

Text:

One hundred years ago today, the Angel Island Immigration Station in San Francisco Bay opened its doors. From 1910 to 1940, the “Ellis Island of the West” was the gateway into America for more than half a million immigrants from 80 countries, all seeking the opportunity, freedom and fortune of the American dream. Among them was a Chinese immigrant who carved the following poem into the bar-
5 rack walls while detained on Angel Island:

I clasped my hands in parting with my brothers and classmates. Because of the mouth, I hastened to cross the American ocean. How was I to know that the western barbarians had lost their hearts and reasons? With a hundred kinds of oppressive laws, they mistreat us Chinese.

We do not know who he was, when he arrived, how long he remained at the immigration station or
10 whether he was admitted into the United States or sent back to China. What we do know is that his poem echoed the frustration, anger and despair that many other Chinese detainees on Angel Island experienced as they suffered through humiliating medical exams, days of intense interrogation and weeks and sometimes months of confinement.

Built to enforce laws that specifically excluded Chinese and other Asian immigrants from the country,
15 the Angel Island Immigration Station turned away countless newcomers and deported thousands of U.S. residents who were considered risks to the nation or had entered the country with fraudulent papers. For those who were denied entry because of race and class-biased exclusion laws, Angel Island showed America at its worst as a gate-keeping nation. But that wasn't the only Angel Island story. The immigration station was also the first stop for thousands of Chinese, Japanese, South Asians and Filipinos
20 who were admitted into the country and made homes here, working as farmhands, small-business owners and laborers. Koreans, Russians and Mexicans passed through the station and found refuge from political persecution and revolutionary chaos in their homelands. [...]

Now, on its centennial, it offers a timely lesson as America once again turns its attention to the debate on immigration reform. Last month, Rep. Luis V. Gutierrez [...]introduced a new comprehensive im-
25 migration reform bill in the House. President Obama has pledged to take up the issue early this year. The issues are complex and the emotions are high. The country, entrenched in a global recession and suffering unemployment rates that are the highest they have been in decades, remains divided over possible solutions to our immigration problem.

Many believe that immigration reform is unlikely in this context. We hope that they are wrong. In the
30 21st century, record numbers of immigrants have come to the country. There are now more than 38 million foreign-born residents in the United States, making up 12.6 % of the American population. We need a functioning immigration system to enhance national security; to expedite the legal flow of people and goods on which our global economy depends; to support America's values as a com-
35 passionate nation of immigrants and refugees. We need, in essence, an immigration policy that treats every individual with dignity and respect.

Instead, we repeat the darkest side of Angel Island's history. According to the Department of Home-
land Security, more than 32,000 people are held in detention on any given day on immigration-related charges. Many of them are longtime U.S. residents with no ties to terrorist activities. Yet they are held for months in substandard conditions, often with insufficient food, clothing and medical care, and little
40 access to legal counsel; 107 people have died in detention since October 2003. Growing anti-immigrant sentiment is breeding discrimination. Immigration laws are skewed to favor those with certain skills and backgrounds, while deportees are disproportionately Latino and poor. Our broken im-
migration system encourages undocumented immigration, and too many immigrant families are living in the shadows of American society.

45 America's contradictory relationship to immigration is written on the walls of Angel Island. We welcome

the “huddled masses yearning to be free,” but at the same time, we unfairly detain and deport immigrants based on flawed immigration policies. On this landmark date in our immigration history, we should remember Angel Island’s multiracial history of inclusion and exclusion and recognize that there is no more time to waste. It’s time to fix immigration and fulfill America’s promise as a nation of immigrants. (718 words)

© Erika Lee and Judy Yung, authors of *Angel Island: Immigrant Gateway to America *(Oxford University Press, 2010)

Wort- und Sachangaben:

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|----------|------------|---|
| line 24: | Rep. | a member of the House of Representatives |
| line 26: | entrenched | here: caught, trapped |
| line 41: | skewed | changed or influenced with the result that it is not fair |

I. Comprehension (about 400 words) (15VP)

1. Outline the symbolic meaning of the Angel Island Immigration Station.
2. Summarize the authors’ position on immigration reform.
3. Describe the strategies the authors employ to convince the reader of their position.