

# When Chinese People Were Banned From the U.S., a Mexican City Came to the Rescue

**Somewhere in Baja California, Mexico, a community of around 5,000 people is celebrating the Chinese New Year festival.**

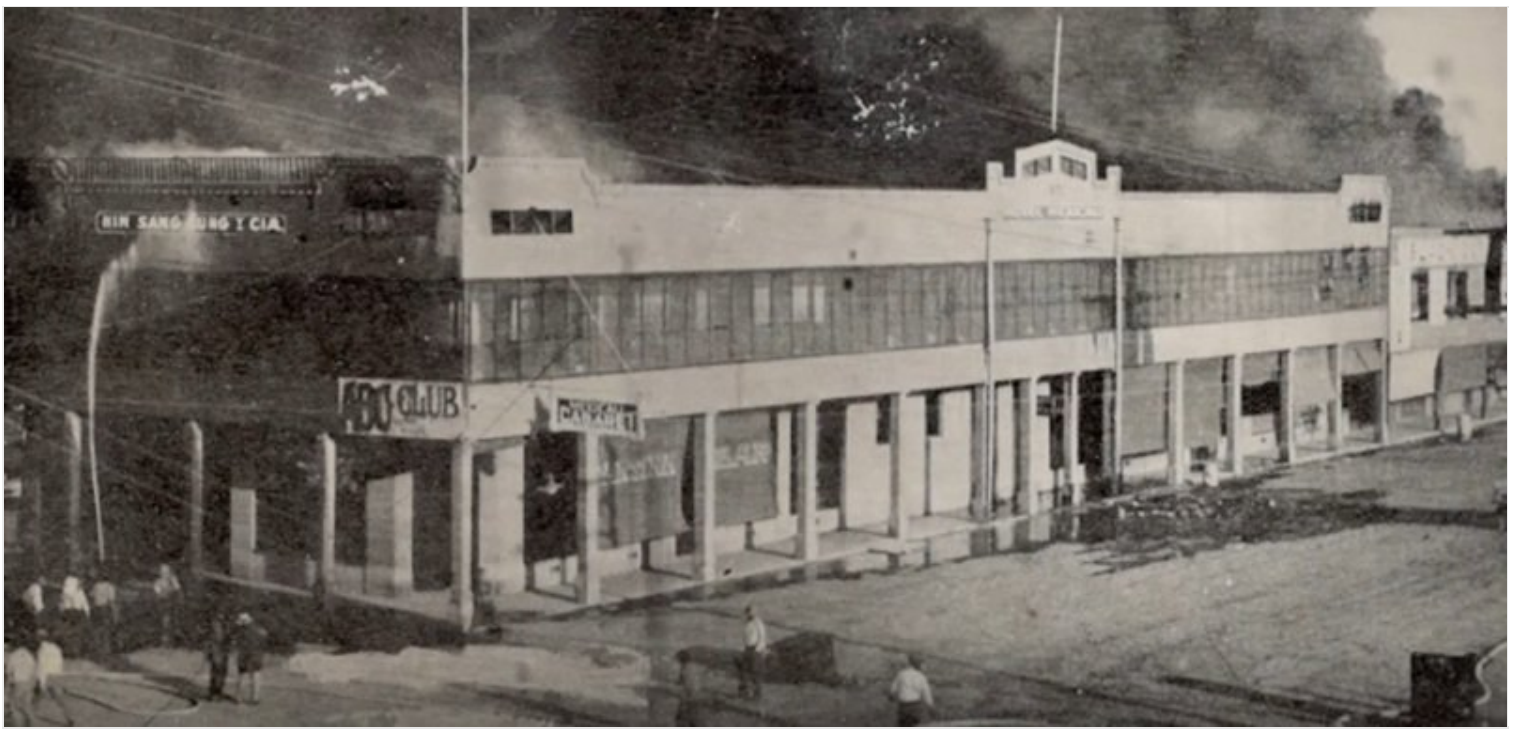
They are the residents of Chinese descent who have been living in the large Chinatown in Mexicali called La Chinesca, according to [San Diego Red](#). For generations, the city of Mexicali has provided a safe sanctuary for Chinese immigrants who, during a dark time in American history, were once shut out of the United States.

More than a hundred years ago, the U.S. government prohibited Chinese immigrants from entering the U.S. for a decade through the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, a policy fueled by growing anti-Chinese sentiment in the U.S. at the time.



Chinese immigrants who wished to migrate to the U.S. did so through Mexico, although many decided to stay in Mexico, finding work and a place to settle in Mexicali.

The city provided a sanctuary for Chinese citizens, who were able to find jobs in labor, providing a much-needed workforce in the region.



For a time, the Mexican governor of the Baja region, Estaban Cantú, began favoring Chinese workers over Mexican laborers for the lower wage they were willing to work for.

In time, tensions developed in the community leading to some Mexicans to commit violent hate crimes against the Chinese. The violence and the intense Mexican heat pushed some Chinese into building and moving into underground tunnels where they lived for a brief period.

Incessant flooding, however, would eventually force the Chinese to move back above ground years later. With Mexicali's friendlier environment upon their return, the "La Chinesca," was soon established.

Through the years, Chinese immigrants further assimilated well within the community, even allowing some to enter politics.

They would eventually form their own union called the **Asociación China de Mexicali**.

New migrants from China have arrived in Mexicali since 2000, with about 90% originating from Guangdong or Hong Kong. The influx of immigrants once caused the city to have the largest concentration of residents of Chinese origin in Mexico per capita.

Tijuana La Mesa District would later surpass Mexicali in 2012 for having more than 15,000 Chinese immigrants.

Today, the Chinese culture remains alive and flourishing in Mexicali, as the Chinese people have