



*Blind in One Eye Only: Western and Eastern Knights of Labor View the Chinese Question**

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Historians have been quick to point out the ease with which the Knights of Labor absorbed Gilded Age prejudices regarding the Chinese. In praising the Order's embrace of universal brotherhood with regard to others, Alexander Saxton writes, "Only at accepting Chinese did the Knights generally draw the line."¹ Clark Halker notes, "Much as the Knights pressed the limits of the meaning of republicanism ... they could never entirely escape notions of racial inferiority ... [N]on-Western European immigrants remained second-class citizens even amongst the Knights. Chinese workers remained beyond the pale ..."² Bryan Palmer and Greg Kealey claim that anti-Chinese hysteria was so pervasive that it "ironically contributed toward working-class solidarity."³ Philip Foner bluntly wrote, "The chief blot on the K of L's record on the issue of labor solidarity was in the case of Chinese workers."⁴ Gerald Grob opined that the organization "never receded from its anti-Chinese attitude," while Catharine Collomp saw Chinese exclusion as "the only issue about which the Knights of Labor and the American Federation of Labor constantly lobbied the Federal government."⁵

Since 1986, most historians have been quick to adopt the formulation of Gwendolyn Mink who argues that "old labor" developed a "job conscious unionism ... suffused with ethnic and race consciousness." For most of the period from 1875 through 1920, she argues, new immigrant groups were the targets of racist and nativist hatreds on the part of more-entrenched working-class groups.⁶ Leaving aside Mink's backdoor redux

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¹Alexander Saxton, *The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1971), 40.

²Clark Halker, *For Democracy, Workers, and God: Labor Song-Poems and Labor Protest, 1865-95* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 130.

³Gregory Kealey and Bryan Palmer, *Dreaming of What Might Be: The Knights of Labor in Ontario, 1880-1900* (Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1987), 150-151.

⁴Philip S. Foner, *History of the Labor Movement in America, Volume II: From the Founding of the American Federation of Labor to the Emergence of American Imperialism* (New York: International, 1955), 58.

⁵Gerald Grob, *Workers and Utopia: A Study of Ideological Conflict in the American Labor Movement, 1856-1900* (New York: Quadrangle, 1961), 58; Catherine Collomp, "Unions, Civics, and National Identity: Organized Labor's Reaction to Immigration, 1881-1897," *Labor History* 29 (1988), 458.

⁶Gwendolyn Mink, *Old Labor and New Immigrants in American Political Development: Union, Party, and State, 1875-1920* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986).

of a Commons/Perlman job consciousness thesis long repudiated by social historians, I would argue that her view and others critical of Gilded Age labor's response to the Chinese is more neat than accurate. Applying a blanket anti-Chinese label to the Knights lacks nuance, and ignores context. The further east one traveled from the Rocky Mountains, the less anti-Chinese campaigns mattered to Knights as more than a mere rhetorical ploy. As a recent work by Andrew Gyory reveals, from the 1870s onwards eastern workers showed considerably less interest in the rabid anti-Chinese hysteria that so consumed laborers in the West.⁷

The Knights of Labor responded to Gilded Age popular anti-Chinese nativism in various ways. These serve as another reminder that Gilded Age ideology and organizations were far too elusive, complex, and elastic to be neatly labeled. Many a commentator has misinterpreted the Knights of Labor by assuming that its national leadership spoke for the rank and file. That was seldom the case. To grasp what members felt, one must usually look to the local level. There, how the KOL viewed Chinese workers was often a function of the composition of one's local assembly, political ideology, and regional identity.

The Knights and Denis Kearney

By 1877, California was awash in a sea of anti-Chinese hysteria. Indeed, tensions had been building for quite some time.

The first recorded incident of Caucasian/Chinese conflict dates to 1849 when Chinese miners were forbidden to toil in the Gold Rush region of Tuolumne County.⁸ As early as the mid-1850s, physical and rhetorical attacks against the Chinese were common. By the 1870s, the so-called Six Companies were rumored to import thousands of "coolie" laborers into the United States despite near-universal condemnation of the practice from everyone outside the business community.⁹

Eighteen seventy-seven was the year of Denis Kearney. In the midst of a San Francisco meeting of the Workingmen's Party of the United States devoted to the great railway strike, an unruly group insisted on linking labor unrest to the "Chinese question." Rebuffed by Party leaders, they quit the hall for three days of looting, assault, arson and mayhem in the city's burgeoning Chinatown district. Kearney assumed the demagogue's mantle, and rallied workers to the cry "The Chinese Must Go!" Kearney thumbed his nose at the Workingmen's Party USA, and formed the Workingmen's Party of California. As the year closed, he was undoubtedly one of the most powerful men in the state.¹⁰

Kearney brought his vitriol East in July, 1878. But, as Gyory has shown, although

⁷Andrew Gyory, *Closing the Gate: Race, Politics and the Chinese Exclusion Act* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

⁸Loren W. Fessler, ed., *Chinese in America: Stereotyped Past, Changing Present* (New York: Vantage, 1983).

⁹Gilded Age laborers often indiscriminately used the term "coolie" in their remarks. Technically, the coolie system was long past by the time of the anti-Chinese agitations in which most Knights of Labor participated and they ought to have properly used the term "contract laborer." In truth, most Knights saw any form of non-free labor as debased and used both terms interchangeably and contemptuously.

¹⁰For more details see Philip Foner, *History of the Labor Movement in America, Volume I: From Colonial Times to the Founding of the American Federation of Labor* (New York: International Publishers, 1982), 490–492. See also Gyory, *Closing the Gate, passim* [Note: Variant spellings of Workingmen's parties appear in both primary and secondary sources. Sometimes it is rendered as a single word, at others as two words. For the sake of editorial consistency I have chosen to combine them as one.]

workers showed initial enthusiasm, they quickly tired of Kearney's boorish antics. Socialists such as Justus Schwab, who had blocked Kearney's attempts to enter the Workingmen's Party USA, dutifully denounced the coolie system, but refused to accept the racist premise that underlay Kearney's rhetoric. A month before Kearney arrived in the East, trade unionist George McNeill noted that labor needed to organize "without distinction of race, color, nationality, politics, or religion," and the *Labor Standard* insisted that class, not ethnicity, be the centerpiece of the labor program for which Kearney ostensibly stumped.¹¹ Kearney said nothing that made eastern workers repudiate McNeill.

By all accounts, the East should have been ripe to embrace Kearnyite nativism. In 1870, 75 Chinese had been imported to break a shoemakers' strike in North Adams, MA, and several other importations of Chinese scabs had raised the fear of floods of cheap labor washing away East-coast wage structures. Nonetheless, in the eight-year interim between North Adams and Kearney's visit, eastern workers had largely ignored the rising tide of anti-Chinese agitation fomenting west of the Rockies.

Kearney caught the attention of the Knights of Labor as he toured. KOL Grand Master Uriah Stephens praised Kearney. And Stephens' soon-to-be replacement Terence Powderly was similarly impressed. During a September speech in New York City, Kearney was greeted with huzzahs, even if Schwab and company cringed. But the more Kearney spoke, the less charitable the Knights felt. Even before Kearney's appearance in New York, Powderly confided to Grand Secretary Charles Litchman that he was "disgusted" with Kearney and thought his shrill one-note anti-Chinese ravings were "injurious" to the cause of labor. Both the labor and mainstream press began to attack Kearney, and an October speech was booed in Boston. By the time Benjamin Butler, Massachusetts' Greenback-Labor candidate for governor, spoke in North Adams, he failed to even mention the Chinese. The reaction against Kearney grew so strong that by the time he left the East, he had dropped Chinese references from his speeches.¹²

The Making of Anti-Chinese Hysteria

Eastern reactions to Kearney reveal the extent to which negative sentiments were manufactured rather than intrinsic to working-class ideology. The Chinese were originally viewed through a lens of exoticism, themes exploited in exhibits displayed by P. T. Barnum, and by the proprietors of Boston's Chinese Museum. Overall silence on the Chinese issue, however, suggests that most antebellum workers gave the Chinese little thought whatsoever. Occasionally, a progressive voice sounded. In San Francisco, an 1849 newspaper referred to the Chinese as "likely to be good citizens, being quiet, inoffensive, and particularly industrious."¹³ To be certain, there was tension in the gold fields, but much of it was directed at generalized "foreign miners," rather than specifically targeted at the Chinese. When anti-Chinese attacks occurred in the 1850s, San Francisco officials cooperated with Chinese leaders to form a Vigilance Committee to clear "thugs" from the streets.¹⁴

¹¹Gyory, chaps. 6–7, quote on p. 101.

¹²Terence V. Powderly to Charles Lichtman, August 24, 1878, *Terence V. Powderly Papers* (University Microfilm located at University of Massachusetts at Amherst), hereafter cited as *PP*; Gyory, *Closing the Gate*, chap. 7.

¹³Fessler, *Chinese in America*, 24.

¹⁴*Ibid.*

How then does one move from indifference, fascination, and mild tolerance to an 1880 article in the Knights of Labor's official *Journal of United Labor* in which San Francisco Knights wrote, "They bear the semblance of men, but live like beasts ... who eat rice and the offal of the slaughter house." The article went on to call the Chinese "natural thieves" and all Chinese women "prostitutes."¹⁵

It is possible that antebellum political and social tensions deflected latent anti-Chinese nativism, but by most accounts it reached fever pitch after the Civil War owing to two factors: (1) fallout from the 1868 Burlingame Treaty, and (2) the spread of contract labor often mislabeled the "coolie" system. The context for both was political hucksterism. As early as 1861, California Governor Leland Stanford discovered votes could be had by advocating Chinese exclusion.

Despite the treaty's popularity in the East, westerners hotly debated it as details became known; many greeted the Burlingame Treaty with demonstrations once it was signed.¹⁶ The treaty recognized the right of Chinese nationals to emigrate, a clause forced on the Chinese government as part of an imposed open-door policy, and thus greatly increased both the numbers of Chinese coming and those staying. Chinese emigration to California nearly tripled in the decade following the Burlingame Treaty, and the flow of returning émigrés, estimated to have been about 47% before 1868, dropped precipitously.¹⁷

Ironically, the treaty's proviso allowing free emigration of Chinese nationals ended the very gang contract "coolie" system against which laborers had long railed. However, it led individual Chinese workers to negotiate jobs, wages, and conditions with labor contractors, like those affiliated with the Six Companies. Employers used to hiring intact crews encouraged the contractors who provided them with cheap labor whose costs could be predicted to the last dime. Doubtless some Chinese workers felt more comfortable among fellow countrymen than as lone wage-earners competing on the free market in a strange land.

For the most part, white workers failed to see the difference between labor contracting and the serf-like coolie system. Not that they would have cared—contract work was viewed with as much contempt as coolie labor. The term "coolie" remained in the popular vernacular throughout the Gilded Age, and Chinese work crews exacerbated working-class fears of unfair competition. Ending contract labor had long been a goal of an organized labor. It was seen as a system that drove down wages, and violated the tenets of free labor ideology. The latter view, ironically, had been fostered by the very elites now contracting Chinese labor. Well-publicized uses of Chinese workers to break strikes in North Adams, MA, Belleville, NJ, and Beaver Falls, PA between 1870 and 1872 heightened fears. Workers at a June 1870 rally in New York City heard several speakers denounce the importation of Chinese labor gangs, and John Swinton wrote contemptuously about the Chinese in a *New York Tribune* article.¹⁸

¹⁵*Journal of United Labor*, Dec. 1880 (hereafter cited as *JUL*).

¹⁶Gyory notes that the Burlingame Treaty initially received an enthusiastic reception in the East. Although it passed the Senate without dissent, western laborers were decidedly upset by the bill.

¹⁷Ronald Takaki, *Strangers From a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans*, (New York: Penguin, 1989); Elmer Sandmyer, *The Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press reprint of 1939 edition).

¹⁸Him Mark Lai argues that the Six Companies functioned mostly as benevolent associations and that their reputation as unscrupulous labor contractors is largely undeserved. Although he may be technically correct, nativists made little distinction between the Six Companies and the coolie system. It is safe to say that the nativists won the perception wars. See Him Mark Lai, "Historical Development of the Chinese

For historian Gwendolyn Mink, all of this is proof that racism and unionism had become inseparable. In her words, the “call for a ban on contract labor was implicitly a call for racial exclusion.” She cites calls from North Adams workers for exclusionary legislature, the presence of anti-coolie clubs inside the striking Knights of St. Crispin, boycotts of non-“white” products, and anti-Chinese rallies in Boston and New York as evidence of her assertions. Mink’s findings resonate with those of David Roediger’s pathbreaking study on working-class “whiteness.” Although Roediger focused primarily on the way white workers related to African-Americans, his work suggests that white racism and unionism are intertwined.¹⁹

However, Gilded Age realities caution against hasty generalizations. As Andrew Gyory points out, for example, it is important to distinguish between being anti-contract labor and anti-Chinese. In the East, after initial spurts of rock and epithet hurling—commonplace in most strikes—workers moved from condemning the Chinese to denouncing the entrepreneurs who imported them, and the Knights of St. Crispin tried to organize the Chinese. Future KOL leaders like Richard Trevellick carefully worded their remarks to differentiate between people and labor systems.²⁰

Trevellick, like most labor leaders, rejected contract labor as unworthy of free workers. That rejection was an article of faith in the Gilded Age working class, but the link between it and racial stereotyping is less tenuous than might first appear. East of the Rockies, labor leaders discussed the Chinese question, but with more heat than fire. As Gyory observes, it was politicians who fanned rank and file fervor on the issue, not labor organizers. By 1880, both eastern and western politicians had seized upon Chinese exclusion as an effective method of appearing to be friends of the laboring classes. It was a cheap dodge that allowed them to gain labor votes without actually investigating working conditions.²¹

The Knights of Labor, founded in 1869, was in its formative phase at precisely the time in which the Chinese question was being redefined. Polarity of opinion within the Knights represents that within the greater working class, if not all of American society, but with a notable exception. The KOL’s emphasis on Universal Brotherhood meant that it was able to foster some members who could transcend the limits of Gilded Age intolerance and see the Chinese as potential “brothers.” Such an attitude was rare in the late Victorian working class, and was a minority chorus within the KOL, though it contained vocal, powerful voices.

The Blind Eye: Knights in the West

There were very few Knights west of the Rockies even mildly sympathetic to the Chinese. Here the KOL was truly blind to the possibility that the Order’s Universal

Footnote 18 continued

Consolidated Benevolent Association/Huiguan System,” in Fessler, ed., *Chinese America: History and Perspective* (San Francisco, 1987), 13–51. For more on Chinese strikebreakers in the East see Fessler, esp. 108–110.

¹⁹Mink, 122; David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London: Verso, 1992). [Note: I wish to make it clear that I am in fundamental agreement with the findings of both Mink and Roediger, especially the latter. Both, however, offer theses which lend themselves to a reductionist reverse stereotyping. That is, white workers have a tendency to appear primarily as racists and nativists. Roediger’s book has been especially open to misinterpretation. It emerged at a time when “postmodernism” was perhaps at its height of academic popularity. In my view, many of those employing postmodern racial theory did so with less skill and less attention for historical evidence than Roediger.]

²⁰Gyory, 23.

²¹See Gyory, Chapt. 10.

Brotherhood principles could include yellow-skinned brethren. As Alexander Saxton, Elmer Sandmeyer, Loren Fessler, and others have shown, West Coast workers began to cultivate anti-Chinese sentiments in the 1850s, views that only hardened over time. Indeed, one recent study links West Coast “relocation” of the Japanese during World War II to an unbroken chain of anti-Asian nativism beginning in the 1850s.²²

West Coast Knights of Labor seemed impervious to the Order’s call for Universal Brotherhood when applied to the Chinese. Papers such as San Francisco’s *Truth* or Denver’s *Labor Enquirer* featured lurid letters and editorials full of slander and stereotype. In 1883, the *Truth* charged that coolies were smuggling prostitutes into the United States through Victoria, British Columbia by falsely claiming them as wives, while the Denver paper printed San Franciscan W. H. Stevens’ letter in which he called Chinatown “a cancer in the heart of the city.”²³

A key figure in both San Francisco and Denver was Burnette Haskell, a journalist, lawyer, and convert to anarchism. He edited *Truth*, was head of San Francisco’s Trades Assembly, and was a KOL organizer. His paper routinely endorsed J. M. Clark’s League of White Shoemakers, a KOL local restricted to so-called “American” workers. Haskell also endorsed and participated in Frank Roney’s League of Deliverance, an organization supported by 13 KOL locals dedicated to expelling the Chinese from California.²⁴ The *Truth* suspended operations in 1884, and Haskell moved to Denver and took over editorship of the *Labor Enquirer* when Joseph R. Buchanan moved to Chicago in 1886. Haskell’s influence in Denver was more disruptive to the KOL than his ravings in San Francisco. Despite the shrillness of the California Knights, the Order had a relatively small presence in the Golden State, and concerns from there could easily be deflected by the KOL’s executive board. Not so in Denver, where the charismatic Joe Buchanan roamed the Rockies organizing Knights’ locals. By 1885, much of the Union Pacific Railroad was in the KOL fold, and Buchanan was a member of the Knights’ executive board.

He is an example of how potent anti-Chinese sentiment was in the West. By his own account, he was a reluctant convert to the anti-Chinese cause. During a trip to Stockton, California, he professed, “I do not hate the Chinese, and I ... believe in the brotherhood of man.” Only after intense debates with California Knights did he alter his views to what he dubbed “The Brotherhood of Man, Limited.”²⁵ He soon learned that being an effective leader required him to pay lip-service to popular hatreds. Lamentably for the Chinese, Buchanan was an ace organizer. As he formed new assemblies in the West, anti-Chinese complaints began to flood the KOL’s Philadelphia headquarters. One Knight warned *Journal of United Labor* readers, “There now hangs over the Pacific states a cloud more portentous of evil than slavery ever was,” and complained of 100,000 Chinese in California where there were “only 170,000 white voters.”²⁶ San Francisco’s District Master Workman John Payne lamented that the California KOL was in danger of collapse as members lost jobs to cheap coolie labor. Another letter told of a state straw poll that revealed 165,000 people were opposed to

²²Saxton, *The Indispensable Enemy*; Sandmeyer, *The Anti-Chinese Movement*; Fessler, Jian-Zhong Lin, “Evacuation Centers or Concentration Camps: What’s in a Name?” (unpublished paper delivered at the North East Popular Culture Association meeting, Worcester, MA, Oct. 1995).

²³*Labor Enquirer*, Jan. 20 and Mar. 3, 1883 (hereafter cited as *LE*).

²⁴Saxton.

²⁵Joseph R. Buchanan, *The Story of a Labor Agitator* (Freeport, NY: Books For Libraries, 1971 reprint of 1903 edition), 273–278.

²⁶*JUL*, Feb. 1884.

Chinese immigration, and only 800 for it, the latter mostly railroad and business magnates “who want slave labor.”²⁷

The increase of Chinese west of the Rockies after the Burlingame Treaty combined with an economic downturn to create palpable tensions in the region. Congressional debates over Chinese exclusion led many Knights to link popular hatreds with the Order’s principles of free labor. Most West Coast KOL locals were trades assemblies—especially cigarmakers, shoemakers, and railroad workers—whose livelihoods were threatened by contract labor competition. In March 1882, Knights were among the 30,000 who gathered in San Francisco to demand the expulsion of Chinese. This was a prelude to more serious outbursts, many of which were legitimated by the Chinese Exclusion Act of that year. The Act’s 10-year ban was seen as inadequate by many. Moreover, discussions of future immigration easily mutated into a revival of Denis Kearney’s mantra, “The Chinese Must Go.”

On September 2, 1885, a dispute between miners and the Union Pacific Coal Department in Rock Springs, Wyoming Territory degenerated into an anti-Chinese riot. At the time, 150 white miners toiled alongside 331 Chinese, and all were paid \$3 per day. This fragile attempt at parity unraveled when white miners conditioned by calls for Chinese exclusion went on a wilding spree. Homes were burned, and at least 22 Chinese were murdered; another 26 were listed as “missing” and were never accounted for. No one was ever charged with the murders as no witnesses came forth to testify.²⁸

To be fair, local trade unions and members of the Mormon church were equally culpable. But there can be no denying that the KOL was deeply involved, even though leaders denied responsibility. The Chinese consulate charged that the massacre took place because Chinese miners refused to take part in a KOL strike, or take out membership in the Order.²⁹ There is little reason to doubt this.

General Master Workman Terence Powderly dutifully denounced Rock Springs as “inexcusable” acts of “inhumanity and butchery,” but the bulk of his comments fed existing tensions, for in the next breath, Powderly partially justified the violence by blaming government officials for failing to enforce the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act. He wrote, “Had steps been taken to observe the law ... the workmen of Rock Springs would not have steeped their hands in the blood of a people whose very presence in this country is contamination.” In an address to the KOL’s General Assembly four weeks after the incident, Powderly denounced the “Chinese evil” and the “indifference of our law-makers to the just demands of the people for relief.”³⁰

As Powderly spoke, other attacks against the Chinese raged. Pasadena, Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz, Merced, San Jose, Oakland, Wheatland, Sonoma, and at least a dozen other Californian towns saw violence against local Chinese.³¹ *John Swinton’s Paper* catalogued troubles in Oregon, Montana, and Dakota Territory, and claimed that the only thing standing between Evanston, Wyoming and a repeat of Rock Springs was the daily policing efforts of KOL volunteers. Swinton noted on October 4, 1885, “the whole region west of the Missouri seems ready to rise in arms against the coolies ...”³²

²⁷ *Ibid.*, Jan. 1885; Feb. 1884.

²⁸ Fessler; Paul Crane and Alfred Larson, “The Chinese Massacre,” *Annals of Wyoming*, 12 (1940); Sandmyer, *The Anti-Chinese Movement*; Craig Storti, *Incident at Bitter Creek: The Story of the Rock Springs Chinese Massacre* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1991).

²⁹ Crane and Larson, “The Chinese Massacre.”

³⁰ Terence V. Powderly, *Thirty Years of Labor: 1859–1889* (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1967, reprint of 1890 edition), 214–215.

³¹ Sandmyer.

³² *John Swinton’s Paper*, Oct. 4, 1885 (hereafter cited as *JSP*).

Serious outbreaks took place in Olympia, Tacoma, and Seattle; beatings and burnings led hundreds of Chinese to flee Washington. Some Knights were horrified by the levels of violence, and many volunteered to help police the streets, but the KOL's own rhetoric fanned the flames. In Seattle, prominent Knights such as M. McMillan, D. Cronin, Walter Walker, B. F. Day, and J. T. Jordan were at the fore of whipping up anti-Chinese hysteria, and the city was placed under martial law from November 1885 through July 1886. McMillan was one of four men tried for conspiracy to riot, though all were found not guilty in suspiciously hasty jury deliberations.³³

As late as 1887, Ethiel Carpenter of Seattle's Local 4808 complained that the Puget Sound area was "not what it's cracked up to be," being that it was "overrun with the abominable Chinese."³⁴ It was an odd and inaccurate complaint, as by 1887 most of the area's Chinese had fled. Equally odd is that Carpenter's letter ended a relative silence in the *Journal of United Labor*. Rock Springs clearly embarrassed East Coast Knights, and once-strident anti-Chinese remarks were toned down, inserted into more universal condemnations of "cheap" foreign labor, or relegated to the letters columns. But there is another reason why letters like Carpenter's reemerged in 1887; by then, some East Coast Knights had challenged the Order to adhere to its own principles.

Leading the Blind: East Coast Radicals

The *Journal of United Labor* was published in Philadelphia, and this fact helps explain the paper's relative silence on Rock Springs and other ugly anti-Chinese incidents. For more than a decade West Coast laborers complained that their colleagues on the East Coast refused, firstly, to take the Chinese threat seriously, and secondly, that they were the dupes of scheming Eastern business interests and politicians. Although there is scant evidence for the latter charge, there is plenty for the first.

To be sure, numerous members of the Eastern power elite decried West Coast racism. An 1877 *New York Times* article compared attacks on the Chinese to Ku Klux Klan activity in the South. Massachusetts Senator George Frisbie Hoar insisted that anti-Chinese prejudice had no place in America, while former abolitionist Wendell Phillips even suggested giving Chinese the right to vote.³⁵

But East Coast labor needed little instruction from its erstwhile betters on the subject. Loren Fessler notes, "In the 1870s the American Northeast experienced none of the anti-Chinese violence that had ... become commonplace in California."³⁶ Fessler is correct; too many historians have conflated nasty rhetoric with the concrete acts of racism that bloodied the West. But even in North Adams, the bulk of the workers' anger was directed at Capital, not the Chinese. When striking Knights of St. Crispin failed to organize the Chinese, leaders blamed the contract labor system, not individual Chinese. By separating nationality from systems of contract labor, the Crispins made a

³³Jules Alexander Karlin, "The Anti-Chinese Outbreak in Seattle, 1885-1886," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 39 (April, 1948); Karlin, "The Anti-Chinese Outbreak in Tacoma, 1885," *Pacific Historical Review* 23 (1954), 3; Rudy Higgens-Evenson, "Class, Ethnicity, and State Authority: Anti-Chinese Agitation in Portland, Oregon, 1886" (unpublished paper delivered at Southwest Labor Studies conference, 1996).

³⁴*JUL*, May 21, 1887. [Note: The *JUL* became a weekly paper in mid-1884.]

³⁵Sandmyer; Fessler, 139.

³⁶Fessler, 115.

profound distinction that escaped their West Coast counterparts.³⁷ The Crispins' experience in 1870 was destined to shape future direction for the Knights of Labor. The Crispins entered the KOL *en masse* after 1878, and their presence was strong in New England, New York, and Pennsylvania, areas largely devoid of serious anti-Chinese agitation.

In fact, numerous future KOL leaders dismissed the Chinese question long before they joined the Order. In New York City, Robert Blissert—also a stalwart in the city's Central Labor Union and a key planner in the first Labor Day celebration—connected the coolie system with slavery but quickly added:

I have no objection against Chinamen ... The Chinaman is as welcome ... as men from Ireland, or Scotland, or England ... As a workingman I will take his hand and say ... come along; we are both laborers, soldiers of the great army of labor. Let us fight the battle side by side.³⁸

Likewise, future New York Knight Patrick Healey testified before Congress on behalf of Chinese immigration. Perhaps even more significant was the absolute refusal of New York City socialists like Justus Schwab to have anything to do with anti-Chinese hysteria.

By 1883, Denver's *Labor Enquirer* was ranting about New York City Knights who failed to realize the threat posed by the Chinese who were moving on to Mott Street. Dire predictions that the area would soon be awash in opium dens, "leprosy pits ... contagion and filth," vied for editorial space with angry attacks on eastern put downs of the "baseness of the west." The *Labor Enquirer* editorial continued,

Nothing meaner was ever manifested by people of the east; nothing more ignorant, arrogant or shameful than the way they met the petitions of the west for relief from the Chinese evil. Now let them work at the problem.³⁹

Such words fell on deaf ears in New York where Thomas Maguire, a leader in powerful District Assembly 49, insisted that organizing the Chinese was a prerequisite for stabilizing the wages for all workers. As if to tweak West Coast critics, Maguire even praised the activities of Chinese hop-pickers during an 1884 Kern County, California, strike and upheld it as proof the Chinese could be good unionists.⁴⁰

Maguire and his New York colleagues represented a powerful faction within the Knights of Labor, one whose ideology was shaped by a combination of Lassalleian socialism and anarchism. Many New York Knights belonged to the city's various radical organizations, and District 49's Pythagoras Hall functioned as a clearing house for radical literature, and a platform for socialist and anarchist speakers like Justus Schwab. Such Knights held expansive views of class struggle and insisted that cautious KOL leaders make good on the Order's stated principles of Universal Brotherhood. They further advanced this cause by touting the superiority of "mixed" assemblies over single-trade assemblies, which they denounced as enemies of class solidarity.

³⁷See Mink, 57, 79. Mink argues that North Adams workers were narrowly focused on getting exclusionary legislation passed. She also argues that the depth of Crispin racism can be seen in the fact that they absorbed anti-coolie clubs into their Order, and that they participated in anti-Chinese rallies in New York and Boston. Gyory, however, convincingly argues that such a view too neatly conflates racism and anti-contract labor sentiment (see Gyory, 40–42).

³⁸Quoted in Andrew Gyory, "Rolling in the Dirt: the Origins of the Chinese Exclusion Act and the Politics of Racism" (unpublished PhD diss. University of Massachusetts, Amherst, 1991), 72.

³⁹*LE*, July 17, 1883.

⁴⁰Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, Vol. II, 60.

Although KOL mixed assemblies were a minority even in New York, the universalist radical faction was powerful in the East. By 1884, in fact, a well-organized opposition known as the Home Club emerged to challenge the conservative administration of Terence Powderly. The Home Club's endeavors coincided with the explosive growth of the KOL precipitated by its 1885 strike victory over Jay Gould's South West railway conglomerate, and in June 1886, the Home Club captured control of the KOL's General Executive Board. For the next two years, Powderly was the virtual prisoner of the Club's various machinations, and it was not until 1890 that he was fully free of its clutches.⁴¹

This set the stage for the KOL's boldest and most controversial experiment in Chinese organization. In May, 1887, *John Swinton's Paper* carried the news of Chinese locals in New York, along with an insulting mock Chinese-accented dialogue to which he was certainly not privy.⁴² At first, the KOL's executive board dismissed the report as rumor, but on June 25, Denver's *Labor Enquirer* carried the alarming headline "It is True! Powderly's District 49 is Organizing the Mongolian Slaves to Knock Out Free Labor." The paper told of how New York's James and Timothy Quinn had organized laundry workers headed by Wah Saing who was using the alias Jose Dolaro to try to mask his identity. San Jose, CA Knights immediately wrote to General Secretary Charles Litchman and demanded an explanation. Litchman denied that a charter had been granted.⁴³

Denials quickly evaporated when Edward Kunze, Recording Secretary for District 49, confirmed the operation of two Chinese assemblies, the Victor Hugo Labor Club and the Patrick Henry Labor Club. Alfred Cringe wrote to *John Swinton's Paper* demanding to know "How is this?," forcing Swinton to speculate that perhaps the Chinese paid for an organizer and "enjoyed certain preliminary exercises," but had not yet obtained a charter. For the next few weeks, Swinton railed against the Home Club, sided with a failed coup against it, and printed angry letters that poured in from the West Coast.⁴⁴ Powderly assured Seattle's Matthew Bulger that neither "D.A. 49 nor no other D.A. shall receive a charter for a Chinese assembly until the General Assembly orders it." But he was forced to add, "We recognize no race, creed, or color ... Will you give me the sentiment of your Assembly as to what to do in the way of treating this Chinese question?"⁴⁵

Instrumental in organizing the Chinese were Victor Drury, a co-author of the anarchists' Pittsburgh Manifesto and the architect and guiding light of the Home Club; "Captain" Maggi, who headed an all-Italian KOL local; D.A. 49 Master Workman Thomas Maguire; socialist Frank Ferrell, the Order's most prominent black leader; and the aforementioned James and Timothy Quinn. D.A. 49 was unrepentant of its actions. Like Daniel venturing into the lion's den, Home Club sympathizer Dyer Lum wrote to the *Labor Enquirer* from his Northampton, Massachusetts home to voice his support for organizing Chinese "along stock socialist lines." When editor Burnette Haskell ridiculed the idea, Lum lectured,

appeals to popular passions may be useful to papers in certain localities where

⁴¹Robert E. Weir, "Powderly and the Home Club: The Knights of Labor Joust Among Themselves," *Labor History*, 34 (1993), 27.

⁴²*JSP*, May 15, 1887.

⁴³*LE*, June 25, 1887; *JSP*, June 26, 1887.

⁴⁴*JSP*, July 3, July 10, July 24, 1887.

⁴⁵Powderly to Mathew [sic] Bulger, July 19, 1887, *PP*.

prejudices run high, but I humbly submit that a few outrages upon the cannibalistic importers of cheap labor would be more to my taste ... Are you so proud of the fact that you are the humble and willing subjects of capital that you resent the intrusions of others by asserting that we alone have the right to cringe before an employer and do his bidding? ... If a scramble to monopolize the taking of subsistence wages is all we desire, it is useless to argue the question.⁴⁶

In all, D.A. 49 is credited with organizing some 500 Chinese into two assemblies, a figure that may well be inflated, given an 1880 census count of only 909 Chinese in the entire state of New York. The chief Chinese organizer was Lee Sah, a tea store clerk on Mott Street and Master Workman of the Patrick Henry Labor Club. Lee Sah was born in Hong Kong in July 1862, to a poor laborer in a fireworks factory who schooled his son in politics and Confucianism at an early age. At the age of 12, Lee Sah fled Hong Kong after refusing to unwind his queue when the local mandarin passed by. He made his way to San Francisco, learned English, studied the Bible and Shakespeare, and worked for a local politician who was subsequently killed in a duel. He then toiled as an interpreter and as a writer before relocating to New York City where he joined the KOL.⁴⁷

But West Coast Knights were simply too rabid on the Chinese question to consider the political and intellectual instincts of a man such as Lee Sah. In response to xenophobic outbursts, crafty Home Club leaders took the wind out of the opposition by “officially” dissolving its Chinese assemblies and transferring all Chinese members into existing “mixed” assemblies. This put the district beyond constitutional sanction.⁴⁸ In the meantime, Philadelphia Knights also organized two Chinese assemblies; wisely, Knights there copied the mixed assembly dodge.⁴⁹

When Knights gathered in Minneapolis in October 1887 for a general assembly, pro-Chinese advocates kept a low profile as the convention focused on other internal squabbles. But at the 1888 convention in Indianapolis, D.A. 49 introduced a resolution which demanded “That special efforts be made to organize the Chinese.” Predictably, a donnybrook erupted, with D.A. 49 delegates insisting that there was nothing in the KOL constitution forbidding Chinese assemblies. The resolution went down to defeat, but the 95–42 vote reveals that nearly one-third of the delegates were considerably more sympathetic to the Chinese than most historians have realized. Even Powderly was forced to concede that it was only on the Pacific Coast that the “influence of the Chinese was felt to any great extent.”⁵⁰

The disintegration of the Home Club in late 1889 pushed assertive efforts on behalf of the Chinese to the back burner. The Order’s overall decline into the 1890s rendered the question moot, but D.A. 49 clearly had an effect. By 1888, official KOL journals were more circumspect in their attacks on the Chinese, as Powderly and his cronies generalized the question to the dangers of imported labor in a sagging economy. For pro-Chinese Knights, this had been the issue from the beginning, and Capital, not ethnicity, was the enemy. After 1889, specific attacks against the Chinese are rare in KOL publications. When mentioned at all, the Chinese were lumped with Hungarians,

⁴⁶ *LE*, July 9, 1887.

⁴⁷ *The Boycotter*, May 21, 1887.

⁴⁸ *JSP*, July 10, 1887.

⁴⁹ Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*.

⁵⁰ Powderly, *Thirty Years of Labor*, 216–218.

Slavs, Italians, and other immigrants perceived as imported threats to native-born workers.⁵¹ The decline of West Coast locals and the passage of the 1892 Geary Bill, essentially a permanent Chinese exclusion act after its renewal in 1902, further quieted matters.

Powderly was booted out as KOL leader in 1893 and, two years later, from the entire Order. His anti-immigrant ravings and calls for restriction won him the government appointment he long coveted: from 1898 to 1902 he was the Commissioner-General of Immigration. He worked for the Bureau of Immigration again from 1907 to 1921, and for the Department of Labor from 1921 until his death in 1924. In each post he railed against the dangers of immigration, and found many willing to listen. But he was never able to convert East Coast radicals to his cause—not in 1884; not in 1924.

The Silent Majority

The Knights of Labor has been stereotyped as an anti-Chinese organization, largely because of the actions of western members who were a minority within the organization.⁵² As the words and deeds of eastern radicals show, there were times in which the KOL was also the Gilded Age's most sympathetic labor organization. But it would be equally wrong-headed (and romantic) to label the KOL progressive on the Chinese question. More nuance is needed.

It is useful to invoke a paradigm originally developed by social scientist Robert K. Merton. As he saw it, there were four possible social permutations of prejudice and discrimination, given that the first is an attitude and the second a set of behaviors. Merton noted that racial extremists, whether racist or ultra liberal, tend to be small groups. The bulk of society is more likely to be more ambivalent.⁵³ Western nativists and eastern universalists represent the two poles of KOL sentiment concerning the Chinese. The middle groups, however, are more difficult to pin down. Those members who felt passionately about the Chinese one way or another were those most likely to voice opinions; rare indeed were those who were moved to express their ambiguity. By necessity, the historian is confined mostly to inference, or to those verbose leaders whose messages can be analyzed in context.

Historians Greg Kealey and Bryan Palmer call anti-Chinese agitation "a cause embraced by North American Knights with ardent enthusiasm."⁵⁴ Perhaps, but it depends upon what one means by the verb "embraced." Slurs against the Chinese were ubiquitous in Gilded Age America—with pulpit, press, politician, and pundit spreading the bile. To avoid being tainted by it took an act of will, and it was mostly the Order's radicals who were willing to confront popular prejudice head-on.

⁵¹*JUL*, Sept. 9, 20, 27, Oct. 4, 11, 1888. *Journal of the Knights of Labor*, July 24, 1890. [Note: The *JUL* changed its name in mid-1889.]

⁵²My point here contextualizes the anti-Chinese question specifically within the Knights of Labor. It may well be true, as Andrew Gyory argues, that organized labor as a whole has been unfairly stereotyped because of the actions of a relatively few rabid western laborers. For more on the latter point see Gyory, *Closing the Gate*.

⁵³Robert K. Merton, "Discrimination and the American Creed," in Robert M. McIver, ed., *Discrimination and National Welfare* (New York: Harper & Row, 1949). Merton labeled the four permutations "prejudiced discriminator," "non-prejudiced non-discriminator," "prejudiced non-discriminator," and "non-prejudiced discriminator." He thought that group three tended to be the largest. Such individuals held prejudicial views but failed to act on them owing to lack of courage or lack of opportunity.

⁵⁴Kealey and Palmer, 150.

But if few Knights took such a major step, neither did many east of the Rockies act on their hatreds. As we have seen, eastern workers engaged in extensive anti-Chinese bluster. But applauding the occasional anti-Chinese speech was a far cry from the blood-soaked riots of Rock Springs and Seattle. No sooner had “The Chinese Must Go” banners appeared in Hamilton, Ontario, than local journals began to publish articles informing workers that the Chinese were no threat.⁵⁵

Further, many of the prejudiced eastern leaders found themselves lacking the power to lead. This was certainly Powderly’s case from mid-1885 to late 1889 when he was controlled by the New York radicals of the Home Club. During this time, Powderly rattled a rhetorical saber—especially during West Coast speeches and in private letters to western leaders—but he was unable to craft a coherent policy that excluded Chinese workers from KOL local assemblies.

Another who was more bluster than action was journalist John Swinton. His anti-Chinese ravings were so out of character with his passionate devotion to working-class solidarity that most of his admirers simply ignored him on the issue. Rare was the Knights of Labor journal that did not routinely republish some pearl of editorial wisdom from Swinton, but aside from Denver’s *Labor Enquirer* almost none printed his screeds on the coming “Mongolization” of America.⁵⁶ In Denver, of course, Swinton was preaching to the converted, but in New York he was haranguing the uninterested.

KOL central leadership tried to confine both its anti-Chinese fire-eaters and its universalists to the margins. A modicum of anti-Chinese rhetoric was near-obligatory within the Order, and several Knights qualify as what Merton called “unprejudiced discriminators.” These individuals harbored little ill will towards the Chinese, but they nonetheless engaged in discriminatory behaviour. Three who succumbed to this were Joseph Buchanan, Richard Trelvelick, and George McNeill.

Recall that Buchanan called himself a convert to the anti-Chinese crusade. There is little evidence that his commitment ran very deep. In a trip to Stockton, California, Buchanan noted, “Only a part of my address was devoted to the Chinese question, but that was the all-absorbing question on the coast at the time, no address, such as a man of my credentials was expected to make, would have been complete without some reference to the agitations against the Chinese.”⁵⁷

The key phrase is “a man of my credentials.” Buchanan quickly learned that any leader with a national profile needed to tailor his message to fit local customs; on the West Coast, this meant requisite slurs against the Chinese. Buchanan traveled incessantly through the West from 1882 through 1886, organizing Union Pacific railroad workers and scores of other assemblies, most of which consisted of trade unionists who felt Chinese competition more keenly than the mixed locals of New York City. Not surprisingly, Buchanan used anti-Chinese nativist rhetoric as an organizing tool among West Coast workers.

Several telling details suggest, however, that he was uncomfortable with such methods. In 1884, Buchanan joined the KOL’s General Executive Board, an appointment that often brought him to the East. His remarks before East Coast workers are largely devoid of any reference to the Chinese. As editor of Denver’s *Labor Enquirer* from 1883 to 1886, he dutifully printed slurs against the Chinese. Very little of the content was actually penned by Buchanan, however; the bulk was letters from West Coast Knights

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 151.

⁵⁶*LE*, Sept. 27, 1885.

⁵⁷Buchanan, 276.

and reprints of articles from other journals, including *John Swinton's Paper* and *The Truth*. The *Labor Enquirer's* editorial pages did not take on a rabid anti-Chinese look until after Buchanan moved to Chicago and former *Truth* editor Burnette Haskell took over the reins. For his part, Buchanan started a Chicago version of the *Enquirer*, whose tone was far less strident on the Chinese question.

Another lukewarm discriminator was English-born Richard Trevellick. Born in 1830, Trevellick was one of the older KOL leaders. He was a ship's carpenter by trade, a job that took him around the globe before he came to the United States in 1857. He visited China at least twice and found it exotic. In 1864, Trevellick moved to Detroit, where he organized numerous trade unions, and in 1866, he became one of the co-founders of the National Labor Union. Trevellick wrote much of the NLU's platform, which included an anti-coolie plank that attacked contract labor, though not free emigration. He traveled extensively as an NLU organizer—especially in the South and the West—and is credited with founding over 200 unions.

Trevellick was a life-long trade unionist who grew convinced that the contract labor systems threatened the free labor ideology he embraced in the 1860s. Free labor, anti-coolie sentiment, and trade unionism formed the core of Trevellick's work identity, and he transferred these principles to the Knights. From 1878 to 1895, Trevellick was an organizer-at-large for the Order.

His home base of Detroit was a centre of the cigarmaking trade, one of the trades most affected by Chinese competition. Predictably, Trevellick spoke out in favor of the Cigarmakers International Union (CMIU) struggle against Chinese competition. As he had done in the NLU, Trevellick differentiated contract labor from Chinese emigration by attacking the former, but supporting the latter. Much like Joseph Buchanan, one suspects that Trevellick probably found the entire issue an annoyance that drew attention from what he considered more important issues, like the eight-hour day, the greenback question, and trade unionism. Indeed, if Trevellick had his pet project, it was temperance, not the Chinese question.⁵⁸

Of all those tainted by the Gilded Age anti-Chinese contagion, perhaps the saddest case is that of Boston's George McNeill, arguably the most universally admired of all KOL leaders in the 1880s. Apart from founder Uriah Stephens, one would be hard-pressed to find another Knight who so consistently trumpeted the need of the KOL to shelter all workers under its broad umbrella. McNeill's goal was nothing less than establishing a "Republic of Labor" undergirded by the principles of Universal Brotherhood.⁵⁹

Yet his own book, *The Labor Movement: The Problem of To-Day*, contains a chapter on the Chinese question that is as vile as anything that came from the West Coast—and that's because it did. McNeill did not write this chapter; rather, it was co-authored by W. W. Stone and Congressman Morrow, both of whom were Californians. Virtually every Gilded Age anti-Chinese stereotype from leprosy-bearing to rat-eating appears in McNeill's book.⁶⁰

But McNeill had little stomach for race-baiting, a practice against which he frequently spoke out. McNeill and Frank K. Foster were co-editors of Boston's *Labor Leader*, a paper that routinely avoided discussion of the Chinese question. When the

⁵⁸Robert E. Weir, "Trevellick, Richard," Entry in *American National Biography*.

⁵⁹George E. McNeill, *The Labor Movement: The Problem of To-Day* (Boston: A. M. Bridgman, 1887), see preface.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 429–454.

issue was broached, it was usually in the context of the hated contract labor system. McNeill consistently denounced contract labor, whether the context was Chinese coolie gangs or the Italian padrone system.⁶¹

The depth of McNeill's ambivalence is seen in his contradictory musings during 1887. In that year, his book was published with its anti-Chinese chapter, and McNeill told a reporter that he did not think Chinese and Americans could coexist. Yet, although his *Labor Leader* paper was one of the most vocal in the KOL when it came to condemning District Assembly 49's Home Club conspiracy, McNeill refused to chastise 49 for organizing Chinese assemblies.⁶² In another *Labor Leader* editorial, McNeill spoke out against pending immigration restriction bills before Congress:

What is the difference between the Irish rack-rent landlord who evicts his tenants, and the American people who play a like-a-dog-in-a-manger act? As a matter of good taste, not to say good principle ... the attempt to restrict the working people of the old world from coming here as freely as they please ought to be agitated by some other organization than that which has the globe as its symbol.⁶³

Through Different Eyes

George McNeill's shifting rhetoric illustrates that anti-Chinese sentiment within the Knights of Labor was not monolithic. Historians have been too quick to tar the entire Order with the brush used by Western Knights, and in their haste have confused eastern rhetoric with western actions. There is simply no equivalent of Rock Springs to be found among Eastern Knights. Nor is there the equivalent of District 49's aggressive organization of Chinese to be found in the West. A nuanced view of the Knights requires more attention to geographical distinctions within the Order.

None of this is meant to suggest simplistic—and dubious—assumptions of regional “character.” There were very important differences in the composition of the KOL that allow for a more historically sound accounting for the differences. First of all, there were more mixed assemblies in the East, especially in New York City. Such locals often mediated in favor of a more expansive practice of the KOL's Universal Brotherhood principles. Craft assemblies, by their nature, had more parochial concerns. This was particularly true of West Coast cigarmakers, shoemakers, and miners.

Second, with the exception of workers along the Union Pacific, the KOL was not that strong in the West. Those who are most threatened are often those most likely to scapegoat and it was logical, if wrong-headed, for West Coast organizers to see every Chinese laborer as a net loss in the recruiting game. There is at least one aspect of the West Coast complaint that needs to be taken at face value: Eastern Knights did *not* have to face Chinese competition to any real degree. Despite westerners' dire predictions of a yellow tidal wave poised to crash upon eastern factories, the absolute number of Chinese who made their way beyond the Rockies remained very small. According to the 10th Census (1880), no state east of the Rockies had as many as 1000 Chinese, though New York actually had more than Colorado. Those numbers did not increase significantly thereafter, as Congress passed bills that curtailed most Chinese immigration. But when eastern bigots perceived a threat, they were capable of as much

⁶¹*Labor Leader*, Mar. 5, May 7, 1887.

⁶²*Ibid.*, July 9, 1887.

⁶³*Ibid.*, July 16, 1887.

over-reaction as westerners. In 1903, Immigration Commissioner Frank Sargent, a one-time official of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen, ordered a raid in Boston that rounded up 250 Chinese workers, 50 of whom were deported. His methods were so brutal that Sun Yat-sen protested the harsh treatment.⁶⁴

But such overt thuggery was rare. Another important East/West distinction lies in the formative experiences of many Knights. Abolitionism, free labor ideology, and trade unionism were more developed in the East than in the West. And, as Gyory reveals, so too was the custom of separating ethnicity from unfair labor practices. Thus, when easterners spoke out against the Chinese they were much more likely to separate the contract labor system from the individual. The first was condemned in no uncertain terms; in fact, the denunciation frequently employed the same symbols and language with which slavery had been denounced. Parallels between the two labor methods were often drawn. Samuel Gompers, a Knight of Labor in the 1880s, summed up matters for many when, in one breath, he supported Chinese exclusion, but in the next added, "I have no prejudice against the Chinese people. On the contrary, having some understanding of their history, and the philosophy of their early sages, I have profound respect for the Chinese nation."⁶⁵ German and Irish organizers were quick to realize that immigration restriction aimed at any one group could easily be extended to restrict their kind as well.⁶⁶

Eastern attitudes were hardly enlightened, kind, or even consistent: the majority of Knights were neither active discriminators like those west of the Rockies, nor advocates of Universal Brotherhood like those in DA 49 and a few isolated locals. Commentators are no doubt correct when they argue that most Americans were not willing to reconsider the Chinese until after the Japanese invasion of Manchuria preceding World War II.

On the other hand, one should not exaggerate the impact of western anti-Chinese attitudes, or stereotype an entire labor organization based on the actions of a few. (Ironically, historians have been generous in their praise of KOL policies towards African-Americans, even though there were scores of racists in the organization.) As I have argued elsewhere, the Gilded Age was a veritable mulligan's stew of ideologies, and it is usually wrong to stick any single label on a single individual, let alone complex organizations like the Knights of Labor.⁶⁷

⁶⁴Jack Chen, *The Chinese In America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980).

⁶⁵Samuel Gompers, *Seventy Years of Life and Labor: An Autobiography*, Nick Salvatore, ed. (Ithaca, NY: ILR Press, 1984), 164.

⁶⁶Gyory also notes this in his "Rolling in the Dirt."

⁶⁷See Robert E. Weir, *Beyond Labor's Veil: The Culture of the Knights of Labor* (University Park, PA: Penn State Press, 1996).