

The Ghadar Party

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BRITISH INDIA, 1874

SOURCE: <https://www.davidrumsey.com/luna/servlet/detail/RUMSEY-8-1-210257-5003908#>

The British Raj

From 1858 until 1947, Great Britain ruled the Indian subcontinent under what was known as the British Raj. But throughout Britain's rule, Indians resisted, although this history of anti-colonial resistance and activism abroad—including in the United States—is rarely taught.

Early Indian Immigration to the United States

The *San Francisco Chronicle* (shown on right) announced the arrival of four Sikh men in San Francisco on April 6, 1899, making the group the first recorded South Asian immigrants in California. Sikh men from the Punjab region of India (which at the time consisted of the areas now known as Pakistan and Bangladesh) began to immigrate to the U.S. in the early years of the 20th century.

Sikhs Allowed to Land.

The four Sikhs who arrived on the Nippon Maru the other day were permitted yesterday to land by the immigration officials. The quartet formed the most picturesque group that has been seen on the Pacific Mail dock for many a day. One of them, Bakkshlied Singh, speaks English with fluency, the others just a little. They are all fine-looking men, Bakkshlied Singh in particular being a marvel of physical beauty. He stands 6 feet 2 inches and is built in proportion. His companions—Bood Singh, Variam Singh and Sc-hava Singh—are not quite so big. All of them have been soldiers and policemen in China. They were in the Royal Artillery, and the tall one with the unpronounceable name was a police sergeant in Hongkong prior to coming to this country. They hope to make their fortunes here and return to their homes in the Lahore district, which they left some twenty years ago.

Early Indian Immigration to the United States

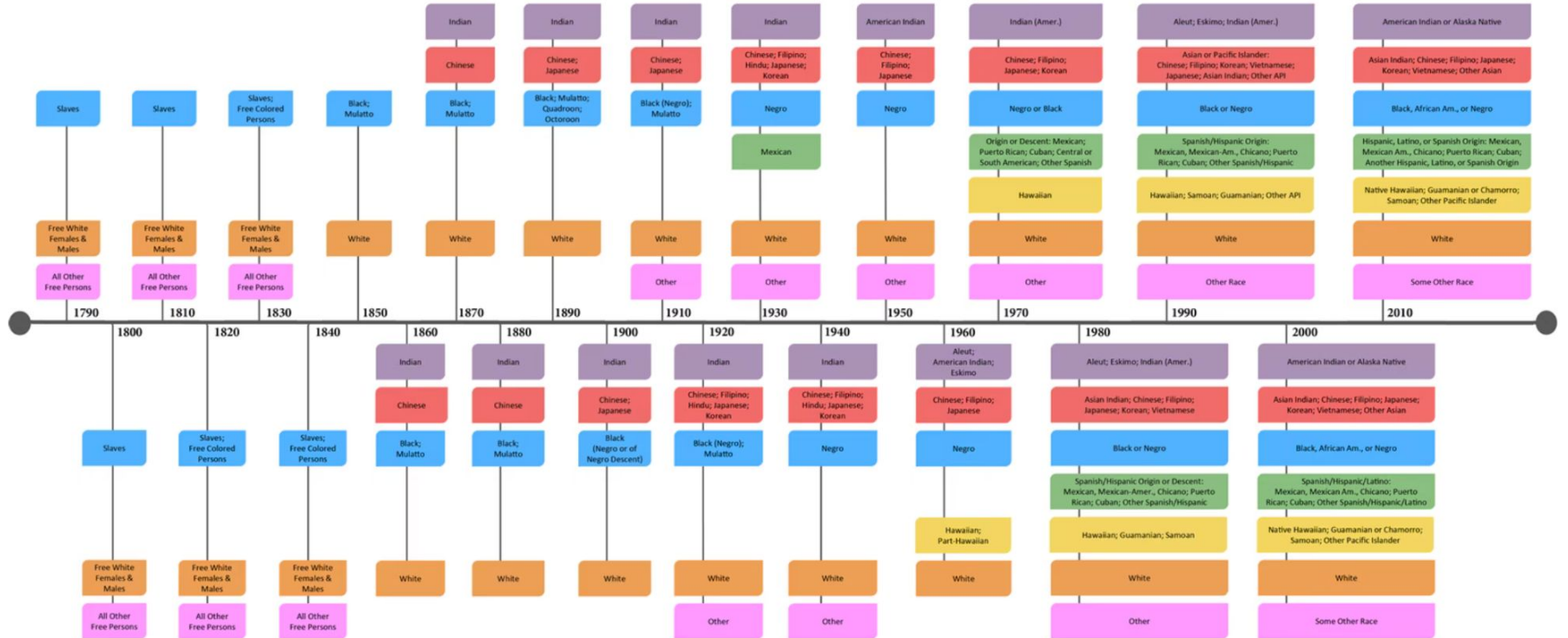
Most Indian immigrants were men who arrived in the U.S. in the early 1900s arrived between 1907 and 1910, with a peak population of 7,000. Approximately 90% of these immigrants were Sikh, 10% were Muslim, and a few were Hindu. Despite these distinct religious identities, Indian immigrants were classified as Hindus (also spelled “Hindoo”) in the 1920, 1930, and 1940 U.S. Censuses. This is the only documented instance of religious affiliation being used as a racial category. From 1950-1970, the category was omitted. In 1980, the Census introduced “Asian Indian” as an ethnic category.



Five Indian immigrants at Angel Island in 1910. Courtesy of California State Parks.

Measuring Race and Ethnicity Across the Decades: 1790–2010

Mapped to 1997 U.S. Office of Management and Budget Classification Standards



Gibson, Campbell, and Kay Jung. 2002. "Historical Census Statistics on Population By Race, 1790 to 1990, and By Hispanic Origin, 1790 to 1990, For The United States, Regions, Divisions, and States."

Humes, Karen, and Howard Hogan. 2009. "Measurement of Race and Ethnicity in a Changing, Multicultural America."

Humes, Karen R., Nicholas A. Jones, and Roberto R. Ramirez. 2011. "Overview of Race and Hispanic Origin: 2010."

Office of Management and Budget. 1978. "Statistical directive no. 15: Race and ethnic standards for federal agencies and administrative reporting."

Office of Management and Budget. 1997. "Revisions to the standards for the classification of federal data on race and ethnicity."

U.S. Census Bureau History Questionnaires. (2014, March 31).

Click [here](#) to visit the interactive version of this timeline.



The S.S. Minnesota arrives in Seattle, Washington, on June 23, 1913. The term “tide of turbans” was a common pejorative used when speaking of migration from India, with the turban itself becoming a symbol for, and target of, anti-immigrant sentiments.

Photo from Washington State Historical Society in Ogden (2012), p. 167

The “Hindu” Problem

The political cartoon on the right is from the August 13, 1910 issues of the *San Francisco Call*, a popular newspaper. What does it show about popular attitudes toward Indian immigrants, aka Hindus? How does this compare to political cartoons from the 1800s about Chinese immigrants and laborers (see next slide)?

Image from Ogden (2012), p. 171



The Great Fear of the Period (1860s) and The Chinese Question (1871)



To WHOM IT MAY CONCERN: This is a Liquid Washing Compound, and is FULLY GUARANTEED BETTER THAN ANYTHING EVER OFFERED TO THE PUBLIC; its constant use will not injure the cloths nor turn them yellow. For sale by the Gallon, Half-gallon and Quart. TRY A SAMPLE AND BE SURPRISED.

THE MAGIC WASHER

Manufactured by
GEO. DEE, Dixon, Illinois

PROCLAMATION
TO ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN
HEREAFTER NO FAMILY
WILL BE WITHOUT
MAGIC WASHER
UNDER PENALTY OF
BEING DIRTY

DONT USE THIS
IF YOU WANT TO BE DIRTY



THE CHINESE MUST GO

We have no use for them since we got this WONDERFUL WASHER: What a blessing to tired mothers: It costs so little and don't injure the clothes.

A New Problem for Uncle Sam



Dehumanization at Home and Abroad

As Sikhs from India began to immigrate to the U.S. and Canada, they faced racial discrimination similar to their experiences with colonial subjugation in their homeland. Frustrated by their unjust treatment in their new homes, Sikh immigrants along the Pacific Coast began to organize and resist the ongoing dehumanization that they attributed to colonialism.

Several publications detailed the restrictive immigration laws and discrimination faced by Indian immigrants as well as the need for revolution in their motherland. These messages of revolution were viewed as seditious threats to British officials, who soon worked with U.S. and Canadian officials to surveil Sikh immigrants.



Indian migrants at the Stockton Gurdwara in the early 1920s. Courtesy of Wikipedia, <https://tinyurl.com/3jt2esbn>.

The Ghadar Party

In 1913, Punjabi migrant workers and Bengali and Punjabi intellectuals and students who felt pushed out of India due to colonialism and now faced racist humiliation in North America came together to form the Ghadar Party. Ghadar, Urdu for “revolt” or “rebellion,” represented the coalition’s name and their goal to attain racial equality in the U.S. and Canada (and beyond) alongside an independent India. The Ghadar Party focused on unity and secularism among those of Indian descent, favoring a collective national identity instead of focusing on religion, caste, or region of origin. Months after the Ghadar Party’s creation, it had over 5,000 members and branches across the world, from Stockton, California to Panama and Shanghai. 90% of Ghadar Party members were Punjabi Sikh men, half of whom had served in the British Indian Army.

Indian Immigration to the United States, 1900-1930*3

1900	9	1916	80
1901	20	1917	69
1902	84	1918	61
1903	83	1919	68
1904	258	1920	160
1905	145	1921	353
1906	271	1922	225
1907	1072	1923	154
1908	1710	1924	186
1909	337	1925	45
1910	1782	1926	192
1911	517	1927	167
1912	165	1928	38
1913	188	1929	56
1914	172	1930	51
1915	82		

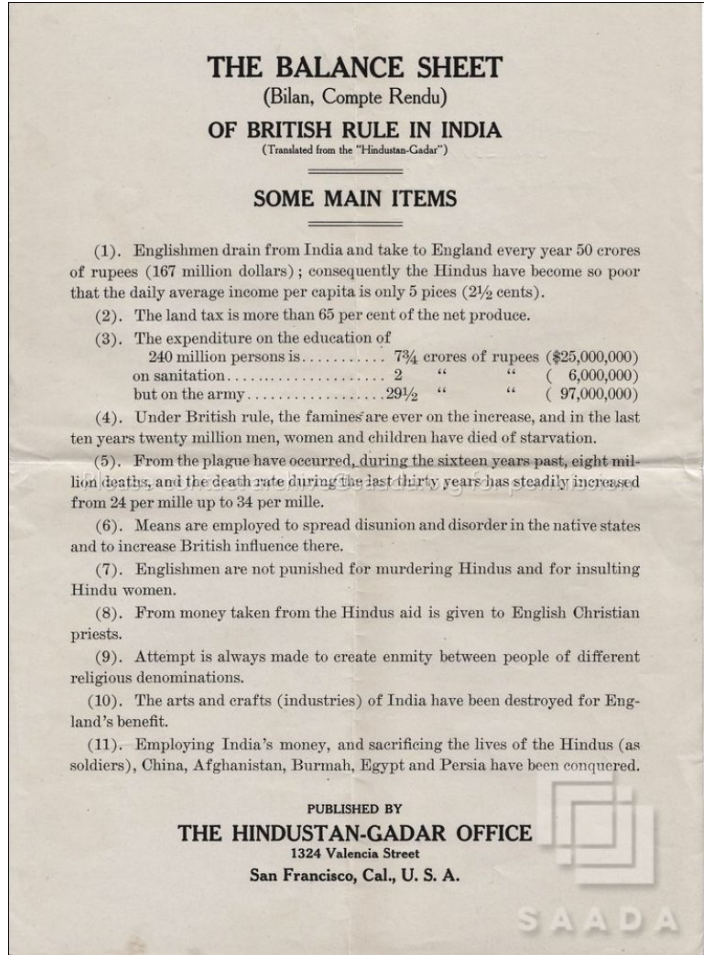
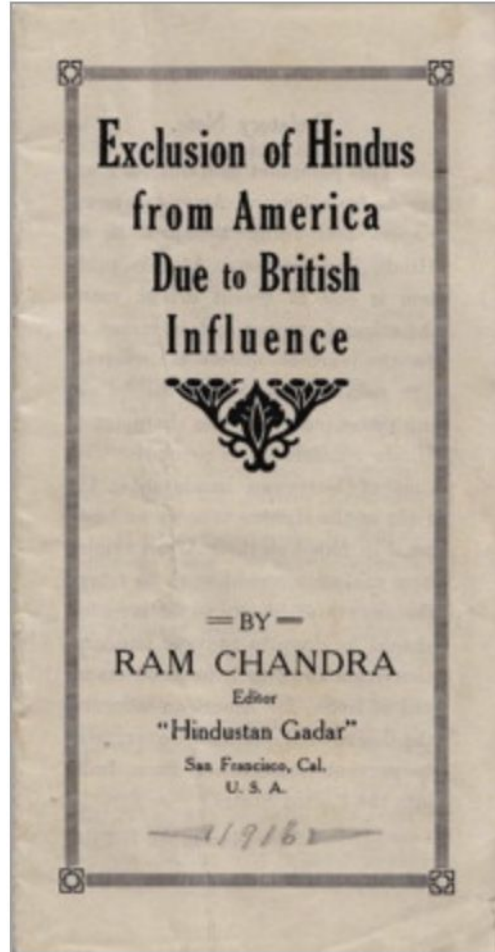
**numbers reflect immigrants classified by the Immigration Bureau as “East Indian,” not the total number immigrating from India, which could include English, French, Portuguese, etc.*

Table from U.S. Bureau of Naturalization

Ghadar!

The Ghadar Party published a newspaper of the same name that encouraged readers to circulate as many copies of the newspaper to fellow Indians as their patriotic duty. With its anti-colonial focus, the paper was banned immediately in India when the first issue arrived on December 7, 1913. Indian officials searched luggage from the U.S., seizing Ghadar publications as contraband. By 1914, nearly 5,000 copies of *Ghadar*, published in Gurmukhi and Urdu, were circulated weekly for free, funded by local Indians. Readership spanned east Asia as well as parts of Africa and South America, and readers there would send copies of *Ghadar* to India. That same year, the Ghadar Press published 12,000 copies of *Ghadar-di-Gunj* (Echoes of Mutiny), a collection of poetry and protest songs in Urdu and Punjabi that were often performed at Ghadar gatherings. These two publications connected and mobilized Indians worldwide as they exposed the exploitation and brutality of British imperialism in the Raj and beyond, leading some members to return to Punjab and attempt an armed revolt known as the Ghadar Mutiny. These efforts were unsuccessful, and Ghadarites were tried for several anti-colonial actions.

Ghadar Publications





Ghadar Party Headquarters

The Ghadar Party began operations at 436 Hill Street in San Francisco in 1913. The location was known as "Yugantar Ashram" - ashram is Hindi for a monastery or religious retreat. The weekly "Ghadar" publication began here. In 1917, the Party's headquarters moved to 5 Wood Street, where it became referred to as "Ghadar Ashram". The building and its contents were handed over to the Indian Consulate in 1949. The building was restored and the Ghadar Memorial was inaugurated by Shri T.N. Kaul, India's Ambassador to the United States, in March 1975. The following year, the Ghadar Memorial Library was established and has a collection of Hindi & English books.

Surveillance of the Ghadar Party

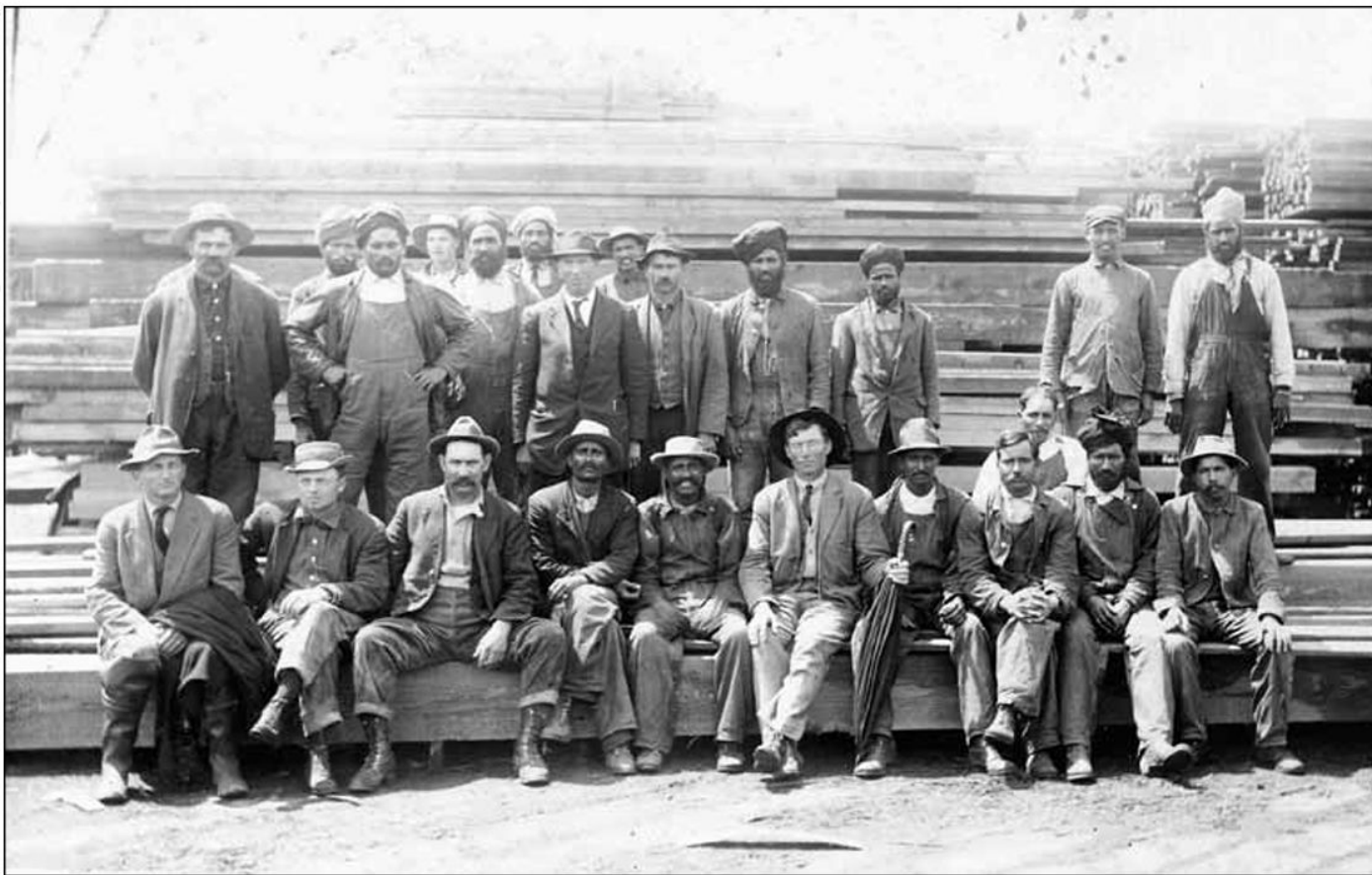
Concerned by the Ghadar Party's anti-colonial efforts, British officials worked closely with immigration offices in San Francisco, Seattle, and Portland to exclude and expel individuals they considered political radicals. The British government pressured the U.S. to refuse asylum to Indian revolutionaries and sent lists of publications and Indian immigrants they considered seditious to the State Department and the commissioner-general of immigration. Soon, both British and U.S. officials viewed Indian immigrants as having subversive political agendas. Across the globe, U.S. diplomats tried to forbid any Indian with anticolonial leanings from leaving India and, if successful, from landing at U.S. immigration stations.

The End of the Ghadar Party

Ghadarites became disillusioned with the U.S. alliance with Britain during World War I, recognizing the hypocrisy of a nation claiming to fight a war in the name of democracy while continuing to dehumanize Black Americans and Asian immigrants at home. In an important show of cross-racial solidarity, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) published reports in its magazine *The Crisis* about the Indian independence movement and efforts by the Justice Department to deport 6 Indians. This alarmed U.S. intelligence officials, who then increased their surveillance on both Black and Indian communities for decades. After World War I, the Ghadar Party began to split into different factions. Some Ghadarites in New York created the Friends of Freedom for India organization, which included Indians and white activists, while others who viewed Soviet Russia as a model society joined the international communist movement. By 1926, the Ghadar Party in California was at its most active and continued to organize meetings and collect money for political outreach in India across the state. Two decades later, the party formally dissolved after Indian independence was finally achieved in August 1947.

The Bellingham Riots

Optional Extension



From Ogden
(2012) p. 168

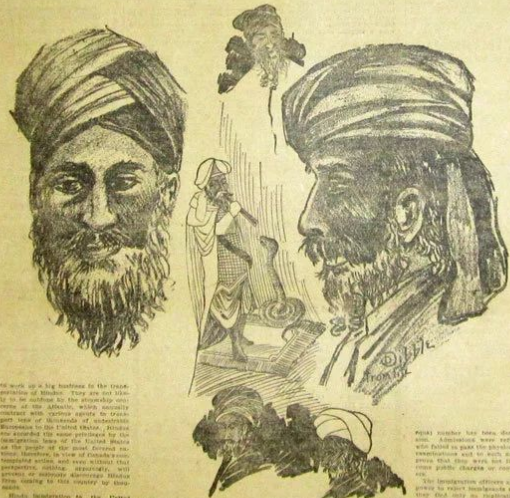
This photograph of Pacific Northwest millworkers from the early twentieth century, likely including a number of Sikhs, captures the regional mix of workers the industry relied on and recruited from around the world.

HAVE WE A DUSKY PERIL

HINDU HORDES INVADING THE STATE

BELLINGHAM workmen are becoming excited over the arrival of East Indians in numbers across the Canadian border, and fear that the dusky Asiatics with their turbans will prove a worse menace to the working classes than the "Yellow Peril" that has so long threatened the Pacific Coast.

HINDU workmen have been coming to Bellingham from the Canadian border in such numbers that the immigration authorities are becoming alarmed. It is reported that the "Hindu horde" has invaded the Puget Sound region in such numbers that the immigration authorities are becoming alarmed. It is reported that the "Hindu horde" has invaded the Puget Sound region in such numbers that the immigration authorities are becoming alarmed.



Keep the Hindus Out, Says Writer

FLOOD OF HINDU HORDES

Immigration of Hindu workmen from the Canadian border is becoming a serious problem for the immigration authorities. It is reported that the "Hindu horde" has invaded the Puget Sound region in such numbers that the immigration authorities are becoming alarmed. It is reported that the "Hindu horde" has invaded the Puget Sound region in such numbers that the immigration authorities are becoming alarmed.

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WHY OPPOSE HINDUS

Work is plentiful in this section, in fact the greatest, and this is recognized by the immigration authorities. It is reported that the "Hindu horde" has invaded the Puget Sound region in such numbers that the immigration authorities are becoming alarmed. It is reported that the "Hindu horde" has invaded the Puget Sound region in such numbers that the immigration authorities are becoming alarmed.

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REMARKS BY SEN. BRYAN

Who they were seen the opportunity

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Who they were seen the opportunity

Article from the 16 September 1906 Puget Sound American newspaper incorrectly describing turbaned Sikhs as "Hindu" and their unfavorable immigration to Bellingham.

Image from [Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hinduism)

More information and primary sources about the Bellingham Riots can be found in [this post by David Cahn](#) by the Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project at the University of Washington.

“We Are Not Strangers” Documentary



THE BELLINGHAM HERALD

FULL ASSOCIATED PRESS LEASED WIRE SERVICE.

CITY OFFICIAL PAPER

BELLINGHAM, WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 1917

SIXTEENTH YEAR NO. 128

The Herald
Prints More
Reliable
Local News
Than All Its
Competitors.

HINDUS HOUNDED FROM CITY

Mob Drives Foreigners From Lodging Houses and Mills

MAYOR DECLARES THAT RIGHTS OF HINDUS MUST BE PROTECTED

Orders Chief of Police to Swear in Fifty Extra Men

WATTS READS ADDRESS BEFORE THE COUNCIL.

Bellevue. Early this morning the chief of police telephoned the mayor that had occurred in this city last night, in which 50 to 60 people were engaged; that the evident purpose was to drive out of this city some Hindus; that in the streets and there was some injury both to property and to some persons; that the mayor, as a public officer, was wholly within the power of the law to prevent all riots and enforce all laws, and he is given the duty to call on every citizen, if necessary, to enforce the laws of this state and of the city.

The mayor stated that responsibility and was willing to do it. That in the interest of these persons, as this appears to be a serious matter, it was wise to call your body together as a council to advise me, so that I could have the benefit of your judgment in what is necessary to do in order that the laws should be enforced. The main object to be attained out of this city are Hindus, who are not citizens of the United States and of this state.

Under the laws of the United States and of this state, they have a legal right to be in the city. They have the legal right to be in this city as long as they do not break the laws thereof. I do not think that there is any law that these men have broken any laws of our state or city, and they have a legal right to remain in this city and perform their duties that they see fit. They have a right to the protection of this state and city, as long as they do not break any

Two Hundred Hindus Piled Into Room in the City Hall



WATTS IS AGAIN

POLICE FORCE HELPLESS IN CRISIS

Mobs Control City Without Interference From Authorities—Hindus Crowded Into Basement of City Hall, While Police Make No Effort to Check Outrages.

CHIEF IS CRITICIZED

Public Believes That a Little More on Part of Officers Would Have Checked the Riot.

Nothing had occurred in the streets since last night, but only by taking the riot to the city, and concentrating the mobsters in the city, but they had started into the police station, the gang, it is believed that the riot.

Continued on Page Two

MOB LAW RULES IN CITY

Terrorized Indians Fly Before Lawless Crowd—Brown Men Are Seized While Police Are Frenzied—Lodging Houses Are Ransacked and Inmates Are Dragged Forth and Ordered to Leave Town.

MORE SWEEP MILLS ALONG WATERFRONT

Flam After Flam Visited By the Orange-Crowd—White Crews Leave Pontoons and John McIndians Herded Together and Marched to City Jail.

DEATH IS THREATENED

Sinks Make No Resolutions—The

Punjabi-Mexican Families

Optional Extension

Immigration Act of 1917

This act was the first widely restrictive immigration law for several reasons:

1. Immigrants over 16 years old were required to pass a literacy test
2. Immigrants had to pay higher taxes upon their arrival
3. Immigration officials had more discretion over who they could exclude from entry
4. An “Asiatic Barred Zone” was designated from which no immigrants were allowed; China, Japan, and the Philippines were the only nations excluded but other restrictions were in place for those immigrants.

Most Punjabis who immigrated to the U.S. were men, and many had left their wives and children behind in India. In Yuba City before World War 1, there were only 4 Punjabi women! In 1930, there were only 100 South Asian women per 1,572 South Asian men. The 1917 Immigration Act made it impossible for Punjabi men to sponsor their families, keeping them separated until the laws changed decades later.

Punjabi-Mexican Families

Many Mexican women who immigrated to the United States during and after the Mexican Revolution worked in the fields of Southern California alongside Punjabi men from India. At the time, anti-miscegenation laws prevented non-white immigrants from marrying white people. This led to several Punjabi-Mexican relationships beginning in 1916 where Sikh men and Catholic women blended religions, cultures, and languages. By 1946, there were 378 Punjabi-Mexican marriages in California.



[Punjabi-Mexican Wedding from the Amelia Singh Netervala Collection at the South Asian American Digital Archive](#)



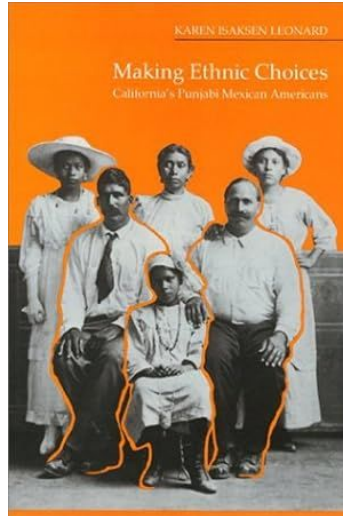
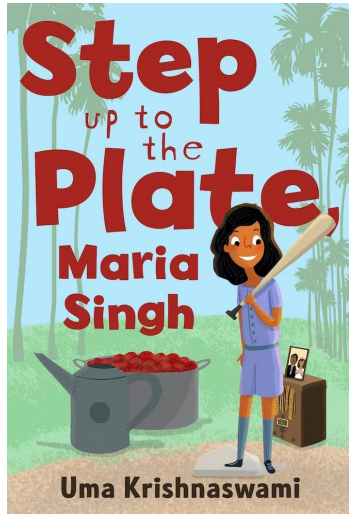
The El Centro, Calif. Sikh Temple, photographed in 1951.

Source: <https://earthjustice.org/blog/2021-may/how-asian-american-farmers-shaped-our-cultural-food-landscape>

Media about Punjabi-Mexican Families

VIDEOS:

- [Roots in the Sand](#)
- [The Punjabi-Mexicans of California](#)
- [Mexican Punjabis in California and Texas](#)



[The History of California's Punjabi Mexican Communities at Latina.com](#)

El Rancho: Punjabi-Mexican Fusion Food

El Rancho, later renamed Rasul's El Rancho, opened in Yuba City, California in 1954. Gulam Rasul and his wife Inez left behind fieldwork to open their own restaurant, which operated for four decades. One of El Rancho's signature dishes was the roti quesadilla, which fused classic Punjabi and Mexican dishes and was sometimes called "Hindu Pizza" despite Rasul being Muslim.



Left: Ad for El Rancho — printed as “El Rancho” in error here — in the July 1, 1977 issue of the *Appeal-Democrat* newspaper. Above: Ad for El Rancho in the Yuba High School 1966 yearbook, both images from [Eater](#)

Adult Donation—\$1.50
Children Under 12—75c

EL RANCHERO Restaurant

440 Garden Hiway — Yuba City — 742-7076

FEATURING:
MEXICAN & EAST INDIAN FOOD
Open Tuesday — Sunday
5 P.M. to 11 P.M.

Curried Chicken — Curried Lamb — Roti
RASUL'S OWNERS

SEE THE ACTION

BOWMAN'S

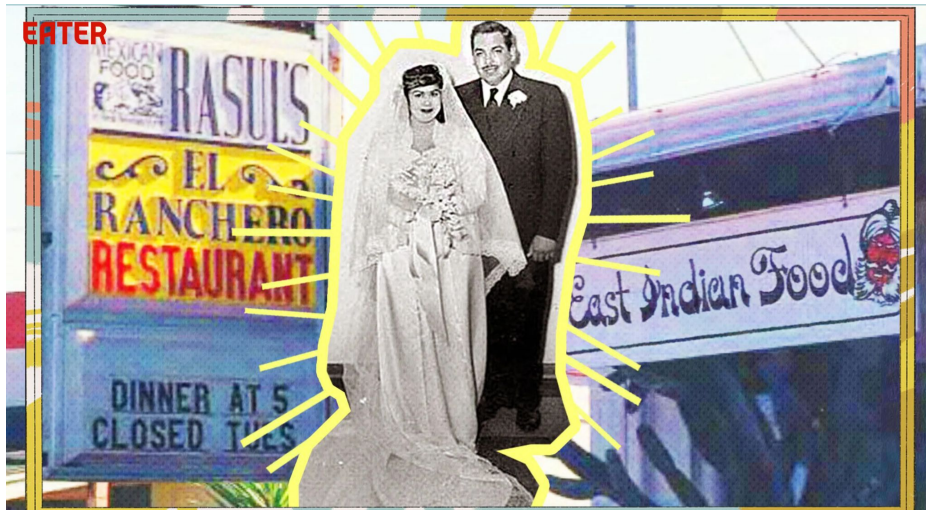
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reception at the
Sunday that they
popular demand.
sophisticated?

Comedienn
SANTA MONIC



Ad for El Rancho in the September 12, 1969
issue of the *Appeal-Democrat* newspaper

THE UNITED STATES OF MEXICAN FOOD

California's Lost (and Found) Punjabi-Mexican Cuisine

Rasul's El Rancho created a roti quesadilla for a very specific community — a half-century before Indian fusion food became trendy

by [Sonia Chopra](#) | [@soniachopra](#) | Apr 23, 2019, 10:00am EDT

References

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[Ogden, J. \(2012\). *Ghadar, Historical Silences, and Notions of Belonging*. Oregon Historical Society.](#)

[Sohi, S. \(2014\). *Echoes of Mutiny*. Oxford University Press.](#)