



U.S. Immigration and Exclusion Laws Relevant to AANHPI Issues

Competency

Educators will analyze how racial exclusion laws shaped Asian American Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) immigration, tracing Chinese American, South Asian American, and mixed-heritage experiences to contextualize present-day inequities.

Key Method

Educators will analyze the inclusion and exclusion of AANHPI immigrants and how racial exclusion laws shaped their own or a close family member's immigration experiences through oral history, and facilitate student oral histories of immigration in order to contextualize present-day inequities. Immigration laws have often been used to divide working people, deny opportunity, and preserve power for a few, while communities have responded by organizing across race and class to claim belonging and rights.

Method Components

Overview: Learning and analyzing U.S. immigration in an anti-immigrant and anti-DEI context

Learning about immigration in the United States begins with recognizing that Native peoples are the original inhabitants of this land. Many individuals and families have their own migration stories that connect them to the nation's history. Exploring these stories helps educators and students learn from one another, recognize shared experiences, and better understand the diverse backgrounds that have shaped the United States. Personal narratives also deepen

AANHPI Stack

US Immigration and Exclusion Laws Relevant to AANHPI Issues
Revised on: Aug 18, 2026

understanding of immigration history and the many contributions that have influenced American society.

U.S. Racial Exclusion and Immigration Laws

Many laws have affected immigration. To understand AANHPI history, we must understand the laws that have limited their participation in American society.

The Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1790 established the foundation for race-based immigration laws. Citizenship was explicitly limited to free White immigrants, completely excluding all non-White populations, enslaved people, and indentured servants. The "free White person" clause defined American immigration and identity for more than a century and a half. It served as a legal tool for racial supremacy and wasn't fully removed until the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952.

The 14th Amendment (1868) is the constitutional foundation for civil rights decisions involving racial equality, education, voting rights, marriage rights, and equal treatment under the law. It grants citizenship to all people born or naturalized in the United States regardless of race or ancestry.

The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 restricted Chinese immigrants from coming to the United States to work and prevented them from becoming naturalized U.S. citizens. It was the first major immigration restriction based on ethnicity.

Alien Land Laws of 1913 were California laws designed to prevent many Asian immigrants, especially Japanese immigrants, from owning agricultural land by restricting land ownership to those eligible for U.S. citizenship. At the time, U.S. naturalization was largely restricted to White people and people of African descent. As a result, many immigrants from Asian countries were considered ineligible for citizenship.

The Immigration Act of 1924, also known as the Johnson-Reed Act, established strict limits on immigration. Because the **national origin quota system** was based on the 1890 census, it strongly favored immigrants from Northern and Western Europe. It also barred immigration from most Asian countries by expanding earlier exclusion policies.

Immigration Act of 1952, commonly called the **McCarran-Walter Act**, reorganized and codified existing immigration laws. It abolished long-standing racial restrictions on naturalization, allowing immigrants from Asian countries to naturalize. But it kept the quota system intact, limiting immigration from many parts of the world and leaving many families separated.

Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, also known as the Hart-Cellar Act, ended the national origins quota system. It prioritized family reunification and employment skills, while opening more opportunities for immigration from Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East.

AANHPI Stack

In addition to the laws, legal cases and wartime policies shaped AANHPI immigration stories.

Ozawa vs. The U.S. (1922) was a Supreme Court case that denied citizenship to a Japanese immigrant by ruling that Japanese people were not considered "white persons" under U.S. naturalization law. This reinforced racial restrictions in naturalization laws and helped justify discriminatory policies.

U.S. vs. Thind (1923) denied citizenship to an Indian immigrant by ruling that "white" should be defined by common public understanding rather than scientific racial classifications. As a result, some individuals who had become citizens had their citizenship revoked.

The Luce-Cellar Act (1946) allowed immigrants from India and the Philippines to become U. S. citizens through naturalization and set an annual immigration quota of 100 per year from each country, weakening the racial barriers embedded in U.S. immigration law.

Executive Order 9066 (1942) authorized the military to remove people considered a security risk and relocate them to camps throughout the United States. More than 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry were removed from their homes. Many lost their homes, businesses, and savings. Although later investigations found no evidence of security risk, racial prejudice, wartime fear, and political pressures were thought to drive the order.

The Renunciation Act of 1944 allowed American citizens to renounce their citizenship while physically present in the United States during wartime. It disproportionately affected Japanese Americans, including more than 5,500 people at the Tule Lake Segregation Center. Many renunciations were made under fear and coercion. After World War II, federal courts ultimately concluded that many renunciations hadn't been voluntary.

The Civil Liberties Act of 1988 formally apologized for the wartime incarceration of Japanese Americans and provided compensation to surviving individuals who had been incarcerated. It serves as a reminder of the importance of protecting constitutional rights, especially during times of fear and national crisis.

Impact and Application

The laws, orders, and cases above shape the immigration history of the United States. Educators should focus on those relevant to their region or units of study and to their own curriculum and experiences.

Immigrant Experiences Case Studies

Immigrants from Asia and the Pacific Islands have contributed unique experiences and perspectives that are woven into the broader story of America. Explore the

histories of the following groups to understand how immigration policies and societal attitudes have shaped their experiences. As you examine these stories, analyze how laws and government actions included and excluded immigrant communities and how those decisions affected individuals, families, and communities throughout U.S. history.

Explore key AANHPI immigrant experiences

In the Resource section of this microcredential, there are many stories from AANHPI immigration experiences. Study the one(s) that are relevant to your curriculum, region, or community. Some examples are:

The Tape Family and Chinese Americans' Civil Rights successfully challenged the exclusion of Chinese American children from public schools and became an early milestone in the fight for educational equality and civil rights in the United States.

Incarceration of Japanese Americans During WWII. The forced removal and incarceration of more than 120,000 Japanese Americans during World War II, most of whom were U.S. citizens, is now widely regarded as a violation of civil rights and civil liberties.

Vietnamese American experiences were shaped by refugee migration after the Vietnam War, resilience in overcoming displacement and cultural adjustment, and significant contributions to the social, cultural, and economic life of the United States.

Current Immigration System

Under the **Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965**, the United States eliminated national-origin quotas. Today, immigration is based on family relationships, employment, humanitarian protections, and diversity programs.

Numerical limits still exist in these ways:

- Family-sponsored and employment-based immigrant visas (green cards) have annual worldwide limits.
- Most family- and employment-based preference categories have a per-country cap of about 7% of the available visas per fiscal year.
- The Diversity Visa Lottery is designed to increase immigration from countries with historically low rates of immigration to the United States.

Although **Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)** is often associated with Latino immigrants, it has also affected many Asian immigrants. Thousands of Asian immigrants brought to the United States as children have gained protection from deportation and authorization to work legally.

DACA provides temporary protection from deportation for eligible individuals who arrived in the U.S. as children and meet specific education, residency, and

background requirements. For many Asian immigrants, DACA has provided greater stability, reduced the fear of removal, and expanded access to work.

DACA and Asian Americans by the numbers

Asian immigrants make up a smaller share of DACA recipients than Latino immigrants, but they remain a meaningful part of the program. People from countries such as South Korea, the Philippines, India, Pakistan, China, Bangladesh, and Nepal have received DACA protections. Advocacy organizations note that Asian immigrants are one of the fastest-growing groups within the undocumented population.

DACA shows that immigration issues extend beyond a single community. It highlights:

- The diversity of the undocumented communities.
- The continued importance of immigration policy in shaping educational, economic, and civic opportunities.
- The ongoing debate over how the United States should address the status of immigrants who were brought to the country as children.

DACA remains a temporary administrative policy, not a permanent solution, and its future continues to be shaped by litigation and federal policy decisions. Policies that separate families or limit opportunity are not neutral; they shape who can participate fully in school, work, and civic life.

Oral History

Oral histories preserve personal memories, experiences, and perspectives that may not appear in official records or history books. Through interviews and storytelling, family members can share why they left their homeland, the challenges they faced during migration, their experiences adapting to a new country, and the traditions they chose to maintain or change over time.

Oral histories capture the emotions, values, and cultural experiences behind immigration journeys. They reveal family relationships, community connections, discrimination, resilience, opportunities, and sacrifices that shaped a family's experience. These stories help deepen understanding of how historical events, immigration policies, and social conditions affected real people.

Passing these stories from one generation to the next helps families preserve cultural heritage, strengthen identity, and connect personal experiences to larger historical events. It also ensures that voices often overlooked in traditional historical records are remembered and valued, and these stories help students connect individual experience to the systems that shape opportunity and belonging.

To learn more about your family's story of immigration, you can interview family members about their immigration history. Be sure to capture topics such as:

- Reasons for migrating or immigrating
- Timeframe of immigration to the United States
- The region of the world from which they immigrated
- Challenges encountered during the journey or resettlement process
- Cultural traditions that were maintained or adapted
- Experiences of belonging, inclusion, or exclusion
- The impact of migration on future generations

Even if your country of origin isn't Asian, Hawaiian, or Pacific Islands, laws have shaped family immigration. Determine whether immigration laws in place were an impediment or an asset to your ancestors' immigration story.

Supporting Rationale and Research

Council on Foreign Relations. (n.d.). History of U.S. immigration policy. CFR Education.

<https://education.cfr.org/global-era-issues/migration/history-us-immigration-policy>

Lebrón AMW, Torres IR, Kline N, Lopez WD, DE Trinidad Young ME, Novak N. Immigration and Immigrant Policies, Health, and Health Equity in the United States. *Milbank Q.* 2023 Apr;101(S1):119-152. doi: [10.1111/1468-0009.12636](https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0009.12636). PMID: [37096601](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/37096601/); PMCID: PMC10126972.

Oral History Association. (n.d.). Oral history: Defined.

<https://oralhistory.org/about/do-oral-history/>

Tracy, S. B. (2019, June 11). How oral history opens up the past. Science History Institute.

<https://www.sciencehistory.org/stories/magazine/how-oral-history-opens-up-the-past/>

Resources

AANHPI Stack

US Immigration and Exclusion Laws Relevant to AANHPI Issues
Revised on: Aug 18, 2026

Learning and analyzing U.S. immigration in an anti-immigrant and anti-DEI context

[Native land interactive map](#)

[US Department of Education letter “Dear Colleague.”](#)

[ACLU Trump on Immigration](#)

U.S. Racial Exclusion and Immigration Laws

[F&F Module: Asian Exclusion: Aliens Ineligible to Citizenship](#)

[NPS Anti-Asian laws and policies](#)

[National Archives Immigration from Asia and the Pacific, 1870s to 1950s](#)

[Stanford University Libraries Timeline of Systematic Racism Against AAPI](#)

[MPI Major US Immigration Laws, 1790-present](#)

Immigrant Experiences Case Studies

[F&F Module: The Tape Family and Chinese American Civil Rights](#)

[F&F Module: Incarceration of Japanese Americans During WWI](#)

[F&F Module: Vietnamese American Experiences](#)

Additional Modules to Consider:

[F&F Module: Thai Americans](#)

[F&F Module: Where We Live: Asian American and Pacific Islander Communities](#)

[F&F Module: Cambodian Americans](#)

[F&F Module: Pakistani Americans](#)

Oral History

[F&F Module: Preserving Community Stories: The Art and Practice of Oral History](#)

[UC Irvine Oral History Toolkit](#)

[UCLA Library Center for Oral History Research](#)

[UCLA Family History Sample Outline and Questions](#)

[Facing History Teaching Strategy: Connecting the Past to the Present Using Oral History](#)

[University of Maryland DRUM Archive of Immigrant Voices](#)

[CSPAN Series Oral Histories](#)

[CSPAN Classroom Oral Histories- A How-To](#)

[Tenement Museum Teaching with Oral History: Lower Elementary](#)

[Smithsonian Lesson 4: Using and Creating Oral Histories](#)

[Getting Started With Google Vids](#)

Submission Guidelines & Evaluation Criteria

To earn this microcredential, you must receive a passing score in Parts 1 and 3 and be proficient in all components in Part 2.

Part 1. Overview Questions (Provides Context)

500-750 words

Please don't include any information that could identify you to reviewers.

Please answer all of the following questions:

1. What's your understanding of how immigration laws impacted your family's immigration to the United States? What biases might you have, or have been raised with, about immigration? What motivated you to choose this microcredential?
2. Consider the students that you work with. Do you work with students whose families have immigrated to this country? How do current laws affect the stories of their family immigration?
3. Describe the school community. What are the school demographics? Do you work in an urban, suburban, or rural community? What are the community sentiments about immigrants and immigration?
4. What skills, knowledge, and experiences do your students already possess about this topic? What skills, knowledge, and experiences do you want to support students in growing throughout the unit of study?

Passing:

The educator answers all four questions, providing specific examples, a clear understanding of their own biases about immigration, students' and the school

community's positionality, and how the educator could enhance student learning about the topic.

To earn this microcredential, please submit the following **three artifacts** as evidence of your learning. See the Rubric for the passing requirements.

Please don't include any information that will identify you or your students to reviewers.

Artifact 1: Your Oral History Presentation

Create and share an oral history and/or family tree presentation. If your family's immigration history is unknown, inaccessible, or doesn't involve immigration, you may conduct an oral history with a community member, neighbor, or colleague. Please select an individual who can share their family's immigration story.

Use an interview to understand the context of the family migration story. Consider the following:

- For how many generations has the family been in the United States?
- Who migrated to the U.S.? When? From where?
- What circumstances influenced their decision to leave their homeland and come to the United States?

Conduct one or more interviews to learn the history of the family.

- Decide who you will interview to deepen your understanding of this migration story? You can interview more than one person.
- Prepare 8-12 questions to ask.
- Record and/or transcribe key stories and perspectives.

Research the historical context of this immigration story

- What immigration laws were in effect during this time period?
- How did these laws or policies include, exclude, support, or restrict immigrants?
- Describe any political, economic, military, cultural, or social connections between the United States and your ancestral homeland that may have influenced migration, such as wars, labor recruitment, refugee movement, or educational opportunities.

Create a presentation to share this immigration story. Include the questions prepared for the interview. Using the information gained through the oral history project and historical research, explain how this family came to be in the United States. **Don't share personal information that would be identifiable to reviewers.** To maintain anonymity, consider using false names or initials. If it's a family member, you could refer to them as "My grandmother" or "My aunt."

Your presentation should include:

- The number of generations between immigration and yourself, or the subject of the oral history.
- The time frame of immigration.
- An analysis of how immigration laws, policies, or social attitudes at the time may have influenced the immigration experience, opportunities, or challenges. Consider whose interests were served by the laws and whose families were separated or limited by them.
- An explanation of the relationship between the ancestral homeland and the United States during this period.
- A narrative summary of the immigration experience.
- A reflection on how learning about a family's immigration story influenced your understanding of immigration and whether the experience challenged, deepened, or affirmed your perspectives about immigration and immigrant experiences.

Artifact 2: Conduct an Oral History Project with your Students

Have students complete an oral history project and/or a family tree that traces their family's migration story. If a student's family migration history is unknown, inaccessible, or doesn't involve immigration, students may interview a community member, neighbor, or family friend.

Support students in researching the historical context of the migration story, including immigration laws, policies, or historical events that may have influenced the migration experience. Teachers will:

- Help students decide who they will interview.
- Collaboratively develop Interview questions; consider providing questions students can choose from.
- Plan for interview practice in class through modeling, student-student practice, written questions to send home, or similar support.
- Plan how students will capture the interview, such as recorded on a cellphone, school-issued laptop, Google Vids, and teach students to use technology if needed.
- Teach historical research information

Students will conduct interviews and then turn in information. Based on the student level, they may turn in one or more of the following:

- Transcription or notes from their interview
- A recording of the interview
- Shared oral histories or reflections with each other
- A timeline of events
- A narrative of the oral history
- An annotated family tree
- Or presentation of findings

After completing the interview and project, students should reflect on the experience. Teachers should collect these reflections in an age-appropriate manner. Consider the following reflection questions:

- What did you learn about your family history?
- What connections can you make with what you're learning in class regarding immigration laws and policies?
- Did you enjoy doing an oral history? Why or why not?
- What challenges did you have doing an oral history?
- If you interviewed more than one person, were their perspectives different?

Summarize the oral history activity for two of your students. **Without sharing personal identifying information**, reflect on and share findings from the activity. To maintain anonymity, use false names, initials, or refer to the subjects as "aunt" or "grandmother." Share the following information to reflect on the classroom oral history project:

- The age or grade of students completing this project
- Three to five questions that the students asked their interviewees
- How the assignments were turned in

Summarize the student reflections on the activity including:

- What they learned about their family history
- Connections they made with immigration law and policy
- Whether there were differences in perspectives within families or between students
- What challenges your students face in doing this project

Artifact 3: AANHPI Comparison

150-300 words

Select one oral history on the [Foundations and Futures](#) website. Oral histories can be found by searching "oral history" in the "Search Multimedia" link found in the table of contents. Listen to the oral history and compare the person speaking to your personal oral history (**Artifact 1**). Write a comparison of the two oral histories. Answer the following questions:

- How did their story demonstrate resilience, challenges, and sacrifices for immigration? Was their story similar to your story?
- How did laws and policies affect their story? How does that compare to your story?
- In what ways were the two stories alike?
- How does hearing these stories reinforce the importance of examining immigration through both historical research and personal narratives?
- What are the present-day inequities in immigration laws and enforcement compared to the past inequities?
- Are there ways these inequities can be addressed today?

Part 2. Rubric

	Proficient	Basic	Developing
Artifact 1: Educator Oral History Presentation	Presentation includes: -Accurate explanation of historical conditions of both locations during the migration period -8-10 thoughtful questions asked of the interviewee -Explanation of the family's immigration story, including when, where, and why -Explanation of how laws and policies affected the immigration experience -A reflection that demonstrates thoughtful consideration of personal perspectives -Protection of identifying information while representing interviewees respectfully	Presentation includes: -Some information about both locations, but may be partially incorrect -8-10 questions for the interviewee -Explanation of the when, where, and why of the family immigration -Incomplete explanation of how laws and policies affected the immigration experience -A reflection that partially demonstrates consideration of personal perspectives -Protection of identifying information while representing interviewees respectfully	Presentation includes: - Little information about both locations -Fewer than eight questions for the interviewee -Explanation of the when and where of the family immigration, but the why is unclear -No clear explanation of how laws and policies affected the immigration experience -No reflection -Failure to protect identifying information and represent interviewees respectfully
Artifact 2: Student Oral History Reflection	The educator completes a reflection on the student oral history project. It's well written, thoughtful and includes:	The educator completes a reflection on the student oral history project. It includes:	The educator partially completes a reflection on the student oral history project. It doesn't include all three of the following:

AANHPI Stack

	-The age/grade of the students completing this project -Three to five questions that the students asked their interviewees -How the assignments were turned in (format assigned) A summary of the student reflections is included and describes: -What the students learned about their family history -Connections they made with immigration law and policy -Whether there were differences in perspectives within families or between students -What challenges students faced	-The age/grade of the students completing this project -Three to five questions that the students asked their interviewees -The format used to turn in the assignment, but the summary includes fewer than three of the following: -What the students learned about their family history -Connections to immigration law and policy -Whether there were differences in perspectives within families or between students -What challenges students faced	-The age/grade of the students completing this project -Three to five questions that the students asked their interviewees -How the assignment was turned in A summary of the student reflections is included, but it includes fewer than three of the following: -What the students learned about their family history -Connections to immigration law and policy -Whether there were differences in perspectives within families or between students -What challenges students faced
Artifact 3: Oral History Comparison	Comparison is well written and clearly demonstrates an understanding of how immigration and exclusion laws and policies have impacted immigrants. -The applicant demonstrates awareness of resilience,	Comparison is well written but doesn't fully explain how immigration and exclusion laws and policies have impacted immigrants. -The applicant implies awareness of resilience, challenge, and sacrifice in both stories	Comparison is not well written or is simply a list of information and doesn't fully explain how immigration and exclusion laws and policies have impacted immigrants. -The applicant doesn't explain an awareness of resilience,

	challenge, and sacrifice in both stories -There's a clear understanding of how laws and policies were involved in both stories -Similarities are identified between the two stories -Personal narratives are shown to add to understanding of immigration history -Past and present inequities in immigration laws are clearly compared	-There's a somewhat clear understanding of how laws and policies were involved in both stories -Similarities identified between the two stories -Connection between personal narratives and immigration history is less clear -Comparison of past and present inequities in immigration laws is implied	challenge, or sacrifice in both stories -There's no clear understanding of how laws and policies were involved in both stories -Similarities implied rather than explicitly shown -Personal narratives aren't clearly connected to immigration history -Comparison of past and present inequities in immigration laws is incomplete
--	---	--	---

Part 3 Reflection

250-500 words

For tips on writing a strong reflection, review the following resource:

[How Do I Write a Good Personal Reflection?](#)

Please don't include any information that will identify you to reviewers.

Answer all of the following questions:

1. What did you learn about the history of immigration and racial exclusion in the U.S.? What patterns did you notice? What connections can you make with today?
2. What did you learn about yourself and your family's migration story? How did this shift your own place and perspective in the United States? How did creating an oral history project impact your perceptions of your students and their families?
3. Identify the skills, knowledge, and experiences you want to help students develop. Describe one way you will help students connect personal narratives to the systems and decisions that shape opportunity. To what extent did you achieve that through this microcredential process? How can you improve this for next time? Explain.

Passing:

The educator answers all three questions in detail, providing clear, specific examples that demonstrate new learning about U.S. immigration history and personal family history. The educator also shares detailed reflections on their success with students during oral history and on how they plan to improve their future practice.