** We’re currently living through a period of peak immigration to this country, mostly from Asia and Latin America. It is changing the face of America and raising new questions about what it means to be American. We’re also living in a global age, where we are connected across borders in real time in a way that we’ve never been before. Large immigrant populations like Asian Americans are at the heart of these changes. Their history helps us understand where we’ve been, how we got to where we are today, and what we might expect in the future.