

U.S. SENATE MINORITY REPORT

The people arguing for Chinese exclusion found support among people who were interested in eliminating the new voting rights of African Americans. In this selection from the minority report of the *U.S. Senate Select Committee to Inquire into the Mississippi Election of 1875*, the two dissenting senators (one from Delaware and one from Indiana), after first reviewing some of the testimony heard by the committee investigating voting irregularities in the Mississippi election, summarize their opinion of the situation in Mississippi. (The other three senators on the committee were from Massachusetts, Wisconsin, and Minnesota.)

”A condition of affairs which would be incredible and utterly intolerable in any of the Northern States exists in many of the black counties of Mississippi, where the property, intelligence, and character of the community is trodden to the earth, insulted and ignored by the most ignorant and sometimes vicious members of the community. Things are of a daily occurrence, and were proven almost daily before the committee, which, if attempted in the State of Massachusetts, Wisconsin, Minnesota, or indeed any of the Northern States, would be met by a popular uprising and speedy overthrow. In such a condition of affairs, the forbearance and self-subordination exhibited by the white population demands and should receive the strong sympathy and high respect of every just and well-regulated mind.

In a latter section of the report, they write about the questions of race in the United States.

The problem of race will continue to be of the deepest interest to the people of this nation...Suffice to say, that the relations of the African to the white races in the United States do not stand alone for consideration, but on our Pacific coast the dark shadow of an Asiatic horde hangs lowering over the white population, and has aroused their gravest apprehensions.

The African race is now admitted fully to the rights of American citizenship. Under the fifteenth amendment all power to discriminate as to the right to vote “on account of race” is inhibited to the States.

Thus, between the admission of the Mongolians to the privilege of suffrage, there now stands but the frail barrier of a single word of the naturalization laws* to be added or subtracted at the will of a bare minority in Congress, which can close or open to the teeming oriental populations unobstructed opportunity, by their mere numbers, to control our elections, and our Governments, State and Federal...”

*The 1790 Naturalization Law only allowed free “white” persons to become citizens. After the Civil War, the law was amended to allow immigrants of African birth and descent to be eligible for citizenship. All others were still excluded.

Source: *Mississippi in 1875: Report of the Select Committee to Inquire into the Mississippi Election of 1875* (Washington, D.C., 1876) vol. I, Minority Report p. cvi.

● QUESTIONS

1. In the first section, what does the report state has happened in Mississippi as a result of the participation of members of the “African race” in the election?
2. What does the report claim will happen if “Mongolians” are allowed to become citizens and vote?
3. How do you think the senators who wrote the report would vote on a law allowing Asians to become citizens?

The following is an illustration titled “War of the Races” from a Yellow Peril novel called *The Last Days of the Republic*. What is happening in this scene? Why would Southern white political leaders in 1880 be receptive to the predictions of this engraving?

