

“Men of All Parties Are in Perfect Accord”: How the Catch-All Argument for Chinese Exclusion of the Workingmen’s Party of California Became Bipartisan Consensus, 1872-1883

By Benjamin Jiang

AUTHOR BIO

Benjamin is a senior at Middlesex School located in Concord, MA, growing up in Beijing, China. Benjamin’s academic interests include history, political science, and philosophy. In school, he is the head of the Asian Affinity Group, Captain of the Squash team, and head of the Philosophy club. Outside of school, Benjamin teaches a world history class to indigenous middle school students in Sichuan, China and runs a mentorship program for high school underclassmen conducting history research.

ABSTRACT

The Workingmen’s Party of California (WPC) dominated California politics for three years from 1877 to 1880, with Chinese exclusion and anti-monopoly as its core agendas. The party significantly contributed to the California Constitution of 1879 and indirectly influenced the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. Yet, few historians have analyzed the WPC through political science frameworks, leaving an important historic case study out of the contemporary discussion on nativism populism and leaving relevant political theories unexamined by the WPC historiography. Using contemporary political science theories, this paper will analyze the WPC as a nativist and populist party. Furthermore, using qualitative and statistical analysis of historic newspapers, this paper will investigate the two main historiographical debates about the WPC’s ideology: whether anti-monopoly or nativism was the WPC’s main ideology, and whether the ideology was artificially constructed or originated naturally. This paper will first argue that the WPC’s most influential ideology was nativism instead of anti-monopoly. Then, this paper will define the WPC’s version of Chinese exclusion as undifferentiated, meaning that it was a catch-all case amalgamating cultural, racial, anti-slavery, and labor arguments against Chinese immigration. Thus, this paper proposes that the WPC’s Chinese exclusion was an intentional, artificial strategy to consolidate a broad coalition. Moreover, this paper proposes that the established parties of California, the Democratic and Republican parties, adopted the WPC’s undifferentiated ideology of nativism. These findings will suggest that the nationalization of anti-Chinese sentiments that led to the

passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 originated from political entrepreneurs, rather than from the populace.

Key Words: *Workingmen's Party of California, Chinese Exclusion, nativism, populism, political entrepreneurs, Denis Kearney, anti-monopoly, republican liberalism, third parties, historical newspaper analysis*

INTRODUCTION

Recently, populist parties with immigration restriction as a core agenda have found success in democracies around the world. Analyzing historic cases of nativist populism can help broaden contemporary understanding of the ideology. The Workingmen's Party of California (WPC) dominated California politics for three years from 1877 to 1880, with Chinese exclusion and anti-monopoly as its core agendas. The party significantly contributed to the California Constitution of 1879 and indirectly influenced the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. Yet, few historians have analyzed the WPC through political science frameworks, leaving an important historic case study out of the contemporary discussion on nativism populism and leaving relevant political theories unexamined by the WPC historiography. Using contemporary political science theories, this paper will analyze the WPC as a nativist and populist party. Furthermore, using qualitative and statistical analysis of historic newspapers, this paper will investigate the two main historiographical debates about the WPC's ideology: whether anti-monopoly or nativism was the WPC's main ideology, and whether the ideology was artificially constructed or originated naturally. This paper will first argue that the WPC's most influential ideology was nativism instead of anti-monopoly. Then, this paper will define the WPC's version of Chinese exclusion as undifferentiated, meaning that it was a catch-all case amalgamating cultural, racial, anti-slavery, and labor arguments against Chinese immigration. Thus, this paper proposes that the WPC's Chinese exclusion was an intentional, artificial strategy to consolidate a broad coalition. Moreover, this paper proposes that the established parties of California, the Democratic and Republican parties, adopted the WPC's undifferentiated ideology of nativism. These findings will suggest that the nationalization of anti-Chinese sentiments that led to the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 originated from political entrepreneurs, rather than from the populace.

HISTORIC CONTEXT

California's early history is characterized by rapid development and change. In 1848, California was ceded to the United States following Mexico's defeat in the Mexican American War. In the same year, gold was discovered near San Francisco, leading to dramatic population expansion totaling nearly 100,000 ("The Forty Niners," n.d.). The gold rush attracted immigrants from around the world, including China. Soon after, in 1850 California was granted statehood. The main objective of California's early labor movement was to shorten the workday (Waldorf, n.d.).

The Californian labor groups of the early 1870s subscribed to “republican liberalism”, a Jeffersonian view of democracy and property ownership that rejected industrial capitalism in favor of small-scale, independent producers (Foner, 1971). A “railroad mass meeting” of anti-monopoly labor groups argued that “tyrannical monopol[ies] can change a noble yeomanry into a tenants-at-will” (Sears, 1872). They supported the abolition of monopolies in order to preserve “a vigorous, noble and prosperous yeomanry throughout the State” (Sears, 1872). A farmers’ union similarly supported the total abolition of monopolies, arguing that “one man by his combinations with capitalists, railroads...has almost as complete control over [farmers] and their wheat as though that wheat was [the monopolist’s] own property and [the farmers] his slaves” (Farmers’ Union of California, 1872).

The Panic of 1873, a financial crisis that led to the Long Depression (1873-1879), increased the momentum of labor movements in California as wages fell and unemployment rates rose. Workers’ discontent culminated in the Great Railroad Strike of 1877, a historic nation-wide strike eventually suppressed with state and federal involvement. Support for organized labor declined in most states following the failure of the national strike in 1877. California’s labor movements, however, increased in strength. Some authors attribute this regional resilience to the unique severity of the depression in California. Following the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869, a large number of East coast workers migrated to California. This expansion of the labor force coincided with the contraction of hiring after the Panic of 1873, leading to a state unemployment rate of over a quarter in 1876 (Saxton, 1995, p. 106). In comparison, the national unemployment rate of 1876 was between 12–14 percent (Lebergott, 1964, p. 187). Labor leaders founded the Workingmen’s Party of California in August of 1877, capitalizing on the salience of labor issues during local riots and strikes. The WPC followed the early 1870s’ labor tradition of republican liberalism, with its economic goal being to “destroy land monopoly in our state by such laws as will make it impossible” (“Platform of the Workingmen’s Party of California,” n.d.). The WPC did not have a singular reason for Chinese exclusion, but rather employed an undifferentiated strategy, using multiple rhetorics to appeal to a broad demographic. In 1880, the party disappeared due to internal fractures.

This paper argues that California’s labor movement was not uniquely resilient, as the WPC cannot be conflated with other states’ labor organizations. Instead, the WPC succeeded in creating a diverse working class coalition due to its undifferentiated ideology of Chinese exclusion, rather than due to its labor ideology.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Within the WPC’s historiography, there is a general consensus that the WPC combined hostility towards monopolies with hostility towards Chinese immigrants. Historians disagree about the specifics of the party’s ideology: whether the WPC was fundamentally nativist or anti-monopoly, whether the party successfully fused these two ideologies, and whether the ideology formed naturally or was constructed by political entrepreneurs.

NATIVISM OR ANTI-MONOPOLY

Kauer (1944), one of the earliest WPC historians, argues that the WPC was fundamentally an anti-monopoly movement that integrated Chinese exclusion, using Chinese labor as a “scapegoat” for white working class grievances against corporations (Kauer, 1944, p. 279). Batzell (2014) also argues that the WPC’s central ideology was anti-monopoly, using the exclusion of Chinese labor to target corporations and advance the aims of labor, writing that “Chinese ‘coolies’ allowed ‘corporate aristocrats’ to transform society by concentrating wealth and power at the top, thereby undermining democratic institutions and destroying the dignity of labor” (Batzell, 2014, p. 146). Batzell (2014) also argues that the WPC amassed a “broad platform” under the rhetoric of anti-monopoly through anti-slavery language (Batzell, 2014, p. 146). Similarly, Saxton (1995) contends that the WPC’s ideology incorporated anti-Chinese nativism into a fundamentally anti-monopoly and anti-establishment movement (Saxton, 1995, p. 118).

In contrast, Moore (2003) explains the WPC’s ideology as fundamentally nativist, framing the party as a manifestation of California’s history of “anti-Chinese hostility” (Moore, 2003, p. 112). Griffiths (1970) similarly argues that the WPC’s central ideology was “anti-Chinese nativism,” allowing “unemployed workers [to find] an emotional and political outlet” (Griffiths, 1970, p. 93).

Ngai (2022) argues that “antimonopoly” and “anticoolie” were equal in importance in the WPC’s ideology, a “powerful alchemy of race and money” (Ngai, 2022b, Chapter 6; Ngai, 2022a, Introduction).

ELITE OR MASS CONSTRUCTION

Kauer (1944) argues that the WPC’s ideology originated naturally amongst white laborers, feeling “antagonism” towards Chinese workers for creating “competition” (Kauer, 1944, p. 279). Batzell (2014) similarly argues that the WPC’s ideology occurred organically, explaining the WPC as a natural continuation of the Civil-war era “anti-slavery tradition” (Batzell, 2014, p. 146). Moore (2003) believes that the WPC was a vehicle of workers’ sentiments, with Kearney being the representative that “g[a]ve voice to unemployed white workers” instead of the political entrepreneur who constructed the ideology (Moore, 2003, p. 112). Ngai (2022) argues that the WPC’s ideology was a natural product of rapid economic and demographic change, with “Chinese exclusion [being] not extraneous to the emergent global capitalist economy but an integral part of it” (Ngai, 2022b, Introduction).

In contrast, Ethington (2001) infers that the WPC’s ideology was politically constructed, explaining that the party employed an antiquated labor ideology that no longer represented the beliefs of the majority of working class people (Ethington, 2001). Saxton (1995) argues that “an ideology need not be internally consistent to be strongly held (Saxton, 1995, p. 26); all that matters is that the inconsistencies be ignored with approval of recognized higher authority,” arguing that Kearney constructed and held together the WPC’s incoherent ideology.

ANALYZING THE WPC AS A POPULIST PARTY

The historiography has yet to define the WPC as a populist party. Analyzing the WPC's ideology with political science theory contributes to the contemporary discussion and understanding of nativist populism and establishes a helpful framework for ideological analysis.

POPULISM IN THE WPC

For the context of this paper, populism is defined by anti-elitism, the creation of a binary group of victims versus oppressors, and the exclusion of outsiders (Bergmann, 2020). To address any confusion regarding the definition of populism, populism is not generated by popular demand. Instead, populism is a broad political ideology that is usually constructed by political entrepreneurs. According to established ideation frameworks, populism is a "thin" ideology that divides society into a dichotomy of "the people" versus the "corrupt elite" (Mudde, n.d.). The WPC defined the "corrupt elite" as the combination of corporate monopolies and the established political system, arguing that "the Government of the United States has fallen into the hands of capitalists" (Workingmen's Party of California, 1878). The WPC defines the "people" as the broad working class, declaring that the party will "lead on the working people to the overthrow of monopolies and corporations" ("By Telegraph," 1878). Populism does not have an economic or political ideology, allowing parties to apply a secondary "host" ideology to complete the political agenda (Mudde, n.d.). The WPC's class-based separation between the elite and the people serves as its base ideology of populism, with its host ideology being nativism.

NATIVISM IN THE WPC

This paper consults Betz's (2019) model of nativism, with the three main identifiers being economic nativism, welfare chauvinism, and symbolic nativism (Betz, 2019). Economic nativism is the belief that native citizens should be the only workforce. Needless to say, the WPC's anti-Chinese labor ideology was economically nativist. Welfare chauvinism is the belief that native citizens should be prioritized for government benefits. The WPC envisioned the creation of a welfare state, advocating for "a system of taxation that will make great wealth impossible in the future," taxes which would be used to "provide decently for the poor and unfortunate, the weak, the helpless, and especially the young" (Workingmen's Party of California, n.d.). Lastly, symbolic nativism calls for the defense of the traditional national identity against corruption by immigrant cultures. Kalloch, the WPC mayor of San Francisco elected in 1879, said during a speech that "Chinese cheap labor...humiliates the [white working]men and women, without whose elevation and good will this splendid experiment of government will prove a splendid failure," arguing that allowing Chinese immigration would lead to a "degradation to Chinese prices, Chinese customs, and Chinese living" (Kalloch, 1880). Granted, this was not the WPC's only or main argument against Chinese exclusion, as the party leaders utilized varied anti-Chinese arguments during different speeches to appeal to the specific crowds. Nevertheless, the WPC generally employed a rhetoric of fear against monopolies, Chinese laborers, and the established political system. In the same speech, Kalloch also warns against having their "fair domain to be given up to lordly monopolists" and

that the “evil agencies that have wrought such destruction elsewhere [as being] rife among [them]” (Kalloch, 1880), referring to corruption in government and monopolies.

NATIVISM ACTIVATION MODEL

The WPC’s rise to power maps onto Young and Goidel’s Nativism Activation Model (2025), a three step process of latent nativist sentiments, catalytic conditions, and political entrepreneurship.

Young and Goidel (2025) explain that nativism is “as old as the nation itself” (Young & Goidel, 2025, p. 5). Indeed, California has a tradition of anti-Chinese racism dating back to the state’s founding. In 1850, the California legislature created a “foreign miners’ tax” following white gold miners’ protests, creating the basis for discriminatory, nativist politics in the subsequent decades (Moore, 2003, p. 108). Soon after, John Bigler was elected Governor in 1853 through a campaign based on Chinese exclusion (Ngai, 2022b, Chapter 6).

This latent nativism in California would erupt periodically in the form of mob violence and discriminatory moments of legislation during economic instability, a phenomenon explained by the second step to nativist activation: catalytic events that create a sense of threat. California’s rapidly evolving demographics and tumultuous economic changes create the ideal conditions for racial scapegoating. For example, following the post Civil War recession in 1867, four hundred white workers attacked Chinese workers, even though the large majority of industries did not have competition between Chinese and white workers (Ngai, 2022b, Chapter 6). Between 1868 and 1870, white workers in California affiliated with the KKK incited over a dozen riots against Chinese immigrants (Waite, 2021). In 1871, a Los Angeles mob lynched 17 Chinese immigrants, one of the deadliest episodes of anti-Chinese mob violence in California (Wallace, 2023).

These spontaneous instances of violence usually dissipated quickly, as there was no political entrepreneur to transform this sentiment into political traction—the third step in Young’s activation model. Granted, the California legislature periodically passed racially targeted laws intended to disadvantage Chinese workers against white workers, sometimes under the advocacy of labor organizations, but no mass political movement attempted to comprehensively restrict Chinese immigration. Kearney was the political entrepreneur that captured the previously unorganized anti-Chinese nativist sentiment. The Panic of 1873 followed by the Great Railroad Strike of 1877—the first nation-wide strike in US history—was California’s latest episode of economic instability, prompting scapegoating of Chinese workers. In 1877, soon after the WPC’s founding as a labor organization, Kearney transformed the party into his own cult of personality. Hoping to stifle the newfound movement, corporate interests convinced the San Francisco police to arrest Kearney in November, acquitting him soon after (Kauer, 1944, p. 281). For Kearney’s followers, his arrest served as evidence for the WPC’s accusations of corruption and corporate dominance in San Francisco’s government, martyring Kearney as a victim of corporate abuse (Hart, 1931). Kearney capitalized on this attention to consolidate power within the party, drawing his support directly from workers instead of his fellow party officials. After a power struggle, the other original founders of the party resigned, disapproving of Kearney’s radicalization (Kauer, 1944, p. 281). Thus, Kearney transformed the WPC from a labor union into his cult of personality, shifting the party towards populism

and nativism as he established Chinese exclusion as the party's main objective. The party gained a majority in the California legislature in 1879, and elected numerous delegates to the California Constitutional Convention. Kearney successfully thus "identif[ied] these conditions, articulat[ed] the fears they produce, and transform[ed] them into a political force" (Young & Goidel, 2025, p. 6).

METHODOLOGY FOR NEWSPAPER DATA COLLECTION

To answer the questions of ideological fusion and origin, one needs to track the sentiments of Chinese exclusion and anti-monopoly over time, comparing the periods before and after the WPC to explain the role of the WPC in California's ideological spectrum. Databases of the daily newspapers of California are uniquely suited for tracking general ideological development, as newspapers have coverage of the broad political spectrum and mostly reflect the sentiments of its readers—the general population of California.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE USAGE

Claude has assisted with constructing the coding techniques for the categorical analysis, an usage approved by Professor Perlmutter. In the methodology section, I will use first person to distinguish my own effort from AI. I selectively adopted the coding techniques suggested by Claude, making adjustments to better suit the analytical needs of this paper. I have documented each technique suggested by AI throughout this section. I solely used AI for coding construction. I did not use any AI for analysis and writing.

DATABASE

This paper uses the California Digital Newspaper Collection (CDNC) (University of California, n.d.). The CDNC is categorized on the article level, with each article documented independently, making it possible to track the total article hit count in a given time period. The CDNC uses boolean search and can filter searches by individual newspapers.

LEXICON CONSTRUCTION

This paper will analyze newspaper lexicon through two categories: anti-Chinese sentiment and anti-monopoly sentiment.

The lexicons are of similar sizes to ensure balanced search counts. Claude helped construct the initial blueprints of the lexicons. I reviewed ambiguous terms within each lexicon by manually inspecting articles with the term. For example, I removed the term "pauper" after discovering that the "pauper mining company" constituted the majority of hits, unrelated to poor Chinese immigrants. Another example includes "vice," which mostly appeared as "vice president" and "vice versa" in the database. The full lexicons can be found in the appendix.

The anti-monopoly and anti-Chinese lexicons track the changes in sentiments throughout the period. To avoid articles unrelated to either Chinese or monopolies that use the same negative rhetoric, such as “oppressive” or “barbarian,” I have coded the sentiment lexicons in the format “(“neutral descriptor” OR “neutral descriptor”...“neutral descriptor”) AND (“sentiment” AND “sentiment”...“sentiment”)", ensuring that each search result meets the criteria of both relevance and negative sentiment. I continuously modified this formatting throughout the data collection process.

NEWSPAPER SELECTION

Most newspapers in 1870s California did not have objective reporting, some being controlled by corporate interests and others having the main goal of increasing readership by using dramatic language (Cole, 1978).

The Daily Alta was the first newspaper founded in California. Being based in San Francisco, the paper had local coverage of the WPC. Most newspapers opposed the WPC. In this newspaper climate, the Daily Alta California was one of the most objective and neutral. The Daily Alta was also relatively neutral regarding Chinese labor and immigration in comparison to California’s mainstream culture of widespread nativism and racism (Ngai, 2022a, p. 101). The paper often summarizes public sentiment as a part of its journalism. For example, an article documenting anti-Chinese nativism first summarizes public sentiment—making the newspaper useful for tracking public opinion—and ultimately concludes that “this matter appears to have been greatly exaggerated, after the true California fashion” (“The Chinese Immigration,” 1852). An article reviewing the Constitutional Convention criticizes other newspapers for “strong partisanship,” writing that the press “in very few cases...exhibit[ed] that dignity and courtesy, and regard for truth which are so essential in securing a healthful moral influence, and thus promoting the general interests of the community” (“After the Battle,” 1879). The Daily Alta had coverage of both Democratic and Republican arguments, but had a larger overall quantity of articles reporting on Democratic views on Chinese exclusion and anti-monopoly. This could either indicate editorial bias in article selection or that the Democratic Party paid more attention to Chinese exclusion and anti-monopoly.

On the other hand, the Sacramento Daily Union, one of the most wide-read papers in the state, was heavily Republican-leaning (Cole, 1978).

The quantitative analysis will mainly be based on data from the Daily Alta given its relative neutrality and objectivity. The Sacramento Daily Union will mainly be used to supplement the Republican viewpoint in qualitative analysis.

Between 1873 and 1883, *The Daily Alta* California and *The Sacramento Daily Union* both had consistent issues and page numbers, both publishing daily four-page issues. The digital collection has no substantial gaps in digitization between 1872 and 1883. For the Daily Alta, an average of one and a maximum of three daily issues were missing from the database per year.

TIME PERIOD

This paper will analyze data between 1872 to 1883, beginning before the Panic of 1873 and ending after the passing of the first Chinese exclusion bill in 1882. The period between 1872 and 1876, before the founding of the WPC, serves as a baseline for comparison with the period after the WPC's founding. The WPC was active from 1877 to 1880. The period following the disappearance of the party, 1880-1883, serves to measure whether the WPC's ideology had lasting influence.

MANUAL NEWSPAPER ANALYSIS

In total, I manually analyzed approximately 150 newspaper articles. I used the findings from this analysis as qualitative evidence. I noted each article's main arguments and categorized them by political affiliation and their specific arguments for Chinese exclusion.

CHINESE EXCLUSION

The justifications for Chinese exclusion in 1870s California included symbolic nativism, competition with white labor, anti-slavery, exclusion as a weapon against capitalism, and unspecified. Symbolic nativism broadly encapsulates xenophobic sentiments, including but not limited to arguments of cultural incompatibility, the immorality of the Chinese race, and the threat of Chinese immigrants corrupting democracy and white American values.

DATA ANALYSIS

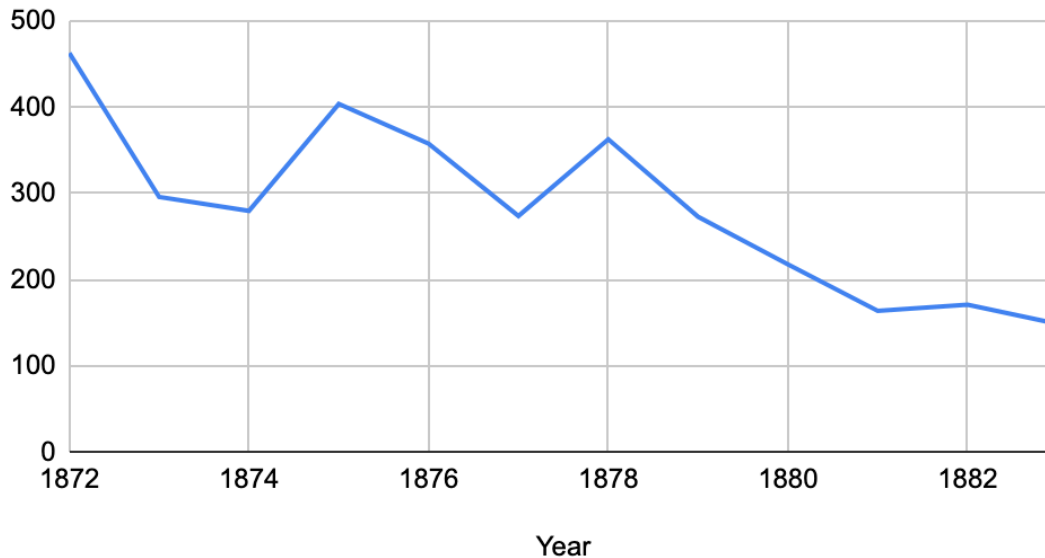
To begin with, the data will illustrate Californian politics' transition from republican liberalism to pluralist liberalism, demonstrating that the WPC's republican-liberalist ideology of anti-monopoly became outdated. Moreover, the data will demonstrate Californian politics' shift from partisan-based nativism to undifferentiated nativism, a shift that this paper argues the WPC propelled. Then, this paper will argue that the WPC's success was a result of its nativist ideology, by using the Nativism Activation Model to explain the party's downfall. Ultimately, this paper will suggest that the momentum that led to the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act was generated by the established political parties, rather than originating from the populace.

Republican Liberalism vs Pluralist Liberalism

Mainstream Californian Politics: From Republican Liberalism to Pluralist Liberalism

Figure 1

Anti-Monopoly Sentiment in the Daily Alta California



Y-axis tracks annual anti-monopoly lexicon hit count in the Daily Alta California archive. Created by author, 2026

Overall, anti-monopoly sentiment gradually declined throughout the decade. This trend reflected a national transition from “republican liberalism” towards “pluralist liberalism” (Ethington, 2001, p. 246). Amidst the economic expansion and transformation of the late 1870s and early 1880s as the US entered the Gilded Age, more groups within the working class became inseparable from corporate capitalism as they engaged in and were employed by large corporations. As groups shifted away from the Jeffersonian lifestyle of small-scale producers, they stopped identifying with republican liberalism. Taking its place, pluralist liberalism accepted industry and large corporations as a hallmark of capitalism, advocating for increased regulation over monopolies rather than total abolition of monopolies (Truman, 1958). During the 1870s, the Democratic and Republican parties and labor groups all shifted towards pluralist liberalism, while the WPC continued to adhere to republican liberalism.

THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY’S PLURALIST LIBERALISM

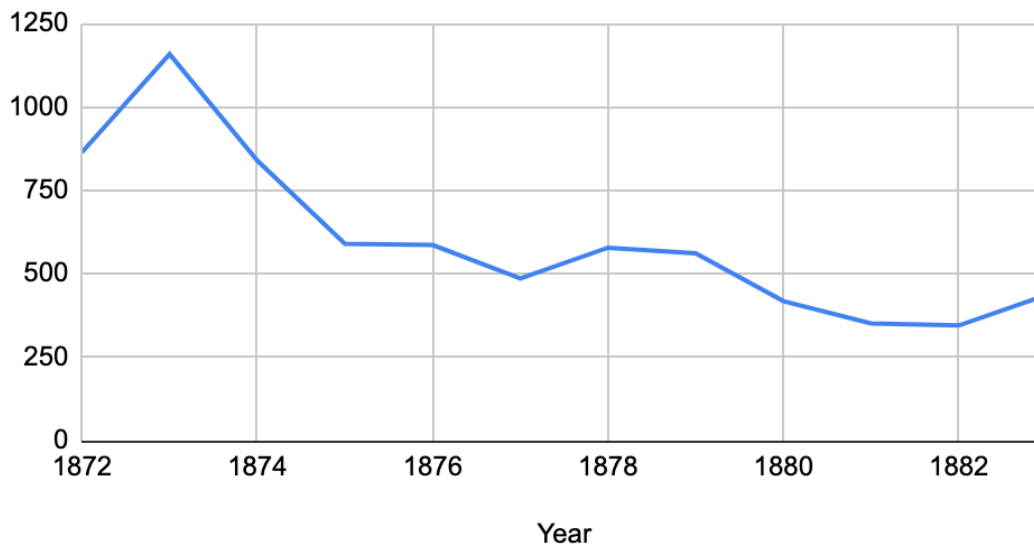
The Democratic Party subscribed to pluralist liberalism, advocating for increased regulation of large corporations. In the Democratic State Convention of 1875, the party “condemn[ed] the Republican party” for “enrich[ing] great corporations at the expense of the public,” and advocated for “legislature to regulate corporations...serv[ing] all citizens without discrimination and at reasonable rates” (“Democratic

State Convention,” 1875). A Democratic Party agenda similarly advocates for having large corporations be “supervisable by and subordinate to state legislation” (“The Democracy,” 1876). While against the excessive power of monopolies, the Democratic Party did not wish to abolish corporate capitalism altogether, distinguishing its pluralist liberalist ideology of regulating monopolies from the WPC’s republican liberalist ideology of anti-monopoly.

THE REPUBLICAN PARTY’S PLURALIST LIBERALISM

Data from the Sacramento Daily Union demonstrates the Republican Party’s shift away from republican liberalism towards pluralist liberalism, as the newspaper adhered to Republican ideology (Cole, 1978).

Figure 2
Anti-Monopoly Sentiment in the Sacramento Daily Union



Y-axis tracks annual anti-monopoly lexicon hit count in the Sacramento Daily Union archive. Created by author, 2026.

In 1873, an anti-monopoly branch of the Republican party founded the People’s Independent Party, finding brief success in California state elections before disappearing (California State Library, 2019). The increase in the anti-monopoly lexicon hit count in 1873 reflected the Sacramento Daily Union’s support for the People’s Independent Party (Cole, 1978, p. 23). The brevity of the People’s Independent Party reflects the declining strength of republican liberalism.

Interested in this work? Contact the journal to reach the author.

By the late 1870s, the Republican Party espoused pluralist liberalism, with a party convention stating that “while [the Republican Party] would disfavor the accumulation of great landed estates...it would as firmly protect all the rights of all persons to all the wealth they may legally and honestly acquire” (“A Great Gathering of the Republican Hosts,” 1879). During the height of the WPC’s power in 1879, the established parties also symbolically announced their disapproval of wealth disparities, while maintaining support of the overall economic system of corporate capitalism.

LABOR GROUPS’ PLURALIST LIBERALISM

Labor groups similarly shifted away from republican liberalism. A pro-labor and pro-reform article advocated for a balancing of the interests of the various classes, stabilizing and strengthening the overall economy by “build[ing] up the structure of industrial and commercial business” in order to benefit the working class, as “any disturbance and disorder is felt more severely by the poor than by any other class” (“The Dignity of Labor,” 1878). To achieve this economic stabilization, the article suggests a pluralist liberalist approach to legislation, proposing to “regulate prices” set by large corporations while ensuring to “give profit to manufacturers” (“The Dignity of Labor,” 1878). Moreover, the article argued that labor movements must be peaceful and reasonable, being “industrious, intelligent, economical and orderly; that they should not demand anything that is unattainable” (“The Dignity of Labor,” 1878). Thus, the article criticized the WPC for “threaten[ing] murder and arson...[being] the nucleus of howling ruffianism...bring[ing] the city into disgrace...condemn[ing] a large portion of those who should be at work to idleness” (“The Dignity of Labor,” 1878). Another article reported that “Kearney is losing caste with the moderate workingmen” (“Kearneyism: Voice of the Press on Its Threatening Attitude,” 1878) due to the WPC’s republican liberalist ideology. Workers that believed in the balancing of class interests through pluralist liberalism left the WPC as they “did not join the movement for the purpose of hanging people, or making property holders feel insecure for the safety of their property” (“Kearneyism: Voice of the Press on Its Threatening Attitude,” 1878). Similarly, the People’s Non-Partisan Ticket, a pro-reform and pro-labor coalition campaigning in 1878, condemned the WPC for rejecting the corporate capitalist system, arguing that the “Kearney ticket...don’t...represent the people,” as “Workingmen’s tickets are composed of the honest and industrious workingmen, who have substance of their own and pay taxes. But...Dennis Kearney, are men who do not work” (“The Non-Partisan Ticket Again Ratified,” 1878), advocating for people to work under large corporations rather than to seek to abolish monopolies. Instead of the WPC’s “riot and revolution” to abolish monopolies, the Non-Partisan Ticket asked working class groups to “organize for protection of labor lawfully, and act justly,” reforming monopolies peacefully through gradual legislation instead of total abolition comparable to the “French Revolution,” which would “take away the little [workingmen] already have” (“The Non-Partisan Ticket Again Ratified,” 1878).

THE WPC’S ANTIQUATED IDEOLOGY OF REPUBLICAN LIBERALISM

Diametrically opposed to these pluralist-liberalist groups—including both established parties and labor groups—the WPC wishes to incite the “fires of a French Revolution” in order to “fight the accursed spirit of corporate greed” (Kalloch, 1880), holding onto the antiquated ideology of republican liberalism.

The WPC rejected large corporations, arguing that “land monopoly [is] contrary to the spirit of republican institutions” (Workingmen’s Party of California, 1879), believing that the “wealthy class of landholders” endangered the Jeffersonian-republican ideal of the small landholder by creating a “landless multitude” (Workingmen’s Party of California, 1879). Even as the party was on the brink of collapse in May of 1880, Kearney continued to preach the anti-monopolist ideology of republican liberalism, declaring, “the bloated bondholder...the thieving politicians must all go...beginning of a mighty end, that would emancipate the workingmen from the thralldom of imperialistic usurpers” (Kearney, 1880), a final testament to the WPC’s failure due to its lack of adaptation. While Kauer (1944) argues that the WPC’s downfall was primarily a result of WPC politicians’ failure to achieve the party’s agenda through legislation (Kauer, 1944, p. 287), data suggests that the WPC’s disappearance was inevitable even if its representatives succeeded in passing anti-monopoly legislation, as the party’s economic agenda was fundamentally outdated.

FROM PARTISAN-BASED NATIVISM TO UNDIFFERENTIATED NATIVISM

Having proven that the WPC’s labor ideology was not responsible for its success, this paper will now examine the development of nativist ideology in California, ultimately demonstrating that the mainstream parties adopted the WPC’s undifferentiated ideology of Chinese exclusion.

THE EARLY 1870S’ PARTISAN-BASED NATIVISM

Before the emergence of the WPC, different parties had individual reasons for Chinese exclusion—including anti-slavery, labor competition, and symbolic nativism—with minimal overlap in justifications between the groups.

LABOR GROUPS: CHINESE COMPETITION WITH WHITE WORKERS

Labor groups sought Chinese exclusion in order to stop competition with white workers. A labor faction within the Democratic Party argued that the “labor of our white people should not be brought into competition with that of the coolie” (“Democratic County Committee,” 1873), seeking employment within large corporations rather than the abolition of monopolies. Similarly, a labor union declared in 1875 that they “oppose Chinese slavery as against white labor” (“The Unterrified Democracy,” 1875). Moreover, a foundry worker testified before the Chinese Commission, an investigative body on public opinion of Chinese immigration, saying that “the laboring classes strongly favor the restriction of Chinese; white population is superior and more desirable” (“The Chinese Commission,” 1876).

THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY: SYMBOLIC NATIVISM

The Democratic Party in general opposed Chinese immigration due to symbolic nativism, afraid that Chinese immigrants will corrupt white American society by bringing in an inferior culture. During the Democratic State Convention, a politician argued that the introduction of Chinese immigrants will pollute American society, describing the Chinese as an “inferior race, detrimental to [white Americans’]

moral and physical health” (“Democratic State Convention,” 1875). Similarly, Zach Montgomery, a lawyer and politician, gave a speech during a Democratic party meeting asking, “is the right of overcrowded China to pour in upon our shores her four hundred millions of downtrodden slaves, for the impoverishment, degradation and final ruin of our own race?” (Montgomery, 1872). This speech is categorized as symbolic nativism instead of anti-slavery, despite the usage of the word “slave” to describe Chinese immigrants, as Montgomery uses the term as derogatory slang instead of as part of a moral argument against the coolie system.

THE REPUBLICAN PARTY: ANTI-SLAVERY

On the other hand, the Republican Party opposed the Chinese coolie system as perpetuating a system of slavery, drawing on the party’s anti-slavery tradition. Republican articles published in the Sacramento Daily Union in the early 1870s do not mention the coolie system in California, however, given the Californian corporations interests that rely on Chinese labor. Rather, Republicans denounce Chinese coolie labor in Cuba: “President Grant attributes the continuance of the barbarous civil war raging in Cuba...to the existence of slavery...a new and worse form of slavery...the Chinese coolie traffic” (“The Curse of Cooleism,” 1872).

THE RISE OF UNDIFFERENTIATED NATIVISM IN CALIFORNIA

The WPC’s Undifferentiated Nativism

The WPC amalgamated all existent arguments to form an undifferentiated ideology of Chinese exclusion under the comprehensive slogan “The Chinese Must Go” in order to attract support from the broad spectrum of anti-Chinese groups.

During a party convention in 1878, the WPC justified Chinese exclusion by combining the arguments of anti-slavery, symbolic nativism, and anti-monopoly, writing that “slave labor has been introduced to still further aggrandize the rich and degrade the poor” and that “Chinese cheap labor is a curse to our land, a menace to our liberties and the institutions of our country” (Workingmen’s Party of California, 1878). Similarly, Kallloch, the WPC Mayor, employed a comprehensive list of anti-Chinese justifications during a speech: symbolic nativism through “a foreign, degraded, unassimilating horde of barbarians”; labor competition through “the vital evil of Chinese cheap labor”; and the combination of Chinese exclusion with republican liberalism through “we have to fight the accursed spirit of corporate greed and individual selfishness. We have to beat back the barbaric hordes of Paganism” (Kallloch, 1880).

Granted, the WPC still occasionally employed singular justifications. However, unlike early 1870s political parties, the WPC constantly switched between the different justifications, likely to appeal to different demographics. In a speech in November of 1877, Kearney criticized monopolies for “refus[ing] employment to white men while still employing Chinese” (Kearney, 1877), echoing early 1870s’ labor groups’ justification for Chinese exclusion. In contrast, Kearney shifted to an anti-slavery

justification during a speech in 1878, explaining that “A Coolie was defined by Webster to be a slave, and the Constitution of the United States prohibited slavery” (Kearney, 1878).

Both the Democratic and Republican parties in California adopted undifferentiated ideologies of Chinese exclusion in the late 1870s, copying the WPC’s coalition building strategy through undifferentiated nativism.

UNDIFFERENTIATED NATIVISM IN THE REPUBLICAN PARTY

The Republican party, previously defending Chinese labor due to its corporate patrons, adopted an undifferentiated stance against Chinese exclusion in 1879 to appeal to WPC supporters. They espoused a labor argument that “unrestricted Chinese immigration...menaces the laboring classes with unequal competition,” claiming that “the Republican party,” rather than the WPC, was “the true friend of the workingman.” The Republican party similarly adopted a symbolic nativist argument that Chinese immigration is “dangerous to [American] civilization.” The Republican leaders also employed an anti-slavery argument, explaining that it was the party’s tradition to defend the working class against unfair labor: “[the Republicans] abolished slavery from the land, not only because it was wrong in itself, but because it was degrading to free labor. It is now pledged to the abolition of Chinese immigration, because coolie labor is demoralizing to our free institutions” (“A Great Gathering of the Republican Hosts,” 1879). A report on an anti-Chinese bill in Congress in 1879 explicitly stated the Republican agenda of Chinese exclusion as a campaigning strategy, noting that “the President will veto the bill limiting Chinese immigration, although he will be strongly urged not to do so, on the ground that he will injure the Republican Party in California at the approaching election” (“Ciose of the Mongolian Debate in the Senate,” 1879).

UNDIFFERENTIATED NATIVISM IN THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY

A Democratic article in 1881 employed symbolic nativism, writing that “Chinese immigration is inherently vicious...class of cheap laborers entirely out of harmony with its system” (“The Chinese Evil,” 1881). Criticizing the Republican Party in 1882, another Democratic article claimed the labor competition argument of Chinese exclusion, writing that the Republican party “pretend[s] to be a friend of the white laboring man, and opposed to Chinese immigration” but “nominate for Governor one of the largest employers of Chinese labor” (“What is a Democracy,” 1882).

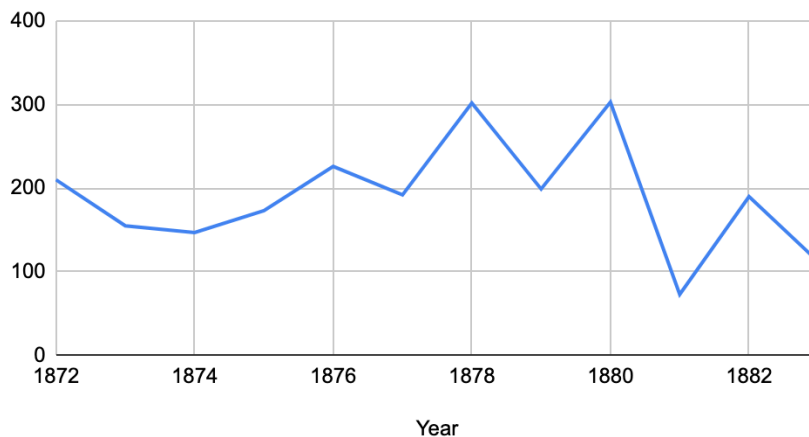
THE NATIVISM ACTIVATION MODEL: THE WPC’S DOWNFALL DURING ECONOMIC EXPANSION

With the WPC’s ideology fully mapped—the antiquated ideology of republican liberalism and undifferentiated nativism—it becomes clear that the WPC relied on its undifferentiated nativism to maintain its coalition. If this is true, the WPC’s downfall should coincide with a period of economic

rebound, as the Nativist Activation Model predicts that nativist sentiments only increase during economic downturn or instability, returning to a baseline level of latent nativism once the economy rebounds or stabilizes. Unfortunately, research on California's early economic development is scarce, and the existing data only tracks economic changes on decade-level (Rhode, 2001, p. 12, 16, 63, 66; Issel & Cherny, 1986), not precise enough to compare with nativist trends during a single decade. Nevertheless, qualitative documentation of economic changes are sufficient to substantiate the Nativism Activation Model's predictions.

Figure 3

Nativism in the Daily Alta California



Y-axis tracks annual nativist lexicon hit count in the Daily Alta California archive. Created by author, 2026.

Annual newspaper lexicon hit count supplies the trend of anti-Chinese sentiment in California. Anti-Chinese nativism gradually rose throughout the decade before declining in 1880. In late 1878, the Long Depression triggered by the Panic of 1873 ended, with the American economy reentering a period of growth (Terrell, n.d.). Indeed, in 1879, a politician against Chinese exclusion said in Congress that “the prosperity of 1878 (and it had been the most prosperous year since the dawn of creation) had been to a great degree one to the overthrow of the fanaticism of the olden times” (“Congress: The House Passes the Chinese Immigration Bill,” 1879), referring to the “fanaticism” of Kearney. During its peak, the WPC relied on its broad platform of Chinese exclusion to unite its labor coalition. As economic anxiety faded, so too did nativist sentiment. With waning support for Chinese exclusion, the various working class factions began to scrutinize the WPC’s labor ideology. Republican liberalism was outdated and insufficient to hold together the WPC’s diverse coalition, leading to the party’s disintegration in 1880.

THE NATIONALIZATION OF UNDIFFERENTIATED NATIVISM

Anti-Chinese sentiment rose again in 1882, reflecting discussions around the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. It might seem perplexing that the legislation was passed two years after the disappearance of the WPC, the staunchest proponent of Chinese exclusion, and during a period of economic prosperity. This paper argues that salience around the Chinese Exclusion in 1882 was artificially generated by the established political parties. After the disappearance of the WPC, Chinese exclusion had become central issues to both parties' agendas. George Perkins, the Republican Governor of California, acknowledged that undifferentiated nativism had become the default ideology of Chinese exclusion in California, declaring, "the question has ceased to be a political issue with us. Men of all parties are in perfect accord that immigrants from China are a curse to this country, and that some adequate restriction upon their coming ought to be imposed without delay" (Perkins, 1880). Chinese exclusion became a "cheap" agenda in the early 1880s. The issue had broad support and minimal objection, as the baseline level of latent nativism remained hostile. In 1881, a year of economic prosperity and a year after the disappearance of the WPC, 170 articles still employed anti-Chinese language. A Chicago traveller to California in 1882 noted that he heard "scores of arguments against Chinese immigration and none for it" ("Eastern Dispatches," 1882), reflecting the widespread nature of undifferentiated nativism in California. As Chinese exclusion became nationalized, the Democratic Governor of Massachusetts in 1882 wrote that there was a "deep-seated, universal feeling that the presence of Chinese was not beneficial to the country" (Butler, 1882). Thus, both parties continued their crusades of Chinese exclusion into 1882, generating sufficient momentum for the passage of national exclusionary immigration policy.

CONCLUSION

This paper concludes that the WPC's ideological innovation was its amalgamation of existent anti-Chinese rhetoric to form an undifferentiated ideology of nativism. The WPC thus constructed two dichotomies: between the working class people and the corrupt capitalist elite and between the white Americans and the outsiders, Chinese immigrants. Contemporaneous political parties initially underestimated and dismissed the WPC for its seemingly outdated economic ideology. Later, as they realized the power of the WPC's nativist ideology, they adopted and maintained undifferentiated nativism even after the threat of the WPC disappeared. Supporting undifferentiated Chinese exclusion thus became cheap insurance for the established parties against potential future anti-establishment nativist movements. With bipartisan support for Chinese exclusion in California, Congress was compelled to produce legislation to appease this seemingly popular demand.

During a Congressional debate about Chinese exclusion in 1879—when the established parties first transitioned to undifferentiated nativism—a Congressman noted that "the people of California want action, not words" (Congress, 1879). Once undifferentiated anti-Chinese nativism became nationalized, few questioned the origins of the movement. Thus, a populist political entrepreneur's coalition building strategy began a movement that ultimately led to decades of racially-discriminatory national legislation.

REFERENCES

- A Great Gathering of the Republican Hosts. (1879, August 7). *Daily Alta California*, 31(10707). <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=DAC18790807.2.14>
- Acemoglu, D., Egorov, G., & Sonin, K. (2013). A Political Theory of Populism*. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 128(2), 771–805. <https://doi.org/10.1093/qje/qjs077>
- Bancroft, H. H. (1884). *The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft: History of California. Vol. I, 1542-1800* (Vol. 18). A. L. Bancroft & Co. <https://archive.org/details/bancrofthistcal01bancroft/>
- Batzell, R. (2014). FREE LABOUR, CAPITALISM AND THE ANTI-SLAVERY ORIGINS OF CHINESE EXCLUSION IN CALIFORNIA IN THE 1870s. *Past & Present*, (225), 143–186. JSTOR.
- Bergmann, E. (2020). Understanding Nativist Populism. In E. Bergmann, *Neo-Nationalism* (pp. 29–52). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-41773-4_2
- Betz, H.-G. (2019). Facets of nativism: A heuristic exploration. *Patterns of Prejudice*, 53(2), 111–135. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0031322X.2019.1572276>
- Bryce, J. (1906). *The American Commonwealth*. J. D. Morris. <https://archive.org/details/americancoma00bryc>
- Burns, J. F. (2003). Taming the Elephant: An Introduction to California's Statehood and Constitutional Era. *California History*, 81(3/4), 1–26. JSTOR. <https://doi.org/10.2307/25161698>
- Butler, B. F. (1882, April 16). Bold Ben Butler Discusses the Chinese Evil. *Daily Alta California*, 34(11682). <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=DAC18820416.2.41>
- By Telegraph. (1878, November 23). *Daily Alta California*, 30(10452). <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=DAC18781123.2.28>
- California State Library. (2019). *Newton Booth*. California State Library. Governors of California. <https://governors.library.ca.gov/11-booth.html>
- California., Stockton, P. K., & Willis, E. B. (1880). *Debates and proceedings of the Constitutional convention of the state of California, convened at the city of Sacramento, Saturday, September 28, 1878*. State office, J. D. Young, Supt. State printing. <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/100564115>
- Close of the Mongolian Debate in the Senate. (1879, February 16). *Daily Alta California*, 31(10536). <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=DAC18790216.2.14>
- Cole, C. L. (1978). Chinese Exclusion: The Capitalist Perspective of the Sacramento Union, 1850-1882. *California History*, 57(1), 8–31. <https://doi.org/10.2307/25157813>
- Congress: The House Passes the Chinese Immigration Bill. (1879, January 29). *Daily Alta California*, 31(10518). <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=DAC18790129.2.25>
- Cowan, R. E., & Dunlap, B. (1909). *Bibliography of the Chinese Question in the United States*. A. M. Robertson. <https://archive.org/details/bibliographyofch00cowarich>
- Daily Alta California. (1873, March 2). The Unprincipled Monopoly. *Daily Alta California*, 25(8374). <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=DAC18730302.2.34>
- Daily Alta California. (1876a, June 12). Washington Notes. *Daily Alta California*, 28(9564). <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=DAC18760612.2.43>

- Daily Alta California. (1876b, November 5). The Workingmen. *Daily Alta California*, 28(9709). <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=DAC18761105.2.59>
- Daily Alta California. (1879, September 13). After the Battle. *Daily Alta California*, 31(10744). <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=DAC18790913.2.75>
- Davis, W. J. (1893). *History of Political Conventions in California, 1849-1892* (Vol. 1). California State Library. <https://archive.org/details/historypolitica04davigoog/>
- Democratic County Committee. (1873, July 22). Democratic County Committee. *Daily Alta California*, 25(8515). <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=DAC18730722.2.3>
- Democratic State Convention. (1875, July 1). *Daily Alta California*, 27(9220). <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=DAC18750701.2.21>
- Eastern Despatches. (1882, April 23). *Daily Alta California*, 34(11689). <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=DAC18820423.2.27>
- Erie, S. P. (1988). *Rainbow's End: Irish-Americans and the Dilemmas of Urban Machine Politics, 1840-1985* (Vol. 15). University of California Press. <https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520910621>
- Ethington, P. (2001). *The Public City: The Political Construction of Urban Life in San Francisco, 1850-1900*. University of California Press. <https://doi.org/10.1525/california/9780520230019.001.0001>
- Farmers' Union of California. (1872, November 27). Address of the Farmers' Union. *Daily Alta California*, 24(8280). <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=DAC18721127.2.30>
- Foner, E. (1971). *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War*. Oxford University Press. <https://archive.org/details/freesoilfreelabo01fone>
- Foner, P. S. (1982a). *History of the labor movement in the United States. 1: From colonial times to the founding of the American Federation of Labor* (7. printing). Internat. Publ.
- Foner, P. S. (1982b). *History of the labor movement in the United States. 1: From colonial times to the founding of the American Federation of Labor* (7. printing). Internat. Publ. <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.74211>
- Foner, P. S. (1984). *The Workingmen's party of the United States: A history of the 1st Marxist party in the Americas*. MEP publ. <https://archive.org/details/workingmensparty0000fone>
- George, H. (1877, July 5). Henry George Speech. *Daily Alta California*, 29(9949). <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=DAC18770705.2.16>
- Griffiths, D. B. (1970). Anti-Monopoly Movement in California 1873-1898. *Southern California Quarterly*, 52(2), 93-121. <https://doi.org/10.2307/41170283>
- Gyory, A. (2000). *Closing the Gate: Race, Politics, and the Chinese Exclusion Act*. The University of North Carolina Press. <https://www.perlego.com/book/538728/closing-the-gate-race-politics-and-the-chinese-exclusion-act-pdf>
- Hanson, V. D. (2026, June 30). *The Agrarian Statesman: Victor Davis Hanson on Thomas Jefferson*. Freedom Frequency | Hoover Institution. <https://www.thefreedomfrequency.org/p/thomas-jefferson>
- Hart, J. (1931). *The Sand Lot and Kearneyism*. <https://sfmuseum.org/hist2/kearneyism.html>
- Henry George. (1877, July 5). Henry George Speech. *Daily Alta California*, 29(9949). <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=DAC18770705.2.16>

- Hon. WM. H. Sears. (1872, July 2). Railroad Mass Meeting. *Daily Alta California*, 24(8133). <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=DAC18720702.2.4>
- Issel, W., & Cherny, R. W. (1986). *San Francisco, 1865 - 1932: Politics, power, and urban development*. Univ. of California Press. <https://archive.org/details/sanfrancisco186500isse>
- Jung, M.-H. (2006). *Coolies and Cane: Race, Labor, and Sugar in the Age of Emancipation*. The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Kalloch, I. S. (1880, February 22). Blow for Blow: Mayor Kalloch's Address. *Daily Alta California*, 32(10905). <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=DAC18800222.2.13>
- Kauer, R. (1944). The Workingmen's Party of California. *Pacific Historical Review*, 13(3), 278–291. JSTOR. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3635954>
- Kazin, M. (1986). The Great Exception Revisited: Organized Labor and Politics in San Francisco and Los Angeles, 1870-1940. *Pacific Historical Review*, 55(3), 371–402. JSTOR. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3639704>
- Kearney, D. (1877, November 4). Kearney's Arrest. *Daily Alta California*, 32(10071). <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=DAC18771104.2.17>
- Kearney, D. (1878a). *Speeches of Dennis Kearney, Labor Champion*. Jesse Haney & Co. <https://archive.org/details/SpeechesOfDennisKearneyLaborChampion1878>
- Kearney, D. (1878b, June 24). The Sand Lots. *Daily Alta California*, 30(10301). <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=DAC18780624.2.10>
- Kearney, D. (1880, May 29). Kearney Out. *Daily Alta California*, 32(11002). <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=DAC18800529.2.7>
- Kearneyism: Voice of the Press on Its Threatening Attitude. (1878, February 4). *Daily Alta California*, 30(10161). <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=DAC18780204.2.19>
- Laclau, E. (2005). *On Populist Reason*. Verso. <https://archive.org/details/onpopulistreason0000lacl/>
- Lebergott, S. (1964). *Manpower in Economic Growth: The American Record Since 1800*. McGraw-Hill. <https://archive.org/details/manpowerineconom0000lebe>
- Library of Congress. (n.d.). *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Library of Congress. Retrieved September 6, 2026, from <https://www.loc.gov/collections/chronicling-america/>
- Montgomery, Z. (1872, September 21). A Democratic Talk with Democrats. *Daily Alta California*, 24(8213). <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=DAC18720921.2.4>
- Moore, S. A. W. (2003). "We Feel the Want of Protection": The Politics of Law and Race in California, 1848-1878. *California History*, 81(3/4), 96–125. JSTOR. <https://doi.org/10.2307/25161701>
- Moynihan, E. A. (2023). *An Irish Attempt to Acculturate: White Identity Politics, Denis Kearney and the Workingmen's Party of California* [Master's thesis, Harvard University Extension School]. <https://nrs.harvard.edu/URN-3:HUL.INSTREPOS:37374771>
- Mudde, C. (n.d.). *Populism in the Twenty-First Century: An Illiberal Democratic Response to Undemocratic Liberalism*. The University of Pennsylvania. The Andrea Mitchell Center for the Study of Democracy. Retrieved August 9, 2026, from <https://amc.sas.upenn.edu/cas-mudde-populism-twenty-first-century>

- Ngai, M. M. (2022a). The Chinese Question: The Gold Rushes and Global Politics, 1849-1910 (Bulletin). *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute*, (69), 95–122.
- Ngai, M. M. (2022b). *The Chinese question: The gold rushes, Chinese migration and global politics* (First published as a Norton paperback). W.W. Norton & Company. <https://books.wwnorton.com/books/The-Chinese-Question/>
- Orsi, R. J. (1975). “The Octopus” Reconsidered: The Southern Pacific and Agricultural Modernization in California, 1865-1915. *California Historical Quarterly*, 54(3), 197–220. JSTOR. <https://doi.org/10.2307/25157574>
- Perkins, G. C. (1880, January 9). Gov. Perkins’ Inaugural. *Daily Alta California*, 32(10861). <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=DAC18800109.2.22>
- Rhode, P. W. (2001). *The Evolution of California Manufacturing* (No. 1582130388). Public Policy Institute of California. https://www.ppic.org/wp-content/uploads/content/pubs/report/R_1001PRR.pdf
- Robert Cherny. (2014). The Evolution of San Francisco’s Labor History. *California History*, 91(1), 64–71. JSTOR. <https://doi.org/10.1525/ch.2014.91.1.64>
- Sandmeyer, E. C., & Daniels, R. (1991). *The Anti-Chinese Movement in California*. University of Illinois Press. (Original work published 1939)
- Sargent, N. (1917). The California Constitutional Convention of 1878-9. *California Law Review*, 6(1), 1–22. JSTOR. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3474812>
- Sargent, N. (1918). The California Constitutional Convention of 1878-1879 (Concluded). *California Law Review*, 6(2), 114–133. JSTOR. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3474194>
- Saxton, A. (1995). *The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Reprint, illustrated edition). University of California Press.
- Schroeder, R. (2020). The Dangerous Myth of Populism as a Thin Ideology. *Populism*, 3(1), 13–28. <https://doi.org/10.1163/25888072-02021042>
- Shumsky, N. L. (1976). San Francisco’s Workingmen Respond to the Modern City. *California Historical Quarterly*, 55(1), 46–57. JSTOR. <https://doi.org/10.2307/25157608>
- Shumsky, N. L. (1991). *The Evolution of Political Protest and the Workingmen’s Party of California*. Ohio State University Press. <https://archive.org/details/evolutionofpolit0000shum>
- Support, Confidence, and Lift Measures. (n.d.). Codefinity. Retrieved August 16, 2026, from <https://codefinity.com/courses/v2/a7e17f02-2cc9-4b92-abe0-cc8710d7011e/d2fce24c-4b70-427a-815a-afeb7ae6e604/bf978c9d-0090-4671-a662-a7277eb34e7d>
- Terrell, E. (n.d.). *Research Guides: This Month in Business History: The Panic of 1873* [Research guide]. Retrieved September 6, 2026, from <https://guides.loc.gov/this-month-in-business-history/september/panic-of-1873>
- The Chinese Commission. (1876a, November 19). The Chinese Commission. *Daily Alta California*, 28(9723). <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=DAC18761119.2.14>
- The Chinese Commission. (1876b, November 19). *Daily Alta California*, 28(9723). <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=DAC18761119.2.14>
- The Chinese Evil. (1881, September 30). *Daily Alta California*, 33(11485). <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=DAC18810930.2.35>

- The Chinese Immigration. (1852, April 26). *Daily Alta California*, 3(116). <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=DAC18520426.2.3>
- The Curse of Coolieism. (1872, December 6). *Sacramento Daily Union*, 44(6764). <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=SDU18721206.2.12>
- The Democracy. (1876, May 26). *Daily Alta California*, 28(9547). <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=DAC18760526.2.19>
- The Democrats. (1875, July 1). *Daily Alta California*, 27(9220). <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=DAC18750701.2.21>
- The Dignity of Labor. (1878, January 4). *Daily Alta California*, 30(10130). <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=DAC18780104.2.65>
- The Forty Niners*. (n.d.). [Web page]. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540 USA. Retrieved August 20, 2026, from <https://www.loc.gov/collections/california-first-person-narratives/articles-and-essays/early-california-history/forty-niners/>
- The Non-Partisan Ticket Again Ratified. (1878, June 13). *Daily Alta California*, 30(10290). <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=DAC18780613.2.18>
- The Unterrified Democracy. (1875, July 22). *Daily Alta California*, 27(9240). <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=DAC18750722.2.19>
- The Workingmen's Party of California, 1877-1882. (1976). *California Historical Quarterly*, 55(1), 58–73. JSTOR. <https://doi.org/10.2307/25157609>
- Truman, D. B. (1958). *The Governmental Process: Political Interests and Public Opinion*. Alfred A. Knopf. https://archive.org/details/governmentalproc0000davi_u6n1
- University of California, R. (n.d.). *California Digital Newspaper Collection*. Center for Bibliographical Studies and Research, University of California, Riverside. Retrieved September 6, 2026, from <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/>
- Waite, K. (2021, May 10). *The bloody history of anti-Asian violence in the West*. National Geographic. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/the-bloody-history-of-anti-asian-violence-in-the-west>
- Waldorf, D. (n.d.). *San Francisco Labor's Fight for 10-Hour Day—1860*. Retrieved August 20, 2026, from <https://sfmusem.org/hist8/earlylabor.html>
- Wallace, K. (2023, January 29). *Forgotten Los Angeles History: The Chinese Massacre of 1871*. Los Angeles Public Library. <https://www.lapl.org/news-stories/articles/forgotten-los-angeles-history-chinese-massacre-1871>
- Watson, M. (2022, July 28). *Big Labor's Golden State: A Tale of Two Cities*. <https://capitalresearch.org/article/big-labors-golden-state-part-1/>
- What Is a Democracy? (1882, May 27). *Daily Alta California*, 34(11723). <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=DAC18820527.2.50>
- Workingmen's Party of California. (1878, January 25). Workingmen's Convention. *Daily Alta California*, 30(10151). <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=DAC18780125.2.17>
- Workingmen's Party of California. (1879, June 5). WPC Convention. *Daily Alta California*, 31(10645). <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=DAC18790605.2.15>

SCHOLARLY DEBUT

— by Scholarly Review

EQUINOX 2026

Workingmen's Party of California. (2022, September 1). *Platform of the Workingmen's Party of California*. Facing History & Ourselves. <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/platform-workingmens-party-california>

Young, C., & Goidel, K. (2025). *Nativist Nation: Populism, Grievance, Identity, and the Transformation of American Politics*. De Gruyter. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111384047>

APPENDIX

ANTI-CHINESE NATIVISM LEXICON

("coolie" OR "cooly" OR "coolies" OR "coolieism" OR "coolie labor" OR "Chinese" OR "Mongolians" OR "Asiatic" OR "Asian" OR "Chinamen" OR "Chinaman" OR "China") AND ("heathen" OR "servile labor" OR "servile race" OR "invasion" OR "pagan" OR "pagans" OR "serf" OR "serfs" OR "rat-eater" OR "rat-eaters" OR "rat eating" OR "barbarian" OR "barbarians" OR "barbarous" OR "degraded" OR "degradation" OR "slavery" OR "slave" OR "vicious" OR "immoral" OR "criminal" OR "crime" OR "pig-tail" OR "pig tail")

ANTI-MONOPOLY SENTIMENT LEXICON

("corporation" OR "corporations" OR "Monopoly" OR "monopolies" OR "Railroad" OR "Railway" OR "Central Pacific" OR "C.P.R.R" OR "C. P. R. R." OR "Central Pac" OR "Capitalist" OR "Capitalists" OR "Bondholder" OR "Bondholders" OR "Subsidy" OR "subsidies" OR "Big four" OR "big-four" OR "railroad combination" OR "corporate combination" OR "railroad-combination" OR "corporate-combination" OR "Southern Pacific" OR "railroad land grant" OR "railroad franchise" OR "corporate franchise" OR "railroad-franchise" OR "corporate-franchise" OR "stockholder" OR "stockholders" OR "freight rate" OR "freight rates" OR "freight-rate" OR "freight-rates") AND ("Land grab" OR "land-grab" OR "Aristocrat" OR "Aristocracy" OR "Octopus" OR "nabob" OR "nabobs" OR "bloated bondholder" OR "bloated bondholders" OR "money power" OR "railroad ring" OR "the ring" OR "extortion" OR "extortionate" OR "soulless" OR "tyranny" OR "tyrannical" OR "oppression" OR "oppressive" OR "oppressor" OR "plunder" OR "plunderer" OR "plundered" OR "grasping" OR "robbery" OR "legalized-robbery" OR "corrupt" OR "corruption" OR "jobbery" OR "swindle" OR "swindler" OR "swindled" OR "greed" OR "greedy" OR "avarice" OR "avaricious")

Data

Daily Alta California Annual Newspaper Lexicon Hit Count

Year	Nativism	Anti-monopoly
1872	210	463
1873	155	296
1874	147	280
1875	173	404
1876	226	358
1877	192	274
1878	302	363

1879	199	273
1880	303	218
1881	73	164
1882	190	171
1883	112	149

Sacramento Daily Union Annual Newspaper Lexicon Hit Count

Year	Nativism	Anti-monopoly
1872	202	864
1873	263	1158
1874	242	839
1875	181	590
1876	327	586
1877	263	486
1878	330	578
1879	340	561
1880	300	418
1881	202	351
1882	253	345
1883	265	436