A Different Mirror

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF RONALD TAKAKI

Ronald Takaki was born in Hawaii to Japanese-American parents. His ancestors immigrated to the US in the 1880s and worked on sugarcane plantations. As a teenager, Takaki was a talented surfer. He earned his BA from the College of Wooster in Ohio, where he was one of only two Asian American students. He then earned his PhD in American history at the University of California, Berkeley, after which he taught Black Studies at UCLA. Returning to Berkeley, Takaki helped to create the Ethnic Studies program at the university, which served a foundational role in the creation of Ethnic Studies as a field. Takaki married Carol Rankin, with whom he had three children. He was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in middle age, and retired from teaching in 2004. He died by suicide in 2009, at the age of 70.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

As a work of history, *A Different Mirror* is teeming with historical events. Some of the most significant include Columbus's "discovery" of the land that became the United States in 1492, and the arrival of the first twenty Africans on American shores in 1619. The Irish Potato Famine of 1845-1855 drove millions of Irish immigrants to the US, significantly shaping the population and culture of the emergent nation. As a conflict driven by racial tensions and the ongoing existence of slavery, the Civil War is also a highly important event in the book. Likewise, the Second World War had a transformative impact on the nature of race relations in the US. Takaki gives an account of the Civil Rights movement that was in many ways provoked by the events of the Second World War, and also of the way 9/11 impacted the US' image of itself and, in particular, the treatment of Muslims and Afghan Americans in the country.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

A Different Mirror bears many similarities to Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States*, which similarly seeks to dispel myths about the US and retell the story of the country from the perspective of ordinary workers, poor people, and people of color. Taking a cue from Zinn, Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz takes an even more critical look at the foundational myths of American history and re-centers indigenous people in *An Indigenous People's History of the United States*. Similar titles include *A Black Women's History of the United States*, *An African American and Latinx History of the United States*, *A Queer History of the United States*, and *A Disability History of the United States*. Other books that take a comparative look at ethnicity in the US include Michael Omi and Howard Winant's *Racial Formation in the United States*, and *Shades of Difference* and *Unequal Freedom*, both by Evelyn Nakano Glenn.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America*
- **When Written:** Unknown
- **Where Written:** Berkeley, California
- **When Published:** 1993
- **Literary Period:** Late 20th century popular American history
- **Genre:** Ethnic Studies
- **Setting:** The United States, from the precolonial period to the 1990s
- **Climax:** N/A
- **Antagonist:** N/A
- **Point of View:** Third person

EXTRA CREDIT

Family Ties. Included among Takaki's sources are his ancestors, who were workers on a sugar cane plantation in Hawaii, and his son, Nicholas, who protests about the inadequate education on issues of ethnicity in the US school system.

All Ages. In 2012, Rebecca Stefoff adapted a version of the book for younger readers, entitled *A Different Mirror for Young People*.

PLOT SUMMARY

Ronald Takaki, the author of the book, finds that people often do not see him as "American" despite the fact that his ancestors emigrated from Japan in the 1880s. He knows that this is thanks to what he calls the "Master Narrative of American history," which falsely asserts that the United States is a white country. In the book, he will cover the history of many different ethnic groups: African Americans, Asian Americans, Irish Americans, Jewish Americans, Mexican Americans, Muslim Americans, and Native people. Although these groups are very different, they are united by their shared experience of exploitation and class struggle, as well as their hopes and dreams about the US. Takaki believes it is important to study the multiethnic reality of the US in order to "let America be America again," a phrase he takes from the poem of the same name by Langston Hughes.

During the early period of the English colonization of the US, William Shakespeare wrote *The Tempest*, a play that analogizes colonialism through its depiction of Prospero, an exiled Italian duke who washes ashore of an exotic island, and Caliban, the indigenous inhabitant of that island. Takaki suggests that Caliban could have been based on the Irish, whose land was colonized by the English and who were dehumanized in the English imagination. English colonizers would repeat the brutal and unjust treatment they originally inflicted on the Irish on Native people when they began colonizing the US.

Although there were initially moments when indigenous people showed generosity to English settlers, this soon gave way to conflict thanks to English violence and duplicity. The settlers killed Native people in brutal ways, and the Native population also began dying of European diseases, to which they had no immunity. The English took advantage of these deaths to expand their settlement.

Meanwhile, in 1619 the first Africans arrived in the Virginia colony. They were indentured servants who had likely been captured as prisoners of war in Africa. For a long time, there were fairly few Africans in the Virginia colony. However, as tobacco farming ramped up, there was a great need for labor. Moreover, the white landowning elite did not want there to be collaborations between white and black indentured servants. As a result, they established a system of racialized slavery. There was thus a contradiction at the very foundation of the American nation state: though the nation was theoretically founded on the principle that all men were created equal, enslaved black people were also legally counted as only three fifths of a person. Under President Andrew Jackson, the federal government aggressively coerced indigenous nations into signing treaties selling their land. Tribes were forced to move west, a move that destroyed their way of life and resulted in the deaths of a staggering number of people. Meanwhile, the government constructed **railroad** lines through indigenous land.

During the Civil War, the nation was split over the issue of slavery. Black leaders like Frederick Douglass and Martin Delany fought passionately against slavery and anti-black racism. Yet they differed in opinion over whether black people could ever flourish through assimilation in the US, or whether black Americans needed to form an independent nation from white people. Unfortunately, even after the Civil War ended and slavery was abolished, conditions of extreme exploitation, degradation, and dispossession continued for black people. Indeed, some commented that this version of freedom was hardly distinguishable from slavery.

Meanwhile, the ongoing suffering caused by English colonialism and, in particular, the Great Potato Famine, prompted millions of Irish to immigrate to the US in the nineteenth century. Once in the US, the Irish formed close-knit networks of mutual support as well as labor organizations that greatly improved their conditions and status within American society. They were welcomed into **Harvard** by the university's President Abbott Lawrence Lowell, and began thriving as part of the country's middle class.

The American annexation of Texas and California in the mid-nineteenth century left half of Mexican territory a part of the US. Suddenly, a huge number of Mexicans found themselves residents of another country, "foreigners in their own land." They were strategically dispossessed of their land and rights by American laws, and were forced to work within a "caste labor system." However, they fought back fiercely against these injustices, frequently going on **strike**.

In the nineteenth century, the US also saw an influx of Chinese immigrants, who were fleeing the British Opium Wars and economic pressure and pursuing a better life in America. These immigrants, almost all of whom were men, were vital to the construction of the Central Pacific Railroad, and also played key roles within the agricultural sector. Yet in 1882, Congress passed the Chinese Exclusionary Act, which prohibited Chinese immigration. In 1902, the Act was extended indefinitely.

In 1890, American soldiers murdered hundreds of unarmed indigenous men, women, and children in the Massacre at Wounded Knee. Meanwhile, Native people continued to suffer under misguided and deliberately harmful government policies. Meanwhile, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Japanese immigrants began coming to the US, most of them to Hawaii, which was made a US territory in 1900. Many of these immigrants worked on Hawaiian sugarcane plantation under difficult conditions. Yet like other ethnic groups, they fought back by repeatedly going on strike, and in this way managed to improve their circumstances. Despite these gains, though, Japanese immigrants faced intense racism and struggled to find acceptance as members of American society.

In the same period, vehement anti-Semitism and bloody pogroms sent many Russian Jews to the US. These immigrants were concentrated in the Lower East Side of New York City, where many worked in sweatshops as part of the garment industry. Facing difficult conditions, labor struggles became a vital part of the emergent identity of Jewish America. Jewish immigrants enthusiastically embraced the US as their homeland and typically competed to appear as assimilated as possible. However, they faced anti-Semitism in the US too, and in 1924 Congress passed an act that limited the ability of Jewish immigrants to come to the country.

Mexican Americans likewise experienced sustained prejudice and discrimination. One way of coping with these difficulties was through the construction of barrios, Mexican American enclaves where new immigrants could find support and where Mexican culture was a vibrant part of everyday life.

In the twentieth century, African Americans moved North from the South in what came to be known as the Great Migration.

Yet although some saw the North as a "Promised Land" where they could finally escape aspects of the suffocating afterlife of slavery, most found life in the North difficult and filled with racism, too. Housing and employment discrimination and violent race riots were a ubiquitous part of life for many black people in the North. At the same time, a new wave of black cultural energy swept the community, which came to be known as the Harlem Renaissance.

After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Japanese Americans were rounded up and placed in internment camps. Meanwhile, black soldiers were forced to serve in a segregated military, despite the fact that the US was supposedly fighting *against* racism and for the ideals of equality, democracy, and freedom. The war provided unprecedented opportunities for well-paid employment in the defense industries for many ethnic groups; this social shift was especially meaningful to women of color. The American government refused to allow European Jews to seek asylum in the US even after President Franklin D. Roosevelt knew about the Nazi regime's plans to exterminate the entire Jewish population of Europe.

Following the Second World War, there was a surge of energy directed toward ending racial discrimination in the US. The main locus of this was the Civil Rights Movement, which culminated with the passing of the Civil Rights Act. Yet despite the legal gains for African Americans during this period, in the following decades the black community continued to suffer from entrenched economic injustice and the cyclical power of poverty.

The fall of the Soviet Union and the Vietnam War brought new waves of Soviet Jewish and Vietnamese immigrants to the US. Meanwhile, brutal conflict and political unrest in Afghanistan likewise pushed many Afghans to seek refuge in the US. Their position in American society was made difficult following 9/11, a terrorist attack orchestrated by the Afghanistan-based organization Al-Qaeda.

In the 1990s and 2000s, the question of what to do with the enormous number of undocumented immigrants in the US—most of them Mexican, although many of them also Irish—became a national talking point. At the time Takaki is writing, the question remains open.

Takaki concludes the book with a reflection on his own life story, which reflects the multiethnic reality of the US. He emphasizes the importance of understanding the past in order to positively shape the future.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Ronald Takaki – Ronald Takaki is the author of *A Different Mirror*. He was born in Hawaii to Japanese-American parents, and notes in his book that because of this, people often don't see him as American—even though his ancestors immigrated to the United States from Japan all the way back in the 1800s. After earning his PhD in American history from the University of California, Berkley, he went on to teach Black Studies at UCLA and develop the Ethnic Studies program at Berkley. He also had a formative influence on Ethnic Studies as an academic field more generally. In *A Different Mirror*, Takaki seeks to illuminate the exploitation and class struggles that ethnic groups endure in the US, and give voice to those people's hopes and dreams about the country. His overarching purpose in sharing the multiethnic reality of the US is to "let America be America again," a phrase he borrows from poet Langston Hughes. *A Different Mirror* grapples with American history even before its so-called "discovery" by European colonizer Christopher Columbus until contemporary times, when questions of how to handle the swelling numbers of undocumented immigrants in the US remain both pressing and unanswered. In reaching back to the past and laying bare the racism, exploitation, and injustice that permeated American history, Takaki hopes that readers can use that ugly reality to positively shape the future.

President Thomas Jefferson – Thomas Jefferson was one of the Founding Fathers and the third president of the United States. From Virginia, he expressed a belief in abolishing slavery even though he was an enslaver himself. He regarded black people as inferior to white people and argued that after abolition, black people would have to be removed from the US. He fathered several children with one of the enslaved women on his property, Sally Hemings, although he lied and denied that this was true.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt – Franklin D. Roosevelt was the 32nd president of the United States. During his time in office, he signed the New Deal and other acts of legislation that helped the country emerge from the Great Depression and conferred certain advantages to ethnic minorities in the US. At the same time, he also failed to desegregate the armed forces during the Second World War despite calls for him to do so, and similarly failed to accept Jewish refugees from Europe even after receiving confirmed reports of the Nazi genocide.

Caliban – Caliban is a character in Shakespeare's play *The Tempest*. He is indigenous to the island upon which Prospero and the other characters are washed up, and is exploited during Prospero's attempt at colonization. Takaki argues that Caliban is a racial "Other" who could metaphorically represent many of the ethnic groups discussed in *A Different Mirror*.

Frederick Douglass – Frederick Douglass was an orator, writer, and abolitionist. Born into slavery, Douglass was of mixed racial heritage and suspected that he was possibly the son of his enslaver, a man named Thomas Auld. After escaping from slavery, Douglass committed himself to ending the institution. Although he came to believe this would only be successfully

achieved through violence, he also dedicated himself to using his particular rhetorical skills in order to convince people of the necessity of abolition.

Martin Delany – Martin Delany was an abolitionist and black nationalist who was descended from Mandingo royalty. After having his offer to attend **Harvard** Medical School rescinded on account of racism, he planned to establish a nation for black Americans in Africa. However, he ultimately abandoned these plans and returned to the US to fight in the Union Army during the Civil War.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Christopher Columbus – Christopher Columbus was an Italian explorer and colonizer who was credited with "discovering" the Americas in 1492. Originally thinking he had arrived in Asia, Columbus' arrival in the Americas instigated European colonization.

President Abraham Lincoln – Abraham Lincoln was the 16th president of the United States, and presided over the Civil War. After the Union won the war, he signed the Emancipation Proclamation, which abolished slavery throughout the US.

Eleanor Roosevelt – Eleanor Roosevelt was the wife of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. She often attempted to push her husband in a more progressive direction on matters of race.

Langston Hughes – Langston Hughes was an African American poet and member of the Harlem Renaissance. He wrote a poem discussed by Takaki entitled "Let America Be America Again" (1936).

William Shakespeare – William Shakespeare was an English playwright who lived during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; he is likely the most famous writer in Western history. His play, *The Tempest*, which is often read as an allegory for colonialism, serves an important role in Takaki's analysis.

Prospero – In *The Tempest*, Prospero is an exiled Italian duke who is washed ashore of an exotic island, which he decides to colonize. As such, Prospero represents the European colonizers of the Americas.

Sally Hemings – Sally Hemings was a woman enslaved by President Thomas Jefferson and his family. While she was underage, Jefferson began raping her, and she ended up giving birth to several of his children.

President Andrew Jackson – Andrew Jackson was the seventh president of the United States. Before becoming president, he profited hugely from opening Chickasaw land that he'd purchased to white settlement. He wanted to "destroy" the Native population and favored taking their land by force.

Booker T. Washington – Booker T. Washington was an educator, author, and orator famous for a speech that came to be known as the "Atlanta Compromise." Although Washington publicly shared moderate and conciliatory demands, in reality he was more radical than many believed him to be.

Abbott Lawrence Lowell – Abbott Lawrence Lowell was president of **Harvard University** between 1909-1933. He welcomed the admission of Irish students to Harvard, but opposed the admission of other ethnic groups, and installed a "Jewish quota" that limited the enrollment of Jews to 10-15 percent.

President Theodore Roosevelt – President Theodore Roosevelt was the 26th president of the United States.

John Collier – Collier was the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in the 1930s. He oversaw a disastrous program wherein he forced Navajos to give up their sheep, claiming that sheep overgrazing was causing soil erosion, when in fact it wasn't.

Marcus Garvey – Marcus Garvey was a Jamaican-born black nationalist who began the Black Star Line, a proposed method of transporting black Americans back to Africa. The endeavor failed, and Garvey was deported from the US.

W.E.B. Du Bois – W.E.B. Du Bois was a writer and sociologist who was the first black American to gain a PhD from **Harvard**.

President Harry Truman – Harry Truman was the 33rd president of the United States. The descendant of enslavers, he held racist views about most ethnic groups in the US.

Rabbi Stephen Wise – Rabbi Wise was the leader of the American Jewish Congress during the Second World War. He unsuccessfully attempted to persuade the Roosevelt administration to give Jewish refugees asylum in the US.

President Ronald Reagan – Ronald Reagan was the 40th president of the United States. Despite being right-wing, he supported the rights of undocumented immigrants and provided them with pathways to become legal citizens.

Thurgood Marshall – Thurgood Marshall was a lawyer and leader of the Civil Rights Movement.

A. Philip Randolph – A. Philip Randolph was an early Civil Rights leader.

Martin Luther King, Jr. – Martin Luther King, Jr. was a minister and the most famous leader of the Civil Rights movement. He was assassinated by the American government in 1965.

Malcolm X – Malcolm X was a black power activist. He was assassinated by the US government.

President George W. Bush – George W. Bush was the 43rd president of the United States. His administration oversaw the establishment of a temporary migrant worker program to meet the need for agricultural workers without providing a pathway for US citizenship.

President Bill Clinton – Bill Clinton was the 42nd president of the United States. He invited Takaki along with a group of Civil Rights leaders to advise him on a speech about race he gave in 1997.

President Barack Obama – Barack Obama was the 44th president of the United States. Born in Hawaii to a white mother and Kenyan father, Obama was the first black president.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

UNITY VS. DIVISION

The most important intervention that *A Different Mirror* makes lies within Ronald Takaki's decision to examine a range of different ethnic groups side by side, rather than focusing on one single group. Through this decision, Takaki emphasizes that people of different ethnicities should feel a sense of unity with each other, offering mutual support and solidarity, particularly when it comes to fighting prejudice and discrimination. He outlines the ways in which inter-ethnic tensions serve the interests of those who benefit from white supremacy. In order to reclaim power, people should maintain a strong sense of unity based in common struggle.

While emphasizing the importance of unity, Takaki is clear that there are many reasons why different ethnic groups may naturally feel very dissimilar, alienated, and suspicious of one another. To begin with, the groups he identifies all have very different reasons for being in the US. There is a stark difference, for example, between Native people who are indigenous to North America, African Americans whose ancestors were forcibly brought to the nation, and immigrants such as Irish or Muslim populations who came to escape war and persecution. Furthermore, each of these groups possessed completely different cultures, practiced different faiths, and spoke different languages, such that there was often no possibility even for basic communication between them. Unsurprisingly, this could lead to misunderstanding, distrust, and hostility.

Takaki is also careful to point out that even among ethnic groups that may appear to have a lot in common from an outside perspective, stark differences remained. For example, he emphasizes that prior to colonization, the US was *already* a richly diverse continent with a huge variety of cultures, languages, and religious practices. Indeed, following the establishment of the US settler colony, there remained significant divides among Native tribes over issues like identification with the US. Where many Navajo served in the Second World War, declaring themselves "proud to be Americans," members of other tribes furiously rejected that possibility, refusing to serve in the "white man's war." Given these stark contrasts between different groups' relation to the US itself, it is perhaps not surprising that members of these groups can end up feeling little commonality with each other. Moreover, Takaki identifies that where feelings of similarity and solidarity might have existed, they often did not prove very enduring. For example, he argues: "Many Irish saw parallels between themselves as a degraded people and blacks in bondage. In Ireland, they had identified themselves as the 'slaves' of the British, and many supported the abolition of slavery in the United States […] But Irish sympathy for black slaves seemed to disappear with the Atlantic crossing. In America, many of them became antiblack." Examples like this show that even where solidarity might have originally been possible, it can be hard to maintain.

Takaki also identifies ways in which white people systematically worked to turn different ethnic groups against each other in order to maintain white supremacy. (Note that for most of the period the book covers, the category "white" does not include Irish, Jewish, or Southeastern European immigrants.) The white middle- and upper-classes were afraid of what might happen if working-class people formed alliances across ethnic divides. For example, during slavery, it was not uncommon for enslaved black people and white indentured servants to escape together. Fearing these kinds of rebellions, enslavers stoked anti-black racism among white workers, attempting to dissuade them from seeing black people as potential allies. In another example, sugar planters in Hawaii "were systematically developing an ethnically diverse labor force in order to create divisions among their workers and reinforce management control."

In order to build power, improve conditions, and fight white supremacy, Takaki emphasizes that it is vital that different ethnic groups unite with one another. For example, workers must refuse to serve as "scabs" (strikebreakers) if offered the chance to break the **strike** of another ethnic group. Even better are examples of when workers of different ethnic groups choose to strike together, such as the Mexican-Japanese strike that took place in Oxnard, California, in 1903. This was the first time in California's history when two ethnic groups, "feeling a solidarity based on class," formed a union. Takaki argues that when ethnic groups unite, the elite class realize that they do not have absolute power.

Takaki also identifies moments when, paradoxically, white supremacy inadvertently brings together ethnic groups rather than dividing them. One example of this is the intermarriages that took place between Punjabi Sikh men and Mexican women in California. Punjabi men were barred both from owning land and marrying white women, but were allowed to marry Mexicans, who were themselves permitted to own land. This convergence of different racist laws ended up bringing together these two otherwise very disparate ethnic groups.

Overall, Takaki emphasizes that while different ethnic groups do not need to erase their differences, they do need to act in alliance with one another. Without such solidarity, white supremacy will continue to oppress *all* those excluded from the category of whiteness.

WHITENESS AND THE OTHER

In *A Different Mirror*, Takaki argues that racist and religious stereotyping was a tool used by white people to distinguish themselves from those they deemed "Other." Indeed, he shows that white identity was itself constructed as a foil, or opposite, to these stereotypes. Ironically, this often involved projecting many of the negative qualities that white Americans possessed onto those of different ethnic groups.

Throughout the book, Takaki returns to the figure of Caliban, the character from William Shakespeare's play *The Tempest*, to explore how white people defined different ethnic groups as the Other. *The Tempest* was written in 1610-11, right at the beginning of the American colonial period. The character of Caliban is indigenous to the island that the European characters in the play colonize, having initially been stranded on it. Caliban is characterized as "savage" and monstrous, and it is widely acknowledged that he represents ideas about the racial Other circulating in English culture at the time. The point is not that Caliban represented one particular ethnic group—indeed, Takaki begins each section of the book by arguing that Caliban could have been black, Irish, Chinese, and so on. Rather, Caliban is a foil to white Western European identity, and in this sense he is a fear/fantasy rather than a realistic depiction of an actual group of people.

Takaki argues that when white English settlers moved to the "New World," they were concerned about how this enormous change in environment might affect their identity, norms, and behavior. Without the cultural and religious institutions of England, they were self-conscious about the possibility of becoming "savages." As a result, they projected their fears about their own fate onto the Indigenous people they encountered. To these settlers, Native people "represented what English men and women in America thought they were not, and, more important—what they must not become." Of course, the irony of white settlers characterizing Indigenous people (and, later, black people) as "savages" was that it was white people *themselves* who were engaged in brutal, "savage" behavior. As Takaki shows, in the first centuries of the nation's existence, white settlers committed genocide, slavery, and mass rape. They damaged the natural landscape and drove the continent's bison population to near extinction. Takaki also points out that the first settlers on the continent practiced cannibalism after they ran out of food, even eating their own family members. Clearly, if anyone was "savage," it was white settlers themselves; yet by projecting this attribute onto the racial Other, they attempted to absolve themselves and depict themselves as a pure, morally upstanding group.

Ironically, another function of the creation of the idea of the racial Other was to *justify* the genocide, slavery, and labor exploitation white settlers were committing. For example, white people claimed that Indigenous people were childlike and didn't know how to properly farm the land (an untrue claim), and that this warranted the deliberate seizing of Native land and destruction of Native ways of life (both of which proved to be fatal to huge numbers of Native people). Similarly, black people were stereotyped as childlike, unintelligent, and loyal in order to argue that it was natural and right for them to be enslaved. Significantly, similar logic was also employed when it came to exploiting non-enslaved workers of other ethnic groups. Takaki quotes a mine owner called Sylvester Mowry who "invoked the images as well as language used earlier by slavemasters to describe the affection and loyalty of their slaves. 'My own experience has taught me that the lower class of Mexicans. ' Mowry declared, 'are docile, faithful, good servants, capable of strong attachments when firmly and kindly treated.'"

As the examples above show, Native people were not the only group against which white people contrasted themselves: every other ethnic group mentioned in the book were negatively typecast by white settlers as well. This did not necessarily occur in the same way or to the same degree. White people were most keen to distance themselves from black people, whereas other groups, such as Mexicans and East Asian immigrants, were seen as being somewhat closer to whiteness. These groups were still positioned as racial Others, but to a less extreme degree than black people.

Meanwhile, other groups, such as the Irish and (later) Jews, were eventually brought into the category of whiteness. As mentioned in the previous section, this expansion of the category of whiteness largely took place to prevent interethnic solidarity developing among the working classes. As the ethnic population of the US increased, white people feared becoming a minority, because this risked losing power. Expanding who counted as white was a consolidation of power that enabled white supremacy to be upheld. This shows that whiteness and the racial Other are flexible ideas; they adapt in different circumstances and historical eras.

Of course, this expansion of whiteness on one side went hand-in-hand with a more restrictive version of whiteness on the other. Takaki points out that during slavery and in its aftermath, the epidemic of sexual violence to which black women were subjected by white men meant that a great many people were born with mixed white and black ancestry (despite "miscegenation" being illegal). Many of these individuals looked white, but white people were determined not to let them integrate into society. As a result, the "One-drop rule" was established, which maintained that even "one drop" of black

blood classified someone as black, no matter how white they appeared. In this example and beyond, Takaki shows that both white identity and the racial Other are fictions, invented to create and uphold a white supremacist nation. It is important to understand how these ideas work in order to realize their harmful potential and combat their effects. He also suggests that in a future where white people will no longer be the majority and "we will all be minorities" in America, the fictions of white identity and the racial Other will—hopefully—no longer have much effect in the real world.

LABOR, PROFIT, AND THE BUILDING OF THE NATION

One of the core things uniting almost all the ethnic groups featured in the book is the core role they played in (literally) building the nation. Of course, this is a well-known fact about immigrant groups in America, and part of the mythology of the American nation. However, Takaki diverges from conventional accounts of ethnicity and labor in his emphasis on the struggle different ethnic groups faced to achieve decent conditions. Takaki shows how this struggle was waged against a (usually white) class who profited immensely from the labor of ethnic populations while subjecting them to unconscionable exploitation. According to Takaki, while it is true that the US's ethnic populations built the nation, this is not a romantic, inspiring story, but rather a brutal history of exploitation and injustice.

To begin with, many of the workers who came to the US and who contributed the most to building the nation did not even have the most fundamental of all human rights: freedom. Takaki shows that the unfreedom of American workers existed on a scale. Those who were least free and most exploited were enslaved black people who were born with slave status and, in most cases, had no chance of seeing freedom in their lifetimes. Indentured servants, meanwhile, were exploited in a similar manner to enslaved people with the distinction that their servitude was usually only for a fixed period. After serving their time, indentured servants were then free to engage in wage labor.

Yet Takaki also shows that in many cases, the conditions of wage laborers—while always fundamentally different than the dehumanizing brutality of slavery—were so bad that in certain ways they resembled a form of slavery. This was particularly true of those who engaged in domestic service and sex work, because these involved the "exploitation of the whole person." Indeed, Takaki argues that Chinese women brought over as indentured servants and forced to work as prostitutes were "virtually slaves," while quoting a Jewish garment worker who also claimed that she and the other women in the factory were treated "like slaves."

Takaki illuminates the terrible conditions of workers in order to de-romanticize the image of different ethnic groups building the American nation. Yet he also shows that members of these groups did not simply allow themselves to be exploited; at every step of the way, they fought back. Takaki's detailing of this struggle means that *A Different Mirror* is as much a history of the labor movement in the US as it is a chronicle of "multicultural America."

Perhaps the most important tactic of struggle Takaki identifies is strikes. Throughout the course of American history, workers of different ethnic groups used strikes as a tactic to achieve just working conditions. In some cases, these were formally organized by established unions. However, Takaki also points to many examples of informal strikes, including those by enslaved people for whom refusing to work was a life-risking activity.

Another way in which Takaki de-romanticizes the story of different ethnic groups building the nation is by showing how this construction was often a brutal, destructive endeavor. The colonization of the continent involved seizing land from Indigenous people, destroying their ways of life and murdering huge percentages of their population. Meanwhile, the expansion of US territory—for example in the border war with Mexico over Texas—involved similarly merciless behavior. Takaki notes that "American soldiers themselves documented the atrocities committed against the Mexican civilian population"—this included killing and raping Mexican civilians for their "own amusement."

Despite all the ways that Takaki de-romanticizes traditional narratives about labor and the construction of the nation, he also emphatically honors the work, struggle, and achievements of all those who participated in this enormous project. Yet he is also keen to show that an organized labor movement is vital to ensure that the profits of workers' toil—and particularly workers from marginalized ethnic groups—do not remain in the hands of a white elite who grow rich from exploitation.

SEGREGATION VS. ASSIMILATION

In simplistic accounts of the question of segregation versus assimilation, it is often suggested that segregation is (broadly speaking) bad and assimilation (broadly speaking) is good. *A Different Mirror* shows that the reality of segregation versus assimilation was far more complex for those immigrating to America. In certain circumstances, some ethnic groups were encouraged or even forced to assimilate in a way that was detrimental to them. Other groups, meanwhile, were forbidden from assimilating and forcibly kept separate from white-settler society. The attitudes of ethnic groups themselves were similarly complex: the question of whether to assimilate or remain segregated varied across different groups, historical contexts, and individuals. Indeed, Takaki ultimately shows that segregation versus assimilation is perhaps a false binary, and that clinging to these two categories can preserve the (false) impression that

the US is a white nation with marginal minority ethnic groups, rather than a diverse, multicultural entity that is as black, brown, Indigenous, Muslim, and Jewish as it is white.

Black and Indigenous people in the US have long faced contradictory treatment, on one hand forced to assimilate while simultaneously being forcibly segregated from white society. Both enslaved African and Indigenous populations were, for example, forbidden from speaking their own languages and practicing their own religions, instead forced to speak English and practice Christianity. At the same time, Indigenous people were also allotted reservations (from within their own stolen land) separate from the rest of the nation, whereas black people were segregated into ghettos and, during the Jim Crow era, prevented from using the same facilities as white people.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, this contradictory treatment corresponded to contradictory feelings within black and Indigenous populations over whether assimilation was actually desirable. Some Native people ended up assimilating into white society—indeed, many were compelled to by virtue of the fact that their own ways of life had been destroyed by white settlers. Meanwhile, during and after slavery, many black people fought fiercely to be considered just as American as white people and to be accorded the rights and freedoms that this entailed. Conversely, there were (and remain) many Indigenous people who refuse to accept the validity of the American nation state and continue to fight for the land that was wrongfully taken from them to be returned. Similarly, during slavery and after abolition, there existed a minority of black people who believed that the descendants of the enslaved would never be treated justly in the US, and that the black population should thus return to Africa, their ancestral home.

Other groups possessed a similarly contradictory relationship to assimilation versus segregation, although this tended to take less extreme forms than it did for Indigenous and AfricanAmerican people. (The primary reason for this is that most of these other groups chose to immigrate to the US, so their existence in the country did not simultaneously constitute the erasure of their ancestral culture.) Some groups were enthusiastic about assimilation. For example, Jews arriving prior to the Second World War often embraced their new American identities and attempted to scrub themselves of signs of their "greenhorn" status. Others, however, did not always see assimilation as the goal of immigration. For example, in the nineteenth century, Chinese immigrants established Chinatowns in different cities across the US. Takaki argues that this was actually a way for Chinese immigrants to mark the US as their home and express their intention to settle in the country for good. Indeed, this case shows that embracing the US as one's home and contributing to American culture can mean preserving one's difference and *adding* that difference to the "melting pot" of the nation.

One key way in which Takaki explores assimilation versus segregation is through **Harvard University**'s evolving admissions policy regarding different ethnic groups. In *A Different Mirror*, Harvard symbolizes entry into the (white) elite of the American nation state. Indeed, being accepted into institutions like Harvard could (up to a certain point) be seen as a measure for being accepted into whiteness. It is telling, for example, that Harvard's President Abbot Lawrence Lowell "viewed the Irish favorably and highlighted Harvard's role in assimilating them into American society. 'What we need,' he had explained earlier, 'is not to dominate the Irish but to absorb them.'" Meanwhile, Lowell restricted the number of Jews that could gain admission every year, aligning himself with Harvard students who declared that "Jews are an unassimilable race, as dangerous to a college as indigestible food to man."

Ultimately, Takaki shows that it is best to let go of the binary of assimilation versus integration and to think in different terms wherein maintaining one's distinct ethnic cultural status should not mean taking on a subordinate position in American society. Illustrating the possibility of a middle way, he describes teachers who encouraged their Mexican students to embrace both their Mexican identity *and* their status as American citizens. Similarly, he quotes an Afghan-American immigrant named Fatema who would like to be both Afghan and American. Afghans have "integrated" instead of assimilated, she explained, "Afghans have kept their uniqueness, the beauty of their culture, and at the same time have thoroughly functioned in today's society. I think that's what integration means." As such, "integration" is presented as one possible third way between the difficult binary of assimilation versus segregation.

CITIZENSHIP, IDENTITY, AND THE AMERICAN DREAM

One of the questions explored in *A Different Mirror* is: What does it mean to be an American citizen? Who is included (and excluded) from American identity and how does this relate to the American Dream? The book questions the idea that all ethnic groups in the nation dream of taking on American identity, and one of the ways it does this by being critical of the narrative of the American dream. Takaki shows that not all members of ethnic groups *wanted* to embrace American identity or even move to America in the first place; indeed, many were forced to do so by desperate circumstances in their home countries (or, in the case of black and Indigenous people, found themselves forced to reside in the American nation without their consent). Yet Takaki is simultaneously critical of the way in which American citizenship has historically been (and continues to be) withheld from certain populations in the US, and emphasizes that everyone in the country deserves equal rights as American citizens.

By presenting a long view of US history beginning with the very first settlers in the country, Takaki illustrates that both American identity and American citizenship are, in a very important way, fictions. This does not mean that they don't have any real-world impact or meaning (they do), but rather that they have no natural, pre-existing meaning: they are inventions whose meaning is contingent and has radically changed over time.

Takaki shows that both American identity and citizenship have been withheld from certain groups in illogical ways. For example, he opens the book with an anecdote about a taxi driver asking Takaki where he's from and commenting that his English is good. Takaki notes that many people do not see him as American even though he was born in the US and his family has been in the country for four generations. This anecdote echoes the comments of a Japanese immigrant Takaki quotes later in the book: "We try hard to be American but Americans always say you always Japanese. Irish become American and all time talk about Ireland; Italians become Americans even if do all time like in Italy; but Japanese can never be anything but Jap." In this quotation, the man illustrates the illogic and hypocrisy of American identity. He indicates that Americanness is seen as a fundamentally *white* identity, one constitutive of multiple different European ethnicities but one that excludes nonwhite immigrants.

Takaki argues that American citizenship works along similarly illogical grounds. For example, the internment of Japanese-American people during the Second World War was a clear violation of these people's rights as American citizens, and proved that although they technically had citizenship, this could be rendered meaningless at the will of the government. For anyone who is not white, American citizenship is contingent and precarious, which of course directly contradicts the ideals of the US as a nation supposedly founded on equal rights for all.

Nowhere is this hypocrisy better illustrated than in the case of black and Indigenous populations, who are neither settlers nor immigrants and thus logically have the most claim to American citizenship, yet who are the groups treated the worst and most likely to be denied their rights as American citizens.

Again, part of the way Takaki deconstructs the ideas of American identity and citizenship is through his critical analysis of the narrative of the American Dream. According to the most simplistic version of this narrative, America is a "country of immigrants" who moved in hope of making a better life for themselves and belonging to a democratic nation where all citizens were equal and free. As the stories of the different ethnic groups featured in *A Different Mirror* show, this narrative is quite far from the reality.

As mentioned above, it is important to point out that two main ethnic groups (black and Indigenous people) never chose to come to America in the first place, and cannot be placed in the categories of immigrants or settlers. Moreover, even for those who *did* come, moving to the US was often less a matter of choice and more one of desperation. Starvation, genocide, and war were common reasons for people to leave their homelands and come to the US. While some of these people dreamed of being American citizens and taking on an American identity, others would have rather stayed in their home country and were skeptical about the American nation. The fact that most ethnic groups faced subordinate treatment in the US suggests that this skepticism was warranted.

Of course, Takaki does not imply that the American Dream was a myth. Indeed, he quotes many immigrants who idealize the US, including an Irish immigrant who wrote back to her father: "Any man or woman without a family are fools that would not venture and come to this plentyful Country where no man or woman ever hungered or ever will and where you will not be seen naked." Similarly, he quotes Jews who see the US as the promised land in which they can finally escape persecution and live freely. Indeed, for many of these immigrants taking on an American identity was in fact the only feasible way to *maintain* their Jewish identity, due to the severity of anti-Semitic persecution back in Europe.

Ultimately, Takaki argues that it should not matter whether people moved to the US by choice or by force, or whether they enthusiastically embrace American identity or reject it. The principles of the US nation state mean that everyone living in the country should be granted the rights of citizens.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

STRIKES

Strikes represented a key way in which ethnic workers in the United States made the country their own, taking matters into their own hands and shaping the nation's future. Performing labor—and particularly labor that was difficult, dangerous, poorly paid (or unpaid), and crucial to the construction of the nation—was a defining feature of the experience of most ethnic groups in the US. Oppressed by both racism and classism, ethnic groups often had little power over their (usually white) employers. One of the key ways that workers *were* able to exercise power and demand better conditions was through strikes. Throughout the book, Takaki gives examples of where workers defied racist assumptions that they were docile, passive, and obedient, instead compelling employers to improve their wages and conditions through strikes.

Furthermore, strikes are a key example of why unity across different ethnicities is so important. Takaki gives many

examples of employers hiring workers of a different ethnicity from the workers on strike to act as "scabs," or strikebreakers. In this sense, strikes show how ethnic divisions can be used against the working-class and keep them oppressed. Indeed, some of the most powerful strikes Takaki depicts are those where workers of different ethnicities went on strike together. This show of solidarity often terrified employers, thus forcing them to capitulate to the strikers' demands.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

As the oldest university in the US, Harvard has played an important role in the building of the nation. Takaki's mentions of Harvard in *A Different Mirror* is less focused on the university's role as a center of knowledge, and more on the part it has played in producing the social hierarchy of America. Who could or could not attend Harvard was often a metric of how integrated, accepted, and assimilated a particular ethnic group was thought to be. However, as Takaki shows, this manifested in a complex way. For example, Abbott Lawrence Lowell, who was Harvard's president in the early 20th century, welcomed the Irish into the student body. Lowell believed that the Irish would assimilate and blend well into American society, and his acceptance of the Irish at Harvard helped promote Irish social standing. At the same time, Lowell was responsible for installing Harvard's Jewish quota in the 1920s. Nonsensically, he argued that Harvard was the least anti-Semitic place imaginable, but that it was also necessary to limit Jewish enrolment to ensure that anti-Semitism didn't take root there. By contrasting the examples of Harvard's treatment of Irish and Jewish students, it becomes possible to see that Harvard was a measure or funnel through which the nation's white elite was produced. Through their acceptance by institutions like Harvard, Irish people became seen as white, and took positions among the elite of the country. For Jewish students, it was much longer before they were seen as "assimilable" and accepted into whiteness.

THE RAILROAD

The railroad is one of the most key pieces of industrial infrastructure in American history. Built by ethnic groups including African Americans, Mexicans, and the Chinese, the railroad symbolizes how the labor of people of color literally built the nation, transforming it into a thriving, modern, technologically advanced country. The railroad allowed people and goods to travel across the US, which in turn significantly shaped the possibilities that existed in the country—including the fact that such a large, diverse area could operate as one nation. Yet the railroad also encapsulates the dark side of this form of labor, which was highly dangerous and underpaid, despite being so crucial to the nation's functioning. Moreover, the railroad also symbolizes the destructive and unjust colonization of land that belonged to indigenous people. It was thanks to the railroad that the frontier could be closed and all of the US settled. Indeed, Takaki describes how Native people were essentially tricked into giving up their land as part of the Indian New Deal, and how railway lines were subsequently built through it. The railroad is thus an ambivalent symbol of American progress, which illuminates how the construction of the nation simultaneously meant the *destruction* of land, people, and ways of life.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Back Bay edition of *A Different Mirror* published in 2008.

Chapter 1: A Different Mirror Quotes

"Race," observed Toni Morrison, has functioned as a "metaphor" necessary to the "construction of Americanness": in the creation of our national identity, "American" has been defined as "white." Not to be "white" is to be designated as the "Other"—different, inferior, and unassimilable.

Related Characters: Ronald Takaki (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 4

Explanation and Analysis

Takaki has just shared a personal anecdote about a taxi driver who complimented his English, assuming that Takaki must be a recent immigrant—when in reality, his family has been in the US for over a hundred years. He explains that the driver's thoughts have been influenced by what Takaki calls "the Master Narrative of American History." This quotation by African-American novelist, essayist, and professor Toni Morrison provides a concise explanation of how the US came to frame itself as a white country, and what it means to be considered a racial "Other." Indeed, Morrison shows that the categories "white" and "Other" are not *descriptive*; rather, they have a political function. Morrison—and *A Different Mirror* as a whole—shows that such categories were invented to propagate myths about the US, and to demonize those who were not accepted according to these myths.

Part 1, Chapter 2: The "Tempest" in the Wilderness Quotes

❝ This demonization of Indians served complicated ends. The enemy was not only external but also internal. To the Puritans, the Indians were like Caliban, a "born devil": they had failed to control their appetites, to create boundaries separating mind from body. They represented what English men and women in America thought they were not, and, more important—what they must not become. As exiles living in the wilderness far from "civilization," the Puritans used their negative images of Indians to delineate the moral requirements they had set up for themselves.

Related Characters: Ronald Takaki (speaker), Caliban

Related Themes:

Page Number: 42

Explanation and Analysis

Takaki has explained how English settlers in the early colonial period waged war against Native people and enslaved them in order to take their land. The settlers asserted that this was divinely ordained, arguing that the Indians were lazy, morally corrupt "savages" who were under the influence of the devil. Here, Takaki explains the multiple purposes that the demonization of Indians served. Importantly, he argues that prejudice against Native people was not only an excuse to exploit and murder Indians and take their land, although this was a very important function of this prejudice. Rather, it was also a way for English settlers to construct a sense of their own identity in contrast to that which they did *not* want to be.

Because "white people" is a flexible and incoherent category whose meaning has changed over time, it is not easy to define this category purely by assigning it positive values. Far more effective is to define white people by virtue of what they are *not*. As Takaki shows, this was particularly relevant to the English settlers because they were nervous about how living far away from their "civilized" homeland would affect them. *A Different Mirror* suggests that the violence white settlers enacted in the name of civilization was ironically what made them savages, unlike the Native people that they sought to demonize.

Part 1, Chapter 3: The Hidden Origins of Slavery Quotes

❝ The planters had come to a crossroads. They could open economic opportunities to white workers and extend political privileges to them, but this would erode their own economic advantage and potentially undermine their political hegemony. Or they could try to reorganize society on the basis of class and race. By importing and buying more slaves, they could reduce their dependency on an armed white labor force and exploit workers from Africa, who could be denied the right to bear arms because of their race.

Related Characters: Ronald Takaki (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 60

Explanation and Analysis

As the Virginia colony grew larger and more workers—both black and white—arrived in America, the landowning elite began to fear that an interracial coalition would rise up against them. These fears were warranted given how this elite class had taken action to increase their own power while denying white indentured workers the opportunity to finish their terms of servitude and imposing lifelong servitude (slavery) on black workers. Ultimately, the fears of the elite class became so extreme that they developed the brutal, dehumanizing system of slavery in order to confer relative privilege to white workers (whose conditions remained terrible) and prevent the possibility of interracial collaboration. Indeed, it was not just slavery that was being invented here but the very system of racialization that remains in place in the US today.

White landowners were unwilling to offer much in the way of material advantages to the lowest class of white workers. Takaki shows that what they offered them instead was *symbolic* privilege—the privilege of white identity, defined against degraded blackness—and the relative advantage of not being enslaved. Of course, what this meant for black people is that they were pushed from the already degraded position of indentured servants to the even more brutally dehumanized status of the permanently enslaved. Not only were black people forced to work as slaves for their entire lives and considered the property of white enslavers, but this status was automatically assigned to their children too, as legally children inherited the status of their mothers. Thus one of the worst and most inhuman social structures in history emerged.

Part 2, Chapter 6: Fleeing "the Tyrant's Heel" Quotes

❝ Many Irish saw parallels between themselves as a degraded people and blacks in bondage. In Ireland, they had identified themselves as the "slaves" of the British, and many supported the abolition of slavery in the United States. In 1842, thousands of them signed a petition that declared: "Irishmen and Irishwomen! treat the colored people as your equals, as brethren." But Irish sympathy for black slaves seemed to disappear with the Atlantic crossing. In America, many of them became antiblack.

Related Characters: Ronald Takaki (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 142

Explanation and Analysis

Takaki has explained that Irish immigrants in the US faced a significant amount of negative stereotyping and prejudice. Indeed, many of the negative stereotypes about black people—such as laziness, lack of discipline, and unintelligence—were also applied to the Irish, and the connection between these two groups was supposed to illuminate how denigrated the Irish were. However, in this quotation, Takaki explores the limits of Irish sympathy for black people, which only really worked in the abstract. As soon as the Irish came to the US and found themselves actually living alongside black people—sharing social proximity and degraded status, and fighting for the same jobs—solidarity disappeared. Through this situation, *A Different Mirror* communicates an important lesson about the flimsiness of empathy and the ways in which white supremacy plays different groups against each other, weakening the power of all who are not accepted into whiteness. Of course, as time went on, Irish people *would* be accepted into the category of whiteness, a turn of events that only deepened their anti-black sentiment.

❝ President Abbott Lawrence Lowell viewed the Irish favorably and highlighted Harvard's role in assimilating them into American society. "What we need," he had explained earlier, "is not to dominate the Irish but to absorb them. We want them to become rich," he added, "send their sons to our colleges, and share our prosperity and our sentiments." In his opinion, however, such inclusionism should be reserved for certain groups. The "theory of universal political equality" he argued, should not be applied to "tribal Indians," "Chinese," or "negroes under all conditions, [but] only to our own race, and to those people whom we can assimilate rapidly." Lowell added that the Irish were unlike Jewish immigrants: they were Christian as well as culturally similar to Americans of English origin. The Irish could, therefore, become "so merged in the American people that they would not be 'distinguished as a class.'"

Related Characters: Ronald Takaki, Abbott Lawrence Lowell (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 152

Explanation and Analysis

Irish immigrants newly arrived in America tended to work menial, dangerous, and degrading jobs. They also faced significant social stigma. However, for the second generation of Irish immigrants, things were quite different. They tended to be much more educated than their parents, and more likely to have white-collar jobs. Here, Takaki delineates the role that Harvard's President Abbott Lawrence Lowell played in accelerating Irish social mobility and welcoming them into the American white elite. By saying that "we want them to become rich," Lowell indicates that absorbing Irish people into the category of whiteness would both be beneficial to Irish people specifically and to the overall project of white supremacy. Indeed, as Takaki later points out, Lowell's willingness to extend the category of whiteness to include Irish people went hand in hand with his deliberate *exclusion* of other groups, which was reflected in his adjustments to Harvard's admissions policy.

Part 2, Chapter 7: "Foreigners in Their Native Land" Quotes

❝ Justifying this racial hierarchy, mine owner Sylvester Mowry invoked the images as well as language used earlier by slavemasters to describe the affection and loyalty of their slaves. "My own experience has taught me that the lower class of Mexicans…," Mowry declared, "are docile, faithful, good servants, capable of strong attachments when firmly and kindly treated. They have been 'peons' for generations. They will always remain so, as it is their natural condition."

But, like the enslaved blacks of the Old South, Mexican workers demonstrated that they were capable of defying these stereotypes of docility and submissiveness. Demanding self-respect and better wages, they repeatedly went on strike.

Related Characters: Ronald Takaki (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 173-174

Explanation and Analysis

When the US acquired vast amounts of territory that used to be part of Mexico in the 19th century, huge numbers of Mexicans suddenly founded themselves living in a foreign country, and being treated as second-class citizens. They were exploited and faced discrimination at work, forced to participate in a caste labor system where Anglos were given better jobs and paid more than Mexicans for doing the same work. Here, Takaki explains that mine owners echoed the words of enslavers by characterizing Mexicans as naturally docile, obedient, and suited to degrading work. Takaki shows how assigning these racial characteristics worked in the interests of those in power; it was a way for them to assuage their own troubled consciences, and imply that they were filling a natural or predestined order of things.

Of course, in reality these ideas were nothing more than a very sinister form racist nonsense. Disproving the stereotypes thrust upon them, Mexicans fought back. This further unites them with enslaved black people, who similarly demonstrated that they were far from the complacent, natural servants that enslavers posited them to be. At the same time, Takaki points out that there were more avenues available to Mexicans for such resistance—such as strikes—than there had been for enslaved people.

Part 2, Chapter 8: Searching for Gold Mountain Quotes

❝ What enabled businessmen like Crocker to degrade the Chinese into a subservient laboring caste was the dominant ideology that defined America as a racially homogeneous society and Americans as white. The status of racial inferiority assigned to the Chinese had been prefigured in the black and Indian past.

Related Characters: Ronald Takaki (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 188

Explanation and Analysis

In the 19th century, Chinese laborers played a vital role in a variety of industries. Many employers were pleased with the hard work and discipline shown by the Chinese workers (as well as the fact that they felt able to pay them low wages). However, a question remained over what role Chinese workers would ultimately play in American society. Many white people argued that the Chinese should serve as a temporary migrant labor force, not settling or becoming part of the US, but rather staying for a fixed period in order to support the construction of the country.

In this passage, Takaki argues that seeing Chinese people as a subservient, temporary workforce who were not part of mainstream American society was made possible by the existing racist logics that existed in the US. White Americans had defined American identity as being equal to whiteness, thereby excluding others and allowing them to become second-class citizens. In this sense, American identity was improvisational; the labor caste system had to be flexible as new waves of immigrants arrived and continually shifted the status quo, yet it was always based on the same principle, which was that only white people had the full benefits of American identity.

Part 3, Chapter 10: Pacific Crossings Quotes

❝ Though they imported workers along with supplies, planters were conscious of the nationalities of their laborers. They were systematically developing an ethnically diverse labor force in order to create divisions among their workers and reinforce management control. Complaining about the frequency of strikes on plantations where the workers were mostly from the same country, plantation managers recommended: "Keep a variety of laborers, that is different nationalities, and thus prevent any concerted action in case of strikes, for there are few, if any, cases of Japs, Chinese, and Portuguese entering into a strike as a unit."

Related Characters: Ronald Takaki (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 237-238

Explanation and Analysis

When Japanese immigrants began coming to the US in the late 19th century, many of them went to Hawaii, where workers were needed on sugar plantations. Planters on the islands imported Japanese laborers along with their families in hope that this would make them stay permanently. As this quotation shows, they were also keen to have a mix of ethnicities represented among their workforce. Landowners were aware of the tensions that could arise as a result of ethnic differences, and also knew that they could stand to benefit from these differences. This substantiates Takaki's argument that in order to gain power and not be exploited, the working classes must unite across ethnicities.

> In their demand for a higher wage, the strikers explained: "We have decided to permanently settle here, to incorporate ourselves with the body politique [sic] of Hawaii—to unite our destiny with that of Hawaii, sharing the prosperity and adversity of Hawaii with other citizens of Hawaii." Significantly, the Japanese were framing their demands in "American" terms. They argued that the deplorable conditions on the plantations perpetuated an "undemocratic and un-American" society of "plutocrats and coolies." Fair wages would encourage laborers to work more industriously and productively. The goal of the strike was to create "a thriving and contented middle class—the realization of the high ideal of Americanism."

Related Characters: Ronald Takaki (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 243

Explanation and Analysis

In 1909, Japanese workers in Hawaii staged a strike, demanding an end to the practice of differing wages according to race. They argued that the labor they performed had nothing to do with race, and that everyone should be paid equally for equal work. This quotation shows that the Japanese workers on strike employed distinctly American language and ideology in order to demonstrate their commitment to the nation and help persuade their employers to agree to their terms. This shows how people of color could use American ideals of democracy, justice, and unity against the American reality of exploitation, inequality, and exclusion.

It also shows that the decision to settle permanently in the US often proved to be an important part of labor organizing. Temporary migrant workers have fewer rights than citizens; their exploitation can arguably be more easily dismissed than the poor treatment of American workers. (Of course, this is not a morally sound view, but as Takaki shows, excluding workers from American identity was a tactic employers often used to justify their exploitation.) By insisting that they were Americans and employing American ideas and rhetoric, Japanese workers not only made the US their home, but fought to make the nation a more just, egalitarian place.

> "We try hard to be American but Americans always say you always Japanese. Irish become American and all time talk about Ireland; Italians become Americans even if do all time like in Italy; but Japanese can never be anything but Jap."

Related Characters: Ronald Takaki

Related Themes:

Page Number: 258

Explanation and Analysis

In this quotation, a Japanese immigrant complains about the double standards applied to Japanese versus European immigrants. Although Japanese immigrants found huge success in the agricultural industry during the beginning of the 20th century, the intense racism of American society meant they faced ongoing exclusion and discrimination. Even the richest Japanese immigrants found that their financial success did nothing to alleviate the prejudice of white Americans.

Many Japanese immigrants made great efforts to assimilate and appear unattached to their homeland, yet were still seen as "Japs." Meanwhile, European immigrants could remain attached to their homeland yet still be included in American identity. This demonstrates how American identity was seen as inherently white—while hybrid European-American identity fit with the logic of the

American nation, non-Europeans could not be recognized as American even if they tried their hardest to detach themselves from their homeland.

Part 3, Chapter 11: The Exodus from Russia Quotes

❝ Expressions of resentment and ethnic epithets began to circulate: "Jews are an unassimilable race, as dangerous to a college as indigestible food to man." […]

President Abbott Lawrence Lowell announced that the college had a "Jewish problem" and led efforts to curb their enrollment. "It is the duty of Harvard," he wrote privately in a letter to a member of the Board of Overseers on March 29, 1922, "to receive just as many boys who have come, or whose parents have come, to this country without our background as we can effectively educate; including in education the imparting, not only of book knowledge, but of ideas and traditions of our people. Experience seems to place that proportion at about 15%."

Related Characters: Abbott Lawrence Lowell, Ronald Takaki (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 286

Explanation and Analysis

Of all the ethnic groups described in the book thus far, Jews who immigrated from Russia prior to the Second World War were most eager to assimilate. They embraced American identity, desperately ridding themselves of signs of their "greenhorn" status. They also had strong desires to gain upward mobility in their new country. Parents and daughters worked hard in difficult, degrading conditions in order to send their sons to college. Yet while Jewish students had a reputation for being hardworking and dedicated to their education, their arrival on college campuses was not always welcomed. This passage illustrates some of the backlash that occurred when Jewish students started enrolling at Harvard. By 1920, the Harvard student population was 20% Jewish, and this caused significant anger among some non-Jewish students.

The first half of the quotation reflects the sentiments of many of the student population at Harvard. Because Jews were not seen as "assimilable," their presence at Harvard was likened to an obstructive, corrupting foreign body. Of course, the claims of these students stands in stark contrast to Takaki's observation that Jews were eager to assimilate, but President Lowell's words in the next part of the quotation help qualify what "unassimilable" means in this context. Although Jews were eager to embrace an American identity, there was (at this historical moment) no sense that they could become part of a *white* identity. Lowell suggests that if there were "too many" Jews at Harvard, their presence would become more obstructive. This indicates that he believed that Harvard could have a smattering of non-white students, but if there were "too many," it would change the nature of the institution itself. In this sense, President Lowell's concerns reflect broader anxieties about non-white immigrants supposedly sullying the "purity" of the American nation.

Part 3, Chapter 12: El Norte Quotes

❝ For many Mexicans, the border was only an imaginary line between Mexico and the United States—one that could be crossed and recrossed at will. Living in El Norte, they created a Mexican-American world called the barrio.

Related Characters: Ronald Takaki (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 307

Explanation and Analysis

Coming to the US as migrant agricultural workers, Mexicans faced severe exploitation and discrimination. During the Great Depression, anti-Mexican sentiment and economic pressures led to the development of repatriation programs, which meant that many Mexicans ended up going back to their homeland. In this quotation, Takaki describes how the US-Mexico border was perceived as an arbitrary, "imaginary" construction by many Mexican immigrants in the US. In many cases, this awareness would have stemmed from the fact that the land where these immigrants lived, or from which their ancestors came, was now considered the US where it had once been Mexico.

When Takaki talks about these immigrants feeling like they could "cross and recross the border at will," this is not meant literally. Rather, it reflects the idea that American and Mexican cultures were intermingled. Indeed, as the section that follows this quotation shows, the establishment of barrios within the US were ways for Mexican immigrants to access their homeland without the leaving the foreign country in which they were situated.

Part 4, Chapter 14: World War II Quotes

In a letter to the NAACP, a soldier wrote: "I am a Negro soldier 22 years old. I won't fight or die in vain. If I fight, suffer or die it will be for the freedom of every black man to live equally with other races." Scheduled to be drafted into the army, a black youth declared: "Just carve on my tombstone, 'Here lies a black man killed fighting a yellow man for the protection of a white man.'"

Related Characters: Ronald Takaki (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 351

Explanation and Analysis

The Second World War illustrated the hypocrisy on issues of freedom, democracy, and equality that existed in the US. While American leaders argued that the US was fighting the war to defend these ideas, Takaki argues that in reality, the conduct of the American government violated them in a serious manner. Japanese Americans were forcibly taken to internment camps, and the army remined segregated. This caused anger in the almost one million black soldiers who fought for the United States during the war, including the two men quoted here. Indeed, these two men represent two different ways of channeling this anger.

The second man quoted feels exasperated and pessimistic. To him, racism in the US undermines the ideals that the war is supposedly being fought for, and thus fighting seems pointless to him—it's just another manifestation of the injustice to which black Americans are subjected. The first man, however, sees the war as an opportunity. He predicts that there will be a connection between US victory and an advancement in the fight for racial equality in the US (which was, in fact, the case). This soldier chooses to fight the war for his *own* reasons, rather than those prescribed by the US military.

"There's one other great incident of humanity that I'm very familiar with, the three hundred years of slavery in my own country, where people for generations were not allowed to be free, subject to the dictates of another race. Held in bondage, forced to work, and forced to do what another person wanted you to do. And if you didn't obey, there were no laws against killing you and destroying your family. So I said, 'As you talk, I see there's a close parallel between the history of my people in America and what's happened to the Jews in Europe.'"

Related Characters: Ronald Takaki

Related Themes:

Page Number: 378

Explanation and Analysis

Despite efforts by Jewish leaders, the US did little to assist the European Jews who were victims of Nazi genocide. Indeed, President Roosevelt and the government rejected plans to offer asylum to Jews fleeing Europe even after they had confirmed knowledge that Hitler was carrying out a plan of murdering all Jews in Nazi-occupied territories. The above quotation consists of the words of an African-American soldier who took part in liberating a Nazi concentration camp. Having heard about the mass murder, torture, and dehumanization to which European Jews had been subjected, the soldier cannot help but see the parallel with his own people.

In some ways, the soldier's words are a moving testament to people's ability to achieve commonality and connection through struggle. The soldier evidently feels sympathy for the Jews of Europe—a people to whom he has no direct connection—because he is unified with them through the shared experience of persecution. At the same time, however, the soldier's words cast a necessary shadow over the US' involvement and victory in the Second World War. While the US framed itself as a heroic liberator of the victims of Nazi oppression, and as a champion of freedom and equality, the reality of American history draws this into question. *A Different Mirror* points out that not only did the US fail to save the 6 million Jews murdered in the Holocaust, but it historically inflicted its own people—particularly black and indigenous people—to similar treatment that Jews suffered under the Nazis.

"I think one man is as good as another so long as he's honest and decent and not a nigger or a Chinaman. Uncle Will [Young, the Confederate veteran] says the Lord made a white man of dust, a nigger from mud, then threw up what was left and it came down a Chinaman. He does hate Chinese and Japs. So do I. It is race prejudice I guess. But I am strongly of the opinion that Negroes ought to be in Africa, yellow men in Asia, and white men in Europe and America."

Related Characters: President Harry Truman (speaker), Ronald Takaki

Related Themes:

Page Number: 381

Explanation and Analysis

When President Roosevelt suddenly died on April 12, 1945, Vice President Harry Truman assumed the presidency. A Southerner, Truman was the descendant of enslavers. This quotation is taken from a letter Truman wrote to his future wife many years before he became president. It contains quite shocking revelations of Truman's racism, which he casually owns up to with the words "race prejudice." Truman attempts to justify his racism on the grounds that he believes people should live in the region of their ethnic origin.

However, *A Different Mirror* argues that this logic is clearly flawed in several ways. To begin with, the fact that there are people of African descent in the US in the first place is the result of slavery. Is it really fair to suggest that African Americans, whose ancestors may have been forcibly brought to the US centuries ago, should be forced to reside in Africa? Yet the real hypocrisy emerges when Truman argues that white people should live in Europe and America. While Europe is the ancestral home of white people, Takaki underscores that the US certainly is not. If Truman was actually following through on his own logic, he would have to argue that Native people should live in America, while white people ought to be confined to Europe. Yet despite the obvious incoherence of the logic in this quotation, the fact that it is expressed by the president demonstrates how powerful it is.

Part 4, Chapter 15: Out of the War Quotes

❝ At a deeper level, the split between Jews and blacks reflected a larger ideological divide, as conflicting visions of equality emerged. The Civil Rights Movement had begun as a struggle for equality for blacks through integration, which was often defined as a condition of equality. To "overcome" meant to integrate the schools, buses, lunch counters, and other public facilities; this goal was expanded to include equality of opportunity for voting and employment. But in 1966, like earlier black nationalists such as Marcus Garvey, Stokely Carmichael and other young militant blacks issued a clarion call for Black Power [...] Equality, for many black militants, now meant self-determination for blacks as a colonized people in America. The cry of black nationalism was for separatism rather than integration, and there was no place for whites, including Jews, in the movement for black liberation.

Related Characters: Ronald Takaki (speaker), Marcus Garvey

Related Themes:

Page Number: 395

Explanation and Analysis

During the Civil Rights Movement, many Jews were passionately involved in the struggle against anti-black racism. However, as the struggle moved northward, the solidarity that existed between African Americans and Jews was tested. Some Jews came to feel that their own prosperity was threatened by advances in black rights. Moreover, as this quotation shows, black people themselves came to question what role Jews and other white people could have within the movement.

As Takaki identifies, the question of voluntary segregation versus assimilation was not new to black people fighting for the flourishing of their people. Yet as this quotation illustrates, this dilemma was particularly difficult in light of the extent to which the Civil Rights movement focused on fighting segregation. Takaki asks: after so many had struggled, suffered, and even died in the battle against segregation, was it justifiable to argue for a form of voluntary segregation in service of black empowerment?

Part 4, Chapter 16: Again, the "Tempest-Tost" Quotes

❝ Facing a rising nativist backlash against illegal immigrants, many Irish newcomers joined Mexican Americans in demanding comprehensive immigration reform that would enable all of them to become legalized. In February 2006, fifteen hundred Irish participated in an immigration reform rally in San Francisco. One of them, Elaine, worked as a nanny. "We're all in the same boat," she told a reporter. "The Irish are lucky because we speak English and we're white. We do get treated better. But we [undocumented immigrants] are all hard workers. We all want a better life." Elaine explained that she would like to become a legal permanent resident so that she could build a stable life in her adopted country without fear of being picked up by immigration authorities. She also would like to take her six-year-old son to Ireland so he can maintain his ties to his grandparents and his Irish heritage.

Related Characters: Ronald Takaki (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 408

Explanation and Analysis

In the 1990s, another wave of Irish immigrants came to the US, many of them illegally. Fleeing terrible economic conditions in Ireland, these undocumented immigrants were forced to take low-paid, undesirable work and to only socialize with others in the Irish community—to do otherwise would be to risk exposing their immigration status. During this time, Irish immigrants teamed up with Mexican Americans in order to fight the "nativist backlash against illegal immigrants" taking place at the time. This perhaps unexpected alliance underlines Takaki's point that people of different ethnicities in the US should unite in order to fight white supremacy and improve their conditions.

The quotation from Elaine highlights how many of the book's major themes intersect with the issue of immigration status. Undocumented immigrants find themselves segregated from society; although their labor is essential to the construction and maintenance of the country, they are forced to accept low pay and poor conditions. Meanwhile, they are also unable to leave the country, which—as Elaine's words indicate—means that they and their children cannot build a relationship with their ancestral homeland. And, as Elaine points out, undocumented status can also ironically confine immigrants to the US and prevent them from embracing the full nature of their identity.

❝ Most of the shop signs in Westminster were in Vietnamese only. But the merchants of Little Saigon have begun to reach out for a larger customer market. In some Vietnamese stores, signs announce: "Se habla español."

Related Characters: Ronald Takaki (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 418

Explanation and Analysis

The Vietnam War drove a large number of Vietnamese refugees to the US. Most of these refugees could speak English, but they nonetheless missed their homeland and wanted to create enclaves of Vietnamese culture in the US, as a result establishing "Little Saigons" in different parts of the country. As this quotation shows, many of the businesses in the Little Saigons only operated in the Vietnamese language. These indicates that, like Chinatowns, Little Saigons were places where Vietnamese immigrants could feel at home again, immersed in their culture and language.

However, the note advertising Spanish-speaking storeowners also shows that Little Saigons—while they may have been segregated from Anglo-American culture—were not totally insular. Indeed, this is a moving example of how other forms of multiethnic integration can exist alongside, or instead of, assimilation into the dominant culture.

❝ "Afghans have integrated instead of assimilated [...] Fremont would be a good example. Afghans have managed to keep their culture and identity. It hasn't been lost in the idea of assimilation. That's when you totally and completely become the culture that you have immigrated to and completely lose your people's original identity. Afghans have kept their uniqueness, the beauty of their culture, and at the same time have thoroughly functioned in today's society. I think that's what integration means."

Related Characters: Ronald Takaki

Related Themes:

Page Number: 426

Explanation and Analysis

Afghan refugees who came to the US fleeing war and oppression established communities where they could retain their cultural identity while also learning to the thrive in their new homeland. One of these communities was in Fremont, California, where in 2007 a conference took place that explored Afghan-American identity. In this quotation, one of the participants—a young woman named Fatema who was born in the US to parents who had fled the Soviet invasion—reflects on the Afghan community in which she grew up.

Fatema's words highlight one of the most important ideas in *A Different Mirror*. Rather than opposing assimilation and segregation, it is important to remember there is a third way, what she calls "integration." According to Fatema, a community is integrated when it has settled and embraced life in the US, without having discarded its own cultural identity and practices. Indeed, one of the most beautiful aspects of any multiethnic nation is that each community brings a different, unique way of life to the broader culture. Retaining this way of life does not mean that a community has not properly integrated; rather, it shows that they feel comfortable enough to maintain their own identity while embracing their new homeland.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

CHAPTER 1: A DIFFERENT MIRROR

Ronald Takaki describes flying into Norfolk, Virginia, and talking to the taxi driver who collects him from the airport. During the conversation, the driver asks how long Takaki has been in the United States, commenting that his English is very good. Takaki explains that his grandfather immigrated to the US from Japan in the 1880s. Yet he knows that despite how long his family has been in the country, the driver does not really think of him as American. Takaki thinks about how Virginia was the beginning of "multicultural America." This was where English colonizers seized land from Native people, and where the first slave ship arrived carrying Africans to the continent.

The introduction of the book shows how history is woven into the way the US operates in the present. Takaki highlights that when the colonizers arrived in Virginia, they intended to found a country of and for white people—despite the fact that there were already indigenous people to whom the land belonged. In a sense, this history of erasure is repeated when the taxi driver assumes that Takaki is not American just because he's not white. The driver continues to buy into the myth that America is a country of white people.

Takaki knows that the driver's thoughts were influenced by what Takaki calls the "Master Narrative of American History," which falsely asserts that being American means being white. If you are not white, you are "Other," and treated as "inferior" and "unassimilable." The Master Narrative can be attributed to Frederick Jackson Turner, a historian who gave a talk in 1893 about the closing of the frontier. Turner argued that a new, distinctly American culture had emerged from the imposition of civilization onto the "savagery" of Native life and the natural landscape.

Here Takaki explains in more detail how the myth of white America works. Clearly, no one can deny that there have always been nonwhite people in the US. However, these people were dismissed, degraded, and kept separate from white society in order to preserve the myth that the country was white.

Shortly after, a **Harvard** professor named Oscar Handlin argued that immigrants were not just a part of American history; "they *were* American history." However, his study of immigrants was limited to those who came from Europe. Takaki explains that today, overhauling the Master Narrative is urgent. White people will soon be a minority in the US, and because of the Master Narrative, most Americans have not been properly educated about the history of people of color in the nation. Educational institutions are beginning to realize this, and are establishing requirements in ethnic studies.

The quote from Oscar Handlin shows how knowledge and ignorance can intersect, creating dangerous false beliefs. Takaki shows that Handlin was right to argue that the story of immigrants is the story of the US, but he was wrong in asserting that this was limited to immigrants from Europe, who represent only a portion of the overall story.

However, scholarship on ethnicity thus far has tended to only focus on one ethnic group at a time, which means the "bigger picture" is difficult to see. Takaki aims to study "race and ethnicity inclusively and comparatively," examining many different groups side by side. Briefly introducing each group in the study, he begins with African Americans, who have been a vital component of the nation since its founding, yet who have been severely exploited and dehumanized for most of American history. Asian Americans also have a long history in the US, often brought in as much-needed labor and then shunned as "unassimilable" Others.

The story of different ethnic groups in the US is so rich and complex that it is understandable why people usually focus on only one group at a time. However, while these studies provide crucial, detailed information, they can also miss vital chances to have a broader, comparative view. Moreover, they may not adequately emphasize the extent to which the US is one whole *made of many diverse strands.*

Many of the first Irish immigrants arrived as indentured servants; millions more later sought an escape from the deathly clutch of the Potato Famine. Jewish immigrants, meanwhile, were also seeking an escape from death, this time from the Russian pogroms and, later, the Holocaust. Many were disappointed by America's lack of support for Holocaust victims, and as a result became important figures in the fight for (African American) civil rights.

Takaki will treat all these histories in more detail in the book to come. For now, he is providing an overview of the content he will cover, while creating a sweeping account of the diverse reality of American history.

Many Mexican Americans did not actually choose to move to the US, but rather found themselves residents of the nation after the 1846-48 war shifted the border. Today, they represent the greatest proportion of undocumented immigrants to the US, and there remains disagreement over how to best address this issue. The book also looks at Muslim Americans, and specifically the Afghani refugees who came to the US following the 1979-89 war and rise of the Taliban. Following 9/11, many Afghan Americans were terrified of facing retaliation in their new home. The US invasion of Afghanistan in 2002 also confirmed that Afghan Americans would not be able return to their homeland anytime soon.

Crucially, Takaki contextualizes the current boom in undocumented Mexican immigrants by pointing out that in the nineteenth century, the US forced many Mexicans to live within its boundaries. Takaki implicitly asks readers the following question: considering that the American government took such an action, is it really fair to demonize Mexicans who now illegally cross a border that was arbitrarily extended into their country in the first place?

Native people were in what is currently the US thousands of years before Columbus "discovered" it. The creation of the American nation state meant the forced eradication of Native people and their ways of life. In 1801, Thomas Jefferson expressed hope that one day Americans would be a homogenous people who all spoke the same language. However, the demand for labor meant that workers from all over the world came to the country, bringing with them vastly different languages and cultures.

Here Takaki juxtaposes two contradictory desires at the heart of the founding of the US. On one hand, the US was a country built on an already existing diversity of tribes or nations—indigenous cultures that had been there for many centuries, and between which there was already much variation. Yet the founders of the country, such as Jefferson, wanted to create an artificially homogenous state.

Ethnic tensions were rife, for example, between black and Irish people, who found themselves pitted against one another and developed deep resentments. However, different ethnic groups ultimately shared much as well: "labor experiences, hopeful dreams, and, above all, values." Indeed, different groups were united through their shared participation in the US' booming industries. These industries were literally tied together by the Transcontinental **Railroad**, which was built by Chinese, Irish, black, Japanese, and Mexican-American workers.

One of the most important ideas in the book is the way that people of vastly different backgrounds are united by their experience in labor. Indeed, because the US was a country constructed so quickly and over such a large area, the sheer amount of labor needed was staggering. As a result, a huge number of people came together from different parts of the world and were unified by their efforts.

United by "shared class exploitation," workers of different ethnicities at times maintained solidarity, such as by going on **strike** together. Struggling together as workers could make people forget ethnic differences. Likewise, immigrants of different ethnicities were linked by their hope in the American nation. Rumors would spread in various home countries depicting the US as a country of freedom, abundance, and possibility. Immigrants had faith that the Declaration of Independence assured equality for all.

Sometimes, it can seem as if the faith immigrants had in the promises of American freedom and equality were naïve—particularly considering the extent of the bad treatment many suffered in the US. However, as Takaki's mention of strikes indicates, immigrants were not just passive recipients of a culture that could be highly racist and unjust—they also actively shaped that culture into something better.

The Civil War was initiated by enslavers who desperately opposed the abolition of slavery, and President Lincoln originally refused to allow black people to serve in the Union Army in fear of rebellion by those from the border states. However, a shortage of men led him to allow African Americans to serve. In the end, 186,000 black men fought, which proved essential to Union victory. Later, President Roosevelt's decision not to desegregate the army during the Second World War led many people of color to question whether they should fight for a country where they were treated as second-class citizens. Many did serve, only to find that they would have to keep fighting for equal treatment following the end of the war.

As will become clear later in the book, wars tend to mark major shifts in the history of race and citizenship in the US. During wartime, questions of loyalty, patriotism, and unity are brought into stark relief, and hypocrisy over the way that people of color and noncitizens are treated becomes exposed. In a similar way to how the demand for labor accelerated the importation of immigrants to the US, the need for soldiers gave those excluded from society a role in fighting for the nation.

In the 1960s, a wave of legislation helped promote justice for immigrants and citizens of color. In 1988, the government issued an apology and compensation for the Japanese-American victims of internment camps during the Second World War. The stories of ethnic minorities in the US have not always been heard, but listening to them is a powerful and vital way of understanding the nation. It can be painful for people of color to look in the "mirror" of American history and not see themselves reflected. The African-American poet Langston Hughes insisted that we "let America be America again," meaning honoring the American principles of freedom and equality for all. Despite exploitation and oppression, ethnic minorities have built a rich and diverse nation, and it is important to recognize this truth.

Ultimately, Takaki takes a fairly optimistic stance when it comes to both the history and future of race relations in the US. Although he is frank about the suffering, exploitation, and injustice that has characterized much of the experience of ethnic minorities in the US, he also retains hope in the ideals upon which the country was founded, and even more so on the achievements of ethnic minorities in holding the nation to account on these ideals.

PART 1, INTRODUCTION: BEFORE COLUMBUS: VINLAND

When Vikings landed on the North American continent, the Native people living there must have thought they looked like strange, pale-skinned monsters. The Viking expedition was led by Thorvald Eiriksson, who journeyed over from Greenland. He had heard about a mystical, fertile land called "Vinland" (currently Newfoundland) from his brother. Thorvald and his men were attacked by a group of Indigenous people, and Thorvald died. However, another expedition followed, and similarly encountered the indigenous Beothuk people. Despite not being able to understand each other, the two groups exchanged goods.

This introductory passage dispels the myth that Christopher Columbus was the first European to set foot on the American continent. Although this might seem trivial, it sets the stage for further myths that Takaki will expose as false. It also provokes the question of what purpose these myths serve. Perhaps insisting that Columbus was the first European in North America helps bolster the idea that he was fated to conquer the land.

However, when the Beothuks returned and found a whole Viking settlement in the same spot the following year, conflict erupted. The Vikings ended up abandoning the settlement and returning home, fearing "terror and trouble" from the indigenous population. This all took place around 1000 AD, and although it was preserved in Viking oral history, it was not officially acknowledged until the 1960s when archaeologists discovered the remains of the settlement. In 1492, the next Europeans to arrive in North America—led by Christopher Columbus—at first believed they were in Asia. At this point, colonization began.

Unlike the later settlers, the Vikings had the humility to fear the indigenous population to whom the land belonged. Of course, the difference was that the Vikings had only primitive tools and resources, whereas the later wave of European colonizers had an enormous amount of wealth and weapons. They came to the country prepared to violently take over.

PART 1, CHAPTER 2: THE "TEMPEST" IN THE WILDERNESS

Takaki explains that the English Puritans were brought to the US by "an economic reality"—population increase, famine, and the evictions of farmers. The North American continent provided an abundance of resources, and the Puritans invented a religious justification of their decision to colonize the land. The indigenous people of Massachusetts Bay were at first very intrigued by the newcomers. The arrival of white people who would steal Native land and kill the population had been accurately foretold by Native chiefs, shamans, and prophets years before the event actually took place.

Here, Takaki contrasts the two starkly different belief systems held by indigenous and white people, respectively. To the white settlers, colonizing America was something they had a religious right to do. Meanwhile, Native people saw colonization as an act of destruction, which is a viewpoint that Takaki affirms throughout the book. Both of these interpretations were built into the respective spiritual systems of each group of people.

Meanwhile, back in England William Shakespeare depicted the colonization of an unknown land in his 1611 play *The Tempest*. On the surface, the play tells the story of a Italian nobleman (Prospero) who is sent into exile with his daughter, gets stranded on an island, and colonizes it. The island is inhabited by an indigenous person called Caliban. Takaki explains that it's easy to see how *The Tempest* could be a metaphor for the colonization of America, particularly considering that it was written at an early stage of colonization, after European settlers had encountered Native Americans but before the Indian Wars.

Here, Takaki draws on the technique of literary scholarship in order to understand a crucial part of history. Literary scholars read a play like The Tempest not necessarily at surface value, but instead for its veiled depiction of events that Shakespeare and his audience would have been thinking about at the time. In this light, it becomes clear that the story Shakespeare depicts is really a way of reflecting on the unfolding story of colonialism.

During Shakespeare's time, Queen Elizabeth I had encouraged Englishmen to pursue "private colonization projects" in Ireland. There was already an established tradition of depicting Irish Catholics as "pagan savages," demonizing their tribal social system and characterizing them as lazy, morally corrupt, and unable to properly cultivate their land. English laws made the Irish into second-class citizens and prohibited intermarriage between the Irish and English. Meanwhile, English colonizers brutally murdered Irish families, including women and children. This brutality would then be repeated on Native people in America, in some cases by the very same men who had earlier colonized the Irish. Indeed, these colonizers claimed that Native people reminded them of the Irish.

One of the more painful aspects of this book is the way that systems of oppression repeat across time, and are transferred to apply to different groups of people. This is a particularly tragic way in which multiple ethnic groups are united across difference. In this case, although there is perhaps little that inherently links Native and Irish people, they are nonetheless brought together by the brutality to which they were both subjected by English colonizers.

The Tempest was inspired by a ship named *The Sea Adventure* getting caught in a shipwreck in the islands of Bermuda in 1609. Takaki points out that Shakespeare's description of the island on which Prospero gets stranded directly echoes the words colonizers used to describe the New World. Ever since Columbus first returned to England, he and other colonizers brought back captive indigenous people to be cruelly displayed as exhibits. The English characterized indigenous people as primitive "savages" who were "libidinous beyond measure." However, colonizers also asserted that Native people could be "civilized" through education. Native children were taught English and converted to Christianity.

Here readers begin to see that the English colonizers' characterization of Native people was not reflective of reality, but rather an invention to serve their own interests. By saying Native people were primitive, brutal, and immoral, colonizers gave themselves the right to treat them cruelly. At the same time, by positing that Native people could be "civilized" through forced education, colonizers made it their duty to conquer Native land and put the inhabitants under their control.

The first English settlement, in what is currently Virginia, was the land of the Powhatan people. Contrary to English accounts, they had a rich, complex culture and thriving agricultural system. When the first 120 colonizers began starving to death, the Powhatans rescued them by bringing them food. The next year, more settlers arrived, and the starvation became so bad that the settlers resorted to cannibalism. Settlers attacked the Native communities, including children, and burned down their villages. At that point, Chief Powhatan determined that there was no hope of living harmoniously alongside the settlers.

The book suggest that the settlers' actions can't be justified, but they are made all the more horrifying by the fact that Native people originally extended kindness and generosity toward them. Indeed, the selfless decision of the Powhatans to rescue the settlers from dying showed that they were in fact the far more "civilized" people, compared with the selfish and brutal acts of the settlers.

The colonizers, meanwhile, began growing tobacco to export, and this led their population to increase tenfold in five years. In 1622, Native people killed 300 colonizers, hoping to drive them away. The colonizers used this as a reason to declare war and announce themselves the rightful owners of Native land. They employed "sadistic" tactics, such as serving poisoned wine at what was supposed to be a peaceful meeting. They continued to sabotage Native ways of life in a manner that amounted to genocide.

The detail about how tobacco farming was related to the expansion of the settler population is crucial. What allowed the settlers to colonize the land was, essentially, capitalism: they could sell goods at a profit to a market that existed back in Europe (and across the colonized world). This gave them the power to colonize.

All this took place in Virginia; in New England, Native people were already farming the rich and abundant landscape. Corn was the most important crop for the various tribes there, and their agricultural systems were highly sophisticated. Almost all of the fertile land available was already in use by Native communities. However, this began to change as the Native population died in huge numbers from diseases the colonizers brought over from Europe. Indigenous people had no immunity to these diseases, and thus could not recover from them. The settlers chose to assert that this proved that God was "making room" for them.

In this passage, Takaki makes it inescapably clear that the genocide of Native people was essential to the construction of the US nation. Although Native people would later sign treaties handing over their land to colonizers—treaties that were themselves unjust—in this case, it was the literal mass death of Native people due to settler influence that "made room" for white takeover.

The colonizers often built settlements on top of what had been Indian villages, surviving by using the stores of seeds that remained there. As such, "Indian death came to mean life for the Pilgrims." The colonizers continued to justify their theft of Native land by arguing that Native people were lazy and were "squandering America's resources." In 1675-76, a group of Native tribes banded together to attack the colonizers in what would come to be known as King Philip's War. Although the colonizers suffered huge losses, thanks to support from England the Indians were defeated, with many of them dying or becoming enslaved by the English.

Here, Takaki illustrates in unequivocal terms the extent to which the US was founded on indigenous genocide. In more ways than one, the settlers were doing everything they could do erase the existence of Native people and their ways of life. To add to the horror, they still relied on indigenous knowledge and resources (such as the seed reserves) in order to flourish themselves.

Ministers like Rev. Cotton Mather enthusiastically spread the idea that wars against Native people were "conflict[s] between the Devil and God." Demonizing Natives was not just an excuse to murder them and take their land; it was also a way for the Puritans to define themselves against the uncivilized Other that they feared they might become. They worried that living in the untamed environment of the New World so far away from what they considered civilization could make them become "Indianized." Sensationalist stories about white settlers losing themselves to devil-worship spread around the colony.

This is a crucial passage in which Takaki demonstrates how racism is used to build a positive image of whiteness for white people. Indeed, scholars of race like Takaki show that a category like "white people" has no inherent meaning. Its meaning has to be invented, and in the case of white settlers this was achieved through the strategic demonization of Native people.

As the colony expanded and developed, settlers became more adamant that Native people should have no place in their "well-ordered Commonwealth." Some settlers, such as Mary Rowlandson, who was captured by Natives during King Philip's War, gave accounts of Native people that both confirmed settler fantasies about devil worship and suggested that Native people were generous and sympathetic. Yet this image was diminished by the vehement racism that dominated settler attitudes toward indigenous people.

Once the dehumanizing narrative about indigenous peoples had been established, it took on a life of its own. Settlers understood Indians through the negative, distorting lens that had been produced by racism. And because it was in their interests to propagate the demonization of Native people, few did anything to dispel this false image.

The increasing prosperity of the settler colony meant an increase in starvation, sickness, and death for Native people. Following the Revolutionary War, the Founding Fathers faced a dilemma regarding Indians. Thomas Jefferson both praised the "friendship" that theoretically existed between settlers and Indians, while also arguing that "Indians had to be civilized or exterminated." Becoming civilized would require completely abandoning Native ways of life. Jefferson asserted that Native people themselves were to blame for their own demise, while also claiming that the expanded population of settlers meant that settlers had the right to decide the fate of Native communities.

Jefferson's words once again highlight the illogical nature of colonizers' attitude toward Native people. On one hand, Jefferson removed settlers' agency and their role in causing the genocide of the Indians by arguing that Indians had brought this upon themselves. At the same time, Jefferson asserted that settlers should have total control over the fate of the country and the Native people who still lived there.

Jefferson called Indians both the "children" and "neighbors" of white settlers. He maintained that settlers had acquired Native land by completely legal, legitimate means, and said that it was up to Native communities if they wished to sell more land. But, Takaki points out, Jefferson then deliberately created economic and social conditions that essentially forced Natives to sell their land. Ultimately, Jefferson wanted Native people to disappear.

Here Takaki dispels more myths: mainly, the idea that white settlers acquired Native land by just and fair means. (Whether or not this was "legal" arguably doesn't matter, although in some cases it was not. Considering it was English people themselves who had written these laws, they were not an indication of justice.)

PART 1, CHAPTER 3: THE HIDDEN ORIGINS OF SLAVERY

Caliban could have also been African. Like Indians, Africans were also captured during the 16th century and taken to England; although they were intended to be translators rather than exhibits, the English population gawked at them as they had done at the captive Natives. Already during this time, a racist ideology had developed within England wherein blackness was associated with dirt and sin, and whiteness with sacred purity. The English once again accused Africans of being devil-worshipers possessed by uncontrolled sexual desire.

Here, Takaki points out another way in which the idea of whiteness was constructed in contrast to a demonized Other: in this case, black people. There is also a specific commonality between the demonization of black and Native peoples, which rests in accusations of sexual deviance. In reality, this was the product of the hatred and fear of sex that existed in European Christian society.

When *The Tempest* debuted in London, there was as yet no plan to bring Africans to the Virginia colony. However, in 1619, a Dutch man sold English settlers in America twenty black men who had probably been captured as prisoners of war in Africa. The formerly enslaved abolitionist Olaudah Equiano wrote an account of the absolute horror of being captured from his Igbo homeland and brought to America on a slave ship. Yet although the first Africans brought to America were "sold," they were likely indentured servants rather than slaves.

Crucially, Takaki reminds his readership that the system of slavery that came to exist in the US did not just pop up out of nowhere. Rather, it had to be gradually built into the horrifying, dehumanizing system it eventually was.

For many years, there remained fairly few Africans in Virginia, even as huge numbers of captive Africans were being brought to the Caribbean. Gripped by racism, English colonizers were likely hesitant for there to be too large a population of Africans in their settlement. Instead, they brought white indentured servants from England, Germany, and Ireland to work on the tobacco plantations. Many of these were convicts, while others had been tricked or kidnapped. In America, black and white workers were illegible to each other, and "mutual feelings of fear and hostility undoubtedly existed." However, they were united by their oppression.

Racism is a flexible force; it can have two completely opposing effects depending on the context in which it occurs. In the early years of the nation's history, racism actually prohibited settlers from importing in very many Africans, because they were concerned about spoiling the supposed purity of the population. Later, however, racism became the justification for importing millions of enslaved people and keeping them in a position of unbearable subjugation.

Sometimes white and black workers ran away together, while others engaged in sexual liaisons. If this was discovered, both parties were punished. Over time, black workers found themselves with fewer and fewer rights. They lost the right to bear arms, and soon the first black workers were assigned enslaved status. They began to be sold as property, required to work not for a set period of time but for the rest of their lives. By the 1650s, about 70% of black people in Virginia had slave status. During this time, most planters still preferred using white indentured servants to meet their need for labor. However, the number of these workers coming to Virginia eventually began to decrease, and at this point there was a drastic increase in the rise of Africans brought to America.

Again, a historical event as awful as slavery does not just occur overnight. If it did, it may face more opposition from people who would be rightly shocked and horrified by it. However, when processes develop slowly—including genocide and systems of enslavement—people gradually grow accustomed to it. At the same time, the intensity of anti-blackness among the Virginia settler population was so high that perhaps they would have accepted any amount of black suffering from the beginning.

The Tempest depicts an "interracial class revolt" in which the white jester and butler conspire with Caliban to overthrow Prospero. The jester and butler at first think of Caliban as a "monster," but eventually agree to work alongside him once they realize what they could gain from it. In the end, however, Prospero thwarts their plot.

The notion of interracial class struggle and resistance is a crucial element of A Different Mirror. *Takaki continually asserts how powerful ethnic groups could be if they chose to work together against their oppressors.*

White indentured servants hoped to become landowners after their servitude ended; America thus represented an opportunity for them to become more wealthy and respected. However, these plans were thwarted by planters whose wealth, status, and power had already vastly increased due to the tobacco boom. These planters established themselves as elite, increased the terms of indentured servitude, and imposed harsher punishments for running away. Frustrated and angry, white workers began planning rebellions. In 1663, nine workers were convicted of conspiring to overthrow the Virginia government, and several were executed.

Here, Takaki provides an important reminder that poor white people were also oppressed in colonial Virginia, although the nature of their oppression was fundamentally different from that of black and Native people. The exploitation of white indentured servants shows that the promise of the US as a land of abundance, freedom, self-reinvention, and social mobility was a lie. Like England, Virginia was controlled by a wealthy elite.

Yet this did not quell the unrest. The landowning class were particularly fearful of the fact that the resentful white workers were armed. In 1676, a planter named Nathaniel Bacon led a rebellion, creating a militia that included many white workers and attacking Indians of the Susquehannah and Occaneechee tribes. Governor William Berkeley charged Bacon with treason, and Bacon marched his army of 500 to Jamestown. At this point, black workers also joined the army, burning Jamestown down. However, government forces managed to suppress the rebellion by tricking the workers into believing that they were being freed, only to then return them to their "masters."

This passage highlights the complicated convergence of racism and interracial solidarity. The fact that black workers joined a rebellion that began with the slaughter of indigenous people highlights the sad fact that black people were capable of anti-Native violence (in the same way that Native people could be vehemently anti-black).

Yet even though the uprising had been quashed, the landowning elite remained nervous. The planters decided to seek a more permanent solution, involving mass importing enslaved Africans as the primary source of labor in the colony. By the end of the 17th century, enslaved people counted for almost half of the colony's population. Every new African who arrived on America's shore had enslaved status. The new labor system was a caste system, wherein white people were given total control over the enslaved Africans. There was also an expansion of what it meant to be black, known as the "one-drop rule." Mixed-race children were automatically enslaved.

Here, the tragic fact emerges that the white American elite caused an unimaginable amount of suffering through slavery simply because they wanted to protect their own power. Indeed, they would rather institute the torture and genocide of black people as part of the nation than risk the possibility of ceding power to workers—regardless of their race.

Thomas Jefferson was himself an enslaver, and profiting from slave labor made him one of the richest men in Virginia. By 1822 there were 267 people enslaved on his property. Jefferson himself admitted to using cruel punishments on enslaved people. Paradoxically, he also claimed that slavery was "an immoral institution" that clashed with American values. He was tormented by guilt about being an enslaver and said that he planned to free the enslaved people he held captive once his debts were paid off, but this never happened. He also lamented the negative impact of slavery on white children, who were harmed by their proximity to such a cruel and perverse institution.

Thomas Jefferson's concerns for white children might at first seem absurd, but of course white children were harmed by growing up in proximity to slavery. Witnessing (and being a direct or indirect participant in) such brutal dehumanization has a severely negative impact on a person. Of course, this does not mean that white children were the real victims of slavery. Rather, it reminds readers of what a horrifically toxic and destructive institution slavery was.

While Jefferson wanted slavery to eventually be abolished, he also believed that black people would have to be removed from America. Noting the difficulty of this task, he advised a gradual removal, which would include sending all enslaved children to Haiti (the first and only country in which enslaved people had rebelled, abolished slavery, and become an independent black nation). Jefferson was adamant that black people were intellectually inferior to white ones, and dismissed the writings of Phyllis Wheatley, a formerly enslaved African woman who criticized slavery as an evil hypocrisy.

Jefferson's ideas about removing black people from the US illustrates how powerful anti-blackness was as a force structuring American society. Even those who theoretically favored ending slavery were afraid to do so because they did not want to live among a free black population.

The black mathematician Benjamin Banneker condemned Jefferson's hypocrisy in a letter to him, accusing him of failing to enact the principles of the American Revolution. Jefferson's diplomatic reply concealed the fact that he maintained that Banneker, like all black people, was simple-minded. He also supported the myth that black people were sexually aggressive and was particularly horrified by the idea of miscegenation. This was ironic, considering that Jefferson himself fathered several children by an enslaved woman named Sally Hemings. During Jefferson's life, rumors and satire about his "relationship" with Hemings abounded in the press. Jefferson nonchalantly denied the charges.

Sexual abuse was a pervasive feature of slavery, and indeed of the racist society that persisted after slavery was abolished. Because enslaved black women were denigrated to the status of property, and because they had no legal rights, white men essentially had free reign to sexually assault black women at will. Indeed, it is difficult to overemphasize the role that sexual violence played in creating and upholding the system of slavery.

In 1784, shortly after the death of his wife, 41-year-old Jefferson went to Paris with his daughter. Three years later, his teenage daughter Polly joined him, accompanied by her enslaved servant, 15-year-old Sally. Sally was very light-skinned and white-passing, and was known to be extremely beautiful. According to Sally's daughter, this was when Sally became Jefferson's "concubine." Because she was free in France, Sally did not want to return to America with Jefferson. However, she did go, and gave birth to five children by Jefferson (one of whom died in infancy). Today, DNA tests have confirmed that Jefferson was indeed the father of these children.

Throughout history (and in many cases still today), Sally Hemings is described as Jefferson's "mistress" or even lover. Indeed, their relationship is romanticized as a love affair between two people whose passion overrode their societal separation. Although it's impossible to know what Sally's feelings were, Takaki points out that the power Jefferson held over her and the degradation of her position as an enslaved woman means that what occurred between them was, in reality, rape.

Jefferson's belief that black people would have to be expelled from America following abolition rested in his fear that the formerly enslaved would seek revenge against their captors in a "race war." Yet this was also part of his reason for wanting abolition in the first place. As long as slavery existed, the threat of violent rebellion was too great. At the same time, the institution of slavery was so widespread and embedded that it could not be easily undone.

This concluding passage summarizes the mess of entangled issues conjured by the endurance of slavery in the nineteenth century. Every option provoked anxiety in the minds of white people. Deep down, they knew that the damage of slavery would be impossible to do undo.

PART 2, INTRODUCTION: THE RISE OF THE COTTON KINGDOM

Takaki explains that the United States was founded on a contradiction. While the Declaration of Independence asserted that "all men are created equal," enslaved people officially counted as only "three fifths" of a person. Around this time, many Northern states were abolishing slavery, while in many parts of the South it was becoming less profitable and, hence, popular. However, in 1793, everything changed with Eli Whitney's invention of the cotton gin. Suddenly, the profits that could be made from slavery skyrocketed, not only in cotton-producing states like Georgia and Texas but also "slave-breeding states" like Virginia and Maryland.

This passage shows how the profit motive of capitalism and the ideology of racism combined to keep black people enslaved in the nineteenth century, even when slavery seemed to be subsiding and support for abolition growing. The book suggests that just one of these factors would perhaps not be enough to support the continued existence of slavery; however, the combination of both was powerful and deadly.

In 1800, the US was a mostly rural nation, but by 1860 there was a greater diversity of industries and greater concentration of citizens in urban areas. Huge profits were being made in agriculture, manufacturing, shipping, and banking. However, the cotton trade was by far the most powerful source of wealth in the nation. The "Cotton Kingdom" owed its existence to the seizing of more Native land and the proliferation of slavery. The sale of huge amounts of Indian land in the South was quickly followed by huge increases in the enslaved populations of Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. Meanwhile, the arrival of more and more nonblack workers from around the world further stimulated the nation's diverse, booming economy.

Again, this passage makes clear why even those who were in theory ideologically opposed to slavery were resistant to ending the institution: it was simply making too much money. As Takaki shows throughout the book, profit was the driving force behind many major occurrences in American history.

PART 2, CHAPTER 4: TOWARD "THE STONY MOUNTAINS"

Where Jefferson believed in trying to cajole Native people to sell their land, President Andrew Jackson favored taking it by force. As a young man, Jackson had profited enormously from buying Chickasaw land and opening it to white settlement. He held extremely racist views about Native people, whom he had brutally fought in the early 1800s. He expressed a desire to "distroy" [sic] the indigenous population, asserting that it was actually his duty to do so. Jackson was "revered as a hero of Indian wars," and elected president in 1828.

Throughout the book, Takaki illuminates the horrifying reality of the racist views held by presidents and other leaders across American history. While some may argue that President Jackson was a "product of his time," Takaki pushes readers to think critically about the ways in which US presidents are often revered within the educational system, and what this means to people of color.

Once in office, Jackson claimed it was not within his power to intervene when states violated treaties they'd made with tribes or forced laws on indigenous communities. In 1832, the Supreme Court ruled that states could not impose their jurisdiction in this way, but Jackson refused to implement this ruling. He did not believe that Native people could be integrated into settler society, and thus established an area west of the Mississippi river where Native people could live freely and govern themselves. He advised Native communities to move there, saying that they should make the same sacrifice of abandoning their ancestral homeland and European settlers had done.

This passage shows that segregation and integration do not align neatly with racism and anti-racism. Throughout history, there have been both racist and anti-racist segregationists, who believe that Native people should live separately from white people for different reasons. Meanwhile, there have likewise been those who want an anti-racist form of integration, and those who hope to eliminate the existence of ethnic populations by assimilation.

Jackson characterized Native people as "children" and said he wanted to treat them fairly, like a parent should. However, he did not regret the enormous number of Native deaths that had thus far occurred as a result of colonization. The area he was clearing by pressuring Native people to move would become the home of the Cotton Kingdom. The land-allotment program, which was originally established by Jefferson, was the main way in which land was taken from the Creek, Chickasaw, and Choctaw tribes.

It is obvious here that the claim to see a particular group of people as "children," besides being infantilizing, is a way of disguising extreme cruelty and control as love. What Jackson really wanted was to have absolute control over Native people, making all their decisions for them, in order to remove them from American society and, eventually, exterminate them completely.

For example, the 1805 Choctaw treaty aimed to turn Choctaws into farmers, ignoring the fact that the tribe had an advanced agricultural system long before colonization. Before settlers arrived, they were a communalist people, who shared everything from each harvest with the whole community. After the establishment of the American settler colony, some Choctaw became rich through land ownership and owning enslaved people. In 1830, the sovereignty of the Choctaw nation was overridden by the Mississippi state government. No longer sovereign on their own land, the Choctaw reluctantly signed the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek, handing their land over to the US.

The genocide of Native people also almost erased many indigenous ways of life. One of the most significant of these was the communalist practice of only using the resources needed by the community, and sharing everything equally between everyone. Takaki points out how this practice stands in stark contrast to the forms of capitalist accumulation, profit-seeking, exploitation, and unequal distribution practiced by settlers.

At this point, white settlers simply started moving onto Choctaw land and claiming it as their own. Meanwhile, a large number of Choctaw began their move west, filled with unbearable sorrow at the prospect of leaving their homeland. The journey was difficult, and many died en route. To observers, it was clear that the white settlers orchestrating the move west were slaughtering the Choctaw without having to do so directly. The Choctaw felt that in leaving their home, they'd chosen the less of two evils, although in this sense they'd hardly had a choice at all. The tribe sued the government for making a $3 million profit on the sale of Choctaw land when they had promised not to do so. Although the Choctaw won, almost all the compensation money went to their lawyers.

The fate of the Choctaw illustrates the situation of utter powerlessness indigenous people were forced into. Takaki shows how, at the whims of a government who were (at best) completely indifferent to whether they lived or died, the Choctaw suffered enormously. Moreover, even when they tried to fight their mistreatment through the settlers' legal system, it ultimately proved fruitless due to the exorbitant cost of their lawyers' fees. There was simply no way for them to receive justice.

Like the Choctaw, the Cherokee Nation had been told that their sovereignty was no longer respected, and that they would have to comply with the laws of the state of Georgia. They were also "given the option" to go west, but at first they refused to abandon their homeland. Chief John Ross pleaded with President Jackson, calling him "Father" and imploring him to honor earlier promises to the tribe. However, this did not work, and in 1835 a treaty was signed selling Cherokee land to the US for just over $3 million. This was done largely in secret and against the will of most people in the Cherokee Nation.

Here, Takaki shows that the supposed choices presented to indigenous nations were not choices at all. Similarly, the idea that they consented to giving their land away was also false; Takaki shows how, even where there was the appearance of an agreement, in reality the situation Native people were in was already so compromised and unjust that their capitulation could hardly be considered proper consent.

Most Cherokees refused to leave their home, and as a result, the federal government ordered the military to remove them by force. Soldiers ambushed Cherokees in the midst of their daily activities, forcing them to abandon their homes without time to pack, and brought them to internment camps. Meanwhile, settlers looted the homes that had been left behind. The march west took place in the middle of winter, and once again, the tribe were vulnerable to cold and disease. A quarter of the Cherokee Nation (4,000 people) died on the journey, which came to be called the Trail of Tears.

The horrifying brutality of the Trail of Tears shows how disingenuous the American government's claims to care about Native people were. Takaki explains that, in reality, the government could not care less about whether Native people lived or died, and indeed engineered a situation that killed Indians in both a short- and long-term sense, by exposing them to deadly conditions and then destroying their way of life.

The Plains Indians originally lived on what is currently Nebraska and Kansas. For the Pawnee people, corn and buffalo were central to their way of life, and buffalo hunting was considered a sacred activity. They were strict about never killing more buffalo than was necessary to their survival, and they used every part of the animal for housing, clothing, and tools. The corn harvest was likewise a sacred ritual. By the beginning of the 19th century, some Pawnees participated in the fur trade, which in turn caused many of them to become ill and die from diseases. Meanwhile, the construction of the **railroad**—and the closure of the frontier it promised—further threatened the Pawnee way of life.

As this passage shows, the colonization of the US indeed represented a clash of cultures. Yet the evidence presented here belies the settler narrative that this clash was between civilization and savagery. And even if it was, the settlers are hardly the ones who appear "civilized." The Pawnee way of life described here is far more peaceful, sustainable, and amenable to collective flourishing than the settlers' mode of existence.

In 1871, the Indian Appropriation Act was passed, which declared that no indigenous nation would be acknowledged as independent from the US. In this way, the government gave itself the legal right to build the **railroad** wherever it pleased. Buffalo were massacred in enormous numbers, while the Pawnee were being pushed from their land by both settlers and the Sioux (who had in turn been pushed from their own land). Although some Pawnees resolved to stay on their homeland, others felt that they had no choice but to migrate to Kansas. A Pawnee named Overtakes the Enemy lamented that to be "civilized" by white settlers was to be destroyed. Indeed, the way of life of the Plains Indians came to be totally destroyed by the brutal march of "American Progress."

Once again, this passage reiterates the way that "civilization" was a banner under which an enormous amount of death and destruction was committed. A seemingly innocuous and even positive technological invention like the railroad in fact spelled death and disaster for many indigenous communities.

PART 2, CHAPTER 5: "NO MORE PECK O'CORN"

Where Native people largely remained separate from settler society, black people were living right at its heart. David Walker was born into slavery in North Carolina; unlike most enslaved people, he learned to read and write, and studied history. Having obtained freedom and moved to Boston, Walker was infuriated and dismayed by the injustice of slavery, which he believed could only be destroyed by violence. In 1829 he published a pamphlet called *Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World*, which even white abolitionists deemed too radial. He died a year after its publication under suspicious circumstances.

David Walker is part of a long, tragic history of black activists killed for their efforts to end racism. As the case of Walker shows, even those who escaped slavery were not free from the deadly grip of anti-blackness.

In 1860, 225,000 free black people lived in the North, a fairly small minority of the total population. Although they were not enslaved, they still experienced intense oppression, and were segregated from white society. Most black people were not eligible to vote; they were often attacked by white workers in brutal race riots; and they were characterized as lazy, unintelligent, and childlike by white people. Fake race science was employed to support the view that black people were intellectually inferior and prone to criminality.

The North is often characterized as being less racist than the South during this era, but Takaki paints a more nuanced picture. While there were arguably more vicious and openly violent forms of racism in the South, in a way it is strange to argue that the North was less racist, considering the pervasive and deeply entrenched forms of racism that existed there, too.

White people in the North were also deeply fearful of miscegenation; even in states where interracial marriage wasn't officially banned, it was deeply stigmatized. Schools were also segregated, and working conditions were poor. Black people in the North may not have been enslaved, but with "drudgery and servitude" as their only options in life, neither were they really free.

Again, it becomes clear that white society's fear of sexuality mingled with fears of threats to the supposed purity of the white race. Segregation and inequality were justified in order to avoid the possibility of interracial sex.

Meanwhile, in 1860 there remained 4 million black people enslaved in the South. Enslaved plantation workers were forced to rise before dawn, work throughout the day under the watch of a vicious overseer, take a lunch break of only 10-15 minutes, and attend to further chores even after the work day was over. Although some enslavers argued that being "kind" encouraged enslaved workers to perform better, the main method of discipline was brutal punishment and psychological torture. Enslaved people were brainwashed into believing that they were incapable of anything but servitude. This indoctrination was helped by the fact that enslaved people were banned from learning to read and write.

It is not possible to overstate the brutality of slavery, which was much more than the sum of its parts. Indeed, it can actually be difficult to comprehend the reality of a system so intent on dehumanization and everyday torture. In this light, Takaki implies that it does not really make sense to distinguish between "kind" enslavers and cruel ones. No enslaver was actually kind or merciful—if they had been, they would not have held enslaved people captive in the first place.

Southern stereotypes about the happy-go-lucky, lazy, unintelligent enslaved person were encapsulated by the figure of the "Sambo." Enslavers regularly complained that black people were naturally lazy, which is why they needed to be forced to work. At the same time, they sometimes spoke affectionately about those they enslaved as one might talk about a young child or pet. Some insisted that genuine love existed between enslaver and enslaved. At the same time, the tide of opinion in the rest of the world had decidedly swung against slavery, and even enslavers admitted that slavery might be "evil." They often avoided talking about it directly.

Once again, Takaki explores the startlingly illogical thinking employed by white people when it came to justifying the exploitation of black and indigenous populations. Perhaps the most egregious of these is the fact that black people were supposedly lazy, when white people were forcing them to work for free while taking the profits themselves. This highlights the abhorrent hypocrisy of racism.

Enslavers were also secretly terrified of rebellion, suspecting that the enslaved might harbor desires to seek violent revenge on white people. Takaki argues that Sambo both "existed and did not exist." Some enslaved people certainly acted like Sambos, appeasing enslavers by agreeing to their inferiority, saying they liked their lives, and offering assurance that they did not want to be free. However, in reality, this was almost certainly an act designed to disguise the reality of resistance, whether this took the form of small, everyday acts or grander plans of escape or rebellion. Nat Turner, who led one of the most famous rebellions of enslaved people in Virginia in 1831, was "as humble and docile as a slave was expected to be" prior to leading the revolt.

Because of the extreme nature of enslavement, it is important to have humility when trying to understand the lives of the enslaved. Very little record exists of the consciousness of enslaved people, and the accounts that do exist tend to come from those who had the relative privilege of being literate and/or who managed to escape from slavery. It is therefore impossible to know how most enslaved people truly felt. At the same time, as human beings in a situation of extreme suffering and degradation, it would be absurd to believe that they did not yearn for freedom.

Enslaved people also regularly practiced small acts of resistance, such as destroying farm tools, crippling animals, and faking illness and disability in order to refuse work. There were also enslaved people living and working in cities. This population were subject to less surveillance than those on the plantation, and this weakened the system of slavery, which relied on total control. Working alongside white workers and even encountering free African Americans, enslaved people in cities came face-to-face with the possibility that it didn't have to be this way.

While enslaved people constantly sought ways to exercise freedom in the face of their total, brutal dehumanization, it must have been difficult for many of them to imagine an escape or end to slavery. This would be particularly true if they had been born into slavery to parents and grandparents who had also been enslaved.

During the Civil War, some enslaved people expressed loyalty to enslavers, but others took this sudden taste of hope as grounds to refuse work and, in some cases, escape the plantation. With so many white Southern men off at war, the discipline that had for so long been brutally imposed on the enslaved began to unravel. Meanwhile, many enslaved men fled the plantation in order to fight for the Union Army. Enslavers were shocked to see the people they had held captive suddenly disappear "without even a good-bye." The myth that enslaved people were loyal and grateful to their captors disintegrated fast. For enslaved women especially, escaping the plantation meant the first moment of relief from a lifetime of sexual abuse.

The shocked reaction of enslavers to the fact that enslaved people sought freedom at the first available opportunity suggests that some white people believed their own lies about the enslaved. Some seemed to have truly convinced themselves that enslaved people loved their captors and were happy with their lives. This belief shows the staggering depths of dehumanization that slavery involved.

Frederick Douglass was one of the many children born to an enslaved mother and a white father. As a child, Douglass was raised by his grandmother, whose house was 12 miles away from the plantation and who was charged with looking after all the young, enslaved children. Looking back on this time, he felt grateful for the period when he was both physically and psychologically distanced from the horrors of slavery. Later, he lived with a family in Baltimore, where he learned to read and write, and encountered black people who were not enslaved. Douglass had witnessed freedom, and his enslaver, Thomas Auld, decided to send him to a "slave breaker," and made him work in the field for the first time in his life.

Again, the true extent of the psychological horror of slavery is almost impossible to imagine. Being 12 miles removed from that horror allowed a young Frederick Douglass to escape a certain level of trauma that in turn enabled him to imagine and struggle toward a different kind of life.

As intended, Douglass was psychologically crushed by this work. However, he developed a new fearlessness, and escaped the plantation within a year, becoming active in the abolitionist movement in the North. In 1847, he met the radical white abolitionist John Brown, who helped convince him that violence would be required to end slavery. Nonetheless, Douglass himself spoke to nonviolent, rhetorical methods of fighting for abolition, believing that this was where his personal strengths lay. Although Douglass never knew for sure who his father was, he suspected that it was Auld, his enslaver. He often spoke about his white ancestry, and after the death of his first wife, who was black, married a white woman. Douglass dreamed of an integrated nation in which black people were "absorbed" and "assimilated."

Like many black people in the US, Douglas had white ancestry. In fact, many enslaved people who were counted as black had mostly *white ancestry—yet the "one drop rule" meant that they were not considered white at all. Douglass was aware that this system of categorization part of the white supremacist subjugation of black people. For him, acknowledging his white heritage was a way of highlighting the arbitrary nature of racial categories and insisting that black people belonged to American society just as much as white people.*

Martin Delany, meanwhile, was a black nationalist descended from Mandingo royalty. His family members raised him to be proud of his blackness, and he became an ardent abolitionist campaigner. He encountered vehement racism in the North. In 1850, he and two other black men were admitted to **Harvard** Medical School on the condition that after graduation they would have to move to Africa. Their admission invoked fury among many of the white students at Harvard, who argued that it denigrated the reputation of the school. In the end, the university bowed to student pressure and rescinded the offers of admission. Delany was furious.

The extreme racism of the Harvard University students and faculty further belies the idea that the North was less racist than the South. A Different Mirror *continually shows that, in reality, institutions like Harvard were interested in producing the white elite that ruled the country and subjugated all other classes of people. As this passage shows, any chance that black students would be integrated into this elite was abhorrent to university members.*

Two years later Delany published his "manifesto for black emigration," and in 1859 he went to Africa to find land for black Americans. Delany described the vicious cycle of inequality, wherein oppression and discrimination made black people poorer, which in turn "confirmed" racist ideas about black inferiority in the minds of both white and black people. He believed that this prevented black people themselves from knowing that they deserved better. He was also pessimistic about the possibilities of interracial solidarity based on class.

As is made clear throughout the book, there are stark divisions among anti-racist campaigners over the best way to approach social change. Delany believed that voluntary segregation was the only viable option for black people flourishing in an anti-black world—even if this required moving back to Africa. This is a drastic contrast from Douglass' dreams of assimilation.

Although Delany passionately advocated for the idea of black people immigrating to Africa, he also retained a sense of American identity, often referring to American ideals. He summarized this contradiction by arguing: "We love our country, dearly love her […] [but] she despises us." When he journeyed to the Niger Valley to make arrangements for gaining land, his mixed feelings persisted. He was thrilled to be in Africa, but found himself feeling a sense of attachment to the US. Ultimately, Delany did not fulfil his plans of African repatriation, and instead returned to the US and fought for the Union Army.

The dilemma Delany faces of loving a country that "despises" him is a common theme across the book. At the same time, this problem arguably affected African Americans more severely than any other group. Degraded and dehumanized to an absolute degree, most black people in the US had also lost their connection to their ancestral home as a result of slavery. They were thus left in a state of homelessness.

Following the abolition of slavery, many black people wanted to be able to live in black communities and to have economic independence from white people. They also argued that the formerly enslaved were owed land. However, the government rejected a bill that would give those freed from slavery "40 acres and a mule," on the basis that the formerly enslaved would need to learn hard work and responsibility before they could be property owners. Although some land was granted to black people in the South, their right to the property was not respected. White people, many of them former enslavers, claimed the land as their own. Many black people were forced to become sharecroppers, indebted to planters and thus robbed over their earnings.

Here, the image of white people as parental figures surfaces again, and again it is clear that this attitude is really a way to justify cruel and unjust treatment, as well as continued control. Takaki argues that the idea that the formerly enslaved needed to learn hard work and responsibility was ludicrous; the reality was that white people were not willing to cede even a crumb of money or power to African Americans.

Many observed that this version of "freedom" was hardly distinguishable from slavery. During this time, the South transformed dramatically, with industrialization and urbanization causing an economic boom. Many black Southerners worked in industrial labor, becoming a key part of this transformation, although they were also excluded from particular industries (such as textiles). In 1895, the Atlanta Exposition included a "Negro Building" which displayed evidence of black achievement since the abolition of slavery. Booker T. Washington, a formerly enslaved man who had become President of the Tuskegee Institute, was one of the speakers at the exposition.

Although the condition of African Americans during this time was changing, there was still a sense of radical uncertainty about what place free black people would have in the US. The gains made by black people in this period were constantly undermined by the severity of racism that lingered (and in some ways increased) following the abolition of slavery.

Washington's speech, which skyrocketed him to fame, came to be known as the "Atlanta Compromise." In it, he encouraged black people to be modest in their desires and not push for full equality yet. Meanwhile, he encouraged his white listeners to remember all that black people had done for them during slavery, and to feel sympathy now. The speech was met with enthusiasm from the audience, and soon Washington even received a telegraph of support from President Grover Cleveland. In reality, Washington was less "accommodationist" than he seemed. He called racism a "cancer" and said it threatened to destroy the nation. In Florida, he refused to give a speech until sheets dividing the segregated audience were removed.

Washington is one of many African-American leaders who attempted to balance a more moderate public image with the radical reality of these views. Of course, it didn't help that those in power—white people—responded far better to his moderate demands than his more radical, true thoughts. The message that was amplified was thus one of humility and conciliation, when this was not necessarily Washington's actual view.

Washington was also proud of being black, and believed that black people should be encouraged to pursue a tactic of racial uplift wherein their place in society would improve based on their own knowledge, skills, and hard work. Unfortunately, the vehement anti-black racism that persisted into the nineteenth century made such plans impossible. The introduction of Jim Crow laws in the 1890s further solidified black people's status as second-class citizens. Meanwhile, the explosion of lynching and other forms of violence made this a particularly brutal period in history.

The idea of racial uplift has long been criticized and denounced, but versions of it stubbornly remain a part of American culture today. Considering the severity of the challenges black people in the US faced—challenges that included brutal violence, legalized discrimination, segregation, psychological bias, and poverty—the idea of uplift was simply impossible for the vast majority of the black population.

PART 2, CHAPTER 6: FLEEING "THE TYRANT'S HEEL"

Takaki argues that "Caliban could also have been Irish." The English subjected the Irish to terrible subjugation, and millions of Irish people ended up escaping to the US in the nineteenth century. Frederick Douglass commented on how the arrival of new Irish immigrants made life difficult for black workers in the North; yet he also empathized with the enormous suffering of Irish people during the Potato Famine. Irish people called themselves "exiles" from their homeland. This exile had been prompted by the long history of English colonization of Ireland. In 1700, only 14% of Irish land was owned by Irish people—the rest was owned by the English.

The problems of exploitation, oppression, and land theft were not unique to the US. Indeed, the template for the brutal actions of English settlers in the US began in Ireland (and other places during English colonial rule).

In the early 19th century, English landowners in Ireland decided to turn their estates into cattle ranches in order to increase profits, and this meant that almost all Irish farm laborers were suddenly without jobs. Irish workers sank into a state of extreme poverty; most were barely able to survive. Many believed that moving to America would provide a chance of employment, greater wealth, and freedom from oppression. One million Irish people immigrated to the US in the years 1815-1845 alone. Meanwhile, those who stayed at home made their living as migrant workers, and subsisted almost entirely on potatoes.

Even before the Potato Famine, English colonizers created such desperate conditions in Ireland that they pushed an enormous number of Irish people to their deaths. Those who didn't die lived in a state of such extreme suffering that escaping the to the US may well have seemed like the only chance at survival, let alone flourishing.

Disaster struck in 1845, when a fungus destroyed 40% of the potato crop. The same fungus returned each harvest, and by 1855, one million people had died from starvation and ensuing illness. Thousands of peasants were unable to pay rent and were evicted from their homes. The meat being exported would have been enough to feed half the population, but instead the landlords profited from selling this meat while the Irish starved to death. Surrounded by devastation and death, a further 1.5 million Irish immigrated to the US during the Great Potato Famine. These immigrants did not necessarily have dreams or fantasies about life in America; rather they were driven there by sheer necessity. Indeed, many were heartbroken to leave Ireland.

Takaki's description of the Potato Famine is an important reminder that the havoc wreaked by "natural" disasters is often not all that natural. While the fungus that rotted the potatoes was an organic phenomenon, the famine that resulted was not. Takaki argues that many Irish people could have been fed by the meat that English colonizers exported, and if wealth and resources had been better distributed, millions would not have starved and died.

The Famine finally ended in 1854, but the Irish remained poor as the result of English colonization. Meanwhile, a further 2 million Irish immigrated to the US in the latter half of the 19th century, leaving their homeland severely depopulated. In the US, Irish immigrants worked in construction, building the **railroads** that would connect different parts of the nation. Irish workers, who would take on work considered too dangerous by Anglo Americans, were treated as "disposable." There was an endless stream of reports of Irish deaths at work. Meanwhile, the Irish faced prejudice within American society, where they were treated like "dogs."

It is important to note that during this era, Irish people were not considered white. Of course, this is no longer true: as will become clear later in the book, at a certain point the Irish were strategically absorbed into whiteness. However, prior to this absorption, the Irish faced racial oppression, something that can be surprising to recall today.

Pitted against workers of other races and facing dire working conditions, the Irish began to organize. In New England, Irish shoemakers founded the Secret Order of the Knights of St. Crispin, which soon came to be the largest labor organization in the US. They demanded higher wages; in response, their employer imported Chinese workers from San Francisco to take their jobs. The Irish attempted to set up a Chinese lodge of St. Crispin; however, it was obvious that the Crispins were doing this for their own benefit, rather than out of a true sense of solidarity, and the initiative failed.

The Irish helped improve their conditions by developing extremely robust networks of mutual support. Indeed, their story provides key evidence in support of Takaki's argument about the importance of labor organizing. However, the failure of the Chinese lodge of the Knights of St. Crispin shows that organizing has limited results when it is restricted to serving the interests of just one group.

The Irish were a highly stigmatized group, and it was not uncommon to compare them to black people as a demonstration of how low their social status was. They were stereotyped as lazy, unintelligent, undisciplined, and hedonistic, with a particular reputation for excessive drinking. Back in Ireland, many Irish people felt sympathy with black people and recognized commonalities between the oppression they faced. However, once in the US, most Irish immigrants developed intense anti-black racism. They resented the fact that they were given jobs deemed too dangerous for enslaved black people (whose deaths were financial losses to enslavers), and animosity developed over competition for jobs.

The sad reality that the sympathy Irish people originally had for black people disappeared once the Irish actually encountered *black people reflects one of the difficulties of addressing racism. Often, people embrace other races in the abstract, but take a different attitude when they feel that their own flourishing is under threat from competition with those of other races. This suggests that wealth redistribution could help significantly in ending racism.*

Anti-black racism among the Irish became particularly intense during the Civil War, at times resulting in violent riots. Meanwhile, there was intense competition between Irish and black people over jobs in domestic work. Many Irish women moved to the US in search of both better employment and marriage opportunities. Once in the US, many worked as maids, and in this way they gained intimate familiarity with American culture. Domestic work could be very lonely, degrading, and emotionally draining. Workers' personalities were part of their job, such that "it was not just her labor that was purchased but the laborer herself." For this reason, some Irish women chose factory work over domestic service.

In this passage, Takaki outlines the grim irony of life for poor black and Irish people in the US. The jobs that existed were difficult and degrading, yet competition for these jobs was so intense that it created massive hostility and resentment between ethnic groups. Of course, as A Different Mirror *shows, this was all the result of the exploitation and greed of the elite class, whose wealth was built on the backs of poor and enslaved workers.*

Conditions in the factories were oppressive and dangerous. Nonetheless, many Irish women delighted in the opportunities that existed in the US, and wrote to family members back in Ireland with glowing descriptions of the US as a land of freedom and abundance. The second generation of Irish immigrant women tended to be better educated than their mothers, and far more likely to be in white-collar jobs. By the early 1900s, a significant number of Irish students were enrolled at **Harvard** each year. President Abbott Lawrence Lowell believed that the Irish would and should be assimilated into American society.

Although the Irish were not considered white when they first arrived in the US, it was not long before they were absorbed into whiteness. This is the secret behind the "miracle" of their upward mobility and success across the generations. While in the UK the difference between English and Irish people had seemed stark, in the comparatively more racially mixed nation of the US, they came to be categorized under the same banner of "white."

Takaki explains that the upward mobility of Irish people rested in the fact that as white people, they were eligible for naturalized citizenship, and did not face the obstacle of having to learn English. Unlike other ethnic groups, they were also allowed to vote, and they developed highly effective political machines that promoted Irish officials and ensured that wealth was redistributed into Irish communities. Similarly, much effort was directed toward acquiring and keeping jobs within the Irish community, while Irish workers "became highly unionized." Other ethnic groups were deliberately excluded from these networks. Very few Irish people ever went back to Ireland, instead assimilating into an American identity and embracing the US as their permanent home.

This passage further elaborates on the ways in which Irish people became part of an emergent white American identity, and how this benefited them as a group, allowing them to make huge gains as new immigrants to the US. It is unsurprising that so many Irish embraced the US as their home—their chances of flourishing were far better there than they ever had been back in Ireland.

PART 2, CHAPTER 7: "FOREIGNERS IN THEIR NATIVE LAND"

The Market Revolution of the early 19th century triggered the US government's violent seizure of land from Mexico, as the Cotton Kingdom expanded into Mexican territory. In 1826, President John Quincy Adams unsuccessfully attempted to purchase Tejas (Texas) from Mexico for one million dollars. A great many Americans were already living there, and the Mexican government feared that the territory had already been "conquered" by these settlers. In 1830, Mexico abolished slavery and banned American immigration to Texas. The Americans in Texas, many of whom were enslavers, were furious and believed war was the only answer. In 1836, a group of Americans in Texas "began an armed insurrection against Mexican authority."

This passage argues that the story of how Texas became part of the US is a story of Anglo-American greed and selfishness. Americans in Texas wanted more land and resources, and wanted to be able to keep practicing slavery. They were prepared to inflict an enormous amount of suffering and destruction in order to fulfil these desires.

The American rebels declared Texas a ceded, independent state, naming it the Lone Star Republic and electing Sam Houston its president. In 1845, the US annexed this new Republic, and a border dispute erupted with Mexico. However, the "real reason" for the ensuring war was not actually this border dispute, but rather the US' desire to annex California. A conflict there began in Sonoma in 1846. Mexico had adamantly kept control of California until that point, although only a fairly small number of Mexicans ever settled there. They were joined by a few Anglo Americans, who were welcomed, offered land grants, and given Mexican citizenship as long as they converted to Catholicism. Once assimilated, they were accorded high social status.

The good treatment Americans received in Mexican-ruled California again highlights the hypocrisy of US expansion and its treatment of nonwhite people. At every turn, other ethnic groups treated white American settlers with a remarkable level of fairness and even generosity. In almost every case, white Americans returned this favor with duplicity, brutality, theft, exploitation, and even murder.

By the 1840s, more and more "Yankees" were settling in California. These new arrivals were less likely to assimilate into Mexican culture; rather, they wanted to make California part of the US. The Mexican authorities were threatened, and rightly so: before long, American rebels arrested General Vallejo, who represented Mexican authority in California, and announce that California was now the "Bear Flag Republic." Shortly after, Commander John D. Sloat triggered war by declaring California a US territory. While the seizing of California largely happened without violence, the same was not true in the Southwest, where "American soldiers themselves documented the atrocities committed against the Mexican civilian population."

It can be quite shocking to read about the readiness with which white Americans were prepared to use violence in order to expand their territory and defend and increase their power. Indeed, it is difficult—but necessary—to gain awareness about the extent to which the US was founded through merciless violence.

The bloody conflict ended in 1848, when Mexico ceded the Southwest territories to the US for $15 million and agreed to the Rio Grande River as the Texas border. All in all, one half of Mexico's total territory was lost to the US in this deal. The US celebrated this outcome, characterizing it as part of the "Manifest Destiny" that supposedly gave white settlers the right and duty to colonize and "civilize" territory. Many Americans were delighted by the acquisition of these new territories, particularly in light of the abundant natural resources that existed in California.

In light of the tensions that exist today around Mexican immigration to the US and the border between the US and Mexico, it is extremely important to bear in mind that half of what was once Mexico was seized by the US.

However, for the Mexicans who suddenly found themselves no longer living in their own country but in the US, these were unwelcome changes. They became "foreigners in their own land," suddenly subject to discrimination that they did not experience previously. In California, Mexican miners shared knowledge with Anglos, but in return the Anglos treated them with hostility and disdain. Meanwhile, in Texas, Mexicans found that although they were legally allowed to vote, in practice they were prohibited from exercising this right.

Again, there is a huge amount of hypocrisy, selfishness, and cruelty contained within the Anglo-American treatment of other races. Seemingly unmoved by the generosity and sympathy extended to them, they continued to behave in an exploitative, oppressive manner to those of other races.

Mexican landholders also often found themselves being swindled out of their land, unable to prove that they owned it in the way American authorities required. Those who fought to have their ownership recognized had to pay exorbitant lawyer fees. The US also introduced a different taxation system, wherein the land itself was taxed instead of the products, which varied in amount from year to year. Many Mexican farmers suffered greatly due to this shift, and were forced to sell their land in order to pay off debts. A huge number went from "landholders to laborers," while Anglos took what had once belonged to the Mexican farmers.

Takaki emphasizes how the survival of so many people is dependent on the seemingly innocuous factor of agricultural policy. Switching to a different taxations system may not appear to have devastating potential, but in reality it was a way for Anglos to consolidate their power and push Mexicans into a cycle of poverty and dispossession.

The number of Mexican cowboys also declined, as more and more Mexicans relied on cotton-picking to survive. Others built irrigation systems that helped turn Texas into a lush, fertile region, while still more worked in **railroad** construction, doing work that was too poorly paid to appeal to white men. In California and the Southwest, a huge number of Mexicans also worked in mining. Their contributions to copper mining in particular helped make possible the spread of electricity around the nation. Yet they were forced to work within a "caste labor system," where Anglos did the less dangerous work, and were better paid even when they were doing the same jobs as Mexicans. As a result, many Mexicans ended up indebted to the companies for which they worked.

Mexican labor was crucial to the construction of the US and the transformation of the land into a profitable resource. Yet in return, they found themselves degraded, endangered, and driven into debt. Sadly, as readers will see, this story is repeated across various ethnic groups throughout the history of the US.

White people would use the same logic to justify the exploitation of Mexican workers as enslavers did to justify slavery. However, Mexicans themselves fought back, repeatedly going on **strike** and making important gains such as pay increases and the implementation of an eight-hour work day. In 1903, a coalition of Mexican and Japanese farmworkers went on strike together in Oxnard, California. This was the first interracial strike in Californian history, and managed to successfully achieve its aims. When Mexican strikers were offered a deal that would sabotage their Japanese counterparts, they refused.

As Takaki will emphasize throughout the book, interracial solidarity—and particularly strikes made up of more than one ethnic group—are one of the most surefire ways through which people of color in the US can increase their power, and deeply frighten the white elite.

In the same year, Mexican strikers at a mine in Arizona were joined by Italian and Slavonian workers in demanding equal wages to workers of northern European descent. The ensuing conflict lasted 19 weeks, but the strikers ultimately emerged victorious. **Strikes** were often supported by *mutualistas*, benevolent associations that provided financial assistance. The strikes that took place during this period showed that Mexican workers maintained dignity and a distinct identity in the face of American racism.

Like the Irish, Mexicans were determined to improve their own conditions and established networks that would make this possible. Through mutual aid, the little power and resources that Mexican immigrants had was consolidated and thus greatly increased. Through collaboration and solidarity, far more is possible than it would be alone.

PART 2, CHAPTER 8: SEARCHING FOR GOLD MOUNTAIN

Takaki proclaims that "Caliban also could have been Asian." During the 19th century, certain white Americans believed that the next step of the Manifest Destiny included "civilizing" Asian peoples. After the annexation of California, Asian immigrants began arriving in large numbers. Chinese immigrants were seeking refuge from the British Opium Wars as well as other conflicts. They were also fleeing starvation. Most migrants were men; few had much education and most were illiterate. They were seduced by the employment opportunities America provided, which were far better than what was available to them in China.

The reasons why Chinese immigrants decided to come to the US are similar to those of most other immigrant groups: a combination of fleeing danger at home and seeking better opportunities in America. Like other groups, these opportunities would come at the steep price of prejudice, discrimination, and exclusion.

Many borrowed money to pay their ticket to the US, which left them indebted as soon as they arrived. Men often left wives behind, not knowing when they would see each other again. By 1930, 400,000 Chinese immigrants had come to the US, about half of whom had settled there for good. However, a 1790 federal law made them ineligible for naturalized American citizenship, which was reserved for white people. In the 1860s, Chinese workers toiled in California mines in harsh conditions. Once the mining industry began to decline, workers switched to the **railroad**.

Again, it is difficult to consider how much workers like the Chinese immigrants of the 19th and early 20th centuries sacrificed, only to be denied basic rights such as the right to naturalized citizenship. The American government took advantage of the desperation of immigrants, and in return kept them in a state of dispossession and precarity.

By the 1860s, 90% of workers for the Central Pacific **Railroad** were Chinese. They provided both the manual labor and technical skill required to build the railway, often facing deadly conditions. In 1867, the Chinese workers went on **strike**, arguing: "Eight hours a day good for white men, all the same good for Chinamen." However, the company would not fold, taking extreme tactics of confining them to their works camps without food, and the workers ultimately surrendered. Across California, Chinese workers lived in both urban and rural areas, performing both industrial and agricultural labor. These agricultural workers were "*the* vital factor" in allowing California to shift from wheat to fruit farming.

The Chinese workers' assertion that they deserved the same labor rights as white people is a crucial example of how a group of nonwhite immigrants decided to shape the future of the country themselves. Rather than accepting the inferior and degraded position they were assigned, they refused to concede that they were second-class citizens, and demanded better treatment.

Chinese agricultural workers were paid low wages, and several times went on **strike** in order to demand higher pay. At the same time, white people were brutally resentful of Chinese workers, and instigated violent riots across California at the end of the 19th century. Many Chinese men also ran laundries during this era, something they never would have done back in China where this was considered women's work, and thus degrading for men to do. In the US, however, a competitive labor market made running a laundry the only option for some men.

When immigrants moved to the US, social norms changed by necessity. In some cases, this had a positive effect, for example by opening up opportunities for women that did not exist back in their home country. In the case of the men operating laundries, while a loosening of the strictly gendered division of labor may ultimately have been a good thing, it also made Chinese men feel degraded.

Most Chinese immigrants lived in the West of the nation, but there were some in the South too. After the Civil War, some white Southerners thought Chinese labor was the solution to the "problem" of the free black population. Planters decided that hard-working, disciplined Chinese immigrants would be good role models for black workers. In reality, however, most Chinese immigrants did not want to work on plantations and thus left for work in the cities.

Here, Takaki provides another example of workers of different ethnicities being pitted against each other by white people according to racist ideology. In reality, it was of course no compliment to the Chinese to be labelled as docile and obedient.

There was a feeling of uncertainty about what Chinese immigrants' role in American society would be. Some felt that Chinese people should be only temporary migrant workers, and that they could serve a useful purpose of doing labor now considered too degrading and dangerous for white men. Once again, negative stereotypes about black people—including duplicity, childishness, and immorality—were now being applied to the Chinese. Similar fears emerged about the supposed threat Chinese men represented to the "purity" of the white race, and intermarriage was banned. Chinese people were likewise characterized as "savages" in the same manner as Native people.

Although racism takes many forms and is applied in different ways—and to differing degrees of severity—this passage highlights the fundamental interconnectedness of racism. Partly because racism has no basis in reality, but is rather meaningless prejudice and projection, racist ideas are often applied to different groups at will, with no coherence or logic.

In 1854, after a Chinese man served as a witness in a California Supreme Court case, the Chinese were, like black and Native people, disqualified from testifying against white people. In 1882, Congress passed the Chinese Exclusionary Act, which prohibited the immigration of all Chinese workers. There was no real basis for this, as at the time only 0.2% of the American population was Chinese. During this period, unemployment had become a problem in the US for the first time, and this issue—and the ensuing social problems—fueled racism against the Chinese. In 1902, the Exclusion Act was extended indefinitely.

In the history of the US, nonwhite races have been perceived as threats long before they were actually a substantial presence in the US, let alone presented any kind of "threat" to white people's power. In this sense, racism is a distinctly paranoid position. It operates through outlandish fears of what other races could possibly do, when in reality the real threat has essentially always been that presented by white people to people of color.

Chinese people fought back against the discrimination they faced. Yet it was difficult to defend themselves against both legislative and interpersonal prejudice, and few felt comfortable bringing their families to the US. In 1900, only 5% of the Chinese population in the US were women. This was partly because of cultural norms, which dictated that women have little independence from their families. Some historians also believe that Chinese women stayed home when their husbands immigrated in order to ensure that these men would one day return and not settle in the US. Meanwhile, white people also feared that the arrival of Chinese women would mean the Chinese would become a permanent and growing part of American society, and in 1875 a law was passed that restricted the entry of these women.

The convergence of forces that prohibited Chinese women from immigrating to the US helped create a situation in which male Chinese immigrants did not feel that the US was truly their home. Without women, they were isolated and cut off from their culture, norms, and family. Instead, the entire focus of their lives was forced to be on their status as workers—a grim and depressing way to live.

While some wives did immigrate, most of the Chinese women who travelled to the US in the 19th century were sex workers, many of them indentured servants. Some had been tricked into sexual servitude, thinking they were being offered other labor opportunities. These women became "virtual slaves," and many became opium addicts. They suffered from STDs and violence, and some ended up killing themselves. In an 1870 census, 61% of the Chinese women in California gave their occupation as "prostitute." However, this dropped to 24% within ten years, as these women were able to pay their debts and get married. Yet there were still so few Chinese women in the US that most Chinese men had no hope of finding a wife.

Sex workers have historically been one of the few categories of women who can achieve a degree of financial independence in highly patriarchal societies. However, this independence comes at the steep price of social stigma, exploitation, and violence. Furthermore, as this passage shows, some sex workers were tricked or forced to do this type of labor, making their suffering even more intense.

Although many were determined to see the Chinese as a temporary population, in reality there were always indications that they intended to stay. One such indication was the establishment of bustling Chinatowns across the nation, which served the needs of the Chinese community. Chinese organizations flourished; there was a proliferation of tongs, which helped immigrants while also running gambling, prostitution, and opium operations. In addition, fongs, which consisted of members of the same family or village, provided further support. Because most Chinese men were bachelors, they spent their free time engaged in activities like the going to the theater, gambling, or just chatting in the backs of stores.

Conditions may not have been ideal for the Chinese immigrants who first came to the US, but these immigrants nonetheless determinedly established a home for themselves in the country. Again, Takaki emphasizes that one of the key methods for doing this was by building kinship and community networks in order to provide mutual support. Indeed, this is one of the ways in which voluntary self-segregation can be essential to the thriving of a particular ethnic group.

The wives left behind in China would describe themselves as "widows" and write anguished letters to their husbands lamenting how much they missed them. In return, husbands wrote back apologizing for not having been able to make more money. Some family members back in China begged those who had immigrated to the US to come home, particularly considering that they were not receiving the money they had hoped for. However, most men who moved to the US never returned to China. Despite the prejudice they faced in the US, many ardently desired to embrace it as their home and become American citizens.

Chinese immigrants who left their wives at home and faced prejudice and discrimination in the US were caught between a rock and a hard place. Conditions were bad in both nations, and it would have been difficult to imagine abandoning the life and work they had built in the US in order to go back and start all over again in China.

Chinese immigrants hoping to be reunited with their families sought ways around the immigration restrictions. Some pretended to be merchants, as (unlike laborers) they were allowed to bring their families. In 1906, an earthquake hit San Francisco, and the ensuing fires destroyed almost all of the city's municipal records, which inadvertently "opened the way for a new Chinese immigration." Chinese men who were born in San Francisco were entitled to bring their wives to the US. Without records to prove otherwise, wives and sons came from China claiming American citizenship. The Chinese population of San Francisco boomed.

The earthquake and ensuing boom in Chinese immigration highlights how much of history comes down to random strokes of fate. Furthermore, the earthquake also shows how legal citizenship is essentially an arbitrary category. For so many Chinese immigrants, the existence of a flimsy piece of paper that could be destroyed in a moment was the only thing standing in the way of them becoming a citizen.

The boys who falsely claimed to have a Chinese-American father were called "paper sons." They faced challenging interrogations from immigration authorities, and about 10% of new arrivals were turned away and sent back to China. Those who were admitted settled in cities all over the US, although 40% of the Chinese population were concentrated in San Francisco and New York. Chinatowns no longer catered to the lifestyles of bachelors, but to entire families. Some of the earlier bachelor immigrants were astonished by the sight of Chinese children after having not seen any for years. For these children, education was seen as the route to success in American society. Some children became highly assimilated, and felt that they were forever "caught between two cultures."

The arrival of children caused a shift where the Chinese population finally had a greater stake in the US and a more solid sense of the country being their home. Indeed, the story of the "paper sons" shows that it was not white Americans or the government who decided to open the country up to the Chinese. Rather, it was a stroke of fate and the ingenuity of the Chinese population that led them to insist that they had a right to be in the US, and to begin building a flourishing, permanent home there.

PART 3, INTRODUCTION: THE END OF THE FRONTIER

The end of the frontier officially occurred in 1891. Many changes accompanied this historic moment, including a surge in manufacturing and work in public utilities. However, unemployment remained an issue; during the depression of 1894, unemployment was at 18%. Social conflict ensued, including the Haymarket Massacre of 1886. Some worried that these class tensions were indicative of the dangerous growth of "an illiterate, ignorant, immoral, and 'criminal' population." Workers in urban tenements were embracing socialism, resentful of the millionaires profiting from their labor.

After having read about all the myriad ways in which workers were exploited, underpaid, and oppressed in the US, it can hardly be surprising that class tensions began leading to social unrest. Workers had never been content to suffer under the brutal control of employers, but at this historical moment, momentum was gathering behind ideas of socialism and anarchism.

With the frontier closed, Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan suggested that the US should focus on rebuilding its navy. He argued that the US should retain its colonizing spirit, but now turn this out toward the rest of the world. He maintained that it was essential the US become a major sea power, and seize control of territory in East Asia. Mahan believed that, as a "superior" race, white people had a right and duty to colonize other lands and reap the benefits of their natural resources. He became "chief architect" of the war against Spain in 1898. His ideas influenced Theodore Roosevelt, who appointed him Secretary of the Navy in 1897.

As Takaki explains in third and fourth parts of the book, war and colonialism have been ways for the US to build its power and boost the economy, all while redirecting money away from things like social welfare. The fact that this comes at the price of global devastation and destruction did not seem to concern figures like Admiral Mahan.

The war against Spain concluded with a fulfilment of Mahan's dreams, when the US annexed the Philippines. His imperial desires paved the way for the conflict between the US and Japan, which would culminate in bombing of Pearl Harbor and the nuclear obliteration of Hiroshima. The 1890s and the closing of the frontier heralded a new wave of American imperialism, a new influx of Russian and Japanese immigrants, and the northward migrations of Mexicans and African Americans.

As Takaki will show in the chapters to come, there is a connection between US colonialism abroad and its treatment of the people of color living within its own borders, which several theorists have categorized as a form of "internal colonialism."

PART 3, CHAPTER 9: THE "INDIAN QUESTION"

In the 1880s, an indigenous prophet named Wovoka of the Paiutes had a vision, saying that if all Indians danced the Ghost Dance, the Great Spirit would rid the land of white people by drowning them in a flood. Native people would be saved, and the land would be repopulated with the dead, as well as the animals whom white people had killed off. Buoyed by this vision, Native people began ardently dancing. This terrified settlers, who ordered the arrest of Native leaders. The Sioux Chiefs Sitting Bull and Big Foot attempted to evade arrest, but were taken—along with members of their community—to a creek called Wounded Knee.

White settlers may have dismissed and denigrated Native belief systems, but when it came down to it, they were terrified by the sight of Native resistance. Indeed, this historical event helps explain why settlers were so strict about refusing to let indigenous children speak their own languages and practice their own faiths and cultural traditions in Indian boarding schools—the settlers were terrified of the power of Native cultures.

Soldiers forced the Indians to give up their weapons, while setting up cannons pointed toward the Indian camp. They then opened fire, indiscriminately killing men, women, and children. By the end of the massacre, hundreds lay dead. The soldiers stripped many of the bodies naked, taking their clothes as souvenirs. Big Foot's dead body lay frozen in the snow, his arms raised in an attempt to protect himself.

The absolute brutality of the Massacre at Wounded Knee is one of the most horrific moments in a long history of shameful behavior by white settlers. In recounting this event, Takaki seeks to reveal the frightening depth of the settler's merciless racism.

General George Armstrong Custer was responsible for the murder of 103 Cheyenne men and the capture of 53 women and children. Eight years later, he was killed at the Battle of the Little Big Horn, and in retaliation for his death, Native people were confined to reservations. During his life, Custer had a paradoxical view of indigenous people. He characterized Indians as both brutally savage and a beautiful, peaceful, courageous group of people. Regarding the question of where Native people fit in modern American society, Custer believed that if he himself were Native, he would choose death over assimilation or confinement to a reservation. In fact, Custer longed for the wild freedom he associated with the Native way of life.

General Custer's strangely self-contradictory attitude toward Native Americans is both confused and confusing. Yet it is also representative of the way a great many white people viewed Indians. Whereas negative feeling about other racial groups (particularly black people) was more straightforward, racism toward the Indians was often mixed with curiosity, admiration, and even envy. However, Takaki emphasizes that this does not mitigate *racism, or make the racist acts committed by white people any more forgivable.*

During the 1870s, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs was a man named Francis Amasa Walker. Walker advocated for a "Peace Policy" with Native people. Although he was largely unfamiliar with the reality of Native life, he believed that urgent steps would need to be taken in order to ensure that the Plains Indians survived, and that the government should take charge of this through "social engineering." He devised a plan for placing Native tribes into one or two large reservations, which would be subject to the constant possibility of military attack. He believed that confining indigenous people to reservations was a necessary step toward their ultimate assimilation. They would be "trained and reformed […] to enter civilized society."

Over the course of American history—and still to this day—Native people have been subject to the arbitrary and contradictory whims of a long stream of white people. A Different Mirror *emphasizes that none of these figures have been qualified to make decisions on behalf of indigenous people, because none have been indigenous themselves. Moreover, their constantly changing and inconsistent attitudes have made life hellish for Native communities, who must constantly readjust to arbitrary new rules and policies.*

Other white reformers were opposed to the segregation that involved in confining Native people to reservations. In 1887, Congress passed the Dawes Act, which some reformers happily nicknamed the "Indian Emancipation Act." This divided reservations into allotments to be owned by individual families, with the "surplus" land being sold to white settlers. Through participating in the allotment program, Native people would be eligible to become US citizens. This policy reflected the general view that, unlike other groups (such as the Chinese), Indians were capable of assimilation. The allotment system also included the establishment of schools where Indian children would speak English and "learn the ways of civilization."

In all cases, what was celebrated as progress and reform by white people did not actually bring justice to Indians. Takaki suggests that the only way in which such justice would arrive would be in the form of reparations and the return of the land taken from indigenous nations. Instead, Native people were forced down a seemingly never-ending rollercoaster of different policies orchestrated by a government that ultimately wanted to maintain control over them.

Rituals took place wherein Native people would change from traditional dress into Western clothing, exchanging a bow and arrow for a plow, in order to symbolize their transformation into "Americans." The Dawes Act essentially gave Indians land they already owned while also taking some of that land for white settlers. In the following years, Congress granted the right to build **railroads** throughout Indian territories. Land that was not being cultivated was seen as being wasted and unneeded by Native people.

The strange and ironic thing about these rituals is that a reverse version of them was repeated by settler children in summer camps in the twentieth century. Here, Native people were ritualistically inducted into settler culture, while in many summer camps, white children performed rituals where they dressed as Indians as a way of inhabiting a mythic form of original American identity.

In 1902, Congress passed an act that required Indian land to be put up for public auction upon the death of the owner. The family members could only gain the land if they purchased it. This was deliberately designed to transfer Indian land into the hands of settlers. Four years later, the protections of Indian land ownership assured by the Dawes Act were eliminated. Theoretically, the goal was for Indians to become farm workers, but in reality Indians became an impoverished, "landless people." In 1934, the allotment program was abruptly brought to an end by the Indian Reorganization Act, written by the Indian affairs commissioner John Collier.

There was a horrifying shamelessness to the way that the American government deliberately and obviously dispossessed Indians of their land. This was half-heartedly hidden under the guise of "protections" and other policies that were theoretically meant to seem as if they were helping Native people. Yet ultimately the government did not care what their theft of the land looked like, because Native people had no power to stop them from doing it.

Collier admired certain aspects of Native cultures, such as communalism, and believed that Native people should be allowed to retain their unique identity and heritage. He saw that allotment was ruining communal forms of life and thus wrote a bill that ended the practice, while allowing indigenous peoples to govern themselves and promoting the preservation of indigenous cultures. Roosevelt was pleased with the bill, which came to be known as the "Indian New Deal." It was up to individual tribes to decide whether they wanted to accept the measures in the bill. 172 voted to be included, whereas 73 tribes decided to exclude themselves from its measures.

Some government representatives, perhaps including Collier, had genuine sympathy for Native people and wanted to improve their conditions. Yet Takaki emphasizes that whatever good intentions existed could not justify the fundamental injustice of US colonization of Indian land and the paternalistic, controlling relationship with Native people that developed as a result.

Among the tribes who refused the bill was the Navajo. In 1863, Navajos had been forced to march to new land, where they were to become "civilized" and switch from herding to farming. However, they refused, and were eventually able to return home and keep practicing their original way of life. Although the Indian New Deal theoretically gave Native people self-determination, in reality it was still a patronizing attempt to manipulate and control Indians without surrendering any real power.

The Navajo's experience shows why Native nations were reasonably suspicious of any and all measures coming from the government. Why should they trust a people who had taken their land, killed off a huge percentage of their population, and were now subjecting them to arbitrary authoritarian control?

Collier saw that soil erosion caused by the overgrazing of sheep would soon endanger the Navajo way of life, and decided that it was the government's responsibility to intervene. He compared the relationship of the government to the Navajos to that between a parent and child. He was also concerned about how soil erosion would affect white settlers. He announced a plan for the government to buy sheep and goats from Navajos. When he presented this plan to representatives of the tribe, they were angry and adamant that they would keep their sheep. To them, sheep were more than just "stock": the animals represented their way of life.

Again, Collier may have had good intentions, but these were severely undermined by his misguided, patronizing belief that he was the "parent" to Native "children." Such an attitude, as readers have already seen, was unjust and deeply dehumanizing. Furthermore, it ignored the fact that indigenous people had successfully lived on this land for centuries; they knew how to sustainably farm the land, and certainly did not need the intervention of settlers.

However, Collier went ahead with the stock reduction program anyway. Although they didn't want to, the poorest Navajos were compelled to sell their sheep because they needed the money. Soon, most Navajos had resorted to supporting themselves with wage labor, which meant they were dependent on the government and the New Deal work programs. Even worse, in the end it turned out that overgrazing was not the cause of soil erosion, and that stock reduction was therefore unnecessary. Navajos already knew this, but the government did not listen to them. As longtime residents of the land, the Navajo knew that soil erosion was fixed by the coming of rain. This knowledge had been passed down the generations.

Takaki shows how the government's dismissal of indigenous knowledge was not just wrong because it was based in ignorance and prejudice; it was wrong because it had an adverse effect on the land, Native communities, and indeed the country as a whole.

PART 3, CHAPTER 10: PACIFIC CROSSINGS

In the 19th century, Japan was worried about the encroachment of Western colonialism. As a result, the Japanese restored the emperor and pursued extensive industrialization and militarization, financed by steep taxes. Unable to pay their taxes, thousands of farmers were forced to sell their land, and sank into debt, poverty, and starvation. Having heard tales about how much money could be earned in the US, many young Japanese men begged their parents to let them go. Between 1885 and 1924, almost half a million Japanese migrants came to the US, most of them to Hawaii.

Takaki's stories of exploitation, debt, and starvation from around the world highlight a sad commonality: across hugely different countries and cultures, poor people are often oppressed in similar ways. As a result, immigrants coming to the US from completely different parts of the world often had similar reasons for leaving their homelands.

Although both Japanese and Chinese immigrants came to the US in hope of economic prosperity, the two groups were very different in most other ways. For example, there were significantly more women among the Japanese immigrant population. Indeed, the Japanese government had encouraged this in order to prevent Japanese men from falling into vices thought typical of bachelors. The 1907 Gentlemen's Agreement allowed Japanese women to emigrate as family members, which led to many thousands of women coming to the US as "picture brides," in arranged marriages to Japanese-American men. Back in Japan, women already participated in wage labor, including in industries like mining and construction. Female education was also a prominent and valued part of society.

It is also important to remember that there are huge differences between cultures, and therefore between the immigrants who arrived on the US' shores. The comparatively independent role women occupied within Japanese culture is a key example of this. Of course, when different ethnic groups mixed in the US, some of these cultural differences came into contact or conflict with each other, which in turn shifted norms.

Most male Japanese immigrants were younger sons, as custom dictated that the eldest son in a family would inherit his parents' land. In 1900, Hawaii was made a territory of the United States, and planters on the islands brought in Japanese laborers along with their families in the hope that this would make the workers stay permanently. On the mainland, Japanese women provided support to their families through unpaid store and farm work. In Hawaii, planters were keen to import workers of different ethnicities in order to prevent **strikes** from occurring. They deliberately imported workers from different East Asian countries in order to "pit them against" each other.

One aspect of this section of A Different Mirror *that is somewhat curious is Takaki's lack of attention to the distinction between Hawaii and the US mainland, and correspondingly, to the indigenous population of Hawaii. This is particularly intriguing considering that Takaki devotes so much time to the experience of indigenous people on the mainland, but hardly mentions Native Hawaiians.*

This policy was thwarted when the Korean government banned immigration to Hawaii after hearing of the abuses suffered by Korean workers there. Planters rushed to import Filipino workers instead. They also "stratified tasks according to race," with white people once again being given higher-status jobs. In 1904, a resolution passed that restricted skilled work to (white) American citizens on the Hawaii plantations. Life on the plantation was highly regimented. The workers were divided into gangs, each of which was controlled by a white overseer. Women worked on the plantations too, and were paid 55 cents a day, compared to 78 cents for the men.

The decision of the Korean government to ban immigration to the US stands out as the only time in the book when a national government made the effort to prevent its citizens from going to America. Considering that the abuses suffered by immigrant workers in the US were hardly unique to Koreans, one might wonder why other governments did not take similar action in attempting to prevent migration.

The work was "punishing and brutal." The overseer would crack his whip if he saw anyone talking, and every worker was called by their number, never their name. Harvesting sugarcane was physically exhausting and painful, and the workers often had to suffer extreme heat and humidity. Although the Japanese, like the Chinese, were stereotyped as passive and obedient, in reality they regularly went on **strike** in protest against their harsh working conditions. In 1909, they organized a strike to demand an end to differential wages based on ethnicity, which left Portuguese workers paid at a higher rate than Japanese. They argued that their labor was worth just as much as a worker of any other race.

These passages invite readers to compare life on the sugarcane plantations in Hawaii to plantations in the South under slavery. Some similarities emerge, for example in the highly regimented nature of the workers' existence, and the difficult, exhausting, and dangerous nature of the work. At the same time, the second half of this passage is an important reminder of the rights and freedoms available to sugarcane workers—including, crucially, the right to organize—that enslaved people were denied.

The **strike** represented the Japanese workers' desire to settle permanently in the US. They employed American rhetoric and ideals to demonstrate that they deserved equal pay for equal work. In response, the planters attempted to get the leaders arrested, and brought in workers of other ethnicities as "scabs," or strikebreakers. The strike lasted four months, and eventually the strikers surrendered. However, they won in the long term, as shortly after the planters installed equal wages across ethnic difference, raising Japanese wages.

This is the first instance of a pattern that appears several times in the book: after brutally forcing striking workers to return to work seemingly without capitulating to their demands, employers will then quietly meet these demands after the fact. This is because they did not want to seem lenient even when they realized the necessity of improving worker conditions.

In the years to come, workers in Hawaii began to realize that they would have to work in solidarity with those of other ethnicities in order to have any power. In 1919, Filipino workers went on **strike**, hoping the Japanese would join them, and eventually they did. Together, the strikers represented 77% of the total plantation workforce on Oahu. Although a Filipino union leader was successfully bribed by employers and called off the strike, many Filipino workers kept striking anyway. The planters mounted pressure on the strikers, eventually forcing them to give in. However, once again the strikers actually won, as six months later the planters increased wages by 50%.

Once again, this passage demonstrates the impressive power of interracial solidarity. When strikes incorporate workers of more than one ethnic group, there is less of a chance for scabs to be brought in to break the strike. Perhaps even more importantly, interracial strikes are an important demonstration to the white elite that workers will not let themselves be divided and conquered.

The housing system on the plantation remained racially segregated. Conditions were cramped and unhygienic; however, as more families arrived, cottages were built to replace the barracks. The workers took care to make these little houses more beautiful and homey. There was an effort to make the camp more like a community, with everyone feeling like "one big family." Japanese immigrants established Japanese-language schools and Buddhist temples. To the annoyance of the planters, these workers took days off to celebrate Japanese holidays. They would also share the food of their homeland with workers of other ethnicities.

The fact that housing was racially segregated helped the planters to stoke ethnic divisions and prevent workers of different ethnicities from acting in solidarity and organizing together. At the same time, this passage highlights that there were also positive benefits to segregation, including the opportunity to build a sense of community and family based on shared culture.

At first, communication across ethnic origin was difficult, as everyone spoke different languages. However, soon the workers began speaking pidgin English, which allowed them to communicate with one another. Hawaii was beginning to feel more and more like home to the Japanese workers, who had come with the intention of returning home, yet who largely decided to stay. While Japanese workers sought out educational opportunities for their children, planters opposed this. They wanted to limit the opportunities available to the children of planters in order to ensure that there would be another generation of planters ready to succeed their parents. In school, Japanese-American children learned about freedom and democracy, which was a stark contrast to the reality of life on the plantation.

One of the American myths Takaki seeks to expose is the idea that the children immigrants who came to the country were encouraged to gain an education in order to achieve upward social mobility. In reality, even where immigrants and their children enthusiastically wished to dedicate themselves to education, this might be discouraged and shut down. Planters (and related classes of people) often wanted workers and their children to remain uneducated in order to keep them doing low-skilled, low-paid, undesirable labor.

The prevalence of anti-Japanese racism on the mainland could prove shocking to those visiting from Hawaii. In Hawaii, Japanese people represented 40% of the population, but on the mainland they were only 2%. Japanese immigrants had four options for accessing land: contract, share, lease, and ownership. They entered the agricultural industry quickly, due to the fact that, at the end of the 19th century, there was a sharp increase in demand for produce in urban areas. Meanwhile, the completion of the national **railroad** and the invention of the refrigerated railway car meant that farmers could send fresh produce across the country with ease. Benefiting from these advancements, Japanese farmers flourished.

It would be easy to assume that in areas where a particular ethnic group was more populous, they might experience more racism. After all, surely these groups would be considered more of a threat to white society. At the same time, Takaki has made it clear that racism does not operate according to any real logic. Rather, it is a way of exercising power—and it is far easier to exercise power over a small minority than a large one.

All farmworkers toiled tirelessly, but women faced the extra burden of housework in addition to field work. Although some Japanese farmers managed to grow rich, they still faced vicious racism. For instance, George Shima, a man who built a massive fortune from potato farming, moved to a wealthy neighborhood in Berkeley and insistently stayed even after he faced extreme opposition from the community there.

One of the book's most important lessons is that wealth is not enough to transcend racism. This makes sense considering that race and class work together, such that one is never truly independent of the other.

Another successful Japanese immigrant, Kyutaro Abiko, put his sharp business skills to use as one of the founders of the Japanese American Industrial Corporation. Abiko was concerned by the future of Japanese immigrants in the US. He believed that it was important that they did not think of themselves as temporary sojourners in the country, but permanent members of American society. His newspaper encouraged Japanese immigrants to go into agriculture, work hard, and "put down roots in America." He purchased 3,200 acres of land to sell to Japanese farmers, naming the settlement, which was in the San Joaquin Valley in California, "Yamato Colony."

Although wealthy members of immigrant communities usually could not gain acceptance within elite white society, they still remained powerful as advocates of their own ethnic group. In this case, Kyutaro Abiko managed to improve the conditions of poorer Japanese immigrants by retaining a commitment to his own ethnic community even after he grew rich.

Although the colony flourished, Abiko's belief that the Japanese would be accepted by white American society through their success in agriculture underestimated the power of racism. In 1913, the state of California passed the Alien Land Law, which restricted land ownership to naturalized citizens and was deliberately designed to prohibit Japanese land ownership. A Japanese man named Takao Ozawa petitioned for US citizenship, but was denied because—although he was an upstanding person who had totally assimilated into American society—he was not white. In 1924, Congress passed a law further prohibiting the immigration of those who were not eligible for US citizenship, which was "code [...] for Japanese." No matter how hard they tried, Japanese immigrants could not make themselves be seen as American.

This passage further dispels the myth that with enough hard work and ingenuity, anyone can find success in the US. As Takaki makes clear, it did not matter how hard Japanese immigrants worked or how much they assimilated into American society: legal discrimination flatly prevented them from exercising their rights as residents of the US, let alone flourishing as fully embraced members of society.

The first generation of Japanese immigrants came to believe that their only route to American identity would be via their children, who were American citizens by birth. Parents emphasized the importance of education, but again, despite the educational success of the second generation, racism persisted, making it difficult for young Japanese Americans to get jobs. Although they had the potential to do highly skilled, blue-collar professions, these individuals found themselves having to take jobs in stores, laundries, and fruit stands. The second generation struggled with the "duality" of being both Japanese and American, particularly considering the level of anti-Japanese sentiment in the US. They did not want to *completely* assimilate, but the dream of retaining both Japanese and American identity became even more impossible during the Second World War.

What is undeniably tragic about this passage is the fact that first-generation immigrants in Japan largely had to give up hope of being accepted into American society themselves, and instead deferred this dream to their children. This is particularly sad considering how much this generation sacrificed and how hard they worked to become part of the US.

PART 3, CHAPTER 11: THE EXODUS FROM RUSSIA

According to Takaki, Caliban could have likewise been Jewish. In Russia, Jews were "degraded as the 'Other'" and faced intense prejudice and violence. They came to the US with no hope of returning to the land from which they'd come. The Russian poor had been brainwashed into believing that Jews were to blame for their problems, rather than the wealthy and oppressive elite. Forced to live in a single region of the country, Jews were prohibited from owning land. Most lived in urban areas and worked in manufacturing or commerce. They faced the terror of pogroms, outbursts of violence where Jews were massacred and synagogues and businesses destroyed.

In a way, Jews faced the most stark and explicit oppression prior to coming to the US than any other group readers have witnessed so far. Indeed, perhaps the most important factor was that they were already explicitly unwelcome in their home country. This prepared them to embrace the US as their true home—after all, they were a people in search of one.

Pogroms left Russian Jews in search of another homeland, and many found it in the US. By 1914, a third of Jews in Eastern Europe had left, with most moving to America. Rumors spread characterizing the US as a land of freedom and abundance. Thrilled by stories of life there, many Jews became desperate to go, selling practically all their possessions in order to raise money for the journey. Most Jewish immigrants felt that they were participating in a landmark point in Jewish history, where homeless Jews would finally have a land of their own. When the ships carrying immigrants finally arrived on American shores, people were overcome with excitement and wonder at the beauty of the landscape.

In a way, Jewish optimism about the US connected their experience to that of English settlers. Like the settlers, Jews felt that there was a sense of destiny surrounding their arrival in the US. However, unlike English settlers, Jews did not constitute a genocidal presence in America. Indeed, it was Jews themselves who had been fleeing genocide. For many of them, the US was their only chance of survival.

Most of these new arrivals had no money, but they tended to be well-educated skilled workers. They usually came in family groups, and about half were women. Most chose to settle in the Lower East Side of New York City, where "a new Jewish community blossomed." The concentration of Jews in this neighborhood could make it seem as if one had never left Russia in the first place. The neighborhood was a poor "ghetto," where conditions were cramped, unpleasant, and "prison-like." The tenements lacked bathing facilities, and on hot summer nights, residents would languish in the park to get some fresh air.

Again, this passage exposes both the advantages and disadvantages of segregated communities where a particular ethnic group is concentrated. While these areas often tended to be poor and lacking in resources, they were also places were a feeling of community and mutual support thrived, which was especially important to new arrivals in the US.

Organizations such as *landsmanshafts* (lodges) sprang up in the community, and people congregated in bathhouses and cafes. They attended lectures in droves, or went to the movies. The neighborhood had an abundance of peddlers, many of whom were highly educated scholars who had been supported by their wives back in Russia. In the US, many wives insisted that their husbands needed to earn a living themselves. The majority of Jews in New York City worked in the garment industry. Many brought sewing skills with them when they moved to the US, and their arrival coincided with the expansion of garment manufacturing in the country. In the late 19th century, there was an explosion of clothing factories, and Jewish garment workers "revolutionized the way clothes were made and what Americans wore."

Unlike in many of the other cultures Takaki has written about thus far, in Russian Jewish culture the norm was for women to work outside the home while men committed themselves to religious scholarship. Yet as this passage shows, Jewish women were eager to embrace a different way of life in the US. This was surely in part because they wanted their husbands to contribute to earning wages for the family; yet it was also more of a symbolic gesture, a way of demonstrating assimilation into American society.

The competitive nature of the garment industry pushed both laborers and contractors to work at incredible speed. Workers would collaborate in teams, with each member forced to keep up with the rapid pace of production. Conditions in these sweatshops were harsh; one female garment worker asserted: "We were like slaves." Accidents were common, and workers described feeling like extensions of the machines at which they sat. Laboring for 11-15 hours a day, these workers still strived to use their precious moments of free time pursuing pleasure activities like dancing. Many garment workers were young women, who had also worked in the clothing industry back in Russia. Most were single, hoping to get married after a few years of work.

Despite the horrific conditions in which Jewish garment workers labored, they were determined to embrace the fullness of life in their new home—as demonstrated by the act that they spent their free time dancing and pursuing other enjoyable activities. The sheer energy required to pursue life with such enthusiasm shows how exhilarating it must have been to be a young Jewish immigrant in New York City during this time, even as exploitative work conditions would have been demoralizing.

Many of these young women were forced to leave their studies at a fairly young age, even if they wanted to continue, in order to work full-time. In 1911, a terrible tragedy struck at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory. The building caught fire, trapping 800 workers inside, most of whom were young women. Many of the girls jumped to their deaths rather than be consumed by the heat and smoke, while another 146 died inside. Most of the dead women were Jewish and Italian, and news of the disaster horrified the Lower East Side. Before the fire, many of the women who ended up dying had gone on **strike** in 1909.

The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire became a horrifying single of the degradation and danger to which working-class immigrant women were exposed. By making them suffer such conditions, employers treated them like their lives were disposable, as became painfully clear when so many died in the fire.

One of the leaders of the **strike**, Clara Lemlich, was a charismatic teenager who compared the plight of the garment workers to enslaved black people in the South. Although the strikers faced police violence, they remained steadfast, and their courage impressed the wider community. More strikes followed in the months and years to come, and these efforts "represented a watershed in Jewish-American history." The energy that emerged from them was not just boldly working class, but also distinctly Jewish. The strikes intensified "a shared sense of ethnicity," and of a particular Jewish-American identity.

As Takaki shows here, labor struggles have long been a vitally important part of Jewish American history. Many of the US' greatest leaders of the socialist and anarchist movements have been Jewish, and Jews were crucial to the wave of labor organizing that took place in the early 20th century.

For new arrivals, the worst possible thing was to be called a "greenhorn." Jewish immigrants pursued the goal of assimilation with enthusiasm. They rid themselves of their old clothes, making an effort to dress in the latest American fashions, and set their minds to mastering English. Many people changed their names to more Anglicized versions. Some gave presents during Christmas to demonstrate that they were not greenhorns, and many started taking summer vacations in places like the Catskills. All this was done in spite of the fact that most Lower East Side families had very little money. These immigrants still did everything they could to appear wealthy and assimilated.

Whereas at other points in the book, immigrants assimilate due to pressure or fear, in this case many Jews enthusiastically embraced an American identity because they truly wanted to. This was true even if it meant contradicting aspects of one's Jewish identity, such as by giving gifts on Christmas. Over time, many Jews would come to realize that assimilation would not require such a dramatic shift away from Jewish tradition, although some would continue to pursue practices such as Christmas gift-giving.

Unlike in Russia, Jewish wives in the US largely did not participate in wage labor, instead being charged with running the home. According to one historian, having arrived in the US "Jewish immigrants became increasingly sensitive to bourgeois notions of respectability" as part of their assimilationist mission. Upward mobility came when unionized workers slowly built up the capital to pay for their children's education. However, it was mostly only boys who received support for their education; their sisters continued to work in sweatshops in order to send their brothers to college. Young women's earning often also helped support their parents.

Here, a quite different side of the Jewish community emerges from the radical labor organizers mentioned in previous sections. Indeed, where some Jewish immigrants committed themselves to socialism and anarchism, arguing for the liberation of the working class against bourgeois oppression, others embraced bourgeois identity and focused their efforts on accumulating wealth and status.

By the First World War, colleges in New York City had a high proportion of Jewish students. By 1920, **Harvard** was 20% Jewish, and this sparked an anti-Semitic backlash. Lowell publicly announced that although Harvard was the least anti-Semitic place in the US, it would still be necessary to restrict Jewish enrollment to the college in order to prevent anti-Semitic feeling from developing among the students. The college established certain criteria designed to ensure there was a Jewish quota each year. Jewish enrollment to Harvard declined to about 10-16% per year through the 1930s. The Irish mayor of Boston, meanwhile, criticized Harvard for this decision, arguing that anti-Semitic restrictions could be an ominous sign of what was to come for Italians, Spanish, Poles, and Irish-Americans.

The Irish mayor of Boston's support for Jewish enrolment at Harvard again highlights the importance of interethnic solidarity. As Takaki has mentioned, by this point the Irish were seen as an acceptable and welcome contingent of the Harvard student population. Nonetheless, the mayor realized that this acceptance was contingent, rather than guaranteed. One way to protect it was to protect the rights of other European immigrants to access Harvard, including Jews.

What happened at **Harvard** was part of a broader "nativist movement." In 1924, Congress passed an act that severely limited immigration, particularly from southern and eastern parts of Europe. Where Jews had initially been seen in a fairly positive light, as more came, they began facing harsher and harsher resentment. Anti-Semitic stereotypes proliferated, violence erupted, and Jews faced discrimination from employers who listed their jobs as available to "Christians only." Anti-Semitic feeling intensified as Jews began leaving the Lower East Side and settling in other areas, such as Harlem, the Bronx, and Brooklyn. However, they tended to move in concentrated groups, keeping established networks of kinship and support.

The nativist movement Takaki refers to here was part of a historical moment in which white Americans began to noticed that the category of whiteness was expanding. This produced anxiety and anger in a group of people who had worked hard to keep their new country strictly hierarchized according to race. Hindsight shows that ultimately this nativist backlash didn't work, and the category of white was indeed expanded to include Jews and other European immigrants.

PART 3, CHAPTER 12: EL NORTE

For Mexican citizens in the early 20th century, immigrating to "El Norte" was fairly simple. Those who had immigrated wrote back to family about their positive experiences, which led to further immigration. Some had little choice to come, in order to escape exploitation from landowners, widespread unemployment, poverty, and starvation in Mexico. The Revolution of 1910 had proven dangerously violent. Immigration also increased thanks to the construction of the Mexican International **Railroad**, which made journeying to Texas easier. Most immigrants were young, working-class agricultural workers. Men often brought their families with them, or sent for them after settling. In the first decades of the 20th century, the Mexican population in Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, and California blossomed.

Considering how difficult it is for people to journey from Mexico to the US today, it is quite startling to imagine that it was once as simple as getting on a train. Of course, in many parts of the world, crossing borders remains this simple. Crossing the border into the US has now become a much more difficult, and—for the many immigrants who attempt to cross via the desert—dangerous endeavor.

Many Mexican immigrants worked in construction, public utilities, and mills, performing unskilled, blue-collar labor. Upward mobility was difficult. Most worked in agriculture; there was much work to be found in this industry, particularly after various pieces of legislation began excluding Asian immigrants. Employers in this industry felt that Mexicans were particularly suited to agricultural labor, and seized the opportunity to pay these workers very little money. Because agricultural work was seasonal, workers migrated, working different jobs for fixed periods of time. In part because of the transient status of these workers, employers did not make any effort to provide them with decent, sanitary conditions.

One of the points that Takaki reiterates throughout the book is that discrimination against a particular nonwhite ethnic group (in this passage, Asian immigrants) inadvertently ends up benefiting another nonwhite ethnic group (in this case, Mexicans). Takaki shows that this entire situation is a product of white supremacy, which creates an environment of intense competition and pits nonwhite groups against each other. Unfortunately, the result is sometimes that nonwhite groups themselves become prejudiced toward other groups.

In protest against this poor treatment, Mexican immigrants got involved with labor organizing. Their "militancy" shocked employers, who had previously considered them "bovine and tractable individuals." When workers in the San Joaquin Valley went on **strike** in 1933, the local sheriffs called the Mexicans "trash" and "pigs," where local media threatened them with "concentrations camp[s]." However, bolstered by the enthusiastic participation of women, the Mexicans held strong, and eventually secured a (compromised) wage increase.

It is unfortunately a fairly common feature of racism to compare people of a certain ethnic group to animals. Here, this takes place with two farm animals, cows ("bovine") and pigs. The implication is that Mexicans, like livestock, can be easily controlled and that their whole purpose is to support agricultural work. As Takaki makes clear, their actions boldly defied these racist, dehumanizing ideas.

In the early 20th century, Punjabi immigrants began coming to the US from India. Most of them were Sikh, and the sight of agricultural workers picking fruit in California wearing turbans struck some observers as "exotic." Most came from the farmer caste in India, and, like Mexicans, they engaged in seasonal, migratory work. Almost no women came as part of this immigrant community, and after 1917, Asian men were legally barred from bringing their wives to the US. Punjabi men were also legally banned from marrying white women. As a result, in Central California, over three quarters of Sikh men were married to Mexican women.

This is a rather surprising and moving example of the way that racism can inadvertently bring different ethnic groups together, *rather than pushing them apart. The Punjabi men in all likelihood did not come to the US expecting to marry Mexican women; yet the absurd laws governing who could own land and who counted as a citizen made these unlikely unions proliferate.*

The 1913 Alien Land Act barred Punjabi and other Asian immigrants from owning land, so marrying Mexicans was one of the only ways in which Punjabi men could be landowners. The marriages between Punjabi men and Mexican women created mixed cultural families; children were often given both Indian and Spanish names. Mexicans, meanwhile, faced discrimination and exclusion from Anglo society. Yet many Mexicans also refused to use "Colored" facilities, protesting: "I would rather die from starvation than to humiliate myself before the Americans by eating with the Negroes."

This passage contains both further examples of the heart-warming union of Mexican and Punjabi culture, and an unfortunate reminder of the presence of racism among ethnic groups. While Takaki repeatedly shows that it is in the interests of people of color to act in solidarity with each other, the anti-black comments of the Mexican quoted here shows that, unfortunately, people often choose racism instead.

Children attended segregated schools, where education was limited in order to cultivate another generation of unskilled farm workers (as was the case on the plantations in Hawaii). Mexican children were taught little, and discouraged from going to high school. However, there were occasional teachers who believed that Mexican children had the right to a decent education, and who encouraged these children to feel proud of their dual Mexican-American identity. Yet at the same time, the influx of Mexican immigrants to the US was alarming many Anglos. In 1937, a group of educators (including President Lowell of **Harvard**) signed a petition demanding that there be a quota on the number of Mexicans able to enter the US.

Once again, Takaki emphasizes that it was a struggle for Mexican immigrants to access education even when they desperately wanted to. Rather than being encouraged to come to the US and make something of themselves, they were forced to remain a permanent underclass in order to serve the interests of white people and other wealthy people profiting from their underpaid labor.

White people expressed concerns that Mexicans were ruining the purity of the nation, and irrevocably shaping the character of the Southwest. The media was filled with negative stereotypes about Mexicans and arguments that the Mexicans could not be assimilated into the US. The fact that Mexicans constituted "cheap labor" was framed as a threat to white American workers. During the Great Depression, both the government and charities pressured Mexicans to go back to their homeland through repatriation programs. Many of those who were repatriated were children, and 60% were American citizens.

Here, Takaki pushes readers to see how little has changed between this era of history and the present. Mexican immigration is sometimes framed as a recent "problem" in the contemporary media, when in fact there have been Mexicans in the US since its founding.

Many Mexicans felt that the border was "only an imaginary line," and created "Mexican-American world[s]" within the US through enclaves known as barrios. Despite being poor, the barrio provided a sense of belonging and community. Mexican holidays were celebrated there, and the distinctly Mexican version of Catholicism was a prominent part of life. Knowledge of job opportunities spread through the network of the barrio, and people provided newcomers with financial support to help them find their feet. There were other factors that created a sense of home: women wearing traditional dress, the presence of Mexican forms of entertainment, and stands offering Mexican food.

The feeling that the border was an "imaginary line" was actually an accurate one. Borders are imaginary lines, not in the sense that they don't have real world implications—they absolutely do—but rather because they are human inventions that don't have any inherent meaning. In this passage, Takaki gestures to the idea that separating human culture according to strict but arbitrary lines is rather pointless and illogical.

Residents of the barrio would share stories and commiserate with one another over the difficulties they faced in El Norte. Some admitted that they had no desire to learn English or assimilate; they didn't like the US, and eventually hoped to return to Mexico. However, it was also clear that most were "making El Norte their homeland."

It is important to remember that, although Takaki identifies trends among particular ethnic groups, in reality each group of people contained a huge amount of internal diversity. Some Mexicans wanted to stay, some wanted to assimilate, and some wanted neither.

PART 3, CHAPTER 13: TO "THE LAND OF HOPE"

Black people also moved northward in huge numbers in the early 20th century. This was the Great Migration. Migration fever was rampant, and had a contagious, cumulative effect: the more people a person knew who were "prospering" in the North, the more they desired to leave the South, and the less reason they had to stay. Indeed, many people who were "left behind" felt isolated and lonely. Forced to work as sharecroppers after the Civil War, black people in the South were "enslaved by debts." Life was defined by hard work and no promise of reward.

It is striking to compare the "migration fever" that enveloped black Southerners in the early 20th century to the feelings of Irish, Jewish, or Japanese immigrants who heard about life in the US and became desperate to go. Black Southerners may have been born in the US, but they, too, became migrants pursuing an "American Dream" of a better life in the North.

Meanwhile, during the First World War, European immigration to the US virtually stopped. As a result, desperate factory managers sent recruiters to the South. A black journalist in Chicago commented that economic necessity provided "a chance" for black people: "Prejudice vanishes when the almighty dollar is on the wrong side of the balance sheet." Black people who had moved North wrote back to friends and family saying they wish they'd come sooner. Both the economic opportunities and social environment were a significant improvement from the South. Those who had been born after the end of slavery were less and less likely to tolerate the miserable conditions of the South.

The comment by the black journalist in Chicago is one of the most important ideas in the book. While Takaki demonstrates the enduring and staggering power of prejudice, he also illustrates repeated moments in history when the desire for profit seemed to erase that prejudice. Of course, in reality prejudice does not actually "vanish" in times of economic necessity. Rather, it is suppressed, and is always in danger of resurfacing.

Jim Crow, segregation, lynching, and police brutality were also significant factors driving black people northward. Young black people dreamed of residing in places where "a man is a man." The writer Richard Wright was one of the huge flock of black Southerners who migrated North in the 1920s. Arriving in Chicago, he felt exhilarated. Black migrants framed their actions in biblical terms; for them, the North was "the Promised Land." Yet as Wright recalled, they did not know what to expect there. Most of those coming from the South first went to Chicago. The black population of the city tripled between the years 1900 and 1920, and this provoked a furious backlash from white residents.

Because conditions for black people in the South were so hellish, any reprieve might have seemed like heaven. In reality, though, just because the North was not stricken by the same kind of violence as the South did not mean it was a hospitable or easy place for black people to live. It must have been terrifying to arrive in a place that was unknown—not dissimilar to the experience of immigrants coming from around the world to a country they had only heard rumors about.

Much of the conflict centered on housing. White residents were desperate to keep their neighborhoods free of black people, and schools were likewise sites of intense racial antagonism. The same was also true of workplaces. Many black Southerners were dismayed to learn that they have been brought up as scabs (strikebreakers), and that they would not be offered full-time employment after the strikes were over. At the same time, the First World War stimulated a need for workers, which helped black people find jobs in a discriminatory environment. For many women, the war provided an opportunity to finally escape the domestic work they hated so much. For the first time, industry jobs with good wages were available.

This passage illustrates a dilemma facing black migrant workers during this time. For the first time, reasonably well-paid employment opportunities were available to them, which is what had drawn them North. Yet at the same time, housing discrimination and social unrest made their new home difficult to actually inhabit. This dilemma reflects similar issues faced by immigrants coming to the US from all around the world.

At the same time, managers were still using black workers to obstruct the labor struggles of white people. Meanwhile, white organizers who tried to recruit black people to join their efforts sometimes had difficulty doing so. Racist violence was a major cause of distrust; in the 1910s, white people bombed black neighborhoods several times. During the race riot of July 4, 1919, white mobs brutally attacked black people and homes, while black people retaliated by attacking white people, too. In response to this hostility, black people in Chicago decided that they needed to band together and spend their money within the black community in order to build security.

Here, Takaki notes that although interracial solidarity in labor struggles is highly important, it is not necessarily easy to achieve. Distrust, suspicion, and prejudice might deter people of different ethnic groups from working together. In the case of the black workers who were resistant to collaborating with white people, this could hardly be surprising, considering the vicious extent of white people's anti-black racism.

In New York City, meanwhile, the burst of the housing bubble at the end of the 19th century meant that Harlem went from being a wealthy white neighborhood to a vibrant black community. White Harlem residents were furious about this, claiming that the neighborhood had been ruined. But their anger did not stop the community from flourishing and becoming "the largest colony of colored people, in similar limits, in the world." Indeed, Harlem actually became too crowded, leading to cramped living conditions. Nonetheless, its residents felt that it was "the land of hope," a place where black people could be happy and free.

It may be surprising to learn that before it turned into a vital home for the black community, Harlem was once a wealthy white neighborhood. This information is pertinent considering that in the present day, Harlem is being re-gentrified by wealthy residents of many different races. The fact that it was once an affluent white neighborhood highlights the way in which the demographics of cities are always in flux.

Harlem resident Marcus Garvey represented this new wave of freedom and aspiration. Born in Jamaica, he recalled an "innocent" childhood free of concerns about race. Once he discovered the painful reality of racism, he developed a theory of black nationalism, and in 1914 founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) which aimed to give support to black people and found a black nation in Africa. Two years later, Garvey moved the organization to Harlem, and membership boomed. Garvey electrified the public with messages of black pride and power. However, his shipping company, the Black Star Line, which was supposed to help black people get to Africa, soon ran into trouble. In 1922, Garvey was charged with fraud, and deported back to Jamaica.

The question of black nationalism and the possibility of returning to Africa have always been important considerations for the African-American population. Even today, there remain divisions over whether black people will ever be able to flourish while having to deal the enduring racism of white Americans. In the early 20th century, Garvey capitalized on—and helped to stimulate—a feeling of exhilaration about the possibilities of black independence.

Yet Harlem remained a thriving hub of black life and culture. Many of the major figures of the Harlem Renaissance came from middle-class families. Dismayed by the ongoing lack of "social acceptance" in spite of black uplift and achievement, these were the class of people Alain Locke called the "New Negro," an "increasingly articulate elite" who lived in urban areas and were proud of their blackness. Langston Hughes insisted that black people were held back by internalized racism and the habit of trying to become like white people. He argued that they must embrace the beauty of their blackness instead. Yet Hughes also wrote about the difficulty of establishing one's identity as a black American, being neither quite African nor American, but both.

Again, this passage serves as a reminder that racial groups are far from monolithic. Some black people embraced their American identity, some wanted nothing to do with the US, and many found themselves caught somewhere in between. Meanwhile, the class of people Locke describes as the "New Negro" had unpresented intellectual and cultural capital—yet found that they were scarcely more accepted than those who were desperately poor and lacking in education.

While writers like Hughes sought community in Harlem, others, like Jean Toomer, went "searching for his roots" in the rural South. Toomer was fascinated by the black folk culture of the South, which he depicted in his modernist novel *Cane*. In the novel, Toomer describes the way that the South remains haunted by slavery. Toomer himself was haunted by his biracial heritage, which also left him feeling caught between two worlds. Meanwhile, Zora Neale Hurston was also determined to represent the black culture of the rural South, and particularly Florida, where she was from. Hurston also brought an important focus on the way race and gender operate in conjunction with one another, paying attention to the sexism that existed in the black community.

The wave of writers who were part of the Harlem Renaissance played a vital role in documenting the rich diversity of black life in the US during this time. Whereas the mainstream cultural establishment remained deeply racist and dismissive of black people, it is thanks to members of the Harlem Renaissance that readers can gain insight into the complex and vivid reality of black communities during this era.

By the 1920s, Harlem was a "slum." Things got worse during the Great Depression, which had a severe impact on black people all over the country. Employers prioritized hiring white people, and in 1932, over half of black people in Southern cities were unemployed. Facing desperate poverty and starvation, black people received little help from the New Deal. Disappointed by Roosevelt, many black political leaders began arguing for "voluntary segregation." They reasoned that becoming economically independent was necessary for black survival. At the same time, however, black people were joining white labor struggles for the first time. Meanwhile, the Democratic party began courting black votes by offering more provisions as part of the New Deal. This appeal worked, and Roosevelt was hailed as the "second 'Emancipator.'"

In this passage, Takaki describes one of the first times when politicians made an effort to deliberately court black voters, and in doing so actually took steps to improve the circumstances of black communities. Unfortunately, even today, the issue of politicians taking black voters for granted remains an issue. In fact, some would argue that this issue has worsened since earlier periods in the twentieth century.

PART 4, INTRODUCTION: THE PROBLEM OF THE COLOR LINES

W.E.B. Du Bois argued that "the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color line." This problem came to a head during the Second World War, when the US and other countries fought against the explicitly racist Nazi regime. Americans realized that there was hypocrisy in fighting for freedom and equality abroad while intense racist oppression and segregation continued at home.

As this introduction shows, the Second World War helped to radically reorient people's opinions on race relations in the US due to the sudden presence of a global, comparative perspective brought by the war.

PART 4, CHAPTER 14: WORLD WAR II

Just over a year after President Roosevelt made a speech about the importance of human rights and freedom, the Japanese dropped bombs on Pearl Harbor. In less than two weeks, Roosevelt ordered that all Japanese "aliens" in Hawaii be put in internment camps. Two days later, the military governor of Hawaii, General Emmons, assured the public that the government did *not* plan to use concentration camps. The following March, Roosevelt ordered that 20,000 Japanese considered security threats be taken from the islands to the mainland. Sensing how much this would disrupt Japan's economy, General Emmons limited it to 1,444 people.

Japanese internment is one of the darkest periods of American history, and also one of the most important to remember. This is particularly true given that it took place against the backdrop of war against the Nazi regime. Takaki underscores here that while the US framed itself as a champion for liberty and equality against the Nazis, in reality both *nations were placing their own citizens in concentration camps.*

In the days following Pearl Harbor, US intelligence concluded that all suspected individuals (just over 2,000 people of Japanese, German, and Italian heritage) were in custody. However, Lieutenant General John L. DeWitt of the Western Defense Command nonetheless argued that all Japanese and Japanese-American individuals on the West Coast—including citizens born in the US—should be forcibly removed from society and placed in special "military areas." In Washington, there was disagreement about whether this was necessary and whether it would violate the Constitution.

The indecision about whether all Japanese Americans should be considered suspects reflects a broader uncertainty about the status of immigrants—and particularly Asian immigrants—during this period of history. There existed no consensus over whether these immigrants should be considered truly a part of the fabric of the US, or whether they were permanent "aliens" who would never truly belong in the country.

On February 19, 1942, President Roosevelt signed an order allowing individual Military Commanders to decide whether to place people in military areas. Although it did not say so explicitly, the intention was to allow Japanese internment. And sure enough, General DeWitt informed the Japanese population of the West Coast that they were to be evacuated on April 30. They were told to bring bedding, toiletries, utensils, and clothes. Some refused to comply on the basis that this order was unconstitutional; however, they were arrested, and their appeals to the Supreme Court yielded nothing. Meanwhile, the Japanese population were put on trains heading to internment camps in remote parts of the nation.

There is a striking and disturbing similarity between the ways in which both Japanese Americans and European Jews were rounded up with little warning and put on trains taking them to remote parts of the country, hidden from plain sight. Although thankfully Japanese Americans did not face the mass extermination that awaited European Jews, the similarities between the use of concentration camps in the US and Germany is staggering.

The captives were crowded into barracks and forced into "military-like routine." Children went to school, while adults performed work for the government. In September 1942, all Japanese men were classified as "enemy aliens," even those born in the US, which disqualified them from serving in the US army. In December 1943, Roosevelt "hypocritically" wrote that no American citizenship should be denied the chance to serve in the military. Soon after, those in the internment camps were given a loyalty questionnaire which included the question of whether they were prepared to serve in the army; 22% answered no, many of whom surely doing so in protest against their internment. Those who answered yes were drafted.

Japanese Americans were both degraded and dehumanized by being put in internment camps and used as soldiers in the war. While some were understandably desperate to prove their loyalty to a country that had dramatically turned against them, others were—also understandably—so angry about their internment that they were vehemently opposed to the idea of "serving their country."

Partly due to their language and other special skills, Japanese-American soldiers were key to US victory. The 442nd unit, compromised of soldiers of Japanese descent, was "probably the most decorated unit in United States military history." At the end of the war, President Harry Truman told the soldiers of the 442nd unit that they had beaten both "the enemy" and "prejudice," but in fact this was far from the case. Anti-Japanese racism was rampant in the US. When those in internment camps were allowed to leave, they often returned to find their homes and businesses destroyed. Some, particularly the old and sick, died in the camps.

The shocking injustice suffered by Japanese Americans during the Second World War highlights a broader, uncomfortable irony about the history of the US. Takaki suggests that those Americans who work the hardest and show the most loyalty to their country are often those who are most excluded from it, denigrated as "aliens" and outsiders rather than real Americans.

Meanwhile, almost one million African Americans served in the segregated military in the Second World War. During the war, the NAACP advocated for the desegregation of the armed forces, but this was unsuccessful. The segregation of the army "quickly became a symbol of America's hypocrisy," one not lost on many Americans. Black soldiers insisted that what they were really fighting for was racial equality at *home*. Meanwhile, in segregated military camps, the German prisoners of war were allowed to use white facilities, while black American soldiers had to use "colored" ones. Many soldiers were shocked by the racism they encountered within the military. Those who wanted to fight often found themselves assigned service duties instead, while others were told black people were not intelligent enough to be pilots.

In this passage, Takaki highlights the remarkable commitment of soldiers of color to a country that, by all accounts, was simply not deserving of the loyalty from which it benefited.

Black soldiers fought against this mistreatment, and eventually the Secretary of War allowed black pilots to be trained at the Tuskegee Air Force Base. The performance of these pilots was so impressive that they were "much in demand," as were tankers in the black 761st Battalion, named "the best tank unit in the country." Black women also served in the military as part of the Women's Army Corps, assigned to tasks like running the military mail service. However, back home, African Americans were dismayed to find that defense industry jobs were restricted to white candidates. In response, A. Philip Randolph threatened a March on Washington in order to protest this policy. Alarmed by this, Roosevelt signed an Executive Order banning racial and ethnic discrimination in the defense industries.

Part of the myth of American history is that white leaders benevolently granted rights to racial minorities out of a sense of justice and knowledge of the need for change. A Different Mirror *reveals that, in reality, white leaders usually had to be forced to capitulate to the demands of people of color, and did so at the last minute and with much reluctance. Rather than acting on a sense of justice, white leaders tended to make decisions influenced by fear of rebellion.*

However, perhaps the main motivating impulse for ending discrimination in the defense industries was the enormous need for workers as the war went on. Facing both sexism and anti-black racism, black women were the last group invited to join the efforts; however, jobs in the defense industries were eventually opened to them, too. As more black women took these jobs, the proportion of them working in domestic services dropped. Overall, African Americans moved into industrial cities to take these jobs in huge numbers. In Detroit, this led to overcrowding, segregation in ghettos, and racist violence.

This passage shows that, in addition to fear, white leaders and employers were also motivated by sheer necessity when it came to integrating the country. In this sense, periods of economic boom—including the war—tended to also be periods of racial advancement, as more opportunities were open to people of all races and competition and racist resentment decreased.

In 1943, a three-day race riot shook Detroit—34 people were killed, most of them black, and millions of dollars in property was destroyed. Many felt that President Roosevelt should speak out against race riots, but he was worried about "irritat[ing] the southern leaders." However, a multiracial group of injured soldiers from Detroit, who were recovering in a (non-segregated) hospital, denounced the racist violence in their city. They argued that the riots provoked them to consider what they were actually fighting for.

In contrast to the lionized image of American presidents often propagated in the more mythic version of the nation's history, Takaki presents Roosevelt and other political leaders as somewhat cowardly. In this case, Roosevelt's fear of upsetting Southern leaders easily trumped any sense of justice or desire to prevent further racist violence.

When the US declared war on Japan, China did as well, making the two countries allies. In New York City, 40% of the Chinese population enlisted in the army, the highest of any nationality. Chinese immigrants were exhilarated by the opportunity to serve their country and demonstrate their patriotism. They were also excited by the higher-paying job opportunities the war presented, after having been confined to restaurants and laundries. Chinese-American women also took on industrial work.

Again, Takaki provides a quite different view of the war than the mainstream, rather mythic image. The Chinese enlisted in huge numbers, but how likely is it that when imagining an American soldier in the Second World War, a Chinese man would come to mind? Indeed, this is a product of the whitewashing of American history, which A Different Mirror *seeks to expose.*

Meanwhile, in Asia, Japan had been producing anti-American propaganda in hope of uniting other East Asian populations against the US. This propaganda pointed to anti-Chinese legislation, particularly the Exclusion Act. Concerned about the possibility of China joining the Japanese Side, Congress repealed the Exclusion Act, although there was now quota of only 105 Chinese immigrants to the US per year. However, the change in laws did also allow Chinese immigrants to become naturalized citizens—a "long-awaited victory."

It is important to note that US race relations have always been affected by the opinions of the world at large. Indeed, it sometimes took commentators from beyond the US' shores to highlight hypocrisy that was not being adequately articulated within the nation itself.

Takaki quotes a young Mexican American who reacted to the news of Pearl Harbor with patriotic horror, and who believed it was his duty, as well as that of his Jewish friends, "to show that we were more American than the Anglos." A huge percentage of Mexican Americans served in the army during the war. When a Mexican-American soldier died, his whole community grieved together, and raised money for the kin he left behind.

The idea that Mexicans and Jews could be "more American than the Anglos" presents a different idea of the US than the one white Americans wanted to uphold. Clearly, people of color were not content to let the US be framed as a white country. They had a different idea of what it meant to be American, and were prepared to fight for this.

Among the soldiers decorated for their service in the war was a Mexican American named Guy Louis Gabaldon, who grew up in a barrio in East Los Angeles, and who had befriended a Japanese family in his neighborhood. He ended up living with the family for six years and learning Japanese. During the war, the family were taking to an internment camp, while Gabaldon himself served in the army. On his first day of combat he killed 33 Japanese soldiers and was filled with regret. Acting alone, he attempted to persuade the Japanese soldier to surrender, warning them in Japanese that they were surrounded. Working to persuade a small group of soldiers at a time, he ended up rounding up 800 prisoners, and was ultimately awarded the Navy Cross for this act.

This passage provides a strikingly clear example of the fact that the multicultural nature of the US has enormously benefited the nation. The blend of people, cultures, and languages has made the US and its population richer, more advanced, and more competitive in the global arena, and is thus something to be celebrated.

Back in the US, the government recruited laborers from Mexico to work in the agricultural industry in order to supply food to the military. Meanwhile, Mexican-American men and women began working in the defense industries. On the assembly lines, Mexican women found themselves working alongside those of other races, and often initial prejudice gave way to friendship and solidarity. Their contributions to the war effort gave them a sense of purpose and "self-confidence." For these women, the exact global politics of the war were almost beside the point. They felt attached to the US, which they identified as their home, and were proud to serve their country through participation in the war effort.

Although there were many positive things that emerged from the war, Takaki's note that the Mexican-American women on the assembly lines did not really pay much attention to the exact politics of the war is important, and somewhat disturbing. While the war may have helped improve the racism that had corrupted American society, it was also a catastrophic global event in which millions of people needlessly lost their lives over issues of territory and power.

On the other hand, for many Native people, the idea of fighting in the "white man's war" was abhorrent. They did not see why they should now have to defend those who had colonized them. Of the Native men who did serve, 20% came from the Navajo Nation. Some expressed pride in being "American Indians," and thus compelled to serve. For others, the motivation to join the army was poverty. Faced with grim employment prospects on the reservation, some felt they had no choice but to join the military.

The unfortunate reality is that, whatever people's feelings might have been about the war and the prospect of serving in the army, the decision to serve was not primarily ideological for most men. Through these examples, Takaki suggests that economic pressures tend to be a far more important factor when it comes to participation in the army. Ideology usually comes after.

Meanwhile, the marines specifically recruited Navajos because they wanted to use the Navajo language as a code. Adapting the language to be used as a military code was a complex task. Because the Navajo language could be so inaccessible to those who had not grown up speaking it, it became known as "the unbreakable code." The Navajo code talkers proved essential at several key points in the war, such as in the battle for Iwo Jima. Yet participation in the war took a heavy toll on Navajo soldiers; some of them were never able to psychologically recover. Some developed alcohol problems and abused their wives. They faced a tough combination of enduring poverty and unemployment on the reservation, as well as what is now known as post-traumatic stress. Yet the war also instilled pride in their unique culture.

The beginning of this passage provides another rousing example of the extent to which the US is made a more advanced and competitive nation through its internal diversity. Unfortunately, this positive note gives way to a grim reality. After working hard and making enormous sacrifices to fight for their country, many soldiers were left traumatized, hurt, and stuck in a cycle of poverty, addiction, mental health problems, and misery.

When Hitler rose to power, the 4.5 million Jews living in the US wondered what they should do. When a representative named Samuel Dickstein suggested that Congress should allow all German Jews with family members in the US to be permitted entry to the country, he faced opposition from Jewish-American organizations. They insisted that the US, and Jews already in the country, should be prioritized. However, this belief began to crumble in 1938 after Kristallnacht, a night of violence against Jewish businesses. Roosevelt condemned the attacks, but was hesitant to expand the existing quota for Jewish immigrants.

Considering what is known about the Second World War from a contemporary perspective, it may seem strange or even unbelievable that the US didn't do more to rescue Jews from Germany and other European countries. While on one hand it is true that people at the time did not know the horrifying extent of the fate that awaited European Jews, Takaki shows throughout A Different Mirror *that exclusion and indifference to death has always defined US immigration policy.*

Meanwhile, a 1939 bill offering entry to refugee children encountered opposition from much of the American public. Eleanor Roosevelt urged her husband to support the bill, but President Roosevelt was too worried about public opinion to do so. Meanwhile, even many Jewish leaders stated that the entry of refugee children should be heavily restricted. Soon after, a ship carrying 907 German Jewish refugees named the *St. Louis* was unexpectedly turned away from Cuba, where those fleeing had hoped to gain asylum. The passengers on the *St. Louis* begged the US to accept them, but they were turned back to Europe, where most were killed in the Nazi genocide.

The fact that Jewish-American leaders opposed measures to allow Jews asylum in the US is perplexing from a contemporary perspective. At the same time, it is important to bear in mind the highly delicate situation American Jews found themselves in, which was defined by rampant anti-Semitism in their own country. Takaki suggests that while this does not excuse the actions of the leaders, it helps explain why they acted this way.

Many American Jews were furious about what had happened to the *St. Louis*. This fury raged even harder after the Nazi invasion of Poland, which endangered the 3 million Jews living there. Meanwhile, Germany's invasion of Russia led to further massacres of Jews. Although Americans did not know exactly what was happening in Europe, on August 28 Rabbi Stephen Wise, the leader of the American Jewish Congress, received a cable from the Geneva representative of the World Jewish Congress, informing him that Germany intended to murder all Jews in Nazi-occupied territories—about 4 million people. Wise shared this information with the Secretary of State, but was forced to wait three months until the information was confirmed.

It is a fairly commonly circulated myth that the general global population—and particularly political leaders—had no idea what was happening to the Jews of Europe until the liberation of the concentration camps in 1945. In this passage, Takaki highlights the reality that, political leaders did *have a sense of the genocide that was taking place.*

After finally hearing that the reports were true, Wise held a press conference bringing the news to the public. However, despite efforts from Jewish leaders, little attention was brought to the issue. Rabbi Wise pleaded with President Roosevelt to take direct action to try and save European Jews, but Roosevelt dismissed this possibility, saying that the best chance European Jews had of rescue was via American victory in the war. Roosevelt was then faced with a further intervention from his Jewish Secretary of the Treasury, who pleaded with him to sign an order declaring that any European Jews who came to the US would be granted temporary asylum.

In this passage, Takaki highlights a shocking but unavoidable reality: Roosevelt simply did not care enough about the Jews of Europe to take action to save them. It also showed that the fate of Europe's Jews was totally incidental; the only thing that really mattered to Roosevelt, Takaki argues, was American victory.

Roosevelt's only concession was to offer a shelter for a mere 1,000 refugees. By the time the US and its allies won the war, 6 million Jews had been killed. African American soldiers who took part in liberating the concentration camps found that Nazi treatment of the Jews was eerily familiar to anti-black violence in the US. Among the liberators of the camps were Japanese- and Jewish-American soldiers, the latter of whom obviously had a particularly personal connection to their role in the war. Meanwhile, back in the US, American Zionists eagerly supported the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, and in 1948, President Truman signed a document recognizing the Israeli nation.

This passage indicates that ethnic groups such as African Americans were far better positioned to understand and sympathize with the horrifying fate of European Jews than Roosevelt. Indeed, some would argue that white leaders like Roosevelt—who were complicit in the mass murder of Jews through their inaction—were more closely aligned with the Nazi regime than its victims.

Harry Truman became president unexpectedly, after President Roosevelt suddenly died on April 12, 1945. Truman was a Southerner; his ancestors were enslavers. In private, he admitted to holding racist views, and held a particular prejudice against Japanese people following the attack on Pearl Harbor. He referred to the Japanese as "subhumans," calling them "savages, ruthless and fanatic." During the war, Truman refused to let Japan surrender, and—acting independently of British and Russian allies—ordered that an atomic bomb be dropped on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945. Three days later, a second bomb was dropped on Nagasaki.

Takaki suggest that President Truman's deep-seated racism reiterates the idea that American political leaders, despite theoretically being on the side of liberty and equality, bore some uncomfortable similarities to the Nazi government and other racist regimes. This is even further emphasized by the acts of genocide of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Japan still refused the unconditional surrender Truman wanted, but—disturbed by the unprecedented devastation the first two bombs had caused—he did not order the third to be dropped, instead accepting Japan's original offer of surrender. Reflecting on the horrors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, W.E.B. Du Bois commented that science, which had previously seemed to be an "emancipator," was actually "the enslaver of mankind."

Again, although it was supposedly freedom and equality that triumphed in the Second World War, the fact that the war concluded with such unprecedented and needless acts of mass death and destruction brings this interpretation into question.

PART 4, CHAPTER 15: OUT OF THE WAR

For many Americans who experienced racist oppression, the Second World War constituted a time for reinvention. Women of color delighted in taking jobs that had previously been denied to them. Both men and women took advantage of the G.I. Bill to access college education. Meanwhile, having fought in a segregated army, African Americans endeavored to battle fiercely against segregation. After two Japanese Americans who had been interned petitioned against the Alien Land Law, the Supreme Court established that restricting land ownership to white people was racist and "unconstitutional."

Nothing can justify the horrors of the Second World War or redeem the horrific fate that so many people suffered within it. At the same time, Takaki points out that some of the consequences of the war were immensely beneficial to people of color in the US. This contradiction represents the complex and often paradoxical nature of human history.

Yet the stigma and shame of the internment camps had a lingering effect on Japanese Americans long after they were freed. It was not until the powerful anti-racist movements of the 1970s that a new generation of Japanese Americans compelled their parents to discuss their experiences in the camps. These testimonials built momentum, and in 1988, Congress passed a bill containing an official apology for the internment policy and $20,000 compensation for survivors of the camps. Issuing the apology, President Reagan acknowledged that the existence of the camps was especially painful considering how many Japanese Americans had loyally served their country during the war.

One striking fact about American history is how long it has often taken for injustices to be acknowledged and attempts at redress to be put into place. While it took over 40 years for the US to apologize and offer compensation to the victims of Japanese internment, it is perhaps striking that the descendants of enslaved people have still never received reparations for the US government for the unpaid labor and unimaginable horrors their ancestors endured, the effects of which are still very much felt today.

Meanwhile, Mexican Americans were dismayed by the fact that the prejudice and discrimination that had lessened during the war returned after the war finished. Cesar Chavez, a Mexican-American war veteran and leader of United Farm Workers, committed himself to fighting for agricultural workers. Those who returned from war were no longer able to tolerate being treated as "second-class citizens," while women were not ready to relinquish the newfound power and opportunities they had gained simply because the war was over. Legislation banning school segregation began to be passed. Thurgood Marshall of the NAACP argued that it was absurd for black soldiers like himself to have fought for freedom only to be denied it back home.

People of color in the US were, of course, aware of racist injustice and deeply frustrated by it prior to the Second World War. Takaki points out that what the war did was invigorate them and give them a sense that radical change and new opportunities were possible. At times of great global flux, more things seem possible and people develop radical visions of how their conditions could improve.

Marshall predicted that after the war, the government would be compelled to institute equality, and he was right. The ruling against segregation in *Brown v. Board of Education* was followed by the Montgomery Bus Boycott, triggered by Rosa Parks and led by Martin Luther King, Jr. King drew on his Christian faith in his battle against anti-black racism. The bus boycott was followed by sit-ins at segregated establishments, out of which the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was formed. Young people passionately committed themselves to the struggle for freedom and equality, participating in the freedom rides despite facing violence. In 1963, A. Philip Randolph and King gave historic speeches at the March on Washington, drawing on the ideals upon which the US was founded.

The startling energy and purpose of the Civil Rights Movement highlights the atmosphere of possibility and determination that existed at this time. With each gain made by the movement, more seemed possible. Indeed, this did not just apply to the African American community, but to other groups—including Asian Americans, Mexican Americans, and gay people and women of all races—who were inspired by the fight for Civil Rights.

Rabbi Joachim Prinz, a Holocaust survivor, also spoke at the March on Washington. He warned about the danger of "silence" and implored Americans not to be "a nation of onlookers," turning away from injustice. Prinz was one of many Jews involved in the Civil Rights Movement. Jews had long been participants in the struggle against anti-black racism, sensing the connection between the pogroms and the brutality to which African Americans were subjected. During the Civil Rights Movement, they served as on-the-ground activists, political leaders, and lawyers. Jews realized that a country with less anti-black racism was also less likely to be anti-Semitic.

Again, this passage reiterates the strong sense of solidarity that existed between African Americans and Jews, particularly after the Holocaust. Both groups had suffered immeasurable loss and hardship, and developed a passion for justice as a result. They knew how dangerous white supremacy and even the apathy of ordinary people could be.

At the same time, the "alliance" between black and Jewish Americans was damaged when the Civil Rights Movement moved beyond the South and into the North. Suddenly, Jews believed that they stood to lose from the advancement of black people. Meanwhile, internal divisions emerged within the Civil Rights Movement, as some pushed for an integrationist policy, while a more militant wing insisted that black people were an internally colonized population who must struggle for independence and self-determination. Nonetheless, the successes of the Civil Rights Movement were monumental, and transformed the US into a more equal place.

This passage contains an important but bleak reminder of the limits of solidarity. Like the Irish who sympathized with black people before they moved to the US but not after, many Jews were happy to support Civil Rights until they realized that they might have to concede some power as the rights and status of black people improved. Of course, true solidarity means accepting such losses in service of justice for all.

At the same time, the Civil Rights Movement did not transform the economic inequality that undergirded racist injustice. The poverty in which African-American communities were stricken created a sense of rising tension. Malcolm X commented that for the millions of black people living in poverty, the "American dream" was more like "an American nightmare." The Civil Rights Movement had failed to address the class issues that formed an inevitable part of racism. Black women in particular faced "a world of barriers," which kept them in an inescapable cycle of poverty. Meanwhile, the deindustrialization that took place in the 1970s damaged black populations particularly intensely. Black workers were left "economically superfluous."

Even today, economic issues are often not centered in discussions of racial inequality. While prejudice and ideology are of course hugely important factors when it comes to racial justice, without economic justice, working-class people of color have little hope of being able to enjoy the full rights that they may possess in the abstract. Issues of race and class are always intertwined, and thus must be considered in tandem.

Economic problems led to racial violence, such as the beating of black motorist Rodney King by members of the LAPD, and the rioting, looting, and brutality that ensued. The LA riots brought attention to the desperate, heavily impoverished reality that existed in American cities. Among those caught up in the riots were Korean-American storeowners, whose businesses burned to the ground. Although the main antagonism was known to be between black and Korean residents of LA, most of those arrested for looting were Mexican. The riots "had no border."

Again, the role of Korean Americans in the LA riots highlights the unfortunate reality that racial tensions often exist between different nonwhite groups, not just between people of color and white people. Anti-blackness in Asian communities remains an issue that many Asian Americans are fighting to change today.

During the 1990s, the media reported on the remarkable educational successes of Asian Americans. People commented that whatever Asian Americans' secret to success was, others should try and imitate it. President Reagan praised Asian Americans' educational and economic success while condemning black people's supposed dependency on welfare, blaming them for their own difficulties. A battle over affirmative action ensued. What these ideological conflicts disguised, Takaki explains, was the fact that the Cold War had created enormous debts, leading to the underfunding of American inner cities. Money spent on nuclear weapons was being taken away from welfare programs.

Takaki suggests that not only is the model minority myth used as an excuse to blame other races (especially black people, Latinos, and indigenous people) for their lack of success, it also propagates racist stereotypes about Asian people disguised as compliments, including the idea that Asians are compliant and have a superhuman, robotic work ethic.

When the Cold War ended, a new era of economic expansion and prosperity began. Scientists who had been employed by the military could now put their knowledge toward improving society. Meanwhile, the development of "smart" consumer goods revolutionized everyday American life. However, before long, this moment of optimism and flourishing was blighted by the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

War sometimes provides an economic boost to the economy, but at other times—including during the seemingly endless period of the Cold War—it has drained the nation of money and resources.

PART 4, CHAPTER 16: AGAIN, THE "TEMPEST-TOST"

In *The Tempest*, the eponymous storm lands the characters on unexpected shores. The same has been true of the US, where chaotic global forces have swept various groups of people onto American land. During the collapse of the Soviet Union, an explosion of anti-Semitism provoked a new wave of Russian Jews to seek refuge in the US. Those who came to the US usually had almost no money, little knowledge of English, and a lack of transferable skills. As a result, 80% of Jewish refugee families from the Soviet Union were on welfare. Nonetheless, they were grateful for the chance to freely inhabit their identity as Jews, even if for most of them this was more of a cultural than religious matter.

Although the Russian Jews who came to the US in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and the Soviet Jews who came at the end of the twentieth share an ethnoreligious identity and a national origin, there were also stark differences between them. These were exacerbated by the near century that separated their arrival in the US. At the same time, Soviet Jews benefited from the cultural institutions and communities that had been established by Jews in the US many years before.

During this period, there was also another wave of immigrants from Ireland, who likewise had been propelled by dire economic conditions in their homeland. Many of these immigrants were undocumented, and were thus forced to work undesirable, low-paid jobs. They "kept a low profile" and only associated with others in the Irish community. These Irish joined Mexicans in fighting for the rights of undocumented immigrants. During this time, more Chinese immigrants were also coming to the US. In the 1960s, the hypocrisy between banning racial discrimination through the Civil Rights Act and retaining race-based immigration discrimination became starkly clear. In 1965, Congress finally eliminated restrictions on Asian immigration.

When asked to picture an "illegal immigrant," most people would probably not imagine a white Irish person. Throughout A Different Mirror, *Takaki highlights that this is because a certain model of what an undocumented person looks like has been aggressively disseminated in service of racism. While undocumented Irish immigrants certainly faced hardships as a result of their immigration status, they also still benefited from white privilege in the way that other undocumented people did not.*

In the ensuing years, there was a boom of Chinese immigrants moving to the US. Many of them were young people coming to the US to study, and many of them later brought their families under family provisions in the immigration law. However, there were also a substantial number with little education or knowledge of the English language, who came to do low-paid, unskilled jobs. Many women in this category worked as seamstresses in the garment industry, just as Jewish women had done decades before. Many men worked in restaurants, remaining within the close-knit community of Chinatowns. Some of these low-wage workers had been teachers, professors, or architects back in China. Without English, however, they could not get equivalent positions in the US.

It is another unfortunate commonality among different immigrant groups that those who held highly skilled, professional positions back in their home country are often unable to find similar work in the US. Although on some level language issues do provide a practical barrier to these individuals gaining equivalent work after immigrating, Takaki suggests throughout the book that racism is also to blame.

During the Second World War, the Vietnamese fought for independence from their French colonizers. After the country was divided in what was supposed to be a temporary partition, civil war took over the nation, backed by China and the Soviet Union on the one side and the US on the other. During the 1960s, the US became increasingly involved in the war, with disastrous consequences. A huge "exodus" of Vietnamese refugees were forced to flee to the US. Escaping widespread death and devastation, the refugees tended to have fairly good English skills and familiarity with Western culture. Half of them were Christian, a minority that was only 10% of the Vietnamese population.

The US involvement in the Vietnam War is often considered one of the most regrettable moments in the nation's history. The trajectory of how this war took place shows how the legacy of imperialism can devastate a nation many years after colonization initially took place, and lead to conflict far down the road.

Back in Vietnam, the communist government's reorganization of society meant that skilled professionals were forced to complete manual labor in the countryside. Many escaped to the US in what amounted to the second wave of Vietnamese immigrants; 40% of these were from the ethnic Chinese population of Vietnam. Although many in the US felt that the Vietnamese, who had fought on the same side as the Americans in the war, had a right to seek refuge in the US, they still faced racist hostility. The refugees themselves had mixed feelings about their new home in the US. Many missed Vietnam deeply and felt dismayed at being cut off from their own culture.

It is hardly surprising that Vietnamese immigrants should feel ambivalent about their new home in the US. A lot of them likely felt resentment about the US' involvement in the Vietnam War in the first place, which would have bred a feeling of general anti-American sentiment. Moreover, the racist hostility they experienced once in the US likely confirmed whatever negative thoughts they had about Americans.

But the US also brought new opportunities, particularly for Vietnamese women, who could gain independence there. Although many refugees wanted to go back to Vietnam, they slowly realized that this was not likely, and began to settle down in their new home. In the past decades, Vietnamese communities in the US have been flourishing. Evidence of this can be found in the fact that more and more Vietnamese have been coming as immigrants, rather than refugees, indicating that the US is seen as a desirable destination to begin a new life.

This passage contains an important detail about the trajectory of immigration patterns. In some cases, particular ethnic groups come to the US by necessity, without having much optimism or desire about building a life there. However, once people of these communities set up a viable life there, the notion of moving to the US by choice becomes more common.

Afghanis also came to the US as refugees. Following political turmoil in the 1970s, in 1979, Afghanistan was invaded by the Soviet Union, who installed a procommunist leader. The US was worried that this would threaten American access to Afghan oil, and thus financed those fighting against the Soviets, the mujahideen. A brutal ten-year conflict ensued. However, even after the Soviets left in 1989, the civil war continued, until 1996 when the ultraconservative Taliban took power. Women were forced to wear burqas, which covered their faces. Then, on September 11, 2001, the Afghanistan-based terrorist organization Al-Qaeda carried out an attack on the World Trade Center. A year later, the US and its allies invaded Afghanistan, deposing the Taliban.

The horrific experiences of Afghans in the late twentieth century are evidence of how a fairly small nation and population can get caught in the midst of global conflict, with terrible results. For ordinary Afghan people, US oil interests and the conflict between the West and the Soviet Union were completely irrelevant and meaningless. Yet they suffered to an enormous degree as a result of these issues.

During these years of strife, Afghanis came to the US to seek refuge. Most escaped via Pakistan, in a journey that was highly dangerous and traumatizing. Many of these refugees settled in the Bay Area, particularly in Fremont, where signs of Afghan culture bloomed. They brought food and traditions to "Little Kabul," but many struggled to find work, particularly due to a lack of English-language skills. Things took a stark turn for the worse after 9/11. Fearing backlash, Afghanis tried to hide their identity, pretending to have Mediterranean or Hispanic heritage instead. Afghan children were bullied at school, and adults were horrified to see all Muslims being characterized as terrorists.

As is evident today, the demonization of Muslims has long outlasted the immediate aftermath of 9/11. For many Muslim Americans, the country that they call home is a hostile and terrifying place to exist. Indeed, this unfortunate reality shows that the issues Takaki describes throughout the book are not confined to history, but rather very real and powerful aspects of the present.

In 2007, a conference was held in Fremont to consider what it meant to be Afghan-American. One 24-year-old Afghan American who was born in the US explained that both identities were "embedded" within her. Others expressed pride in being both Afghan and American. Some indicated a desire to return to Afghanistan and contribute to the country. They also discussed their fears of anti-Afghan and anti-Muslim abuse in the US, which had become a major problem after 9/11. Others noted that it could be difficult to reconcile the cultural differences between Afghanistan and the US, particularly as children caught in the middle. Yet one participant spoke of how Afghans have managed to retain their identity while immersing themselves in the US, which she framed as "integration" rather than "assimilation."

Again, just because the experience of being an immigrant often involves being caught being two cultures, it doesn't mean that this is a bad thing. As the conference on Afghan-American identity shows, the duality of culture can actually be a source of beauty, complexity, richness, and strength, even as it might also have some downsides. Indeed, the issues described at the conference are hardly unique to Afghan Americans, but are rather something than an increasing majority of people in the US experience in some form or other.

At the time Takaki is writing, there are 12 million undocumented immigrants in the US, most of whom have come from Mexico. There are many in the US who want to exclude and deport this population, making their lives so difficult that they are forced to leave—or worse. Yet some argue that they should be given amnesty, as suggested in a 2007 article in *Time* magazine. The article assured readers that these undocumented immigrants would eventually assimilate. Takaki points out that it is largely thanks to US-backed trade policy that the Mexican economy has become so unstable, forcing immigrants to come northward. These undocumented migrants dream of a better life in the US.

A Different Mirror *was originally published in 1994; Takaki revised it in the 2000s, when the issue of undocumented immigrants was gaining more and more national attention. Since this edition of the book was published, immigration has become an even more emotionally charged and difficult aspect of American culture. Indeed, the trajectory that emerges here suggests that the history of immigration is not one of straightforward progress, but often involves periods of significant regression.*

Crossing the border is highly difficult and dangerous; many die in the desert during the journey. In order to meet the US need for agricultural workers, President George W. Bush initiated a guest worker program, which forces migrant laborers to return home after a fixed period. This harkens back to the painful era when Chinese laborers—who were so crucial to the construction of the nation—were denied the right of naturalized citizenship. A perhaps unlikely supporter of the rights of undocumented immigrants was President Reagan, who created pathways for the undocumented to reside in the country legally. Reagan argued that the undocumented class were doing labor that American citizens were not themselves prepared to do.

Today, it is easy to draw simplistic conclusions down party lines about who believes what about immigration, which is why Takaki's description of Reagan's more nuanced beliefs is so important. Reagan's beliefs about immigration suggest that from a purely economic perspective, open borders are far more profitable than exclusion.

For many Mexican immigrants, moving to the US has provided educational and employment opportunities that have enabled them to flourish. Like other children of immigrants, young Mexican Americans must find a way to reconcile their ancestral culture with the norms that govern life in the US. They work hard in order to honor the sacrifices made by their parents and grandparents and to make the older generations proud. Yet Latinx people in the US have some of the lowest levels of educational attainment. Those who are undocumented often have to pay steep out-of-state tuition prices, making college economically unviable for many. Still, there has recently been a sharp increase in the percentage of Mexican Americans who are US citizens, which Takaki asserts is a highly promising turn of events for the community.

The issues Takaki describes here remain pertinent and difficult obstacles. Indeed, this serves as a reminder that the future of the country is still very much in flux. The US may still become a place where racism and xenophobia begin to vanish and the country will indeed embrace its multiethnic history and reality. At the same time, it is also very possible that racism and xenophobia will increase. *This possibility ties into Takaki's overarching goal in writing* A Different Mirror*: to lay bare the pain and exploitation that characterized US history so that Americans can learn from the past and cultivate a better future.*

PART 4, CHAPTER 17: "WE WILL ALL BE MINORITIES"

Takaki recalls a morning in 1997 when he received a call from the assistant to President Bill Clinton, inviting him to come to the White House as part of a gathering of civil rights leaders. Takaki told the president that at some point in the twentieth century, white people will no longer be the majority in the US, meaning "we will all be minorities." In the speech President Clinton gave the following day, he cited many of the historical events covered in *A Different Mirror* to demonstrate the beauty of multicultural America. Yet he also argued that the US faced the possibility of further inequality and segregation, and that it must turn away from this fate.

In some ways, the optimism Takaki describes here can seem somewhat foreign from a contemporary perspective. At the time he is writing, the idea that the US will soon be a nation where no one racial group is the majority seems positive. Yet in the face of rising prejudice against various racial, ethnic, and religious groups, the notion of an increasingly equal society can seem like a naïve dream.

Takaki emphasizes that "the future is in our hands," and that it is possible to redefine our image of the US to encompass its complex, multiethnic reality. The US is a country of "borderlands," zones where several different cultures meet in the same space. The future of the US is multiethnic because the past is, too. Figures like Tiger Woods and President Barack Obama speak proudly of their multiracial heritage, which is reflective of the US more broadly. Takaki urges that we stop "denying our wholeness as members of one humanity as well as one nation." Across the country, people from wildly different places struggle together for freedom and justice. As the demographics of the US change, perhaps there will finally be a chance to "let America be America again."

The idea of "let[ing] America be America again," which comes from Langston Hughes, acknowledges that the US has never been a white nation, and that if people accept and embrace this, perhaps the country will live up to the ideals on which it was founded.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: EPISTEMOLOGY AND EPIPHANY

A Different Mirror reflects the reality of Takaki's own life. He was born in Hawaii in 1939; his father was a Japanese immigrant and his mother was a Japanese American who had been born in the US. His neighbors came from a variety of countries, and they spoke pidgin English together. The students at his school were not expected to attend college, and most of his family members received little education. However, they managed to withdraw Takaki from public education and send him to a private school. A passionate surfer, he wanted to surf professionally, but in his senior year one of his teachers—who was the only Japanese American he knew with a PhD—inspired him to apply to the College of Wooster, in Ohio.

The opportunities Takaki experienced and the upward social mobility represented by the trajectory of his life are examples of the American dream. Yet at the same time, Takaki has shown in the book that his experience is not necessarily representative of immigrants overall. In many cases, ethnic groups remain held back not by a lack of skill, ambition, or desire to assimilate, but by entrenched racism and discrimination, which can prove impossible to overcome.

At college, Takaki experienced a "culture shock," and found that those around him did not believe that he was American. He met his future wife, Carol Rankin, in his sophomore year. She was white, and her parents despised the idea of her marrying a Japanese man. However, after the birth of Carol and Takaki's first child, Carol's parents' hostility turned into love. After completing his PhD, Takaki gained a job teaching black history at UCLA in 1967. Many of the young black students in his class were confused by the fact that he wasn't black.

Takaki's story of success and flourishing in the US is moving, but, as the rest of A Different Mirror *shows, unusual. Indeed, the book implies that if people embrace the reality that the US is a multiethnic nation, more and more people will be able to have a life like Takaki's, rather than one blighted by intractable prejudice and discrimination.*

Despite enormous success early in his career, Takaki was denied tenure. However, a silver lining came when he took a position in the brand new Department of Ethnic Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. Takaki came to have a definitive role in the newly formed field of Ethnic Studies. Meanwhile, Takaki's family has expanded to include people of Jewish and Mexican heritage. He concludes the book by arguing that one must understand the past to create positive change for the future.

Takaki's role in founding the academic field of Ethnic Studies helps contextualize the work that A Different Mirror *seeks to do. Whereas existing academic fields such as African American Studies and Native American Studies focus on particular groups, Ethnic Studies deliberately deploys a comparative perspective.*

HOW TO CITE

To cite this LitChart:

MLA

Seresin, Indiana. "*A Different Mirror.*" *LitCharts*. LitCharts LLC, 20 Jun 2019. Web. 13 Jan 2021.

CHICAGO MANUAL

Seresin, Indiana. "*A Different Mirror.*" LitCharts LLC, June 20, 2019. Retrieved January 13, 2021. https://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-different-mirror.

To cite any of the quotes from *A Different Mirror* covered in the Quotes section of this LitChart:

MLA

Takaki, Ronald. A Different Mirror. Back Bay. 2008.

CHICAGO MANUAL

Takaki, Ronald. A Different Mirror. New York: Back Bay. 2008.