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## “纸儿子”和华裔移民历史回顾(1)

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美国总统奥巴马一月二十七日在美国参众两院联席会议上发表国情咨文。



专题报道 &gt;&gt;

从19世纪中叶到20世纪初,受《排华法案》的影响,华人移民美国倍受歧视。因此,他们利用加州档案被大火烧毁的机会,伪造身份证,以美籍华人儿女的身份进入美国,这些人被称为“纸儿子”。下面我们就来介绍这段鲜为人知的历史。

现年56岁的Steve Yee是加州沙加缅度二埠博物馆副馆长。他说,他父亲Joe Yee在世时常常带他们兄妹几个到邓氏家族协会“邓高密公所”参加各种活动。“邓高密公所”的人把父亲看作是自己人,用广东话和他打招呼。Steve和姐姐Lillie曾问父亲,他们家姓余,为什么来邓氏家族协会呢?父亲从不作答。Steve表示,他们除了知道父亲二战时曾在美军服役,被授予铜制战斗勋章之外,对他的身世一无所知。

Steve说:“这些问题常常萦绕在我们心中。其他人都会谈论自己的祖籍和家人,说他们的祖父母或曾祖父母是谁。但是,我们什么都不知道,因为父亲从来没给我们讲过。所以,我们心里总是有一个问号:爸爸,你是谁?我们是谁?我们常常向他问东问西,他的回答总是令人莫名其妙。1950年代,作为少数族裔,我们虽然生活在美国,却没有作为美国人的感觉,我们被当作另类看待。”

Steve的姐姐Lillie退休后请弟弟帮忙一起查找父亲的身份。Lillie表示,他们两家的孩子已经步入成年,但是到现在也不知道家族史:“现在,学校在给孩子们布置作业时,常常会让他们写出或讲述自己的家族史。我的孩子现在25岁了。15年前,在他还是5年级的时候,他做了一个家谱图,除了我的直系家庭之外,他任何亲人都不知道,因为我们没有什么可以向他提供的。因此,他的家谱图上画满了问号。我感到,为了我的孩子,我愿意找到这些问题的答案。”

于是,Steve和姐姐Lillie来到“邓高密公所”查询。他们发现,父亲1940年代以Joe Yee的假名字,也就是所谓“纸儿子”的身份进入美国。他真正的姓氏是邓,邓氏家族的原籍是广东开平。Steve说,他们发现,当局为确定他父亲的身份,一度把他送到旧金山天使岛移民拘留站关押审问。他的回答使当局相信,他的身份是真的。

Steve说:“我父亲后来搬到沙加缅度,开了一家超市,也是那里最初的几家超市之一,而且生意非常成功。我们住在中上层社区,从某种意义上讲,实现了很多人羡慕的美国梦,但是,我父亲对他的身份始终闭口不谈。他最大的恐惧是,他可以实现美国梦,所有的孩子都出生在美国,如果当局发现他是非法移民,他和母亲就会被遣返回国。”

天使岛移民拘留站基金会的主任黄卫中(Eddie Wong)认为,所谓“纸儿子”实际上是1882年美国国会通过的《排华法案》的产物。

黄卫中说:“《排华法案》从1882年一直实施到1943年。这项法律规定,除非申请者是商人、外交官、学生或美国公民的儿子或女儿,否则不能移民美国。因此,很多人就佯称自己是美籍华人的儿子和女儿申请移民美国。这个情况是由一起重大事件促发的。1906年,加州发生大地震,导致旧金山大火,市议会会被烧毁,所有档案荡然无存。”

这一事件使受到《排华法案》长期歧视的华人看到了移民美国的一线希望。他们趁机找到当局登记说自己在在中国有多少儿女,其中有真有假,无从得知。之后,他们把伪造的身份证卖给有需要的人。持有这些伪造身份证进入美国的人就被称为“纸儿子”。美国当局一度把这些“纸儿子”送到天使岛移民拘留站进行关押审问,通过审问的就进入美国,没有通过的就被遣返回国。

黄卫中表示,因为身份问题被送到天使岛移民拘留站关押审问的不仅有华裔,还有其它少数族裔。他说,到1925年,美国法律排斥所有亚裔人:“今天,天使岛在某种程度上成为一个国家纪念碑,它记载了美国移民持久坚韧的性格。他们不但在自己的祖国忍受了极度的贫困,而且经历了千辛万苦才被允许进入美国。他们的后代子孙中,有的开创了自己的生意,有的成为各种专业人士,他们都对美国社会做出了杰出贡献。”

为了解决历史遗留问题,美国政府后来设立了一个认罪赦免计划,希望这些“纸儿子”出面澄清自己的真实身份。但是,很多人出于恐惧,到死也没有响应政府的号召。下次节目,我们将继续为各位介绍《排华法案》的始末以及分析回顾“纸儿子”历史的现实意义。

## Historical Review: "Paper Son" and the descendants of Chinese immigrants (1)

From the mid-19th century to early 20th century, the "Chinese Exclusion Act," had a huge impact on U.S. discrimination against Chinese immigrants. A fire destroying immigration files in California presented an opportunity to create false identity cards allowing many Chinese to enter the United States as Chinese-American children; these people are known as "paper sons." Here we introduce to you this little-known history.

56-year-old Steve Yee of the Sacramento, California Yee Fow Center, recalled his father, Joe Yee would often take them to the Tang family association called the "Ong Ko Met" to participate in various events. The Ong Ko Met would welcome his father as brothers and greeted him in Cantonese. Steve and his sister Lillie would often ask his father, if we are Yees why are going to the Tang clan association? His father never answered. Steve said that they knew very little of their father apart from him serving in the U.S. Army during World War II and being awarded the Bronze Battle Star. Joe Yee's life and his experiences remained a topic unshared.

Steve said: "Knowing of our father's true identity often lingered in our hearts. Other people would talk about their own ancestral home and family. They had stories of their grandparents or great-grandparents. However, we do not know anything because my father never talked to us about those things. So, in our hearts remains a question: Dad, who are you? Who are we? We would often ask him but his answers were always vague. In the 1950s, as ethnic minorities, although we were born in the United States, did not feel as Americans, society viewed us as foreigners."

When Steve's sister Lillie retired she invited him to help find his father's identity. Lillie said that her family has two adult children. But until now do not know her side of the family's history: "Now, schools give the kids assignments, they often make them write or tell their family history. My son who is 25 was instructed to make a family genealogy diagram 15 years ago when he was in the 5th grade. When he made the family diagram, in addition to my immediate family, he had no relatives beside my brothers and sisters on my side of the family because we could not provide him with that information. Therefore his family tree diagram shows are full of question marks. I feel for my child, I would like to find the answers to these questions."

So, Steve and his sister Lillie remembered being taken to the Ong Ko Met by their father as children decades ago and went to the Ong Ko Met Family Association in search of their fathers true identity. They found that many fathers that came to the US in the 1940s came with false identities. They were called "paper sons" His father's real surname must have been Ong. The Ong family origin was in Guangdong Kaiping. Steve said, they found that when his father arrived in the United States he was detained in San Francisco at the Angel Island Immigration Station, in custody for questioning and answering to the authorities in order to determine whether his identity was true.

Steve said: "My father later moved to Sacramento and was part owner of a supermarket. As grocery stores began to expand to supermarkets, his was one of the first of several supermarkets in Sacramento. The business was unique as a Chinese business because it reached out to the Anglo community and enjoyed mainstream success. We lived in a prosperous neighborhood and in a sense, achieved the American dream. But my father never spoke about his past as a child in China nor coming to the United States as a paper son. His greatest fear was after having achieved the American dream and all the children being native born Americans, if the authorities ever discovered that he was illegal immigrant, he and their mother will be sent back to China."

Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation's Director, Eddie Wong said that the so-called "paper son" occurred as a result of U.S. Congress passing the "Chinese Exclusion Act" in 1882.

Eddie Wong said: "When the Exclusion Act was implemented from 1882 to 1943, the law stated that unless the applicant is a merchant, diplomat, student or the son or daughter of a U.S. citizen, Chinese people was not allowed to immigrate to the U.S. Therefore, a lot of Chinese people pretended that they were Chinese-American born sons and daughters in order to immigrate to the U.S. This was precipitated by a major earthquake in California in 1906 leading to a San Francisco fire in which the city records were burned and all the files had been destroyed."

With this incident, the Chinese saw a glimmer of hope to overcome the Chinese Exclusion Act, with its the long-term discrimination against the Chinese, and immigrate to America. Some Chinese already in America took the opportunity to falsely say that they had number of children in China and the authorities had no way of knowing if this was true or not. Later, those fake identity cards were sold or given to others. Those entering the United States with forged or false identity cards were known as "paper sons." The United States authorities sensed this was happening and upon entering the west coast of California, the Chinese were sent to the Angel Island Immigration Station in custody for questioning. Through the interrogation, those that were deemed not to be who they claimed were repatriated.

Eddie Wong said that immigrants sent to Angel Island Immigration Station in custody for questioning were not only by ethnic Chinese, there are other ethnic minorities. He said that in 1925, U.S. law included the exclusion of all Asians: "Today, Angel Island, to some extent as a national monument, which records the tough U.S. immigration policy and lasting character of immigrants. They not only endured extreme poverty in their own country and have experienced untold hardships before being allowed to enter the United States. Their descendants, some opened their own business, while others have become professional people, they all made an outstanding contribution to American society."

In order to reconcile the scars left by the exclusion policy, the U.S. government subsequently set up a plea amnesty program hoping these "paper sons" would come forward to clarify their true identity. However, out of fear many "paper sons" did not respond to the government's call, taking their true identity to their graves. The next program, we will continue to introduce the "Chinese Exclusion Act," recall the circumstances leading to and analysis of the "paper son" the history of practical significance.