

Ceremony - Pilgrimage to Angel Island

Sept 22, 2018

WELCOME Rev. Deborah Lee & Sarah Lee

MUSIC Robin Guillen

SELECT POEMS from Angel Island - Jeff Leong *author of Wild Geese Sorrow*

Rev. Merry Chan (Chinese)

Jeff Leong (English)

MUSIC Robin Guillen

CEREMONY:

(English) To you who came before us, **we come here to remember.**

(Chinese) 對於那些被遺忘的人，我們來這裡記住，**we come here to remember.**

(Spanish) A este lugar a donde viniste antes, venimos aquí para recordar, **we come here to remember**

We remember our First ancestors of this land

Coast Miwok, Patwin, Plains Miwok, Bay Miwok, Ohlone (Costanoan), Yokuts and so many more... You suffered under the militarization of California as a Spanish territory, enslaved and forbidden to speak your own languages, dying from disease and broken hearts. Then the U.S. conquest and Gold Rush ravaged the land, your hearts, your bodies. Yet... your spirit deep within the land itself and your descendants beckon us to return, to remember, to repent and release new life. We ask your permission to be on this sacred land.

We invite Robin Guillen, indigenous leader and musician, to receive these flower to honor the first ancestors of this land.

We remember. For we do not want your stories to be forgotten.

RESPONSE: Listening * Remembering * Mourning * Honoring * Solidarity

We remember our African American Ancestors

Kidnapped, enslaved, sold for profit ----transported to this continent during centuries of legal transatlantic slave trading. Yet you found ways to overcome oppression with dignity, humor, creativity, and community. Facing anti-black racism in every institution, in the past and present; targeted by 3 strikes laws, excessive sentencing, and the building of dozens of new prisons to profit from and control black bodies. You have boldly challenged this system of mass incarceration which has torn up families, communities, bodies and spirits. You chart paths of human resilience and social resistance that shows us that when black lives matter, all lives matter.

We invite up Phil Hutchings, a veteran of the Civil Rights Movement, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, and Black Alliance for Just Immigration, to receive these flowers.

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For the Ancestors who came to Angel Island during its operation as an Immigration Station: from 1910-1940.

Leaving homelands torn asunder by conquest, war, persecution, and poverty
Sending children ahead, leaving family behind,
With no money and only what you could carry
With no other choices but with hearts full of hope, you came.
We remember. For we do not want your stories to be forgotten.

To our Chinese ancestors

Welcomed as valuable laborers for the trans-pacific railroad and capitalists during the Gold Rush, you soon lived in the shadows of exclusion, anti-Chinese laws, violence and expulsions to drive you out when the economy faltered. You endured decades of family separations. Yet you consistently challenged the constitutionality of the exclusion laws and protested their enforcement. You devised ways to work around them, and inscribed your stories of sadness and resistance on the wooden walls of the Angel Island detention center.

We invite up Lauren Chinn, Jeff Leong, Alton Chinn, Lena Chinn, and Kara Leong - descendants of Angel Island detainees to receive these flowers. We invite others of Chinese descent who were detained at Angel Island here today, to raise their hand or to stand

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To our Japanese ancestors

Many of you arrived from the long ocean voyage as “picture brides” to join the wave of male bachelors who had arrived decades before. The door to America was “half-open” for you. You were accused of being “land grabbers.” You persevered through the “agony, anguish and anxiety” that marked detention at Angel Island then once again during WWII where 120,000 of Japanese ancestry in the US were forcibly removed into family detention camps across the country.

We invite up Hiroshi Shimizu, formerly interned at Tule Lake, and leader of the Tule Lake Committee, as well as Rev. Michael Yoshii, pastor of Buena Vista United Methodist Church, a historically Japanese American congregation which lived through internment and is now a Sanctuary church - to receive these flowers

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To our South Asian ancestors

Punjabis, Sikh, Muslim and Hindu students, farmers and former colonial soldiers from British India, you were labelled part of the “yellow peril” and a “menace to the prosperity of the coast,” with alarmists saying “Turn back the Hindu Invasion.” Suffering the interrogations and humiliating examinations, at the height of exclusion, 98% were denied entry. Yet you had labored in logging, railroad, mines, road construction and brought expertise in irrigation methods of developing rice fields and fruit and nut orchards in California. We remember you then and now as Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim and South Asian communities are targeted by surveillance, deportations, travel bans, and forms of “othering.”

*We invite **Abby, Arvind, and Henna** from ASATA, the Alliance of South Asians Taking Action, an organization that educates, organizes, and empowers the Bay Area South Asian communities to end violence, oppression, racism and exploitation within and against our diverse communities. ASATA sees themselves in*

solidarity with peoples worldwide struggling for self-determination and community rights, keeping in mind the centrality of gender and sexual liberation.

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To our Korean ancestors

Fleeing Japanese colonialism, “a people without a country,” you came as refugee students, freedom fighters and picture brides, at times without passports. Through the transnational solidarity of the Korean National Association with regional headquarters in the U.S., Hawaii, Siberia and Manchuria, the community advocacy convinced many immigration officers to permit entry after interrogation and examinations.

We invite Erina Kim-Eubanks to receive these flowers - she is the daughter of Korean migrants who currently serves as the Director of Advocacy and Community Engagement at First Presbyterian Church of Hayward, one of the Sanctuary Congregations in the Bay Area. She is grateful for an inheritance that includes early morning prayer, fermented foods, costly generosity, and a fighting spirit.

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To our Russian and Jewish ancestors

Fleeing religious and political persecution from pogroms in Russia and Eastern Europe, Angel Island tested you with passing the medical exam, or under consideration of “likely to become a public charge” (LPC), or exclusion for illiteracy or radicalism, or locked out by quota laws. Yet with the support of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) which helped to find legal support, sponsors, jobs, and pay bonds, Angel Island proved to be an open gateway to freedom, safety and a new start in life.

We invite up Rabbi Dev Noily and Caroline Lehman, leaders in Bay Area synagogues, and actively involved in the sanctuary movement and immigrant justice - to receive these flowers

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To our Mexican ancestors

Fleeing the political turmoil of the Mexican Revolution or seeking reunification with family, *el norte* promised refuge. Yet you were increasingly identified as an immigrant “problem” and an economic or moral threat along the same lines as the “Asiatic invasion” from China, Japan, South Asia and the Philippines. During the 1930s, coercive repatriation programs forced deportation of one million to return to Mexico with many exiled from the US via Angel Island. Once again, today, you face racist insults and scapegoating, and limited ways to immigrate legally. Yet you continue to offer the spirit of *la lucha y solidaridad* through the decades.

We invite up Hugo Aguilar and his family, and Dianeth Lopez and her family to receive these flowers. Hugo was detained by ICE for over a year, and recently released through the leadership of his family, many of you, and larger immigrant rights networks. Dianeth continues to bravely fight for the release of her husband Raul, with over a year and a half in detention.

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To our Filipinx ancestors

After decades here in California as a vital part of the California agricultural economy, racism and labor strife targeted you as the “Filipino problem.” The government sought to deport and forcibly repatriate thousands of you, especially as you went from being considered “U.S. Nationals to illegal Aliens” overnight in 1935. Those who were sent back to the Philippines often spent their last nights detained here in Angel Island, knowing they would never be allowed to come back. Yet those of you who stubbornly remained here in California invoked the spirit of struggle and unity with brave labor strikes and a Filipino-Mexican union of fieldworkers, roots of the United Farm-workers today.

We invite up Sammy Gutierrez and the Filipino Advocates for Justice team to receive these flowers. FAJ began in 1973 to respond to the discrimination faced by Filipino immigrants. They continue to organize and empower 130,000 Filipinos in who call the East Bay their home.

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To our African Ancestors

Though you came to Angel Island in few numbers, the few who did were subject to the racial bias and assumptions of US immigration laws and practices. The cases we know of were deported at once due to your color and race. Today we are enriched by the contributions and diversity of African and black immigrants and refugee communities across our country. Yet today, black immigrants face the highest rate of immigration detention and deportation. And thousands are currently denied entry due to the Muslim ban and drastic cuts to the US refugee program.

We invite up Adoubou Traore to receive these flower. He is a leader of the African Advocacy Network, which provides African and Afro-Caribbean immigrants with legal services, dignity and cultural resources.

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To our Cambodian, Lao, Hmong, Vietnamese Ancestors

You suffered immeasurable pain, loss of life and destruction of your homes and villages due to 20 years of US war and bombings. War turned you into refugees, separated your families, and sent you to refugee camps not knowing what the future would bring. Coming to the US, you were met with isolation, racism, poverty, and violence. Yet, somehow you survived and made your way in a new land. You did your best, but some could not escape the cycle of pain, trauma and violence. Despite this being your country, many of you are now threatened with detention and deportation back to a place you don't even know. Yet your witness and love, offer us a path to redemption, healing and human understanding.

We invite up Ny Nourn, Danny Thongsy, and Borey “PJ” Ai to receive these flowers - all are Southeast Asian community leaders personally impacted by incarceration and detention, who are now fighting for the freedom of those incarcerated and at risk of deportation

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To all those unnamed and unrecorded, to the particular hardships faced by women and LGBTQIA migrants detained here...

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Behind prison walls and barbed wire
Whose hopes and dreams are met with suspicion, hate,
Separation, humiliation, lengthy interrogations.
Not knowing if not knowing when, not knowing
Helpless, hopeless, aching, and in despair.
We mourn for we do not want your pain to go ungrieved.

We honor the ways you survived and endured.
Scratched poetry on wooden walls, refusing silence,
Your hearts' cries stand as testament to injustice.
Your attempts at suicide ring out your pain and resistance
Imprisoned, yet organized to help one another you fought for survival
We honor you, for we, too, need your resilience and fighting spirit.
Those strangers who visited, provided aid and comfort,
Those who offered hope, gifts, mercy and compassion,
Those who witness, supported spoke out,
We honor you, for we too, want to believe that we will do the same.

Help us to see the common suffering of all
Help us to see that the immigrants and the prisoner is not the enemy.
Help us to see that what happened yesterday is happening today.
Help us to tell your stories and to listen to each others.

(English) To you who came before us, **we come here to remember.**

(Chinese) 對於那些被遺忘的人, 我們來這裡記住, **we come here to remember.**

(Spanish) A este lugar a donde viniste antes, venimos aquí para recordar, **we come here to remember.)**

STORIES of the PRESENT:

Ny Nourn - Survived and Punished Coalition,
Yuri Kochiyama Fellow at the Asian Law Caucus

Danny Thongy - Spoken Word Poem

*Honoring all community members directly
impacted by immigration detention or
incarceration today - invitation to come forward
to receive flowers.*

Borey "PJ" Ai - Prayer

Rabbi Dev Noily - Closing Reflection

