

The Persistence of Anti-Chinese Racism in Vancouver

The stereotypical image of Chinese-Canadians as wealthy “yacht people” with mega-mansions who are responsible for Vancouver’s housing affordability crisis may differ from historical prejudices, but the principles are remarkably similar. Kay Anderson argues that white sentiments towards Chinese-Canadians were produced and reproduced through a lens of Otherness, no matter how the Chinese tried to define themselves apart from their race. Chinatown itself is not only called that because the Chinese lived in this enclave, but because it is partly a European creation. There are no other neighbourhoods in Vancouver named after the predominant race living in its boundaries; thus, the implicit conclusion is that the normative racial makeup of Vancouver is white.

The racial discrimination that created Chinatown also produced particular perceptions of the Chinese race. The *N* wrote in June that Vancouverites believed Chinatown was a natural outcome of the “herd instinct” of the “clannish Chinese” with their “habit of huddling in limited quarters of their own, directly opposed to our conceptions of civilized progress, morality, and hygiene.”

blamed for their wealth as the cause of increasing real estate prices. Lastly, the fact that these stereotypes persist, as though there is only one socioeconomic form to all people of Chinese origin, and that particular behaviours are linked to racial identity, indicates not much has changed regarding the issue of 'Othering.'

The Case of Low-Income Chinese-Canadians in Richmond

A problem arises when these stereotypes overlap with contradicting information. As income tax reports have been compared to real estate prices in certain neighbourhoods, some have questioned how it is possible to have such high percentages of residents report low incomes. The Vancouver Sun wrote an article titled "Thousands of Metro Vancouver mansion owners avoiding taxes," correlating neighbourhoods with high concentrations of low-income tax filings with the proportion of Chinese residents. Researchers pointed out that "most of the

not proven facts. Quick assumptions were made about the contradiction between low incomes and high home prices, correlating data to support the idea that 'those' Chinese-Canadians were trying to deceive 'us.' Earlier in the essay, I mentioned a comment that a health inspector once said in — that the Chinese evade the law. It seems this sentiment continues to pervade the European-Canadian imagination.

full-time workers in V Y and total full-time and part-time workers. Additionally, out of all the jobs that V Y residents have, percent are in the sales and service industry.

homeownership increased faster between 1995 and 2005 for immigrants. Carlos Teixeira points to a significant amount of Canadian literature on immigrants' housing careers, adding that "attainment of homeownership... for many immigrant households represents a steady and secure economic investment and a realization of the 'Canadian dream,'" and because many of them experienced prolonged difficulties in the rental market. Katharyne Mitchell was able to interview key informants, who told her that as a general rule, Hong Kongers who had average incomes (middle to upper middle class in Vancouver terms) tended to buy in Richmond, because new houses were large but prices were lower than in other Vancouver neighbourhoods.

Another possibility for how low-income households in Richmond acquired homes may be linked to the business class immigration program. Preston et al. suggests that though Chinese immigrants came with "sufficient assets to purchase housing upon arrival," they have found difficulty reproducing income in Canada. In Ley's research, he found that "Chinese immigrants who declared incomes below the poverty level were recorded for over 40 percent of households in 1995; compare homeownership rates of over 60 percent for the

immigrant trends in Metro Vancouver.

The most interesting statistic from V Y that was not included in any of the news article studies was the percentage of residents who were Canadian citizens. Consequently, assumptions and notions of who is “Canadian” are contested in this part of the discussion. Approximately out of V Y residents are Canadian citizens, and yet the public discourse about wealth and poverty in north Richmond centers around ethnically Chinese immigrants. Tensions have grown in the last few decades regarding Chinese migration into Richmond and the changes they have brought – not only ethnically, but spatially as well. These tensions may have had some influence

conducive conditions for housing speculation and low-paying jobs, regardless of race. It is undeniable that years and billions of dollars' worth of investment from Chinese, Hong Kong, and Taiwanese individuals has had an impact on Vancouver's housing market. It is true that tens of thousands of Chinese immigrants found themselves in Richmond, for personal and structural reasons. Urban spaces have changed as a result of the Canadian state's insistence of wealthy foreigners to live here. However, to say, whether explicitly or implicitly, that Chinese immigrants are the cause of Vancouver's most pressing urban issues due to their wealth, is problematic.

From the very start of Chinese settlement in Vancouver, the community's racial 'Otherness' segregated them from European-Canadian spaces. A number of legislations and policies from various levels of government "institutionalized the notion of a Chinese race as a salient public concept," while the structure of the labour market perpetuated income inequality. At the same time, they were the target of criticism for 'stealing jobs' from European-Canadians. Since the 1980s, new concentrations of Chinese immigrants in various neighbourhoods have given rise to new concepts – as a group of wealthy individuals 'stealing property' from European-Canadians. The B.C. government was a symbol of racial discrimination.

polarization and the suburbanization of poverty, particularly among racialized Canadian residents, should be taken seriously and future qualitative studies should be done to achieve a more accurate understanding of who is living in Richmond and their living conditions.

