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Bringing Anti-Racism into Historical Explanation: The Victoria Chinese Students' Strike of 1922-3 Revisited

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Résumé de l'article

La théorie antiraciste nous amène à nous interroger sur la construction sociale et sur la nature contestée des catégories raciales. Le présent article applique cette théorie antiraciste à l'étude de la grève des étudiants chinois, qui se déroula en 1922-1923, à Victoria, en Colombie-Britannique ; l'auteur démontre que la ségrégation scolaire était moins une question de répartition d'étudiants qu'une question nationale : les Chinois, en tant que groupe discriminé, pouvaient-ils ou pourraient-ils faire partie du Canada tel qu'on le concevait comme nation ? Non seulement le discours racial marginalisait-il les Chinois à l'extérieur de cet idéal national, mais approuvait-il aussi le colonialisme en endossant l'occupation anglo-européenne du territoire de la Colombie-Britannique. Par ailleurs, il existait à Victoria un groupe important de Chinois nés au Canada, qui étaient passés par les écoles dirigées par le gouvernement provincial, et qui avaient assimilé les valeurs dominantes. Ce groupe avait acquis suffisamment d'assurance culturelle pour contester ouvertement les polarisations raciales. Il affirmait sa « canadianité » à sa façon et s'opposait vigoureusement à la discrimination. L'intervention des antiracistes anglo-européens dans la querelle contribue davantage à montrer que les catégories raciales étaient des constructions sociales contestées. Finalement, la *Loi de l'immigration chinoise* de 1923, qui frappe durement d'ostracisme les Chinois au Canada, explique la manière dont s'est conclue la grève des étudiants au début de l'année scolaire 1923-1924.

Bringing Anti-racism into Historical Explanation: The Victoria Chinese Students' Strike of 1922-3 Revisited

TIMOTHY J. STANLEY

On September 5, 1922, the first day of classes of the new school year, the elementary school principals of the Victoria School District in British Columbia called certain students out of their classes, lined them up, and marched them down the road. By order of the school board, these pupils were to be segregated from the rest of the student population.[1] As one school board trustee had publicly stated earlier, school segregation was "a method well-calculated to meet a difficult situation."[2] Certainly, as citizens and ratepayers, the adult guardians of those being segregated were entitled to have their children educated in the provincially controlled schools. But these children belonged to a group widely represented as so different morally, intellectually, and socially that many Victoria residents believed their mere presence threatened not only the educational progress, but the very physical and moral well-being of their own children.[3] Many even held that the older boys among the students were a

1 Some of the research for this article was conducted with support from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. For accounts of school segregation in Victoria, see Mary Ashworth, "Chapter Two, The Chinese," in *The Forces Which Shaped Them: A History of the Education of Minority Group Children in British Columbia* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1979), 54-90; David Chuenyan Lai, "The Issue of Discrimination in Education in Victoria, 1901-1923," *Canadian Ethnic Studies/Etudes ethniques au Canada* XIX/3 (1987): 47-67; and Timothy J. Stanley, "White Supremacy, Chinese Schooling and School Segregation in Victoria: The Case of the 1922-1923 Chinese Students' Strike," *Historical Studies in Education/Revue d'histoire de l'éducation* 2/2 (Fall 1990): 287-305. On the events of 5 September 1922, see "Chinese Pupils Start 'Rebellion'," *Victoria Daily Times*, 6 September 1922, p. 2 and "Oppose Plan of Segregation," *The Daily Colonist*, 6 September 1922, p. 1. At no point was the segregation of the handful of Chinese high school students seriously proposed. It would have been far too expensive.

2 "Aim Resolutions Against Orientals," *The Daily Colonist*, 29 November 1921, p. 3.

3 On school segregation more generally in British Columbia at this time, see Timothy J. Stanley, "'Carrying into the schools what already exists in every other institution of society': Colonialism and the Discourse on Chinese School Segregation in British Columbia during the Early Twentieth Century," *International Journal of Educational Policy, Research and Practice* 1/4 (2000): 453-469.

sexual menace to their own children of tender years, and especially to girls,[4] while in January 1922, the most important official of the Victoria School District, the Municipal School Inspector George H. Deane, had urged the board to segregate all of these students for "sanitary" reasons.[5]

However, segregation was not really a response to the differences between this group and other residents of the city. An historical interpretation informed by anti-racism suggests that it occurred because of the fundamental *similarity* between groups. Anti-racism draws attention to racialization, the cultural practices of representation and exclusion through which people are sorted into socially constructed and contested categories of "race." A process of racialization is particularly evident in the Victoria school segregation dispute. The cultural construction of the children being segregated and of their adult guardians as permanent aliens to the "imagined community"[6] of Victoria glossed the many ways in which they had long been and were increasingly similar to those from whom they were being segregated. They were no more (and no less) alien to the territory that had become British Columbia than were any other non-Aboriginal inhabitants. Most of the students being segregated were Canadian-born British subjects.[7] At least one was the daughter of a native-born Victorian,[8] a claim to roots in the city that few others residents at that time could match. Allegations about the threats posed by these students were also unfounded. Those being segregated were at most one or two years older than their classmates, something not unusual in a school system where grading by student reader level (first primer, second primer, first reader, second reader, etc.) commonly produced multi-aged classrooms. As a published list of the names of 112 of the students and their class standings shows, far from retarding others' progress, their academic performance was often above their class averages.[9] The sexual menace of the older boys in the group, if it had ever existed, was already contained; first in 1915 and continuously since 1919, boys more than two years older than the average for their grade level attended special classes at the Rock Bay School where they had little contact with other students.[10] As for the alleged health

4 For an illustration of the phantasms surrounding co-education with older boys, see Hilda Glynn-Ward [Hilda Glynn-Howard], *The Writing on the Wall* (Vancouver: Sun, 1921). See also Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991), especially "The White Slavery Panic," 4-103.

5 "Says Chinese Are Menace in Schools," *The Daily Colonist*, 21 January 1922, p. 9.

6 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

7 See Letter from P. Lee, "Chinese Segregation," *The Daily Colonist*, 15 October 1922, p. 4.

8 "Chinese Pupils Start 'Rebellion'," *Victoria Daily Times*, 6 September 1922, p. 2

9 G.W.Cumyou, "Chinese Segregation," *The Daily Colonist*, 26 November 1922, p. 14

10 Victoria School District, Minute Book, 1915-1919, 23 August 1916, p. 622 and 2 September 1919, p. 888. School District 61, Educational Heritage Archives and Museum, Victoria, BC.

threat posed by the segregated students, the municipal health inspector had informed the board earlier in the year that if sanitary conditions had once been inadequate in the area of the city from which these children supposedly came, it no longer posed any public health problems.[11]

Those being segregated were neither aliens to Victoria, nor ready to become such. They refused to be segregated. When the students arrived at their new schools, on a pre-arranged signal, they ran away before the principals could dismiss them.[12] Their parents and community organisations had decided to boycott the Victoria School District until the children were allowed to return to their former classrooms and schools. Despite multiple attempts at resolution, the "students-strike," as it was called, continued for the entire 1922-3 school year. Only at the beginning of the 1923-4 school year did the school board abandon its segregation plans and allow the vast majority of the affected students to return to their original schools and classes.

Anti-racism helps to explain various aspects of the dispute. It draws attention to the discursive processes through which the alleged alienness of those being segregated was constructed and contested. In so doing it identifies a link between racialization and Anglo-European settler colonialism. It also helps to explain how the majority of school trustees were able to deny racist motives for their actions, while at the same time deliberately applying the measure to the members of one racialized group alone. The contested nature of the racializations involved also draws attention to a significant group of people among those being segregated who had themselves assimilated dominant values and cultural capital through the provincially controlled school system. The fact that those being segregated had assimilated dominant values in turn helps to explain their determined resistance to the measure. Finally, anti-racist theory also helps to explain how the strike ended.

Anti-racism is a diverse body of theory and practice that resists easy characterisation, however most anti-racist theorists share a number of understandings.[13] Anti-racism begins with a commitment to fight racism; academic work on this

11 See Lai, "Issue of Discrimination," 55.

12 See "Chinese Pupils Start 'Rebellion'," *Victoria Daily Times*, 6 September 1922, p. 2.

13 Some key readings in anti-racism are Alastair Bonnett, *Anti-Racism*, Key Ideas Series (London: Routledge, 2000); James Donald and Ali Rattansi (eds.), *"Race," Culture and Difference* (London: Sage Publications, 1992); George J. Sefa Dei, *Anti-Racism Education: Theory and Practice* (Halifax: Fernwood, 1996); Robert Miles, *Racism*, Key Ideas Series (London: Routledge, 1989); Leslie G. Roman and Linda Eyre (eds.), *Dangerous Territories: Struggles for Equality and Difference in Education* (New York and London: Routledge, 1997); Michelle Fine, et al (eds.), *Off White: Readings on Society, Race and Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1997); David Theo Goldberg (ed.), *Anatomy of Racism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 295-318 and David Theo Goldberg, *Racist Culture: Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1993); Cameron McCarthy and Warren Crichlow (eds.), *Race, Identity and Representation in Education* (New York:

project can take the form of trying to understand the dynamics of racist systems so as to identify more effective strategies for mitigating, overcoming, or ending their effects. At least in English-speaking contexts, most anti-racist theorists see racisms as much more than individual prejudices or socio-biological fears of "strangers."[14] Rather, they see racisms as systemic social, political, and cultural practices that single out certain groups of people for exclusion while allowing others to exclude them. Racisms consequently shape the experiences of oppressed and privileged alike, and are accordingly constitutive of modern social formations, rather than incidental to them. While they may act through and in conjunction with other social phenomena such as class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and nationalism, they cannot be reduced to them. Within the last ten years, many scholars have also adopted an anti-essentialist approach, preferring to see racisms as contextually specific, rather than as having a fixed essence.[15] Put differently, racism is not a singular phenomenon; there are many different kinds of racisms (institutional, economic, symbolic, etc.) and there have been many different racisms through history. Although people in Canada today are often most familiar with racisms based on skin colour, there have been many racisms based on other factors: for example, those involved in anti-Semitism, the Rwandan genocide, and "ethnic cleansing" in Croatia.

Anti-racism accordingly departs from common conceptions of racism as prejudice and discrimination based on taken-for-granted biological and/or cultural differences. Racisms based on skin colour, for example, assume that human beings can indeed be sorted into distinctly different and unproblematic skin colour groupings independent of their historical and cultural circumstances. Similarly, racisms based on cultural characteristics take for granted that these cultural differences actually exist and have consequences for people's moral qualities. By contrast, critical anti-racist scholars have noted that, for all their apparent permanence, racial categories are specific to particular

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Routledge, 1993); M. Ibrahim Alladin (ed.) *Racism in Canadian Schools* (Toronto: Harcourt Brace, 1995); Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, *The Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism in 70s Britain* (London: Hutchinson in association with the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, 1982); E. Ellis Cashmore, *The Logic of Racism* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987); P. Cohen and H. S. Bains (eds.) *Multi-Racist Britain* (Houndsmill, Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1988); Michael Omi, Michael and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States from the 1960s to the 1980s* (New York and London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986); M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Feminist Geneologies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

14 For an account of racism as a form of xenophobia, see Tahar Ben Jelloun, *Le racisme expliqué à ma fille* (Paris: Seuil, 1999). See also Christian Delacampagne, *L'invention de racisme : Antiquité et Moyen Age* (Paris: Fayard, 1983).

15 In *Racist Culture*, Goldberg analyses the shared features of different historic racisms and is careful to avoid arriving at a definition of racism in favour of identifying what he calls "conditions" for racism. Key critiques of essentialist anti-racism are in Donald and Ali Rattansi (eds.), *"Race," Culture and Difference*.

contexts.[16] A body might be defined one way in one context and another way in a different context. For example, from the 1950s to the1970s in Britain, the term "Black" commonly referred to people who had migrated there from former British colonies in Asia and Africa. Thus, the term grouped people ranging from diasporic Afro-Caribbeans to Hong Kong Chinese and marked them as a single group in relation to "whites." The process was not entirely ascriptive as the term also enabled working-class elements within these communities to organise anti-racist solidarity.[17] In the 1980s, this category broke down and gave rise to what Stuart Hall has called "New Ethnicities."[18] During the same era, the use of the term "Black" to refer to people from Hong Kong would have been nonsensical in the United States or Canada. Even where categories remain stable, sub-groups can be differently sorted at different times.[19] Racial categories are not only fluid, their invention can be traced historically.[20] Even such apparently long-lived classifications as skin colour groupings, do not allow for the fact that entire peoples do not fit one or the other racial category.[21]

The fluidity and apparent arbitrariness of racial categories has led to a consensus among many scholars that "race" is a social construct, drawing attention to strategies of racialization – that is, of constructing racial categories along the lines of "socially imagined" difference.[22] For example, literary critic James

16 For examples of critical anti-racist historical scholarship, see Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995); Constance Backhouse, *Colour-coded: a Legal History of Racism in Canada, 1900-1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999); James W. St. G. Walker, *"Race," Rights and the Law in the Supreme Court of Canada: Historical Case Studies* (Toronto: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1997).

17 See, for example, David Parker, *Through Different Eyes: The Cultural Identity of Young Chinese People in Britain* (Aldershot, England: Avebury, 1995).

18 Stuart Hall, "New Ethnicities," reprinted in Donald and Rattansi, *"Race," Culture and Difference*, pp. 252-259.

19 See, for example, Naomi Zack, "Mixed Black and White Race and Public Policy," in Naomi Zack, et al (eds.), *Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality: The Big Questions* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 1998), 73-84.

20 See T.W. Allen, *The Invention of the White Race*, 2 Vols. (London and New York: Verso, 1994); I. Hannaford, *Race: the History of an Idea in the West* (Washington, DC and Baltimore, MD: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1996); and Frank M. Snowden, "Europe's Oldest Chapter in the History of Black-White Relations," in *Racism and Anti-Racism in World Perspective*, ed. Benjamin P. Bowser (Thousand Oaks, Ca.: Sage Publications, 1995), 3-26. George M. Frederickson, *Racism: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

21 The scientific status of the term "race" is also in doubt. It has long been known that genetic difference is greater within pre-defined populations than among population averages. Further, genetically defined "races" do not sort into the kinds of skin colour categories that are associated with popular racisms. On the fallacy of genetically distinct races of the kind associated with popular racisms, see L.L.Cavalli-Sforza, "The Genetics of Human Populations," *Scientific American* 231/3 (September 1974): 81-89.

22 See Robert Miles, *Racism* (London: Routledge, 1989), 7.

Snead has identified "marking" and "separating" strategies within Hollywood films as one way of constituting racialized skin-colour differences.[23] Feminist sociologist Ruth Frankenberg has shown how racialized geographies shape the memories of white women growing up in the United States.[24] Sociologists Richard Hatcher and Barry Troyna have shown how young people in Britain strategically use constructions from the surrounding culture within their peer culture even though they do not themselves support racist exclusions; in effect, some boys use racist expressions to rattle their friends.[25] Recently, cultural critic Paul Gilroy has argued that racial codes in English language popular culture are currently being bent beyond recognition to the point where the term "race" itself has little meaning.[26]

Racialization is a discursive process involving both certain kinds of linguistic performance and a material patterning of social landscapes. Racialized discourse marks and differentiates people according to their presumed bodily and/or cultural characteristics. It does this through representation, the fixing and communication of meanings. However, representations themselves are continually "at play"; the meanings that they communicate are constantly slipping as they are challenged, reinvented, or bent. There is no necessary pre-determined relation between a representation and what it means. Rather, both are highly contextual and open to multiple interpretations.[27] Within enduring racisms, racialized meanings are only relatively stable because processes of power fix them, because their distinctions are continually being re-affirmed, their consequences inscribed on people's bodies and psyches. The notion of absolute difference needs to be promoted continually in the face of constant challenges to notions of absolute difference arising from ordinary human interactions. In the case of racializations, racist social systems employ repertoires of representation and of power to fix racialized meanings which at any moment are in danger of becoming unglued because racisms always essentialize, but human beings do not have fixed essences. People bend racial categories through miscegenation. They sometimes escape the effects by "passing" or by moving to places where these categories do not apply. Where racializations are based on presumed cultural characteristics, other cultural

23 James A. Snead, *White Screens, Black Images: Hollywood from the Dark Side* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

24 Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).

25 Barry Troyna and Richard Hatcher, *Racism in Children's Lives: A Study of Mainly-White Primary Schools* (London: Routledge, 1992).

26 Paul Gilroy, *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000).

27 Stuart Hall, "The Work of Representation," in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. Stuart Hall (London, Thousand Oaks and New Dehli: Sage Publications, 1997), 13-74.

characteristics can sometimes be learned and modelled. Still another strategy is to exaggerate and satirise racist forms of representation to the point where stereotypes can no longer be credible. Given the many ways of challenging, bending, and circumventing racial categorisation, most racist social systems develop practices that forestall escape from their categorisations. These range from the representational (that is, reasserting notions of absolute difference), to forced geographic and occupational segregation, to state-organised discrimination, violence, and murder.

When viewed in light of the idea of an ongoing contest over racialization, it becomes apparent that the 1922-3 school segregation dispute was less about which classes students should attend, and more a struggle over racist categories, their contents, and consequences. On the one hand, the advocates of segregation were re-asserting these categories in the face of their apparent slippage. On the other, those being segregated were challenging these categories with their very being. Nor is it astonishing that this struggle over racialization took place within the domain of government-controlled schooling, as it was through these very schools that this new category of people who challenged the racist binaries had been constructed.

Although less polite terms were frequently used, those being segregated by the Victoria school board were usually called "the Chinese." This term homogenised and marked as separate from other residents of Victoria people who spoke Hakka, Mandarin, English, and four mutually unintelligible dialects of Cantonese, who enjoyed various citizenships (Chinese, naturalised British, and native-born British), and multiple ethnicities (primarily Cantonese and Hakka). It referred to immigrants as well as the Canadian-born, to those who had been in the territory since the Fraser River Gold Rush of 1858 and those who had only recently arrived.[28] Above all, it referred to people of multiple and complex moral qualities, in this respect no different from any other sample of humanity. Like migrants from Upper Canada, Britain, and the United States, those from China had resettled British Columbia within living memory, displacing the original settlers, the Aboriginal peoples. Like other migrants, they had brought their parental languages, their cultural practices, and hopes and dreams with them. Most of the adults had chosen to come to Canada, while most of the children (as with all other groups) were involuntary migrants. Men tended to migrate first, intending either to return to the old country once having made fame and fortune, or to send for their families once established.

28 See David T.H. Lee [Lee T'ung-hai], *Jianada Huaqiao shi* [A History of Chinese in Canada] (Taibei: Zhonghua Da Dian Bianying Hui, 1967); Edgar Wickberg (ed.), *From China to Canada: A History of the Chinese Communities of Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982); Anthony B. Chan, *Gold Mountain: The Chinese in the New World* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1983); Peter S. Li, *The Chinese in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988).

Like other residents of Victoria in the era before automation, "the Chinese" worked hard; children as well as adults, women more so than men. "The Chinese" too practised patriarchy, a system maintained through a gendered division of family roles and of work. "The Chinese," like Victorians of European origins, took their religious beliefs seriously and were not prepared to give them up just because they were the target of mission pressure or another religion promised a better life. Like almost all other first generation re-settlers, they had not entirely abandoned the old country but lived in constant hope of news from "home" and in the possibility of returning.[29] Like British Canadians, they were part of a larger transnational cultural community; the educated among them closely followed the political news from home and from the other places these people had resettled, and as often as not educated and uneducated alike were involved in helping relatives and friends make their way in the world. Meanwhile, for the members of the second generation, return to the old country was their parents' dream; Victoria, British Columbia, and Canada were their native places. "The Chinese" too had made Victoria, with their sweat, their talent and their wealth. If not for the fact of their segregation, they would not have been so different after all.

By 1922, there was also a sizeable group of racialized Chinese who were no longer segregated. Chinese sources indicate that the majority of children involved in the dispute lived in integrated neighbourhoods, while there are scattered references in the English-language sources to individual "Chinese" families living in previously all "white neighbourhoods."[30] Archival sources confirm that a number of middle-class Chinese families had moved out of the Chinatown area. Chan Dun, the proprietor of the Panama Café, his wife, Chan Koo Shee, and their twelve children lived at 2308 Wark Street.[31] The Canadian-born Lim Bang, who was the manager of the Chinese Department of the Bank of Vancouver, Victoria branch, and an entrepreneur in his own right, lived with his wife, Lim Ng Shee, and their four daughters at 955 Queen's Street as early as 1914. Lim was one of the first racialized Chinese to attend the public schools of Victoria.[32] George Y. Lee of the Lee Dye and Company,

29 See the collection of letters in City of Vancouver Archives, Yip Family and Yip Sang Company Ltd. Papers, Add.Mss 1108, Vol. 89-91.

30 See "Zhonghua huiguan shang xuewubu shu" [Chinese Benevolent Association sends school board a letter], *The Chinese Times*, 2 February 1922, p. 3. See, for example, the letter from Fred W. Grant, "That Chinese School," *Daily Colonist*, 27 August 1922, p. 23.

31 City of Victoria Archives, PR 164, Roy S.T. Chan fonds. See especially photographs 98502-20-751 and 752, and 98795-04-2363. Although the first two photographs are labelled as having been taken in the 1920s, the accompanying text indicates that eleven of the twelve Chan children were born in the house. Judging from the age of the children, the family must have lived there a decade or more.

32 Lim Li Bang fonds, City of Victoria Archives, PR 139. Note the date of 1914 on print 7339, showing his house.

also born and educated in Victoria, lived at 1051 Johnson Street with his wife, Yet Lan or Lee Chan Sze (or Lee Chan Shee) and their seven children.[33] As products of the provincially controlled school system, these people would have been fluent in English, and were also quite European in their lifestyles and tastes, even engaging in the same kind of leisure activities as other middle class residents of Victoria.[34]

However, the sense of difference most Victorians embodied in the term "Chinese" was so fixed that few could understand that their image of "the Chinese" was a phantasm of their own creation, more a statement of their own values than an accurate description of those the image allegedly represented.[35] The main strategy for racializing people from China and their Canadian-born children was to represent them as inexorable outsiders to the moral community of Canada and of Victoria. This strategy is evident in the comments of Municipal Inspector George H. Deane when he first raised the idea of segregating all racialized Chinese students at the January 11, 1922, meeting of the Victoria School Board. Deane was reporting on what the Board minutes record as "the large attendance of pupils at the Rock Bay School (Chinese), also the unsatisfactory condition obtaining in some of the graded schools by reason of the attendance of a large number of Chinese pupils," when "he stated [that] in his opinion the sanitary conditions of homes from which these pupils come should be enquired into."[36] The *Victoria Daily Times* reported that he claimed, "The Chinese should be forced to have a clean bill of health" before they entered the schools as "[t]here is more or less of a menace if these Chinese come from places that are not sanitary." Deane added, "There is a tendency – more than a tendency, a practice – for Chinese to live in unsanitary conditions."[37] He thus called for the segregation of all "Chinese students." Although Deane's comments were in part a reaction to conditions at the Rock Bay school, by homogenizing all "Chinese," they are a classic example of racialization. By advocating social exclusions on the basis of these racializations, they were also racist.[38]

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33 George Y. Lee, City of Victoria Archives, PR 223. See 23 E 4, folder 7. This shows the family as living in the house as of 15 February 1924. These fonds also contain many of Lee's educational records.

34 See, for example, the picture of the tennis party at the home of Lim Bang which includes Lim, several other merchants and entrepreneurs, and Lee Mong Kow, the official interpreter of the federal Department of Immigration. Lim Li Bang fonds, Print 7341.

35 This point has been made by W. Peter Ward, *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy Toward Orientals in British Columbia* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1978), 6-7.

36 School District 61 Educational Heritage Archives and Museum, Victoria School District, Minute Book, January 1920 to December 1922, p. 1133.

37 "Orientals Health Menace in Schools, Inspector Asserts," *Victoria Daily Times*, 12 January 1922, p. 18.

38 Here I follow Goldberg, *Racist Culture*.

Since September 1919, the Rock Bay school had been used for segregated instruction of immigrant Chinese who spoke little or no English, and who were usually two or more years older than other students at their reader level. The annual reports of the Department of Education show a steady rise in enrolments at the Rock Bay School from one division with forty-three boys and one girl in 1919-20, to three divisions, one of sixty-six boys, another of fifty-nine boys and one girl, and a third of forty-two boys in 1921-2.[39] These classes were large and unruly. In 1921-2, the Board even hired a Miss Lavina Dickman, a young Canadian-born "Chinese" woman, to teach in the school in the belief as Deane later explained, "that a Chinese woman would naturally be better adapted to teaching boys and girls of her own race than a white teacher."[40] However her class of forty-two boys, many not much younger than herself, proved too much for the unfortunate Miss Dickman and the Board voted against renewing her contract.[41] Conditions in the school were sufficiently bad that in April 1921 a Vancouver Chinese language newspaper, *The Chinese Times*, published a statement from the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA), the principal organisation of the Victoria community, condemning the actions of some of the students attending it. According to the CCBA, "It has recently been learned that among the more than eighty Chinese children who have come to Canada this year and remained in Victoria to study in the western people's elementary schools, there are those who do not follow the school rules: while in class they make noise and spit, they dance around playing with each other, and even go so far as to wipe their snot on the walls." The CCBA noted that the police had been called in to investigate an incident in which some money was stolen from a purse belonging to one of the teachers.[42]

It is entirely possible that some of the adolescent boys enrolled at the school had never previously attended school. The 1911 Nationalist Revolution in China and resultant on-going civil strife often disrupted its fledgling system of public education as warlords seized provincial revenues for their own

39 See British Columbia, Superintendent of Education, British Columbia, Superintendent of Education. *Annual Report of the Public Schools of the Province of British Columbia* (Victoria: King's Printer, 1920-23).

40 "No More Chinese Teachers Here," *The Daily Colonist*, 30 August 1922, p. 5. See also, *Chinese Times*, 9 September 1921, p. 3.

41 Ibid. There is again an element of racialization at work here. Miss Dickman was Canadian-born, the daughter of a Methodist minister, young, a woman, and may have had only limited knowledge of the dialects spoken by her charges, let alone knowledge of their origins as she may not have even visited China. Indeed the very factors that enabled the Board to hire her in the first place assumed a compliant nature (age, gender, family background) and familiarity with the Canadian school system, etc., meaning that she was unlikely to find common ground with her charges. This, however, was ignored as her "race" was assumed to produce an automatic connection, while her failure was again attributed to her "race."

42 "Yubu Zhonghua huiguan bugao zhao lu" [A notice from the Victoria Chinese Benevolent Association], *The Chinese Times*, 8 April 1921, p. 3.

purposes. Thus the funding of state elementary schools in China was uneven to say the least and even in Guangdong province, the place of origin of most immigrants from China, where clan associations often provided free schooling to clan members and sponsored the higher education of the best and the brightest, there was no system of universal education.[43] Some of the boys at Rock Bay may have been deliberately rowdy to protest their situation. Few likely wanted to be in school in the first place. As recent immigrants, they were under considerable pressure to work so as to support their families and to pay off the costs of their immigration, including the $500 head-tax. Thus, attending school was at best a distraction from their real task. The only reason to attend school was to learn English, something that could provide an economic return in the service-sector. However, as various spokespersons pointed out, being placed in a segregated class with other Chinese speakers was a poor substitute for being placed in a class of English-speakers. For example, in October, the Canadian-born Won Alexander Cumyou, a well-known entrepreneur and court interpreter, told the board that segregation would not give "the Chinese speaker" a grounding in English.[44] Finally, the large class-sizes in the school (in 1919-22, the smallest was forty-two and the highest was sixty-six)[45] suggest an indifferent quality of instruction. In any event, these boys recently arrived from China were quite a different group from the children of the long-established middle-class families who attended other schools.

Be this as it may, Deane's comments in January 1922 racialized all "the Chinese" by explicitly stating that so-called "Chinese" needed to be "separated" – not just those individuals whose personal hygiene was unsatisfactory or who did not obey school rules. In effect, he used the actions of a few to stigmatise a collectivity, whatever their actual individual practices. In so doing, he discursively created this collectivity. If his concerns were well-founded, his comments also demonstrated a stunning lack of consideration for racialized Chinese children. If some students were a health menace or a moral threat to children of tender years, they were presumably a threat to "Chinese" ones as well. Thus, if Deane was justified in calling for the isolation of particular students, by extending segregation to all "Chinese" pupils, he was putting other children at risk by placing them in the same classes. In the logic of this position, the idea that the health of children of "Chinese race" would be as threatened as that of "white" students by "Chinese" students wiping their noses on school walls was absurd. Racialized Chinese had long been characterised as

43 On education in Guangdong, see Glen Peterson, *the Power of Words: Literacy and Revolution in South China, 1949-95* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997).

44 "Chinese Meeting School Board Over Impasse," *Victoria Daily Times*, 3 October 1923, p. 7. See also "Chinese Submit Two Proposals," *The Daily Colonist*, 3 October 1922, p. 11.

45 See the annual reports of the British Columbia, Superintendent of Education, for 1919-20, 1920-21, and 1921-22.

practising unsanitary habits on the one hand and simultaneously being somehow genetically immune to epidemic diseases on the other.[46] The effect of this racialization was to mark "the Chinese" as unsanitary people outside the moral community of "white" society.

The schools chosen for the Chinese students were likewise "outside" the moral community.[47] The small Rock Bay School, although relatively close to Chinatown, was one of the oldest in the district. It had been closed for many years before its re-opening for segregated classes in 1915-6 and again in 1919. The King's Road School was also one of the oldest in the district. Although some of its classrooms had been used in 1921-2 to relieve overcrowding at the North Ward School, the rest of the school had been closed for seven years, ever since it had been condemned by the provincial school inspector as having "quite possibly the worst physical conditions of any school in the province."[48] Much of the building was actually below street level as over the years the old school had settled into its foundations while the surrounding streets had been built up. Meanwhile the newly established Railway Street School, which consisted of two wooden-frame buildings relocated to the site (the early twentieth century equivalent of portable classrooms), was remembered years later as "the chicken coop" school by those subject to the segregation order.[49] The idea that "Chinese" could not be kept in the same buildings as "whites" was so strong that in October 1922, when one of the trustees broke with the rest of the school board and called for racialized Chinese to be accommodated in the same schools as the other students (albeit in segregated classes), Deane claimed that the vacant rooms in these schools would soon be needed so that there would be "little room for Chinese classes at white schools."[50] For Deane, schools had become racialized as well; some were "Chinese," others were "white." This categorisation in turn draws attention to a broader racialized geography in

46 On racialized discourse, see Patricia E. Roy, *A White Man's Province: British Columbia Politicians and Chinese and Japanese Immigrants, 1858-1914* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1989).

47 For Deane's complete plan, see School District 61 Educational Heritage Archives and Museum, Victoria School District, Minute Book, January 1920 to December 1922, Minutes of the July 3, 1922 Meeting, pp. 1209-1210.

48 British Columbia, Superintendent of Education, *Forty-Fourth Annual Report of the Public Schools of the Province of British Columbia, 1914-15* (Victoria: King's Printer, 1915), A23.

49 Liu Guangzu (Joseph Hope), "Yubu Huaqiao sanshi nian fendou shiji" [The record of accomplishments of thirty years of struggle by the Victoria Overseas Chinese], in *Jianada Yuduoli Zhonghua Huiguan/Huaqiao Xuexiao chengli qishiwu/liushi zhounian jinian tekan* [Special memorial publication marking the seventy-fifth anniversary of Canada's Victoria Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association and the sixtieth anniversary of the Overseas Chinese School], ed. David T. H. Lee (Lee T'ung-hai) [Li Donghai] (Victoria: Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, 1960), Part IV, 6.

50 "Trustee Pleads in Broken Voice for Chinese Students," *Victoria Daily Times*, 12 October 1922, p. 7.

which the territory of British Columbia was apartheided into "Chinese" and "non-Chinese" territories.

This racialized social geography was articulated even by opponents to the board's segregation plans. In August 1922, the Victoria *Daily Colonist* printed a letter to the editor from Fred W. Grant of 1916 Princess Avenue. Grant wrote, "The vast majority of the Canadian residents of Victoria are becoming quite alarmed and disgusted with the continued encroachment of Chinese into those residential districts that should be entirely preserved for our own people." Although Grant admitted that "there may be no means of preventing individual Orientals from forcing their unwelcome presence into these communities," he objected to the city council and school board's efforts to "practically foist those unwelcome additions on to some unfortunate residential section." Grant pointed out that the results would lower property values and accused Victoria's "authorities" of having, as their ultimate intention, plans to make Central Park "a playground of the Chinese of this city."[51] He concluded by demanding that the Chinese-only Railway Street School be established in Chinatown.

Grant's letter racializes both "Chinese" and "Canadians" by juxtaposing one group to the other and painting them as mutually exclusive. It casts the "Chinese" in negative terms, using such loaded terms as "encroachment" to refer to the process of movement into his neighbourhood. It homogenises the "Chinese" with the term "Oriental" and suggests that they are "unwelcome," and lower property values. It strongly implies that "Occidentals" would be welcome and would raise property values. Through a string of associations, it gives substance to racialized binaries. "Canadians" are associated with "residents" with "unfortunate" and implicitly with "Occidental," and higher property values. In effect, the letter constitutes the nationalist category, "Canadian," as long-term, desirable inhabitants who are European in culture and origins, and who are being unfairly and improperly victimised by the government. By contrast, "Chinese" are associated with "encroachers" and "unwelcome," "Oriental," and lower property values. In effect, "the Chinese" are all that "Canadians" are not; they are undesirable short-term interlopers who are culturally antithetical to things European.[52] This construction of binaries is a racialization. Both groups are represented as homogenised (might not certain Anglo-Europeans lower property values, too?) and as mutually exclusive. The racialized schemata presented in the letter cannot allow for someone claiming to be both "Canadian" and "Chinese." As with all binaries, these two categories ("Chinese" and "Canadian") are mutually dependent. One cannot exist without the other. What it means to be "Canadian" is defined in relation to what it means to be "Chinese," and vice versa.

51 Fred W. Grant, "That Chinese School," *Daily Colonist*, 27 August 1922, p. 23.

52 See Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

Significantly, Grant's comments also articulate the Anglo-European settler colonialism that dominated British Columbia in 1922. His racializations are very much tied to questions of land and its control. In effect, "Canadians" are positioned as desirable re-settlers, in contrast to "Chinese" who are not. His discourse further positions the Chinese as interlopers in a previously existing "Canadian" landscape. It is "the Chinese" who are encroaching, not "Canadians." This Canadian landscape is also tied directly to the much larger cultural formation of Europe, to the "Occident," rather than to China and the "Orient." Furthermore, Grant represents occupation of the land in mutually exclusive terms. If Central Park becomes "a playground for the Chinese," somehow it cannot be one for "Canadians" too. Anglo-Europeans cannot control the land if the Chinese do. Finally, he also suggests that the proper role of government is to serve the interests and needs of Anglo-European re-settlers, not those of the competing Chinese.

Grant's letter also demonstrates the power of racialized identifications. The passion with which he writes would suggest that he lived in the immediate neighbourhood of the school. Actually, he lived ten blocks away. Thus, the moral panic his letter is articulating also points to his own position of racist privilege. Grant's letter not only racializes, it is racist. In effect, he is advocating the organization of social spaces on the basis of racializations. In a direct echo of the phenomenon noted by Kay Anderson with respect to anti-Chinese discourse in Vancouver,[53] for him "the Chinese" belong in Chinatown, Anglo-Europeans belong everywhere else. At the same time, in positioning the "Canadian" residents as victims, he excludes from consideration the meanings understood by those subject to the exclusion order, including the self-definition as "Canadian" that at least some of them held. Significantly, Grant is also implying that an existing system of racist exclusion is slipping: he points out that individual Chinese are moving into non-Chinese areas and that this cannot be helped. What can be stopped is a larger migration out of Chinatown.

To read the last five hundred years of European colonialism, of white supremacy, and of the Anglo-European invention of Canada, into a single letter to the editor may seem a bit much. However, it should be noted that Grant's views, far from being idiosyncratic, are consistent with a larger pattern of representation and racialized exclusion in British Columbia. That Grant's position is not idiosyncratic is shown by a petition and delegation to the School Board a few days after his letter was published. Fifty people who lived in the area of the new Railway Street School appeared at a special meeting of the School Board to air the same grievances. The leader of the delegation, H.S. Stevenson, told the Board that "the fringe of Chinatown . . .was all over the city, and it was

53 Kay J. Anderson, *Vancouver's Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875-1980* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991).

to keep that fringe in its proper place in the district known as Chinatown that he was opposed to the having of the Chinese school in its proposed location."[54] According to the *Victoria Daily Times*, he claimed that if racialized Chinese were allowed onto the Railway Street site, the result would be a "storm of protest" from parents "who would refuse to allow their children to [any] longer play there."[55] Another member of the delegation who claimed to be the oldest living resident of Vancouver Island, W. J. Wale, said that "Chinamen should be kept together, not allowed to straggle all over the city."[56] Thus "the Chinese" were racialized as properly belonging in Chinatown, the rest of the residents as properly belonging in the rest of the city and a territory used by the Chinese was racialized, as rendered it unusable by others.

The positionings evident in this discourse exactly articulate what might be called the racialized grammar of colonialism.[57] Although the actual forms of racialized representation may shift over time, on a long-term basis, grammars of popular racism define the same bodies in the same ways in relation to other bodies. A new racism emerges in which explicitly racist language is avoided although the same people are excluded as were formerly.[58] To illustrate: in Canada, today, few people would publicly express concern over the number of Chinese migrating to Canada. Instead they would express concern about the number of immigrants in general; the term "immigrant" becomes code for "Asian and African." In the case of Victoria, a similar grammar was at work. A pattern of representation follows a recurring logic. Multiple statements define people from China and their Canadian-born children as aliens who do not belong. In the process, these statements constitute people from Europe and their Canadian-born children as not only unproblematically belonging in Victoria but as being there "naturally." Meanwhile, this particular discourse serves another purpose because it is completely silent on the subject of First Nations people, who are rendered invisible. In effect, the dominance of the territory by people from Europe is not only rendered proper and just, it is rendered a natural fact that requires no explanation. So deeply held are the moral assumptions and categories at work here that, to many Victorians of the day, the local dominance of Europeans was unquestionable. This is a classic example of how a discourse constitutes knowledge of a subject. Like all such discourses, it was the product of historical invention.

54 "Ratepayers Speak Mind to Trustees," *Daily Colonist*, 29 August 1922, p. 1.

55 "Hear Views of Opponents to School Location," *Victoria Daily Times*, 29 August 1922, p. 7.

56 Ibid.

57 I borrow the concept of a grammar from Fazal Rizvi, "Children and the Grammar of Popular Racism," in *Race, Identity and Representation*, eds. McCarthy and Crichlow, pp. 126-139.

58 Martin Barker, *The New Racism: Conservatives and the Ideology of the Tribe* (London: Junction Books, 1981).

The definition of people in racialized terms, the exclusion of some and the inclusion the others, had longed been tied to the project of asserting Anglo-European dominance and control over the territory of British Columbia. People from China had entered the territory at the same time as Anglo-Europeans. However, unlike African Americans from California or the Pacific Islanders known as Kanakas, so-called "Chinese" entered the territory with little connection to the Anglo-European colonisers, and by the 1870s, they were as significant a group in British Columbia's population as were Europeans and First Nations people.[59] To consolidate Anglo-European control over a largely Aboriginal territory, successive British Columbia governments racially organised the political, social, and geographic spaces of British Columbia. Immediately following Confederation, people of "Chinese race" and First Nations people were barred from participating in the political processes of the new government through disenfranchisement. The loss of other political rights followed, as the political exclusion of racialized Chinese was also linked to Anglo-European control over the land. Chinese, along with First Nations people, were barred from pre-empting land; in effect, lands controlled by the new government were reserved for Anglo-Europeans. In 1885 when provincial disenfranchisement was extended to the federal level, Sir John A. Macdonald characterised the Chinese as "aliens" who contrasted with "the British." Some members of parliament contested his comments, arguing that some of "the Chinese" were as good British subjects as he was.[60] J.-A. Chapleau, Sir John A. Macdonald's Quebec lieutenant and former Chair of the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration, justified Chinese disenfranchisement by citing a private remark made to him by John Sebastian Helmcken, one of the longest established re-settlers in British Columbia, to the effect that the English wanted to be in the territory themselves and so did not want any others to be there.[61] By 1922, to most people in British Columbia, the racialization of "the Chinese" as alien and as "un-Canadian" had become common-sense.

Significantly, the idea of segregating all Chinese pupils in Victoria's schools was one of several measures, including a prohibition on the ownership of real property, proposed by a Victoria Chamber of Commerce committee in 1921. Other measures included rigid enforcement of bylaws on shop closings and an attempt to raise "Oriental" standards of living by the rigorous enforcement of public health laws. These measures were aimed at preventing racialized Chinese and other Asian immigrants from entering middle-class areas of the economy and allegedly competing unfairly against their Anglo-European coun-

59 Robert Galois and Cole Harris, "Recalibrating Society: The Population Geography of British Columbia in 1881," *The Canadian Geographer*, 38/1 (1994): 37-53.

60 See the debate on *Dominion Franchise Act*, 14 May 1885, Canada, House of Commons, *Debates* (Ottawa: MacLean, Roger, 1885), esp. 1579-1591.

61 Ibid.

terparts. When asked by the *Daily Colonist* about the rights of those Chinese who already owned land in Victoria, one of the members of the committee, John L. Beckworth (who was also a member of the school board and its chair throughout much of 1922), suggested that City Council should look into and stop "Chinese" from building homes in the exclusive Rockland District, adding, "The mixture of whites and Chinese in the public schools is abominable." Another member of the Chamber of Commerce committee, who became a member of the school board member during the segregation dispute, dissented from the prohibition on property ownership, but only because he thought worse results would ensue. In his minority report, Christian Sivertz claimed that such a ban would push the Chinese into trade and commerce, which would foster even greater competition between whites and Chinese. Sivertz also urged that a distinction be made between naturalized citizens and other Chinese, and stated that he would oppose any limitation of the rights of citizens. Nevertheless, it was Sivertz who praised the proposals on school segregation as "a method well-calculated to meet a difficult situation."[62]

This grammar of popular racism and colonialism enabled the majority of school trustees to deny that they were motivated by "racial prejudice" despite the fact that the measure so evidently applied to racialized Chinese only, whether or not they spoke English.[63] During the weeks following the start of the students' strike, the trustees were pilloried in the English-language newspapers by a series of letter writers who accused them of racial prejudice, of being anti-Christian, and of violating the rights of British subjects. While tending to attribute the dispute to the actions of few trouble-makers, board members were increasingly frustrated that the parents and adult guardians of the children involved in the strike had not responded to the board's arguments or ultimata, and became convinced that they had not succeeded in explaining their actions sufficiently to those affected.[64] In mid-October, they took the extraordinary step of publishing their own statement on the dispute. Remarkably, this statement makes no explicit reference to "the Chinese." Instead, it claims that the measures applied to "pupils of foreign extraction who were deficient in English" and more specifically to those students in the junior grades in the North Ward, and those from other districts within a reasonable distance of the schools, who "on account of their deficiency in the English language" needed special instruction in English. It claimed that the new accommodations were better than those used previously, and relieved "congestion" at certain schools.

62 "Aim Resolutions Against Orientals," *The Daily Colonist*, 29 November 1921, p. 3.

63 The term "racism" does not exist in English discourse during this era. It comes into usage much later. See, for example, Miles, *Racism*.

64 For accounts of the chronology of the strike, see Ashworth, "The Chinese"; Lai, "Discrimination in Education"; and Stanley, "White Supremacy, Chinese Schooling and School Segregation."

They were also allegedly more economical. Finally, it claimed, "The board has put into effect no policy based on racial segregation" and that "[w]ith but comparatively few exceptions, it is simply demanding that . . . pupils of foreign extraction . . . who will benefit by special instruction in English, attend the classes . . . organized for such purpose."[65] Although the Board's statement may not explicitly racialize "the Chinese," it still enacts racism by putting those who are being segregated into the position of being deficient in English, and being of "foreign extraction," and by refusing to take seriously their own self-representations to the effect that they were neither. In addition, the board's statement articulates colonialism by claiming, in effect, that those of European origins and who were native English speakers were not somehow also "foreign" to the territory and had or should have privileged access to its schools. In other words, it naturalises the Anglo-European occupation of the territory and constitutes non-English-speaking "foreigners" as outsiders to that occupation. In addition, given the dominance of the racialized representations of "Chinese" and "Canadians," few residents of Victoria would have mistaken their references to those of "foreign extraction" and "deficient in English" for anything other than "the Chinese." This is a classic example of the new racism: racist exclusions continue without explicitly racist markings.

By 1922 in Victoria, there was a well-established discourse that linked colonial control over the territory of British Columbia to the enforced exclusion of racialized Chinese, in part through racist school segregation. There is also some evidence within this discourse that racialized Chinese people were seen as beginning to move out of Chinatown into formerly "white-only" neighbourhoods, and that they were also perceived as imminently in danger of moving into middle-class occupations where they would compete directly against white professionals. It also strongly suggests that segregation of the racialized Chinese was believed necessary in order to prevent these things from happening. This interpretation is further supported by the counter-discourse of the racialized Chinese themselves.

If a dominating discourse racialized the Chinese as outsiders to the moral community of Victoria, the subjects of this discourse responded by asserting the morality of their stance and by directly challenging racialized binaries. For example, the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association responded to Deane's charges of unsanitary practices in a letter addressed to the Board, dated February 10, 1922, and reproduced in *The Chinese Times*. In it, the CCBA called Deane's comments "absurd." The letter noted that the majority of the students in the Victoria schools lived in "the Western people's streets with white people for neighbours" and that "as for those who live in Chinatown, they have

65 "Segregation Plan to Aid Efficiency of Public Schools," *Victoria Daily Times*, 21 October 1922, p. 24.

long been subject to inspections of the Municipal Health Inspector." In effect, the writers were claiming that the "Chinese" did not have the racialized qualities attributed to them. The letter further noted that a non-racialized policy would not threaten other children: "[s]everal [students] who have been ill have been sent home by their teachers," while any that had caused disturbances were also sent home. The CCBA further pointed out that pupils were well aware of the potentially hostile climate surrounding them, claiming that in the presence of their "enemies," Chinese pupils were more likely to be well-behaved. It rejected the suggestions that somehow Chinese pupils were retarding the academic progress of others, since several had graduated from the district's schools with the highest distinctions and had gone on to university. The CCBA noted that "all locally born Chinese students should received equal education" with other students, and called for anti-racist solidarity by pointing out, "Today what is being done to the Chinese, tomorrow will be done in succession to Italians, Germans, Russians, French, Americans, Irish and Japanese." It concluded by suggesting that if Deane's "unbelievable" comments led to segregation, it would be opposed by "the whole of the Chinese people."[66]

Thus, those racialized as "Chinese" and positioned as health menaces by Deane's discourse directly contested his claims; in effect, they responded that they were in the same position as others and hence that the racializations had no basis in fact. Also significantly, the letter claimed that most racialized Chinese children in the Victoria school district lived in racially integrated neighbourhoods, confirming that the previously existing geographic apartheid was beginning to break down in Victoria. The CCBA explicitly rejected racialized categories, arguing instead that all native-born should have the same rights.

Perhaps the strongest challenge to the racialized binaries came not from the CCBA, but from a group of second-generation Chinese. Indeed, it seems to have been primarily the extension of the previously existing system of segregating immigrant Chinese children to Canadian-born, second-generation Chinese that drew the ire of the strikers. In part, the reason was social class. Because of immigration restrictions, there were relatively few intact conjugal families in Victoria's "Chinese" community in 1923, and any that were present tended to be those of well-to-do merchants and entrepreneurs, the only families exempted from head tax regulations. Significantly, as the Chinese-only economic sector was stagnant, these families needed access to English Canadian schooling to maintain their class positions. They needed entry into the professions and semi-professions. Consequently for middle-class families more limited access to schooling was a considerable disaster.

66 "Zhonghua huiguan shang xuewubu shu" [Chinese Benevolent Association sends school board a letter], *The Chinese Times*, 2 February 1922, p. 3.

Clearly, the position of the second-generation protesters presupposed knowledge of the dominant group's cultural capital. A significant group of racialized Chinese had already used the public schools to gain this cultural knowledge, as is evident in the ease with which they used the English-language newspapers to expose the racism underlying the school board's actions. For example, in the days following the start of the boycott, several letters to the editor in Victoria's English-language dailies questioned the school board's motives. G. Won pointed out that the overwhelming majority of school principals in Vancouver, "a city with five times the more population in Chinese students than Victoria," had voted against segregation. After calling for the return of all students to their original classrooms, he concluded, "the evidence shows one cannot come to any conclusion other than that the attitude of the Victoria Board of School Trustees is one of discrimination."[67] Quon Y. Yen, a Victoria merchant, questioned the reasons for the school board's actions. After pointing out that it could not be because of sanitary issues as the Chinese children were clean, nor academic ones as many were at the top of their classes, he asked, "Why select the Chinese and not discriminate against the other nationalities? These children are British born and are here to stay and become citizens of Canada." He suggested that it was segregation that created prejudice and concluded by asking, "Surely [the trustees] are not moved to act simply out of racial prejudice?"[68] A third letter, signed by Kwong Joe (most likely Joseph Hope, also known as Low Kwong Joe) dismissed the Board's claim that segregation was in the best interests of the students themselves as a "smokescreen" covering the "sinister purposes" behind its "prejudiced actions." He claimed, "the Chinese residents cannot but come to the conclusion that the School Board in taking this action were [sic] under the unholy influence of the [anti-] Oriental agitators, who either have forgotten or did not possess the virtues of the teachings of the Christian religion, virtues to make what is known as the brotherhood of men no matter what race or from what class he may spring." He then sarcastically pointed out that the Chinese had been residents of Victoria and had consequently enjoyed the benefits of a superior civilisation for only fifty years in contrast to the trustees who had received this benefit for 1800 years, and that consequently the latter must all be honourable men.[69] C.C. Lowe, self-described as a native-born Victorian, who had been educated "among the white boys," claimed that he had learned English with no difficulty and was aware of many others for whom this was also the case. He admitted that "a milder form of segregation" was justified for those few who did not speak any English at all, but wondered whether "the Board mean[s] to say that all Chinese pupils below

67 G. Won, "School Problem," *The Daily Colonist*, 10 September 1922, p. 4.

68 Quon Y. Wen, "Chinese in Schools," *The Daily Colonist*, 10 September 1922, p. 4.

69 Kwong Joe, "Chinese in Schools," *The Daily Colonist*, 10 September 1922, p. 4.

the entrance class [to the high school] cannot read or write well?" He then questioned the terms in which alleged difference was being constituted by the trustees by asking, "Are there not Chinese students who understand the language just as well as the Canadian children?" He claimed he was forced to conclude that "the city School Board is under the damaging influence of a few prejudiced minds."[70]

The strongest challenge to the racist representation of the Chinese came from representatives of the Chinese Canadian Club, an organisation of second- and third-generation people. In an October letter to the Victoria *Daily Times* on behalf of the Chinese Canadian Club, Low Kwong Joe, the club's president, pointed out that they were a group "whose future must perforce be with and in Canada" and that they were disturbed by the school board's actions as it would prevent them from learning English. Racialization would then be enhanced: "Being ignorant of the language we will be unable to take our part by the side of other Canadians, and we will then be pointed out as those who refuse to learn the customs or social life of the country – in fact, refuse to assimilate. It will have been forgotten by then that it was not because we did not want to learn, but because certain narrow-minded autocrats have taken upon themselves the responsibility of preventing our learning." Thus, in contrast to the racialization of ideas expressed in Grant's letter, he explicitly rejects the "Chinese"/ "Canadian" binary, and explicitly positions "Chinese Canadians" alongside "other Canadians." He further notes that it is the school board that is fostering this binary, not the natural characteristics of the Chinese themselves. Finally, in contrast to the view that the character of the so-called Chinese is fixed, he points out that they can "learn the custom" and "social life of the country." He then collapses racialized categories by asking his readers to imagine themselves in his position; he concludes by calling on "the citizens who have children to put themselves in our place and ask themselves if they would have accepted the edict of the School Board. . ."[71]

Low's letter explains what the stakes were in the dispute for people such as himself. For second-generation Chinese Canadians, schooling in the English-language public schools was the key to gaining the cultural capital and language needed to survive in a Canadian context. Through the board's segregation measure, and the accompanying inferior instruction in English, the entire position of the second-generation Chinese was being put in jeopardy. This kind of thinking clearly lay behind the decision of strike organisers to establish a Chinese-language school for the children involved.[72] If Chinese Canadians had

70 C.C. Lowe, "Segregation," *The Victoria Daily Times*, 14 September 1922, p. 4.

71 Low Kwong Joe, "Chinese Segregation," *The Victoria Daily Times*, 11 October 1922, p. 4.

72 "Yuduoli Zhonghua Yixue zhaosheng jianzhang yuanqi" [General rules for enrolling students in the Victoria Chinese Free School], *The Chinese Times*, 28 October 1922, p. 3.

no future in Canada, their future was necessarily in China. Either way, they saw schooling as preparing the way for this future.

Low's attack also seems to have stung the trustees. Their October statement specifically rejects the claim that the board had "disregarded its duty to all citizens."[73] But the idea that the trustees were motivated by the educational interests of racialized Chinese students was repeatedly refuted by the Canadian-born Chinese. For example, on November 26, the club secretary Gordon W. Cumyou, himself a third-generation Chinese Canadian, published a list of 112 Chinese students in the graded schools, along with their grade levels and their class standings, a list that they had earlier challenged the board to produce. The list showed clearly that ninety-five of the students were either above the middle of the standing for their classes or had been promoted. In other words that the so-called Chinese, far from retarding the progress of other students, were often among the top students in their classes and, far from needing separate instruction to learn English, spoke English very well indeed.[74]

The socially constructed nature of racialized categories is also demonstrated by opposition to segregation on the part of Anglo-European anti-racists. These latter employed a number of discourses that rejected the alienness of "the Chinese." One drew upon notions of Christianity to trouble the racist binary without actually collapsing it. Perhaps it is no surprise that this approach was used by Christian missionaries. For example, at an October Board meeting, the Reverend Robert Connell told the trustees that he and others were "in sympathy with the Chinese on this question," that the action taken by the Board was "not in the interests of Canadian and British principles," and that "the attitude of the Chinese has been a very reasonable one and that it is not fair to these, largely native born, to treat them this way."[75] A similar view was expressed by one of the trustees a week later. Mrs. Bertha P. Andrews rather dramatically broke ranks with her fellow trustees in mid-October. In what was reported as "a broken voice," Mrs. Andrews read a prepared statement into the record. She stated that she had not participated in previous discussions as she had been out of the city when the issue of segregation first arose and had been silent "hoping in the meantime that some amicable settlement might be reached." She called the Board's actions "a violation of the fundamental principles of British justice and even a greater violations of the basic principles of our Christian religion."[76]

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73 See "Segregation Plan to Aid Efficiency of Public Schools," *Victoria Daily Times*, 21 October 1922, 24.

74 G.W.Cumyou, "Chinese Segregation," *The Daily Colonist*, 26 November 1922, p. 14.

75 "Chinese Meeting School Board Over Impasse," *Victoria Daily Times*, 3 October 1922, p. 7. See also "Chinese Submit Two Proposals," *The Daily Colonist*, 3 October 1922, p.11. See also Minutes of the Special Meeting, 2 October 1922, p. 1238.

76 Minutes of the 11 October 1922 meeting, p. 1242. See also "Trustee Pleads in Broken Voice for Chinese Students," *Victoria Daily Times*, 12 October 1922, p. 7.

After her comments were challenged by Municipal Inspector Deane and the other trustees at the meeting, she added, "Some of the Chinese students are good Christians like ourselves. It is our duty to re-consider this matter."[77] Thus, Mrs. Andrews positions at least some of the Chinese as "like ourselves," directly challenging the either/or categorisations of the dominant discourse. The power of that latter position is demonstrated by the response of the other trustees who greeted Mrs. Andrews position with palpable ridicule, again insisting that they were motivated by the educational interests of the students involved.[78]

The struggle between the school board and the segregated students and their parents dragged on for the rest of the school year despite various attempts at resolution, including attempted mediation by the Chinese consul in January and a near-settlement in April. To maintain the strike, the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association established a free Chinese-language school for the children involved and organised major rallies and fund-raising efforts in Victoria and Vancouver.[79]

Given the amount of coverage that the segregation dispute received in both Chinese- and English-language newspapers, it is curious that very little was written about its ultimate settlement. At the beginning of August, *The Chinese Times* reported that preparations were under way to re-open the Chinese-language school for striking students, while at the end of August George Deane told the Board that the Chinese had approached him with a view of securing "the same terms as granted last Easter." After Deane told the Board that "even slightly better terms could now be offered the Chinese," the Board voted to leave it to him to secure their return.[80] On the first of September, 1923, the Anti-School Segregation Association in Victoria wrote to its Vancouver support group that the parents of the strikers had accepted the Board's latest offer under which 197 pupils would be able to return to their former schools. However, all beginning students below the second reader, presumably regardless of their knowledge of English, would have to attend the special school, meaning some six students who were over the average age for the beginning class, and eleven students who would attend at Railway Street. And even here, the teachers and principal had been instructed to send the students to the regular schools immediately after it had been determined that their English was sufficient. Thus,

77 "Trustee Pleads in Broken Voice for Chinese Students," *Victoria Daily Times*, 12 October 1922, p. 7.

78 There is an evident gendering at work here. The other trustees portray themselves as doing a necessary, even if distasteful task, and as not giving into weakness, unlike the tearful, soft-on-the-Chinese Mrs. Andrews.

79 "Kangzheng fenxian yanshuo dahui ji" [Notes on the Resist School Segregation Rally], *The Chinese Times*, 6 November 1922, p. 3 and "Kongqian Weiyou zhi yanshup dahui ji" [Notes on an unprecedented rally], *The Chinese Times*, 21 November 1922, p. 3.

80 "Kangzheng fenxiao jiaoxue zaixing kaixue" [The Resist School Segregation School again Prepares to Start Classes], *The Chinese Times*, 8 August 1923, p. 3.

although *The Chinese Times* proclaimed, "Resistance to School Segregation Achieves Victory,"[81] it was at best a partial victory. The trustees seemed to be suddenly more accommodating at the same time that they were still extending the system of segregation. Meanwhile the parents involved evidently felt that they had achieved what they could. It seemed as if both parties were too exhausted to stick to their proclaimed principles.

However, a more important development in terms of the so-called Chinese, their racialization, and their status in Canada, may account for the outcome of the strike. In May 1923, the federal government introduced legislation that seemingly permanently resolved the issue of Chinese alienness. The Chinese Immigration Act not only ended all immigration of those of "Chinese race," but required all such already in Canada, whether immigrant or foreign-born, to register with the federal government or face fines, imprisonment, and deportation.[82] The version of the bill passed by the House of Commons even provided that all "Chinese" found to be illiterate in English would face deportation. After lobbying by Chinese groups, including some from Victoria, the Senate rejected this clause. With the House prorogued, the government decided to accept the Senate version.[83] It seems that knowledge of English, the very thing at issue in the Victoria dispute according to the strikers, could define Chineseness and Canadianness at the highest levels of the state. Once the racialized Chinese had been fixed as alien at the highest levels of the state, the more local dispute in Victoria must have seemed less important to both parties involved. No matter what the school board did, racialized Chinese would still be alien. School segregation was less needed to fix racialized Chinese as aliens to the nation and the racist actions of the local school board paled in comparison to those of the federal government.

Elsewhere I have argued that anti-racism provides an alternative to the taken-for-granted nationalist frameworks that dominate historical writing in Canada and should produce a better history in accordance with generally accepted standards of historical criticism.[84] It should do so by providing better, more critical, readings of primary sources, by bringing into play a broader range of such sources, and by helping to redefine the contexts from which we can understand the particulars of the past. In this paper, I have attempted to illustrate the advantages of an anti-racist history by specifically calling attention to the contested nature of the racializations evident in the school segregation dispute as well as by introducing the salience of colonialism

81 "Kangzheng fenxiao yi de shengli" [Resistance to School Segregation Achieves Victory], *The Chinese Times*, 14 September 1923, p. 3.

82 Racialized Chinese are the only people who had to do this in order to live in the country.

83 Wickberg, *From China to Canada*, 144.

84 See Timothy J. Stanley, "Why I killed Canadian history: Conditions for an anti-racist history in Canada," *Histoire sociale/Social History* 33/65 (2000): 79-103.

as a context for understanding racialized discourse. The resulting analysis emphasises that racisms are not about prejudice and discrimination over naturally occurring or inevitable difference, but rather involve the fixing of invented racialized difference and concomitant organisation of exclusions based on these differences.[85] I hope it is also clear that language was not the real issue in the strike. If some children spoke little or no English, others caught up in the school board's segregation plans spoke it very well indeed. I have also attempted to show how racisms are resisted; as power fixes certain categories, people find ways of challenging them. However, racist systems are themselves dynamic. As certain measures are circumvented and categories bent, new measures and ways of fixing difference come into being.

Whether or not the members of the Victoria School Board were motivated by racial prejudice, by reasserting a racist social organisation that had started to slip, they were certainly *enacting* racism. It was precisely the similarity between the so-called Chinese who were being segregated and other Victorians that was the reason for their segregation in 1922. Segregation then was not so much *caused* by difference as it *created* difference. By 1922, a significant group of racialized Chinese in Victoria did not fit into the existing patterns of racialization and were challenging the social organisation of racism. Some racialized Chinese, mainly from relatively well-to-do merchant families, had used schooling to assimilate to the dominant Anglo-European culture of the era, had entered many of the semi-professions in Victoria as well as the retail trade, and had moved out of Chinatown. Some were even Christians like most other Victorians. Their numbers included a sizeable group of second-generation Chinese, whose presence in the territory was difficult to contest. These racialized Chinese were consequently bending the binaries that framed anti-Chinese discourse. Their very being directly challenged the white supremacist re-settler colonialism that dominated British Columbia, its representations, and its political, economic, and geographic patterns. School segregation reasserted dominance by forestalling access to the kind of public schooling that allowed access to the cultural capital of the dominant group. Only after the federal government had fixed racialized Chinese in Canada as people permanently outside of the Canadian state, and had forestalled any racialized Chinese from entering Canada (insuring the decline of the "Chinese" population already in Canada) was school segregation no longer a necessary strategy to maintain a racist social order.

85 This analysis follows Goldberg, "The Social Formation of Racist Discourse," in *Anatomy of Racism*, ed. Goldberg, 295-318 and Goldberg, *Racist Culture*.