

[Chinese Exclusion Resolution.]

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Resolution acknowledging the regrettable role that San Francisco has played in advancing the policies of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the first federal law to discriminate against a specific group solely on the basis of race or nationality, and celebrating the significant contributions of the Chinese American community.

WHEREAS, The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 passed by Congress and signed by President Chester A. Arthur severely curtailed immigration from China and denied naturalization and citizenship to Chinese immigrants; and,

WHEREAS, This exclusion act caused untold suffering and hardship, separating families, creating a society of single men, and institutionalizing hostility, prejudice against and isolation of Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans; and,

WHEREAS, The City and County of San Francisco was the site of virulent anti-Chinese agitation and was a major force in organizing anti-Chinese elements by hosting meetings, demonstrations, and state-wide conventions; and,

WHEREAS, The City’s public officials not only encouraged and sanctioned anti-Chinese violence, legislation, and other racially discriminatory activities, but they initiated a concerted, national movement that led to the Chinese Exclusion Act; and,

WHEREAS, In 1876 San Francisco Mayor Andrew Jackson Bryant called upon the Board of Supervisors to appoint a commission on the “Chinese Problem,” which produced an official appeal to Congress and the President of the United States to restrict Chinese immigration; and,

WHEREAS, The federal government responded by appointing an investigative Committee of the Joint House of Congress which convened at the Palace Hotel in October 19,

1 1876, and heard testimony from Californians supporting and opposing Chinese immigration;
2 and,

3 WHEREAS, In 1877, the Board of Supervisors passed a series of anti-Chinese
4 ordinances; among them were the Lodging house law, the Queue ordinance, and the Laundry
5 ordinance; and,

6 WHEREAS, On July 23, 1877, several thousand persons assembled in the sand lots
7 south of City Hall to demonstrate against unfair labor practices and the Chinese of
8 San Francisco, many of whom blamed Chinese Americans and Chinese immigrants for all of
9 California's economic troubles, and which led to several days of anti-Chinese rioting and
10 attacks on Chinese-owned businesses; and,

11 WHEREAS, The Exclusion Act became the law of the United States on May 6, 1882;
12 and,

13 WHEREAS, Through the legislative efforts of San Francisco Congressman Thomas J.
14 Geary, the Congress in 1892 passed the Geary Act which extended the exclusion of the
15 Chinese from the United States for another ten-year period and required all Chinese
16 immigrants to register and to carry photo-identification to prove their right to be in the United
17 States; and,

18 WHEREAS, On May 30, 1900, the Board of Supervisors passed an ordinance enabling
19 the Department of Public Health to close all businesses in San Francisco owned by Chinese
20 Americans and Chinese immigrants, and Chinatown was quarantined and barricaded,
21 trapping the residents inside; and,

22 WHEREAS, The Chinese Exclusion Convention of 1901 was hosted by the Board of
23 Supervisors, and it led to the indefinite extension of the Exclusion Law; and,

24 WHEREAS, The Exclusion Act remained in effect until 1943, when the law was
25 repealed because the U.S. and China became allies during World War II; and,

1 WHEREAS, Chinese Americans and Chinese immigrants resisted illegal and violent
2 acts with acts of self-defense and fought for equal rights through civil disobedience and legal
3 action in state and federal trial and appellate courts, including the Supreme Court of the
4 United States; and,

5 WHEREAS, Chinese Americans struggled for basic civil rights and set numerous legal
6 precedents that upheld the constitutional rights of all Americans, such as the Equal Protection
7 Clause of the U.S. Constitution in the case of *Yick Wo v. Hopkins* and the right of citizenship
8 by birth in the case of *United States v. Wong Kim Ark*; and,

9 WHEREAS, The Chinese Americans and Chinese immigrants defended their civil and
10 human rights with tenacity, sacrifice, courage, and the help of courageous fellow Americans,
11 legal counsel, and supporters of this noble cause; and,

12 WHEREAS, Americans are at their best when they learn from past wrongs, find
13 inspiration and pride in the historic struggles to perfect the promise of America, and
14 understand that the lessons to be learned from the Chinese American experience are part of
15 the necessary healing process from the wounds to our society inflicted by the unjust legacy of
16 the Chinese Exclusion Act; and,

17 WHEREAS, Federal immigration policies at the center of the present national debate
18 trace their historic roots to the 19th century movement in San Francisco to exclude Chinese
19 immigrants; and,

20 WHEREAS, The role that San Francisco played in the persecution and exclusion of
21 Chinese Americans, a community that today comprises nearly 20 percent of our City's
22 population, has been long ignored and its significance neglected in American history; and,

23 WHEREAS, The City and County of San Francisco must take action to educate all of
24 its residents and the entire Bay Area community that the lessons of the past should be applied
25 to the national debate regarding current immigration law and policies; now, therefore, be it

1 RESOLVED, That the City and County of San Francisco recognizes the historic role
2 that this City's government played in the anti-Chinese movement in California and throughout
3 the United States, the federal Chinese Exclusion Acts, and related discriminatory legislation;
4 and, be it

5 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the City and County of San Francisco expresses the
6 profound regret of its government for the role that certain of its public officials and institutions
7 played in the terrible and often horrific acts perpetrated against the City's Chinese residents
8 before, during, and after the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Acts; and, be it

9 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the City and County of San Francisco shall encourage
10 opportunities to celebrate the historic contributions of Chinese Americans in the building of our
11 City, our State, and our Nation; educate the public of the era of Chinese Exclusion and its
12 lessons for today; and assure that the civil and human rights of all San Franciscans will never
13 again be infringed upon based on race or national origin.

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