

## South Asian Diaspora

British Colonialism,  
“Dark Caucasians” and  
Multiethnic Identities

## Immigration of South Asians

- 6,800 from the Punjab before 1917
- British colonial network and Diaspora
- migration via other colonies, including U.S. colonies
  - 1834 abolition of slavery
  - “coolies”
  - Voluntary migration
- military service
- familiarity with western political system, e.g. litigation



## Regulation and Restriction

- Administrative regulation
  - tightening restrictions in Canada (1907)
  - remigration from Philippines banned (1913)
- Legislation
  - 1917 “Barred Asiatic Zone” and literacy
    - west of 110th and east of the 50th meridian (South and Southeast Asia)
    - lowest educational level of all racial and ethnic groups in 1940 census

## Anxieties of Empire

- Fear of Indian Nationalism
  - Ghadar Party (1911)
- WWI
  - “The world must be made safe for democracy. Its peace must be planted upon the tested foundations of political liberty. We have no selfish ends to serve. We shall fight for the things which we have always carried nearest our hearts, for democracy, for the right of those who submit to authority to have a voice in their own Governments, for the rights and liberties of small nations.” Woodrow Wilson, April 2, 1917
    - Wilson’s Fourteen Points -
    - National Self-Determination

## Limited self-determination Europe versus colonies



- New countries created from territory of the defeated powers of Germany and Russia
- Britain, France, and Italy divided up German colonies

## How to categorize South Asians?

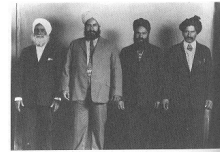
- “Hindoos”
  - 85-90% Sikhs
  - 10% Muslims
  - few actually Hindu
- Religious category becomes racialized/ethnic category
  - external and internal designation
  - Stockton Gurdwara (Sikh temple) - 1912

## Citizenship: Caucasian but not White

- *Ozawa case* (1922)
  - Japanese immigrants not eligible for naturalized citizenship, because they are not "white."
  - White synonymous with Caucasian
- *U.S. v. Bhagat Singh Thind* (1923)
  - "Caucasian" or "Aryan" does not mean "white"
  - understanding of "common man" versus scientific racial/linguistic categorization

## Implications of not being white

- alien ineligible for citizenship
- alien land laws
- anti-miscegenation laws



U.S. 1923 men before and after donning their turbans. Top, left to right: Karam Singh, Karam S. Sandhu, Charn S. Sandhu, Gade S. Sandhu. Bottom, left to right: Charn S. Sandhu, a visiting service, Karam S. Sandhu, Karam Singh. c. 1923. (Courtesy of Aron Singh Thind, Singapore.)

## Mexican-Punjabi families

- 2 "In-between" groups
- Mexican Americans
  - Eligible for American citizenship
  - "Hispanic" or Indigenous or Mestizo?
  - local variation in applying anti-miscegenation law
- Migration and Agriculture
- Marriage and sibling networks
  - chain migration/chain marriage
- Gender/cultural/religious separated networks
  - Compadrazgo (godparents)



Wedding Photo, 1917  
Alvarez-Singh family

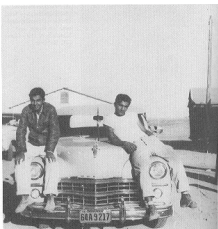
## identity construction

- Life cycle perspective for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> generations
- Language
- interactions with parents
- religion



Funeral, circa 1945

- Gender differentiation
- Class differences
- Self-construction/Invention of "Hindoeness"



18. Ramnand Singh and Rajnand Ganswal, Hidville, 1920. (Courtesy of Mary Gail Hidville.)



17. Mary Ganswal, in a carrot field near Hidville, c. 1926. (Courtesy of Mary Gail Hidville.)

## Impact of Historical Events

- 1946 Luce-Celler Bill
  - Context of WWII
  - Citizenship
  - 100 immigration quota
- "Real Indians" vs. Mexican-Punjabi Families
  - 1965 Immigration Act
- 1947 Partition of India
  - Pakistan (Muslim nation)
  - increased significance of religion
- Dangers of an Ethnically bounded approach to studying AA history/experience
  - Privileges particular conceptions of ethnicity
  - Privileges particular forms of family



1946

## *Making Ethnic Choices*

- *An understanding of the Mexican-Hindu experience confirmed that ethnicity is both persistent and flexible, that ethnic identities are continually constructed and reconstructed by individuals and society. As Comaroff puts it, ethnicity is something to be explained, rather than something that can be used to explain other phenomena.*
- *The marking of ethnic identities in relation to others, not the substance of ethnic identities, is primordial.*
  - Karen Leonard
- How is ethnicity a choice? To what degree is it a choice?