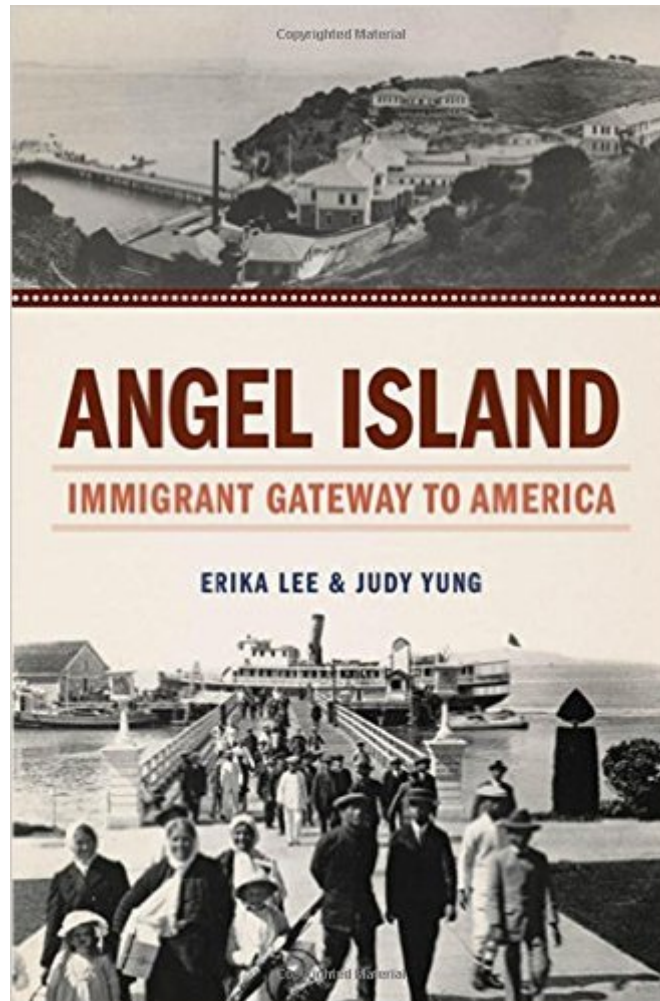


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# Angel Island: Immigrant Gateway To America



## Synopsis

From 1910 to 1940, the Angel Island immigration station in San Francisco served as the processing and detention center for over one million people from around the world. The majority of newcomers came from China and Japan, but there were also immigrants from India, the Philippines, Korea, Russia, Mexico, and over seventy other countries. The full history of these immigrants and their experiences on Angel Island is told for the first time in this landmark book, published to commemorate the immigration station's 100th anniversary. Based on extensive new research and oral histories, *Angel Island: Immigrant Gateway to America* examines the great diversity of immigration through Angel Island: Chinese "paper sons," Japanese picture brides, Korean refugee students, South Asian political activists, Russian and Jewish refugees, Mexican families, Filipino workers, and many others. Together, their stories offer a more complete and complicated history of immigration to America than we have ever known. Like its counterpart on Ellis Island, the immigration station on Angel Island was one of the country's main ports of entry for immigrants in the early twentieth century. But while Ellis Island was mainly a processing center for European immigrants, Angel Island was designed to detain and exclude immigrants from Asia. The immigrant experience on Angel Island—more than any other site—reveals how U.S. immigration policies and their hierarchical treatment of immigrants according to race, ethnicity, class, nationality, and gender played out in daily practices and decisions at the nation's borders with real consequences on immigrant lives and on the country itself. *Angel Island: Immigrant Gateway to America* is officially sponsored by the Angel Island Immigration Station.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Ellis Island has become a national symbol of America's acceptance of immigrants to our shores from all over the world. It, with the neighboring Statue of Liberty, has become an icon of some of the most benevolent and welcoming characteristics of the persona of the United States. Although Ellis Island was the largest point of entry of immigrants to this country, it was only one of 19 immigration stations. From 1910 to 1940 over half a million immigrants disembarked on Angel Island in San Francisco harbor, often referred to as the "Ellis Island of the west." But where Ellis Island was largely set up as an efficient mechanism to accept immigrants into the United States, Angel Island primarily functioned as a much less efficient mechanism to keep immigrants out. Ellis Island was primarily a processing center for European immigrants that restricted but did not exclude potential citizens, while Angel Island was the main port of entry for Asians that was intent on legally permissible exclusion. The contradictory relationship of America with its immigrants has a long history that has yet to be resolved. What the authors make abundantly clear is that the United States has long treated immigrants very differently based on race, nationality, gender and class. From colonial times through the mid-nineteenth century immigration was encouraged to help settle this newly colonized land. There were dirty and dangerous jobs to build a transportation infrastructure and mine badly needed natural resources that many whites were reluctant to attempt. But when the gold played out, the initial stages of the transcontinental railroad were achieved, and the economy faltered - a racial backlash began to occur.

In response to the reviews that state that the subject matter in *Angel Island* is less expansive than expected and is too data-driven, I personally found this book to be meticulously researched and accessible to academics and non-academics alike. Based on quantitative and qualitative data, Lee and Yung incorporate personal histories they have discovered from oral interviews past and present--supplemented by data found in the national archives--to weave (and make interesting) a true story that frankly chronicles how America, from the top down, strove to keep certain races out through racism and legislation. About the authors: Judy Yung, an early pioneer in the field of Asian American Studies (I strongly recommend reading her social history text, *Unbound Feet*, about Chinese American women in San Francisco), has a gift for storytelling and also for conducting oral histories. Furthermore, she co-authored *Island* with Genny Lim and Him Mark Lai, the seminal text on Angel Island poetry. I have not read Lee's book, *At America's Gates*, but the choice of Lee and Yung as the authors of *Angel Island* reflects their academic work. Both Yung and Lee are direct descendants of Chinese immigrants who entered into the US through Angel Island, so there is an

emotional and generational tie between the authors and the text. Additionally, Yung is 2nd generation Chinese American and Lee, 3rd, allowing for a more multifaceted, generational, and ethnic perspective in reading Angel Island. Onto a review of the book: Text has been endorsed by the Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation, with proceeds benefiting the foundation, itself.

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