



**DISCUSSION GUIDE**

# **FAR EAST DEEP SOUTH**

**DISCOVER THE PAST YOU NEVER KNEW**





# FAR EAST DEEP SOUTH

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# FAR EAST DEEP SOUTH

## INTRODUCTION

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This film began as a personal journey to search for our family roots so that my daughter would know from where she came. Being of Chinese ancestry, my original thought was that this journey would take us to the Far East to some remote village in China. Instead, it took us to the Deep South and the Mississippi Delta.

We thought we were taking a family vacation to simply find my grandfather and great grandfather's gravesite. Before we knew it, we began to uncover not only the history of our family, but also that of the early Chinese American settlers in the South. In addition to dealing with segregation and struggling to provide for their families, these settlers had to do it during a time when Congress enacted the only act in American history that explicitly targeted a specific race; The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.

However, this story is more than a story of struggle and injustice. We discovered how this community of people found redemption and created new bonds with strangers; how being caught between Black and white created a bridge for everyone. An important symbiotic relationship developed between the African-American and Chinese-American communities in the South. Both were shut out of white communities and needed one another to sustain themselves. They overcame enormous challenges so that our generation today can experience everything that our ancestors could only dream about.

Growing up, I had no idea that laws like The Chinese Exclusion Act or Jim Crow personally affected my family. By watching our film, I hope it expands how you think about American history and what it means to be an American. I hope that when future generations learn about the American South, they will know that there was more to the story than just Black and white.

Sincerely,



BALDWIN CHIU

Producer, FAR EAST DEEP SOUTH

# FAR EAST DEEP SOUTH

## ABOUT THE FILM

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FAR EAST DEEP SOUTH presents a personal and eye-opening perspective on race, immigration, and American identity. It sheds light on the history of Chinese immigrants living in the American South during the late 1800s to mid-1900s through the emotional journey of Charles Chiu and his family as they travel from California to Mississippi to find answers about his father, K.C. Lou. Along the way, they meet a diverse group of local residents and historians who help them discover how deep their roots run in America. The film also explores the interconnected relationship between the Black and Chinese communities in the Jim Crow era and the generational impact of discriminatory immigration policies, such as the Chinese Exclusion Act.

*\*This is mostly a family friendly film but please be aware there are a few racial slurs used in historical context as a few people give first-hand accounts of being subject to demeaning comments.*

## THEMES AND TOPICS

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There are many themes and topics woven through FAR EAST DEEP SOUTH. Any one of these themes can warrant significant discussion. In this guide, we have provided some discussion questions, activities, a timeline of historical events from the film, definitions and additional resources.

Here's a list of themes and topics you will see in FAR EAST DEEP SOUTH

- American South
- American identity
- Chinese Exclusion Act
- Jim Crow laws
- Immigration
- Late-1800's to mid-1900's America
- Sharecropping
- Race relations
- Discrimination
- Fatherlessness
- Family History
- Transgenerational trauma
- Father and son relationships
- Bullying



# FAR EAST DEEP SOUTH

## TIMELINE

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A select timeline of major historical events referenced in FAR EAST DEEP SOUTH

**1850s CHINESE ARRIVE IN U.S.** - The first significant wave of Chinese immigrants arrives in the U.S. during the Gold Rush to pursue better economic opportunities.

**1861 CIVIL WAR BEGINS** - The battle begins between the Union Army (Northern states) and the Confederate Army (Southern states) over slavery, states' rights and westward expansion.

**1863 EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION** - President Abraham Lincoln issues this proclamation stating that "all persons held as slaves...shall be free." This paves the way for the eventual freeing of all enslaved people in the U.S.

**1863 CONSTRUCTION OF TRANSCONTINENTAL RAILROAD BEGINS** - The Central Pacific Railroad breaks ground in Sacramento, CA. About 90% of the Central Pacific Railroad workforce is made up of Chinese men numbering about 15,000-20,000. The Union Pacific Railroad breaks ground in Omaha, NE.

**1865 CIVIL WAR ENDS** - The Confederate Army led by Robert E. Lee, surrenders to Ulysses S. Grant in Appomattox, VA. Shortly after this, Jim Crow laws are enacted.

**1869 COMPLETION OF TRANSCONTINENTAL RAILROAD** - On May 10, 1869, the tracks of the Union Pacific and Central Pacific railroads meet at Promontory, UT making travel by train coast to coast in the U.S. possible for the first time.

**1869 SOUTHERN PLANTERS CONVENE IN MEMPHIS, TN** - Southern plantation owners hold a conference in Memphis to discuss recruiting Chinese labor to replace their loss of work force due to the end of slavery. Soon after, Chinese laborers arrive in the Mississippi Delta.

**1875 PAGE ACT** - This federal law targeting Chinese women prohibits East Asian women from entering the U.S.

**1882 CHINESE EXCLUSION ACT** - This law prohibits Chinese laborers from entering the U.S. and prevents all Chinese immigrants from becoming U.S. citizens. It is the only law in U.S. history to restrict immigration by targeting a specific race, regardless of country of origin.

## **FAR EAST DEEP SOUTH**

- 1906** **SAN FRANCISCO EARTHQUAKE & FIRE** - A 7.9 magnitude earthquake hits San Francisco and causes fires that destroy most of its original Chinatown and the city's Hall of Records, which contained documents like immigration records.
- 1910** **ANGEL ISLAND** - An immigration station on Angel Island opens to process, interrogate, and detain incoming and outgoing migrants. It closes in 1940 due to a fire.
- 1924** **JOHNSON-REED ACT** - This Immigration Act expands immigration restrictions. It limits the number of immigrants allowed to enter the U.S. based on national origins quotas. It severely limits immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe as well as Africa. It also bars immigration from Asia.
- 1929** **THE GREAT DEPRESSION** - Considered the worst economic downturn in history, it begins with the stock market crash, also known as Black Tuesday, and lasts until 1939. It causes financial hardships for millions of Americans.
- 1941** **BOMBING OF PEARL HARBOR** - Japan attacks the Hawaiian island of Oahu on December 7, 1941 killing 2,400 Americans and wounding 1,000. This prompts the U.S. to officially enter World War II.
- 1943** **CHINESE EXCLUSION ACT REPEALED** - Because the U.S. needs China as an ally in World War II, Congress repeals the Chinese Exclusion Act. However, Chinese immigration to the U.S. is limited an annual quota of only 105 persons.
- 1945** **WORLD WAR II ENDS** - As many as 20,000 Chinese Americans serve in World War II. A large number are from the Mississippi Delta.
- 1954** **BROWN v BOARD OF EDUCATION** - This landmark U.S. Supreme Court case ruling declares segregation in public schools is unconstitutional.
- 1964** **CIVIL RIGHTS ACT** - It prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. It ends the practice of Jim Crow laws.
- 1965** **IMMIGRATION AND NATIONALITY ACT** - Also known as the Hart-Cellar Act, this law eliminates the national quota system in immigration and lifts prior restrictions on regions such as Asia.



# FAR EAST DEEP SOUTH

## KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

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**Archives** - a place where public records or other documents of historical significance are stored.

**Bogue** - a small body of water like a stream

**Bound Feet** - an old practice in China of breaking and binding young girls' feet so they would stay small in size. It was considered a sign of elite status and beauty. By the Qing dynasty (1644-1912), it became popular among many social classes. The practice ended by the mid-1900s.

**Chinese Exclusion Files** - a general term to reference the case files of Chinese individuals who traveled to and from the U.S. during The Chinese Exclusion Act (1882-1943). These files contain ship records, birth certificates, customs forms, interrogation transcripts, and other immigration documents. They are housed at the National Archives.

**Congress** - U.S. governmental body, consisting of the Senate and the House of Representatives, responsible for passing laws and bills.

**Immigration** - the act of coming into a country of which a person is not a native or citizen

**Jim Crow laws** - a suite of state and local laws put in place after the Civil War enforcing racial segregation until 1965.

**Anti-miscegenation Laws** - the prohibiting of interracial marriage

**Narcissus** - a type of flower also known as a Paperwhite

**Segregation** - the act of separating people or things. In the Southern United States, it refers to separating based on race or ethnic group

**Sharecropper** - a tenant farmer who works the land and receives an agreed share of the crop as payment to the landowner. Most sharecroppers were only paid once or twice a year during harvest times.

**Slavery** - a situation in which a human being is owned by another, mainly for the purpose of exploiting them for labor.

**U.S. Supreme Court** - the highest court in the U.S. that evaluates the laws.

# FAR EAST DEEP SOUTH

## SECTION 1 - OPEN DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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*After watching FAR EAST DEEP SOUTH, use these questions in a large group or in smaller breakout groups. These questions can also be used as essay prompts.*

1. What were new things you learned from watching Far East Deep South?
2. Why is this history relevant today?
3. Give examples from this film of the discrimination that Chinese faced.
4. How are these examples similar or different from those faced by other ethnic groups?
5. What did you learn about the relationship between the Black and Chinese communities in the Mississippi Delta?
6. How has your view of Asian Americans changed after watching this film?
7. How has your view changed about who belongs in America?
8. How does this immigrant story differ from other Chinese immigrant stories in other parts of the country? How does it differ from other immigrant groups?
9. Why is it important to learn about the history of immigrants from different countries?
10. How can this film help to combat racism?
11. What do you know about your grandparents or ancestors who first came to the U.S.?
12. Name at least one relative you want to ask more about their life and history.





# FAR EAST DEEP SOUTH

## SECTION 2- ACTIVITIES



### Geography

1. Find Mississippi on a map or globe.
2. Use [Google Earth](#) (or other similar map application) to find the following:
  - a. **Xinhui District** in China (aka Sunwui). This is the birthplace of Charles Chiu.
  - b. **San Francisco, CA**. After leaving China, this is where Charles Chiu arrived by ship. This is also the birthplace of Baldwin and Edwin Chiu.
  - c. **National Archives in San Bruno, CA**. This is where the Chiu family found documents about K.C. Lou, Shee Chin (Mrs. Lou) and Chas J. Lou. The Chinese Exclusion Files can be found here for Chinese who passed through the port of San Francisco during the Chinese Exclusion Act. These are public records and anyone can request to see these files.
  - d. **Cleveland, MS**. Look for Delta State University, then search for Charles W. Capps, Jr. Archives. That is where the Mississippi Delta Chinese Heritage Museum is located.
  - e. **Pace, MS**. This is where the Chas J. Lou grocery store was located. Look around the town.
  - f. **Greenville, MS**. This is where some people featured in our film, like Stan Lou and Carolyn Chan, grew up and attended school in a one-room schoolhouse.
  - g. **Mound Bayou, MS**. This is the first independent black community. It was formed in 1887 by former slaves. Darryl Johnson, the former mayor of Mound Bayou appears in our film.



# FAR EAST DEEP SOUTH



## Family History

1. Draw your family tree. Add the locations of where your family members were born.
2. Create a timeline as far back as you can trace your family tree. Add major historical events on the timeline to see which family members experienced those events.
3. Create a digital photo collage with as many family members as possible on Google slides or similar program.
4. Ask your parents or grandparents about how they or your ancestors came to the U.S. Then, document it on video, audio recording, or in writing. Ask them about their struggles, joys, and lessons they learned.



## Museums

1. Visit an Asian American museum or historical museum near you.
2. If you were to create a museum exhibit about your family, what objects would you include? Why are those objects significant?
3. Visit the virtual exhibits at the **Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation**  
<https://www.aiisf.org/virtualgallery>
4. Visit the **Tenement Museum** digital exhibit, **Your Story, Our Story**  
<https://yourstory.tenement.org/>
  - a. Search the word "Mississippi" to see what objects show up.
  - b. There are two photos of objects featured in our film. Can you find them?  
(Answer: 1. K.C. Lou's Bible, 2. Chas J. Lou Co. letterhead)
  - c. Search for objects and stories from your state.
  - d. Consider submitting your own story to their exhibit.





# FAR EAST DEEP SOUTH

## SECTION 3- QUESTIONS BY FILM CHAPTERS

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*You will find the time markers listed for each of the three chapters of the film.*



### Chapter 1 - An Immigrant Story

Full version [00:02:47]

PBS version [00:03:05]

**Q. Where was Charles Chiu born?**

A. Sunwui (aka Xinhui), which is in the Guangdong province of China

**Q. What city did he arrive in when he first came to the U.S. and how old was he?**

A. San Francisco, CA. He was 14 years old.

**Q. Who accompanied Charles Chiu to the U.S.?**

A. His grandmother, Shee Chin aka Mrs. Charles J. Lou. She had bound feet and had previously lived in Mississippi.

**Q. What mode of transportation did Charles Chiu take to travel to the U.S. from China?**

A. He came by ship on the S.S. Cleveland.

**Q. In what branch of the military did Charles serve?**

A. Air Force

**Q. What were the first jobs worked by the first group of Chinese immigrants that came to Mississippi?**

A. They worked on plantations picking cotton and harvesting other crops.

**Q. Why did the Chinese move on to become grocery store owners?**

A. Working under the hot sun all day in the fields was very hard labor. When their contractual obligations ended with plantation owners and they had the opportunity to leave, they began operating grocery stores, mostly in black neighborhoods. Furthermore, under the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, merchants, but not laborers, could enter the U.S. Consequently, Chinese people coming to the U.S. could no longer work labor jobs on places like plantations.

**Q. Why were the last names of Charles Chiu's father and grandfather "Lou" instead of "Chiu"?**

A. In Chinese, the surname comes first. Charles's grandfather's Chinese name was "Chiu Jong Lou". Immigration assumed "Lou" was the surname and not "Chiu." It was a common occurrence that immigration officials misinterpreted the names. When Charles became a naturalized U.S. citizen, he restored his surname to "Chiu."

# FAR EAST DEEP SOUTH



## Chapter 2 - A Southern Story

Full version [00:033:13]

PBS version [00:033:35]

### **Q. Why were Chinese grocery stores located in Black neighborhoods?**

During this time of Jim Crow laws, many white grocery stores did not want to sell to black customers or treated black clientele as second class forcing them to use a separate entrance from white customers. The Chinese provided a better shopping alternative to an underserved black community. Like the African Americans, people of Chinese descent were not allowed to live in the white neighborhoods. Most Chinese families ended up living in the back of their grocery stores.

### **Q. What financial courtesy did Chinese grocery stores extend African Americans?**

A. Many African Americans in the Mississippi Delta worked as sharecroppers, who were only paid once or twice a year when the crops were harvested. Unfortunately, white-run banks and stores shunned Black clientele in this time of segregation. The Chinese-run stores were willing to offer interest-free credit to the Black community so they could afford essential items throughout the year. They lived by an honor system and the majority of people paid back their debts.

### **Q. Why did Chinese people come to work in the U.S.?**

A. During the 1850's, they initially came to work in gold mines. Then, they were recruited to various industries across the U.S. such as working to build the Transcontinental Railroad, farming, canning, making cigars and logging.

### **Q. How did the Chinese children get their education in the segregated South?**

A. During segregation, like the African American children, Chinese children were not allowed in many white public schools in the south and in some areas, they could not even attend Black public schools. Many Chinese parents initially homeschooled their children. Eventually, Chinese communities, with the help of the local churches, created mission schools. The schools would generally consist of one main classroom where children of various ages between grades 1-12 would be taught by one teacher.

### **Q. What were other examples of discrimination Chinese Americans faced in schools?**

Some Chinese children were denied being named valedictorian, even though they had achieved the highest grades in the schools. Some Chinese Americans, who went on to become teachers, could not teach in white schools.

### **Q. What were other examples of rights denied to Chinese and African Americans in the South during the Jim Crow era?**

A: Chinese and African Americans could not use public swimming pools, were denied services at places like barbershops and hospitals, and had to use separate facilities like bathrooms and drinking fountains. They also had to be buried in separate cemeteries.



# FAR EAST DEEP SOUTH



## Chapter 3 - An American Story

Full version [01:00:43]

PBS version [01:01:02]

### **Q. What kind of records are kept at the National Archives and Records Administration?**

Any federal records of historical value. These include military records, immigration records, congressional records, the Constitution and pretty much any documents created by the federal government like the Chinese Exclusion Act Case Files. There are numerous branches of the National Archives in the U.S.

### **Q: When was Angel Island Immigration Station open?**

A: From 1910 to 1940. The facility, primarily a detention center, was designed to control the flow of Chinese and other immigrants into the country.

### **Q: What was the Page Act of 1875?**

A: It was a law that prohibited immigrants coming to the U.S. who were deemed 'undesirable'—mainly defined as Chinese "coolie" laborers and prostitutes. In practice, it was used as a way to prevent Chinese women from migrating to the United States.

### **Q. Why did a lot of Chinese men living and working in the U.S. have to get married and have families in China?**

A. There were fewer Chinese women in the U.S. because of laws like the Page Act. It was also illegal in many states for Chinese men to marry outside of their race because of anti-miscegenation laws. They were left with few options if they wanted to have a family.

### **Q: Why was Shee Chin aka Mrs. Lou able to come to the U.S. when most Chinese women were restricted from entering the U.S.?**

A: Shee Chin's husband, Charlie Lou, was a merchant and there was an exemption to allow the wives of merchants to enter the U.S. However, in practice, all women were subject to difficult interrogations and conditions upon entry which deterred many from coming. One way to more easily pass immigration inspection was for a woman to show that she had bound feet, which Shee Chin had. This demonstrated that she was no threat to labor jobs or prostitution.

### **Q: Why did the Chinese have to register with the U.S. government?**

A. In 1892, the Geary Act was passed and required Chinese people to register and carry a certificate proving they had a right to be in the U.S. If they were caught without their papers, they could be deported or imprisoned.

# FAR EAST DEEP SOUTH



## Chapter 3 - An American Story (continued)

**Q. How did the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act and other immigration laws affect Charles Chiu's family?**

A. The Chinese Exclusion Act was the first and only federal law enacted that specifically targeted people of a certain nationality. It prevented Chinese people from entering the U.S. with only a few exemptions: mainly merchants, diplomats and scholars. It also prohibited Chinese people from becoming U.S. citizens. Immigration officials could deny entry to anyone of Chinese descent. It made it very difficult for anyone Chinese to travel to the U.S. There were amendments to The Chinese Exclusion Act and related laws passed that restricted Chinese women and family members from coming to the U.S. All these restrictions were major factors in preventing Charles Chiu, his mother and older sister from joining K.C. Lou in America. Sadly, the family was never reunited before K.C. Lou's death in 1946.

**Q. How did immigration laws expand during the time of The Chinese Exclusion Act?**

Subsequent laws, like the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act of 1924, expanded restrictions to not just affect the Chinese but people from other countries in Asia, Eastern Europe, Southern Europe and Africa.

**Q. When was The Chinese Exclusion Act repealed?**

A. The Chinese Exclusion Act was not repealed until 1943 with the passage of the Magnuson Act, which was a result of needing China as an ally during World War II. However, it set a quota that only permitted 105 Chinese immigrants each year. Heavy immigration restrictions remained and many other Asian countries were still excluded until 1965 with the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act.

**Q. Why do family stories like these matter?**

A. This is an American story even though it's an Asian American family. The Asian American voice has been misrepresented and underrepresented in both history books and media. It is important to know that there are many families like these that have been in America for a very long time and they have made great contributions to America. When these stories aren't heard, the misperception is that Asians and other minority groups are foreign outsiders, and thus not American.



# FAR EAST DEEP SOUTH

## FINAL THOUGHTS

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Thank you for watching and discussing FAR EAST DEEP SOUTH. Hopefully, this inspires you to seek out and tell your own family story. For those in the U.S., most of us are either immigrants or descendants of immigrants. Even if you have indigenous roots, your family story matters. Let's learn and share about the struggles that previous generations endured that have led us to where we are today. Let's learn how they overcame those challenges and how we can rise together rather than apart. It's important to tell diverse family stories because all of our stories, collectively, make up history.

More importantly, we hope to see all U.S. History curriculum include the story of the Chinese and other people of color when segregation and the American South is discussed. Please tell more teachers and schools about our film and this often overlooked chapter in American history. All our stories matter.



### CONTACT US

We want to know how this film has made an impact in your school or community. What was your audience's response? Are there cool activities you did or good questions you used with with our film? Do you have questions? We'd love to hear from you!

**Send us an email at [education@fareastdeepsouth](mailto:education@fareastdeepsouth).** We may even include your ideas in future updates of our guide or on our website.



### LICENSE

You can license our film for educational use through **New Day Films** ([newday.com](http://newday.com))  
You can also watch on **Kanopy** with university access ([kanopy.com](http://kanopy.com))



### BOOK A SPEAKER

If you'd like to invite **Baldwin Chiu** (producer) and/or **Larissa Lam** (director/producer) to speak at your school or organization in-person or virtually, fill out the [booking request form on our website](#) or send an email to [booking@fareastdeepsouth.com](mailto:booking@fareastdeepsouth.com)



### SUBSCRIBE & FOLLOW

Get updates on FAR EAST DEEP SOUTH, educational panels and workshops that we offer and more by subscribing to our newsletter on our website [FarEastDeepSouth.com](http://FarEastDeepSouth.com) and following us on social media.



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@FarEastDeepSo



# FAR EAST DEEP SOUTH

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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### PHOTOS AND DOCUMENTS



#### [Mississippi Delta Chinese Heritage Museum - Photo Collection](#)

View the museum's online gallery of historical photos showing the different aspects of the MS Delta Chinese families.

#### [Library of Congress](#)

Search and view photos, documents and other media online. Additional items can be seen in person at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC.

#### [National Archives and Records Administration](#)

Search the online database of the National Archives. Some documents are now available to view online. Contact a researcher at a branch to arrange an in-person viewing of any documents you find held at that branch.

#### [Chronicling America](#)

Search and view a large collection of America's historic newspaper pages originally published from 1789-1963

### VIDEOS



#### [Asian Americans Make History](#)

Watch our filmmakers, Larissa Lam and Baldwin Chiu aka Only Won, give a 3-minute musical crash course in Asian American history by putting their twist on the Hamilton song, "The Schuyler Sisters."

#### [Growing Up Southern - Beyond Far East Deep South](#)

Watch this conversation with Carolyn Chan and Stan Lou, who both appear in FAR EAST DEEP SOUTH. They recount their childhood growing up in Greenville, MS and the challenges they faced as Chinese Americans in the segregated South.

### PODCASTS



#### [Love, Discovery and Dim Sum](#)

An enlightening podcast that helps people discover more history and an Asian American perspective on race and culture. Hosted by Baldwin Chiu aka Only Won & Larissa Lam

#### [Southern Fried Asian](#)

A podcast dedicated to all things Asian American and Southern.

# FAR EAST DEEP SOUTH

## BOOKS



- *Chopsticks in the Land of Cotton* by John Jung
- *Southern Fried Rice* by John Jung
- *Opening the Gates to Asia* by Jane H. Hong
- *The Chinese and the Iron Road: Building the Transcontinental Railroad*  
edited by Gordon H. Chang & Shelley Fisher Fishkin
- *Ghosts of Gold Mountain* by Gordon H. Chang
- *Journey Stories from the Cleveland Chinese Mission School* edited by Paul Wong and Doris Ling Lee
- *The Mississippi Chinese Veterans of World War II: A Delta Tribute* by Gwendolyn Gong, John H. Powers and Devereux Gong Powers
- *At America's Gates* by Erika Lee
- *Angel Island* by Erika Lee and Judy Yung

## MISC



["Reclaiming Our Collective History"](#) via Mom of All Capes

Discussion questions and activities to explore your family history inspired by FAR EAST DEEP SOUTH

["How African Americans and Chinese Immigrants Forged a Community"](#)

Los Angeles Times Op-Ed by Larissa Lam

["Chinese Immigrants in the Deep South Struggle and Thrive in PBS Documentary"](#) by Glenn Garvin, Reason

[FamilySearch.org](#)

Free family research and genealogy website

RESOURCES FOR LESSON PLANS

[Immigrant History Initiative](#)

[The Asian American Education Project](#)

[Museum of Chinese in America](#)

Visit our website [FarEastDeepSouth.com](#) for more resources and links.