

**IMMIGRATION AND URBANIZATION****Viewpoints**

As more and more Chinese arrived in the West in the mid-19th century, some white Americans began to view them with suspicion and hostility. Anti-Chinese clubs were formed, and violence against Chinese immigrants flared. By the late 1800s, prominent citizens in California pressured Congress to pass a law preventing any more Chinese from entering the United States. A law was passed in 1879, but President Hayes vetoed it because it violated rights guaranteed to the Chinese in an 1868 treaty. The treaty was then revised to answer these objections. Believing itself freed from the constraints of the treaty, Congress passed the first exclusion act in 1882. Great controversy raged over this and subsequent exclusion acts passed in 1892 and 1902.

**Directions:** Read the following viewpoints on the Chinese Exclusion Act. Then answer the questions that follow on a separate sheet of paper.

**The Chinese Exclusion Act**

"The law is barbarous [cruel], contrary to the spirit and genius of American institutions, and was passed in violation of solemn treaty stipulations. . . . It is to the interest of this country to maintain friendly relations with China. We want the trade of nearly one-fourth of the human race. . . . [W]e are losing the trade of China by pandering to the prejudices of the ignorant and cruel. . . . Our country is an asylum [refuge] for the oppressed of all nations—of all races. . . . Let us retrace our steps, repeal the law and accomplish what we justly desire by civilized means. Let us treat China as we would England; and, above all, let us respect the rights of men."

—Orator and lawyer Col. R.G. Ingersoll, *The North American Review*, July 1893

"The Chinese law . . . was justified by the circumstances prevailing in this country; it was in accordance with the treaties made between this Government and China; it imposed no undue or unjust hardship upon the Chinese people here, and was a proper and just exercise of power on the part of this country. . . . American interests in the far West, the maintenance of American civilization, and the just protection of American labor from Chinese competition, is of more consequence than the profits of the Chinese trade, or the maintenance of missionary stations in China."

—Representative Thomas Geary of California, *The North American Review*, July 1893

**Questions to Think About**

1. Is Colonel Ingersoll in support of or against the Chinese Exclusion Act? What is Representative Geary's position?
2. **Distinguish Relevant Information** What argument does Colonel Ingersoll offer to support his position that the United States should maintain a friendly relationship with China?
3. **Distinguish Verifiable Information** Colonel Ingersoll and Representative Geary have opposing views on many aspects of the Chinese Exclusion Act. One fact on which they disagree can be easily verified to find out which speaker is more accurate. Which fact would this be, and how might you verify the truth?