

Karen Isaksen Leonard, *Making Ethnic Choices: California's Punjabi Mexican Americans*

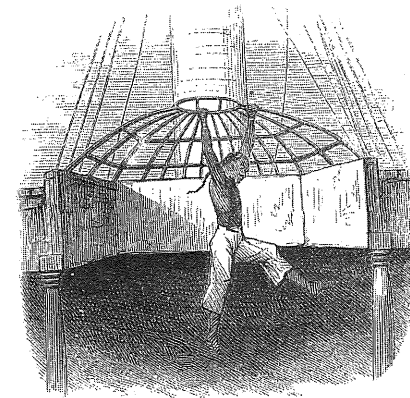
Gary Y. Okihiro, *Cane Fires: The Anti-Japanese Movement in Hawaii, 1865-1945*

Sucheng Chan, *Entry Denied: Exclusion and the Chinese Community in America, 1882-1943*

THE COOLIE SPEAKS

CHINESE INDENTURED LABORERS AND
AFRICAN SLAVES OF CUBA

Lisa Yun



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ADDENDUM: SELECTED PETITIONS

PETITION 2

On the fourth day of the second moon, according to Xian Zuobang (first-degree licentiate), Qin Abao, He Asi, He Aqiu, Zhang Fucai, Zhou Qing, Lü Jinyuan, Li Ajin, He Azao, Liang Agui, Liu Aguang, Wu Achang, Chen Shidong, Jin Awen (civilians) from Nanhai County, Guangdong Province:

A first-degree licentiate, I passed the prefecture examination under Master Yin, Minister of Education [of Guangdong], and became a student of the provincial academy, in the ninth year of Xianfeng (1859)ⁱ. In the next year, Pan Aheng, who lived in Panyu County, Foshan, told me that if I went to teach in Macao, I would be paid a hundred and twenty *yuan* each year. However, after arriving in Macao, I was abducted to work abroad. Other civilians, who lived in either villages or cities, were also abducted or deceived by gangsters hired by foreigners in Macao. Once we entered the Pigpen, we were not allowed to leave. Once we boarded the Pigship, we were not allowed to land. We were shackled and lashed according to their will. Soon we were shipped across the ocean. Once we got to the Havana Selling People House, our plaits were cut off, our clothes were changed, and people were allowed to choose and buy. Here, no matter how knowledgeable one was in China, one has to become a laborer. No matter what status one had in China, one will become a slave. If one is sold to a household to be a servant or a cook, although one still gets lashed, at least one will not be starved and will have fewer night shifts. However, not that many people are fortunate. If one is sold to work at brick kilns, bakeries, mountain hut or sugar refinery, one cannot prevent from working with feet shackled and work overnight shifts. Thousands of millionaires of sugar plantations make a profit by using this kind of cheap labor. The Chinese labors here eat food that is not even wanted by dogs and do work that is even hard for horses and oxen. We are lashed so often that our arms and legs break and bleed. Hanging, drowning, cutting throats and poisoning—all kinds of suicides take place every day among the Chinese laborers. People who were shipped earlier from Fujian or Guangdong Province signed a five-year contract. However, the contract was taken away by staff at Selling People House as soon as we arrived Havana. People who were shipped from

i. First-degree licentiate under the former system. After passing two exams, the first-degree licentiate was a formal student in the country. Most likely, this petition was written by Xian Zuobang and co-signed by other petitioners. The word "I" referred to Xian Zuobang himself.

Macao all signed an eight-year contract. No one knows who set down the contract period. In the earlier years, after finishing the contract, people often could spend ten *yuan* or more to find a godfather to wash heads so that they were able to get the freedom paper.ⁱⁱ Now, the officials collude with the merchants; even godfathers cannot help. If a Chinese did not have the proof issued from the owner, he could not apply for freedom paper from official.ⁱⁱⁱ If he did not have the freedom paper, the patrol could force him into the official workshop whenever they wanted to. In Cuba, the official workshop is no difference from the prison. People with an expired contract are called “runaways” and are locked up in the workshops forever, just like being locked up in official prisons forever. They just make a conspiracy to trap the Chinese workers to work at the official workshop forever since they do not need to pay us anything and also they can skim profits by binding us. Apart from the freedom paper, there is the Walking Paper, which requires a fee to renew every year. Without that paper, one could not walk on the street. If one wanted to travel to another town, one would have to ask the local officials for Traveling Paper; otherwise, one could be put into prison. Any Chinese who are handicapped and cannot work, or are expelled by the sugar plantation, or are very old and sick in the official workshops, need a Begging Paper in order to become a beggar. The Begging Paper cannot be obtained without a fee. As to the Go-Aboard Paper, the fee depends on how much money one has in savings. It ranges from a few dozen *yuan* to several hundred *yuan*. How dare a Chinese worker dream of going back to China? We witnessed that in the year of Ren Xu (1862), soldiers suddenly arrested the Chinese who already had the freedom paper and forced them to chip stones. This was called *jiandiela*; the Chinese were forced to sign contracts again.^{iv} Black overseers were so atrocious that there were cries everywhere. Thanks to the coming of an upright official in the year of Gui Hai (1863), the Chinese workers were finally released and received freedom papers so that they could earn a living. Later, once again, in the year of Xin Wei (1871), patrols intruded in the homes of the Chinese at night and took their freedom papers away, and then put them into prison, accusing them of running away from plantations. Fortunately, British and American consuls intervened, and they were released. But still, there are Chinese workers being resold into the mountains. Why are innocent Chinese so miserable here? Whenever Chinese walk in the street, they are yelled at and thrown stones at by Cuban people. If the Chinese resist, they will be beaten down by many people and be put in the jail. When the Chinese buy things from Cuban people, they are punched by the store owner if they try to abate the price. However, when local people buy things from the Chinese or have meals in a Chinese restaurant, the Chinese will be lashed if they ask

ii. “Wash head” referred to baptism.

iii. “Proof” means the proof of finishing the eight-year contract.

iv. Another term for “official workshop.”

the Cubans to pay. There have been Chinese who die in these incidents. We always want to know why people from other countries come and go freely and trade fairly in Cuba; anyone but the Chinese! Why are the Chinese abused even worse than Blacks? We always think of writing letters to warn all the other Chinese not to be cheated to Cuba again; but we find no way to send them out. Luckily we have your honor here so that we can file a plaint of grievance all together.

PETITION II

On the tenth day of the second moon, according to the petition by Zhang Luan, a military officer from Guandong, former Commandant of the Right Brigade in Tingzhou City who was awarded the rank of Brigade Commander because of military merits; Cheng Rongling, a Jiangsu native and Expectant Appointee for Police Chief of Guangxi; Mo Rongxian, a Commandant in the Jinxian County, Guandong; Chen Xuezhou, a Squad Leader by Recommendation from Guangdong Province; Lin Guo from Zhao'an County, Fujian Province; Li Chang and Tang Meilang from Jiayingzhou City, Guangdong Province; Lin San from Changle County; Gu Xiu, Gu Song, Zou Er, Zou Sheng, Lin Si, Lin Chang, Zhang Ping, Tian Fa, Yu Yangxiu, and Lin Man from Boluo County; Zhang Fu and Liang Gui from Guishan County; Chen Shi and Lin Nan from Jieyang County; Zhang Bing from Yingde County; Xian Qiao from Xin'an County; Luo San from Xinning County; Huang Yixing from Lianpingzhou City; Peng Liang, Huang Chun, Peng Jinbao, and Du Teng from Enping County; Chen Fu from Wuchuan County (civilians):

We were born and grew up in China, having a well-off life in China.^v Since the time of our grandpa's generation, nobody has ever heard of going abroad to make a living. The principle of running a country from ancient times is to grow in population for ten years and not worry about a large population. Rulers would only try to gather people, but not scatter people in four directions making temporary living in foreign countries, let alone let them fall into a deathtrap.^{vi} But in recent decades, China is doing business with foreigners;^{vii} unexpectedly there are Portuguese colluding with Spanish, also with the Chinese gangsters whose job is to abduct people. This practice originated in Xiamen and prospers in Macao. The accomplices are spread over prefectures, counties, and cities, and capture or abduct Chinese along the coastal line, and send them to the Pigpen, then ship them to Havana to sell as

v. This petition is very likely written by the four officials among the petitioners, because this petition begins with “*zhideng*,” (职等) which is how lower-level officials addressed themselves while talking or reporting to higher-level officials.

vi. Unlike other petitions, the first sentences here talked about how to rule a country. They reflected the status of the author(s), who were educated in politics.

vii. In the Qing Dynasty, emperors pursued a “Closed Door” policy until 1840. The policy shut the Chinese off from the advancing world and affected how Chinese viewed both foreigners and the world.

goods. Sometimes, they cheat us by honeyed words and phrases, telling us that it is very easy to become wealthy in Cuba without working for long time. Moreover, they tell us that the ship is going to Britain, Singapore, San Francisco, or New York, and other places, so that people will not be scared. But they cast their nets in every harbor and their schemes block every road. No matter the wise or the fool, we are all trapped. All this happens because Portugal and Spain are hard-hearted and lack moral principles. They lure people into greed and perfidy. They tempt people to violate laws and to commit crimes. As a result, the kindred of good Chinese people are separated; the branches of kinship are broken off. The island of Cuba is shaped like an alligator; the toxic air is suffocating, which is totally different from the places where we have been. Sugar plantations stand like trees in a forest and miles and miles of sugar cane grow there; there are more than thousands of prisons and tens of thousands of shackles. Voices crying out wrong and bearing pain, shapes of broken skin and flesh, and suicides by cutting one's throat, hanging, swallowing opium, and drowning are by no means isolated cases. The young and strong are willing to commit crimes to become prisoners while the old and weak beg for begging papers to become beggars. Do Cubans even have sympathy for us as humans? On top of it all, most of the Cuban officials are businessmen; sugar plantation owners always collude with them. If owners use brutal punishment, officials pretend they know nothing about it. If owners beat laborers to death, officials do not ask about it. In recent years, Cuban officials held up the freedom paper and do not issue one without large fees. They expanded the official workshop and have patrols to hunt for Chinese everywhere. If a Chinese is caught, they force him to sign a contract to work. Government officials do so as a favor for businessmen, as well as getting a share of the bondage money. These officials circulate Chinese laborers to gain pure profit. In this way, the Chinese pass through many hands and become all of Cuba's slaves forever, without any hope of returning alive again. For those who have finished eight-year contract, they should be given freedom papers and released, which is obviously reasonable. Instead, they are sent to the official workshop, working with their feet chained same as murderers and other prisoners. The ones who are not supposed to be locked up are all locked up; the ones who did not run away are accused as runaways. Have you ever heard of this kind of unfair political thing in the world, in history? Several years ago, because of no doctors for illness, no graveyards for the dead,^{viii} no way to send letters home, and no definite date to return home, the Chinese planned to set up an association with donations from every port and elected directors. Some righteous foreigners were willing to help. Unexpect-

viii "No graveyards for the dead": In China, a funeral is considered "the white joyous occasion," while a wedding is the red one. Chinese believe that people still continue on in an afterlife after death and that improper funeral arrangements can wreak ill fortune and disaster upon the family of the deceased. In ancient China, a proper funeral was a very elaborate ceremony, involving about twenty to forty procedures. It was considered an insult if a person did not receive a proper funeral ceremony.

edly, the Portugal officials wanted to break up the morale of the Chinese. They colluded with Chinese traitors and said that the Chinese would collect money for revolt. Then they persuaded the Cuban government to prevent the matter. Later, the Portugal vice-consul lured the Chinese to go to Cardenas to get fake papers. At the same time, he secretly contacted patrols to check their papers or to extort it from them. Most people who had genuine freedom papers were seized and resold to the mountains. How unfair and miserable! Just think, there are thousands of Chinese associations all over trading centers both in China and abroad. Have you ever heard any of them organizing to rebel against governments? Cuba has been in a civil war, which was caused by the Spanish, for several years. During wartime, every plantation owner forced the laborers to join the war. However, the Chinese would rather die than obey the order. They went away one after another. You can still ask around for their names now. In some sugar plantations, which were near the enemy's camp, and some workshop in La Trocha, no one ever heard of any Chinese who rebels. This is not because our Chinese are willing to requite ingratitude with kindness.^{ix} It is because we come from China, a land praising decorum. We do not want to do anything immoral. Cubans ought to feel grateful and ashamed but on the contrary they started a rumor from this incident and even found a way to lock up the Chinese. Do they even have morals? Since we were children, we studied literature or martial arts so that we could earn a scholarly honor or official rank.^x We did not even think of working overseas. Now, we are trapped on this faraway desolate land without any hope of escaping. We cannot devote ourselves to our country but disgrace her. What else can we say?^{xi} Only our hearts look forward to our country as eagerly as sunflowers look forward to the sun. Only our hopes grow as pea shoots grow after being plucked. Fortunately we can welcome your honor here so that we dare to reveal our miseries. We beseech your investigation and your rescue. As quoted.

PETITION 20

On the fifteenth day of the second moon, according to the petition by the licentiate Li Zhaochun from Panyu County, Guangdong Province; Wu Er, Lin Dexiu,

ix. To requite ingratitude with kindness is considered to be virtuous in Chinese society.

x. "Studied literature or *wushu*": In order to become a civil officer, one must study literature and pass several examinations, and "the military examination system progressed through the same stages as its civil counterpart. . . . To become a military licentiate, or *wushengyuan*, a man had to pass the district, prefecture, and qualifying military examinations [. . .] the only difference between military and civil examinations was that the military system lacked the extra reexaminations that had been interpolated in the civilian system." See Miyazaki, 102-104.

xi. This passage expresses the desire to dedicate themselves to the service of their country, but the concern about bringing humiliation to their country is an indication of their dishonor as Chinese officials.

Zheng Deru and Ye Er from Wuchuan County; Wei Zuo from Changle County; Yuan Er and Zhang Jiu from Xingning County; Xie Fu, Pang Erxian, Zhang Chang, Zeng Jin, and Xie Yulang from Jiayingzhou City; Zhu Yuan from Yingde County; Chen Bing from Dong'an County; Li An from Leizhou City; Wen Chuchen, Yu Desheng, Tang Zisheng, Zhou Maoting, Li Wenchu, Zhou Yougui, Li Desheng, and Wen Rizhang from Xiangtan County, Hunan Province; Cao Jun from Tianjin City; Tan Decheng from Longnan County, Jiangxi Province; Wan An, Zhang Wen, and Yuan Sheng from Ji'an County; Guo Sheng from Raozhou City; Liu Ming from Jianchang Prefecture; Chen Jinyuan from Jintan County, Jiang Nan; Huang Man from Shangyuan County; Yao Si from Fengtian Prefecture; He Chang from Guilin City, Guangxi Province; Jiang Linhang, Zhang Erding, Jin Nian, Lin Bai, and Zheng Yan from Quanzhou City, Fujian Province; Wu Wanzhen from Zhangzhou City; Zhuang Jiu from Longxi County; Hong Wei, Chen Zhen, and Wu Junzheng from Nan'an County; Lin Run and Shen Chao from Zhao'an County; Xu Gao from Hui'an County; Chen Qinglai from Pinghe County; Lin Youwen from Zhangpu County; Liu Xiunian from Heyuan County, Guangdong Province; Chen Fu from Suixi County; Zhang Run from Yingde County; Zhuo San and Xi Gao from Xin'an County; Deng Jin, Zheng Ying, Mai Wen, Yang Songlang, and Huo Hao from Sanshui County; Li Bie, Ruan He, Feng Songji, He Fu, Zhao Jian, and Ou Chang from Nanhai County; Tan Lai, Mai Weixin, and Wu Lianfa from Xiangshan County; Zhong Xiu, He You, and Liang San from Xinning County; Tan Wang, Liao Ersheng, Wen Zhao, Luo Yinggui, and Zeng Jinxiu from Zengcheng County; Liang Li, Su Fa, and He Cheng from Xinhui County; Zheng Quanfu, Li Jin, Li Hai, You Shi, Yuan Wan, Yuan Qing, Cai Ji, Ou Zhi, Zhou Xin, and Wang Song from Dongguan County; Lu Yuan and Su Huaibao from Shunde County; Zhong Tian and Liu Er from Conghua County; Ye Gengxiu from Longmen County; Ling Run and Huang Yan from Panyu County; Jiang Er, Huang Zao, Chen Fu, Zou Huo, Li Xi, and Tang Hong from Boluo County; Lin Liang, Liu Chang, Lin Qun, He Baoluo, Nan Yanggu, Chen Fu, Cai Ming, Xie Guiqiu, Chen Fu, Chen Kai, Luo Yingpan, Tu Shengcai, Qiu Jinfu, He Bao, Lu Taolin, Yao Fu, Xiao Man, Shi Chang, Zhang You, and Xue Gong from Guishan County; Liu Jinbao, Li Mu, and Liu Mei from Haifeng County; Xie Quan, Li Run, Xie Xian, Li Xi, Ruan Nian, Liu Mangui, Zhang Xing, Wu Mei, Wang You, and Ruan Xi from Heyuan County; Li Chengji, and Zhang Xian from Yong'an County; Lin Lu from Lufeng County; Wu Tao from Longchuan County; Tan Dehou, He Chang, and Liang Dai from Kaiping County; Chen Zheng from Yangjiang County; Kong Long, Zheng Xia, Xiao Lian, Peng Liang, Liu Jiu, Lu You, and Zeng Genglian from Enping County; He Ming from Gaoyao County; Shen Chuan and Li Sheng from Heshan County; Wu Shui from Sihui County; Huang Jinke and Wu Fu from Gaoming County; Zhang Mao from Deqingzhou City; Chen Qushou and Zeng Hong from Haiyang County; Xiao

Mao and Zhou Dong from Chaoyang County; Lin Wangzi from Jieyang County; Fang Fu from Huilai County (civilians):

I was born in the fourth year of Xianfeng (1854).^{xii} I was a first-degree licentiate, graduated from Zhangbaikui Institute.^{xiii} Then I became a teacher. During an upheaval, I was deceived and told that there was teaching job in Macao. After arriving at Macao, I was forced to go abroad and later was sold to be a slave in a tobacco shop. Others of us were peasants, scholars, woodcutters, fishermen, or small retailers in China. Over the several years, one by one, we were abducted and lured to a Pigpen in Macao by Portuguese who colluded with gangsters. In the Pigpen, we were not allowed to leave. They often told us that certain people, who refused to go abroad, were beaten to death, or tied up and thrown into the sea, or left to die in a dungeon. We were so frightened as if our hearts and guts were split open. Later we were dragged to see some foreign officials. They were as ferocious as wolves and tigers. The interpreter read the contract to us ambiguously. He said that we were hired to work in places like Vietnam, Singapore, Melbourne, or San Francisco. At that time, we were still hoping for a chance to survive so as not to die immediately. Then we had no other choice but sign the contract and board the ship. We didn't know that we were sold to Cuba to be slaves for the rest of our lives and suffer so much that we would hope to die soon, but our hope has not been granted. After the abduction, for tens of years, our families have no idea of whether we are alive or dead and of our whereabouts. We remember that we were shut in the cabin or even put in the bamboo cages or locked up in irons when we were on the ship. The owners of the ship arbitrarily dragged several people out and beat them to put on a show of force. We did not know how many of our peers died on the ship because of illness, beating, thirst, or suicide by jumping into the sea when there was a chance. When we arrived at Havana, we were washed, our plaits cut, and sent to the Selling People House.^{xiv} We had to wait for businessmen to select and negotiate the price. We didn't know how much we were sold for or who shared the ill-gotten gains. We were born in China, educated by our parents and finally grew up. To our surprise, we were cheated and sold by foreigners in a steady stream, who keep the bondage money. From ancient times to the present, is there anything that is more unfair than this? Cubans claim that they are merely hiring and recruiting people, or trading contracts. They never say that they are selling people to be slaves. Just think of

xii. This petition was written by Li Zhaochun and co-signed by other people. Therefore, "I" in this petition referred to Li himself. And "we" referred to Li and his peers.

xiii. Zhangbaikui Institute was named after the high governor of Guangzhou, Zhang Baikui. This was an official institute, where education was connected with politics. See Liu Dong 刘东, *Zhonghua wenming duben* 中华文明读本 (*Reader in Chinese Civilization*) (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 1999), 292.

xiv. The plait was a symbol of national identity to that particular generation of Chinese. It was important especially to the ones who were loyal to the Qing Dynasty.

those people who died on the way to Cuba, would Cubans want to trade these dead people's contracts? How can the Spanish even try to deny the fact that they trade people? As to those who were sold to be slaves, only several of them were sold into stores; very few of them were sold to tobacco or coffee plantations; nine out of ten were sold into sugar plantations. The owners of sugar plantations would ask the managers for more sugar; in turn, the managers ask the overseers for more work to be done. They put profit-making first and do not care about laborers' lives at all. They have no concerns about whether Chinese laborers have enough rest or not, whether they are starved or not, or whether they are alive or not! For each of the two meals daily, the Chinese laborer receives four plantains. Those managers who give only three plantains for a meal are considered even more capable. We are forced to work for twenty hours a day. Those managers who could force us to work for twenty-one hours a day were considered even more capable. Beatings happen often; locking-up takes place wantonly. The ones who report an illness are beaten up and starved; the ones who work slowly are chased and bitten by dogs. Many of us die of being lashed, stabbed, and drowned. No one goes to the law against the owners. Even if so, officials merely come to take a look and get through it perfunctorily. Among us, some have had long friendships with each other since they were in their hometowns or have close relationships like young shoots of a reed, and have witnessed a murder, but would not dare tell the truth. Because if they ever did so, they would be killed immediately! Cubans always say that Chinese often kill their managers. Why would one pay one's life for killing others, unless forced by the situation? Cubans say Chinese often escape. Why would one risk life to escape, unless one could not live safely? In every sugar plantation, the Chinese laborers get four *yuan* paper currency for payment, which is worth just one silver. It is not enough for buying clothing or food in the first place. However, inside the plantation, managers own stores, where groceries are low quality and expensive. We have to buy from them and have our salary deducted. If we buy from other places, we would be accused of running away, then our feet would be shackled while working. After the expiration of the eight-year contract, who will have enough traveling money to go back to China? In recent years, the sugar plantation owners, who are also officials in government, have set up a new harsh policy. The Chinese laborers whose contracts have expired have to be sent to the official workshops to work with feet shackled and without any payment. No matter where you work, no matter how long you work, you have to work till you die. If the former master or other people negotiate with the government officials, they can pay about ten *yuan* or more to hire labor back to the plantations, which is called "Tie-up" (bondage). However, most of the salary is submitted to the officials, according to the policy. The money that the Chinese laborers receive is just several *yuan* each month. How could we save money for traveling? As to the contracts that we signed in Macao, most of them were taken

away by the plantation owners when we arrived at the plantation. The plantation owners can negotiate with officials and substitute a dead person's contract with another living person in the official workshop. That is even more miserable. The Chinese laborers here do not really like gambling, but the Spanish government schemes up gambling like "White Dove Ticket" and has tickets sold everywhere. If one wins the first prize, called "Heaven Prize," one would be allowed to buy back freedom. Therefore, everyone puts their hope on the game without knowing that this makes them even poorer! Moreover, not all of the Chinese laborers like smoking opium. Even if they do, the voyage from Macao to Cuba lasts so long that their addiction is stopped. However, policemen use opium houses to make money and use opium-smoking to extort people. So they are glad to see Chinese smoke opium. The rich people believe that if the Chinese become addicted to opium, they will not desire to go back to China because of lack of money and aspiration. That is why they like to lure the Chinese into smoking opium. The Chinese consider that they are not able to own their bodies and they are not able to own their money. Besides, everyone is forced to stay and not to go back to China. Thus, they throw off restraint, spend their money thoughtlessly and smoke more opium; there is no alternative. Otherwise, given the fact that the penalty from the sugar refineries' is extremely harsh, how would it be hard to prohibit us from smoking opium? Moreover, how could it be possible for the Chinese to ship and sell opium here? Besides, if places like stone workshops, sugar plantations, brick kilns, tobacco plantations, railroad companies, or shoe stores, owned several Chinese or more, they would set up implements for punishment. Whips, shackles, cells, and so on, these implements look the same as ones in sugar plantations. People from other countries also own sugar plantations. Sometimes, they give four silvers for payment and some rice or noodles for meals every other day. However, due to customs in Cuba, the working hours in these plantations are still very long. According to the new policy, after eight years, freedom paper will not be issued. We believe that you need to get permission from the owner of the goods if you want to sell the owner's goods, but now the Spanish collude with gangsters, trading Chinese freely. Our families do not know about it; the law is ignored. The society is so decadent that even relatives and friends try to cheat one another. The Spanish are destroying human relations and rotting people's sympathy in China. This peril has no end and is no trivial matter. We also see that people feed their horses and oxen till they are full and rest them when they are tired. Even if they do whip the animals, the whipping is only a few strikes. They never shackle their feet while yoking them. However, look at how the Spanish treat the Chinese laborer: not enough food, arduous labor, hundreds of strikes till skin is ruptured and bones are broken without any sympathy. The cells in sugar plantations are seldom empty. In the daytime the prisoners still have to work with their feet shackled. There are official workshops, which are also called Runaway Company.

The Chinese laborers who have fulfilled their contracts and have not tried to escape are still sent to these workshops. Every day, they have to chip stones and carry dirt with their feet shackled. Foreigners oversee the labor with whip and machete. Sometimes, they put on two or more shackles on the laborers' feet to make them more miserable and coerce them into signing bondage contracts for more years with rich businessmen. After the expiration of these contracts, they employ the same scheme over and over. Thus, the Spanish sell us for slaves and make a way to enslave us for the rest of our lives. We do not have any hope of surviving. Is there any brutal and vicious thing in the world worse than this? We do not know in the morning what may happen in the evening; we do not know when our lives will be ended. We just hope that this peril can be stopped so that Chinese will never come to Cuba again to suffer. Then we could die with our eyes closed.^{xv} As quoted.

PETITION 25

On the twentieth day of the third moon, according to the petition by Jian Shiguang, Liang Lai, and Zhong Wen from Panyu County, Guangdong Province; Lan Ru, Huang Lichang, and Zhuang Tuo from Haiyang County; Wu Lian, Lin Yuanxing, and He Liangyi from Jieyang County; Chen Gu, Lin Zhenyang, and Zhuang Ermei from Chaoyang County; Wubao Lisan from Dabu County; Chen Yong, Liu He, Ruan Xifan, Wu You, and Pan Rui'an from Nanhai County; Xie Chang, Huang Qi, Pang Zhang, Pang Er, Ye Long, and Lin Wan from Xinning County; Li Wen, Chen Lei, Chen Mei, Liu Xian, and Hong Cai from Haifeng County; Zhu San, He Baosheng, and Huang Nan from Zengcheng County; Zeng Wu from Enping County; Hu Shou, Lu Yuan, Wu Sheng, and Liao Xi from Shunde County; Kuang Lu, Zhou Chang, and He Mengmei from Kaiping County; Yuan Gui, Chen Wuchang, Shen Fo, Dong Li'an, Zhong Mei, Zhuang Ming, Chen Song, Huang Fu, Feng Man, Huang Guanyang, Fang Lai, and Liu Gui from Guishan County; Liu Long, Zeng Guangcheng, and Chen Tian from Xingning County; Huang Hui, Wang Neng, Wu Ming, Huang Ting, and Ye Fu from Dongguan County; Zhang Guiqing, Zhang Yuelai, Jiang Er, and Wen Hua from Boluo County; Liao Yuangui from Shixing County; Huang Fu, Liu Run, Li Xi, Yuan Fu, and You Wen from Heyuan County; Li Xian from Sanshui County; Li Hui and Lun Guang from Gaoyao County; Zhang Biao from Luoding City; Qiu Huan and Wang Fengqing from Jiaying City; Zhong Chun and Zhong Ri from Fengshun County; Kong Jinhong, Deng Er, Liao Xian, Zeng Xian, and Wan Er from

xv. *Sibu mingmu* “死不瞑目” is an idiomatic expression that means “people die with eyes open.” This saying implies that people who die with their eyes open usually die with unrequited injustice or without fulfilling their duties or wishes.

Changle County; Pei Xian from Longmen County; Wen Fu from Heshan County; Luo Chuanzeng, Luo Hai, and Liu Lian from Longchuan County; Chen Fa and Luo De from Lufeng County; Lin Zhang from Xiangshan County; Zhang Wu from Deqing County; Lin Rende from Yangjiang County; Li Cekui from Yizhang County, Hunan Province; Jia Runcheng from Ningyuan County, Hunan Province; Zhou Weiping from Jiangning County, Jiangsu Province:

We, as ordinary civilians, have little learning and we were born in ill times.^{xvi} Some youths were sold here because of failure in business; some were tricked and abducted by the wicked in their prime years. The reasons why we are here are filled with misery. Nevertheless, we have fallen into this trap, how can we get away from it? We only hope that we can go back to our hometowns after the contract expires. We did not expect to work in the foreign country, and we are treated worse than prisoners. We are sinking in a strange place and living in a hell on earth. The managers act like tyrants. They seek bribes. The owners are greedy. They often overwork us day and night. Sometimes, they put shackles and handcuffs on us. They flog us brutally. It is hard to have a day without being lashed; it is hard to have a morning to take a rest. Although the contract period on paper is eight years, they never follow the contract. We are miserable for the rest of our days. Working in the cities is a little better than other places. However, the local Cubans bully us even worse than slaves. We are bound by the contract; how can we not keep firm in difficulties? When the contract expires, almost half of us have died. For those who have not died, a lot of them either become disabled or have internal injury. If you are still healthy, you will be bullied by the rich or the government officials; or will be forced to sign another contract; or will be forced to work in the official workshop; or will be put into prison. They find ways to tie us up and make us slaves forever. How atrocious and greedy those people are! Moreover, this country has set up a cruel policy, stating that Chinese who have contracts here have to covert to Catholic and find a Cuban as “godfather” after the contract expires, if they want to get a freedom paper. If no freedom paper, the Chinese would be counted as an escaped convict. People in this country are greedy and untrustworthy. If we Chinese ask them to do something, we have to speak to them nicely and give them a lot of money, give them treasures and gold, respect them as godfather, and beg them to apply for a freedom paper for us. If they agree, they will ask for a lot of money, which is said to be used to bribe government officials. Thus, there are hundreds of thousands of Chinese laborers here, whose contracts have expired; but only several thousands of them get the

xvi. Although the authors of this petition said that they had little learning, the petition employed a standard speech and had many references. The pattern of sentences was carefully and neatly done. This ended with praises to the Qing emperor. The reason why the authors said that they had little learning or were foolish was to show modesty and humbleness, which are considered good virtues in Chinese tradition.

freedom paper. There is an incident, which would make the listener's hair stand on end.^{xvii} Cuban government officials are like greedy *qionggi* and *taotie* at heart.^{xviii} Havana police go as far as vicious tigers and jackals. They often knock at our doors at night, intrude with weapons, and seize the opportunity to rob everything; they break crates and take away all money. Even if you call out loud, your neighbors cannot help. If you fight with them, they will take money, frame a case against you, and put you into prison. Where can we voice our grievances? To whom can we inform our woes? Their avarice is like a river that can never be filled. Their desire is like a sea that can never become full. On the tenth of the ninth moon in the year of Xin Wei (1871), local rich people started a riot and put Chinese in a bad situation. The corrupted officials manipulated power for personal ends and tortured the Chinese. All of a sudden, they assembled their army, and sacked the Chinese thoroughly. They took away freedom papers by force and locked up the Chinese, using thousands of cruel corporal punishments. They forced the Chinese into bondage and into signing another contract. Countless Chinese died in this incident. At that time, life and death were both difficult dilemmas, going forward and withdrawal were both dangerous decisions. Fortunately we unexpectedly were rescued from this desperate situation by heroes from other countries. Some officials from other countries knew we were treated unjustly and came to rescue us. They asked the generals for legal justifications and questioned the magistrate for reasons. They talked with harsh words and stern looks and made the Cuban officials talk with low voices. They discussed people's comments and made the local rich tyrants bow their heads in submission. Finally, the iron lock was open; the birdcage was broken; we were like swimming fish fleeing from the fishnet, weighing favor from those countries as

xvii. "Making the listener's hair stand on end" (发指, *fazhi*) is a Chinese idiom, which is an expression of extreme anger.

xviii. These are mythological beasts. In Chinese mythology, *qionggi* (穷奇) is an evil god who praises evil and censures good. It is said that *qionggi* often visit fight scenes, where they bite off the good person's nose. If someone has done bad deeds, *qionggi* would encourage them to do more bad deeds. Therefore, ancient Chinese would call people, who befriend evilness and shun away from goodness, *qionggi*. It was written in the chapter of Wengong (文公十八年) from *Zuozhuan* (左传) that a worthless son of a *Shaohao* clan, who despised righteousness and worshiped iniquity had been called "*qionggi*" by the people. *Zuozhuan* (左传) (Spring and Autumn Annals and the Commentary of Zuo Qiuming) Available at www.guoxue.com/jinbu/13jing/cqzz_006.htm. There is also another definition: "A mythological beast, shaped like a cow, has hedgehog hair, makes noises like wild dogs," in *Shan hai jing*, the ancient Chinese mythology text; "A kind of beast, shaped like a tiger, has wings. It eats humans from their heads. It has another name: *Cong Zu*," in Pu Guo 郭璞, *Shan hai jing: 18 juan* (山海经: 18 卷), (Shanghai: Shang wu chubanshe 上海: 上海商务出版社, 1937). In Chinese mythology, *taotie* (饕餮) is a human-eating beast. During the *Shang* Dynasty, Chinese used the motif of *taotie* to decorate vessels. The term first appeared in *Zuozhuan*, in the chapter of *Wengong*, as a worthless son of *Jinyun* clan who had been extremely greedy in obtaining both food and goods, and his desire was difficult to be satisfy, so people called him "*taotie*." See Zuo Qiuming. This has also been described as follows: "In the mountains of Gou Wu . . . there is a kind of beast. It has a goat's body and human face. Its eyes are under its armpits. It has tiger teeth and human fingers, named *Pao Xiao*, which eats humans," in Pu Guo.

heavy as a mountain. We were like frightened birds flying back to our nests, grasping belongings in our homes as if precious as jade. How sad it is! Yesterday our lives were threatened in an instant; how miserable it is! Hunger and cold are everywhere near. All the suffering we experienced is due to the despotic ruling of Cuban government. Now, His Majesty's kindness is like a wide ocean, extending to corners of the world. We are like grass and trees that benefit from his rain-like generosity, which is a rare grace in thousands of years. We, as ordinary civilians, are humble and foolish laborers with misfortune. Youths are trapped in a land faraway from home; adults are wasting their lives in a foreign country. We regret that we are poor and sickly. We feel woeful that the harsh government here is making more cruel policies. That is why we dare to voice our grievance to you. As quoted.

PETITION 54

On the third day of the third moon, according to the petition by Ren Shizhen from Nanhai County; Dai Renjie from Xinning County; Liang Xingzhao from Shunde County, Guangdong Province:

Back in China, Shizhen ran a *fengshui* house in downtown Guangdong.^{xix} Renjie had a restaurant. Xingzhao was the owner of a paper-money store.^{xx} We all had wives and children, living well-off lives. However, we were cheated onto the Pigship, forced to travel across the ocean, and sold to a sugar plantation. We had been suffering hunger and whipping for eight years. Since we had to buy food and clothes from the stores in the sugar plantation, all our payment was deducted because of that. We had thought that after eight years, when we finished the contract, we could go out to find some jobs, which would pay us a little higher than the sugar plantation did, and could earn some traveling expenses to go back home. Unexpectedly, on the day when we finished contracts, the owner of the sugar plantation sent us into the official workshop. The next day, our feet were shackled, and we were forced to repair roads like prisoners. There was no payment at all. Then some businessmen came to make a deal with the officials and the workshop. Later they forced us to sign another contract, which was called "bondage." Every month, the payment was fifteen *yuan*. However, the officials took away ten *yuan* so that we got only five *yuan*. Sometimes, we had thirty *yuan* for payment, but the officials shared twenty-four *yuan* so that we got only six

xix. *Fengshui* (风水) is a study of environmental balance between the people and where they live, especially their dwelling or workplace. Ren Shizhen who ran a *fengshui* house, earned his living by providing consultation.

xx. Paper-money stores (纸宝铺, *zhibao pu*) sell symbolic money for funeral rites and might also sell paper houses, or in the ancient times, paper servants. The family of the deceased burns these as offerings.

yuan. When the bondage contract expired, we were sent back to the official workshop. After several months in the official workshop, we were forced into bondage again. In between, there was not even one day when we could do as we like! Not to mention that we did not have money to go back home, even if we had money, we could not go back to home because we did not have the paper for going abroad. We are about sixty years old now and cannot see the end of our suffering. We think that the foreigners must have made a lot of money by abducting us Chinese for sale. They sell each Chinese for four hundred to one thousand *yuan*. They can get about two to three hundred *yuan* as profit. By now, they must have sold more than two hundred thousand Chinese and profited millions from this business. But since we are Chinese, this money is supposed to be given to our country and shared with our families. People who come from Fujian Province or Guangzhou Prefecture mostly sign a five-year contract. However, we three had to work for eight years. Obviously they have taken away three more years payment from us. We also saw that some people who got freedom paper in the earlier years could go out to work. They can earn at least twenty *yuan* and at most sixty *yuan* a month. Now we finished the contract and did nothing wrong, but we were forced to do unpaid labor in the official workshop. If we were paid at the rate of an outside job, which is thirty *yuan* on average, how much money have they made from that and how much should they return us? When we were in bondage, officials took away a big part of the bondage money, so how much money have they taken from us Chinese and how much should they return to us? As for the fee for freedom paper, it was only less than a hundred *yuan* in the earlier years. But later, officials ask for hundreds of *yuan*. Just think about it, how much money have they taken from us? The fee for going to court, walking paper, opening-store paper, doctor's license paper, off-board paper, begging paper, and the renewal for all these paper, how much money have they gotten from us Chinese labor? And it is needless to mention the rapacity and the robbery from the precinct chief and the soldiers. Though the officials and the businessmen in Cuba have gained so much money from the Chinese labor, they do not know how to appreciate; instead, they humiliate us, trample on us, and insult us by making us slaves and treating us like animals. Have you ever heard of any other things more miserable than this in history? We heard that the Chinese government has already reconciled with those big foreign countries and those countries have already prohibited the trade of black people; why is it that nobody tries to save the Chinese in Cuba? Why? Since the Cuban officials have made ways to make us slaves over and over, we have been trapped here for seventeen or eighteen years and have already become weak. We are not really sure about our future. Maybe we will be tortured to death in the official workshop or at the bondage place; or will be expelled out and will die in the street because of sickness and aging. In all, when we die, we will have no coffin and no grave. Maybe our bones will be burned and mixed with bulls and horses' bone

ashes, and then used for the bleaching of white sugar!^{xxi} Our sons will have their sons, and then their sons will have sons. Nobody in our family will have the chance to know where we are. How pitiful! How pitiful! As quoted.

PETITION 65

On the sixth day of the third moon, according to the petition by Tang Liansheng from Nantongzhou Prefecture; Jiangsu Province; Wu A Xiao from Baoshan County; Yang Defu from Shangyuan County; Wu Alei from Tong'an County, Fujian Province; Xie Aling, Xie Ari, Yu De, Lin Dalian, and Shi Ashang from Zhangzhou Prefecture; Ping Hui from Dong'an County; Gao Ayi from Quanzhou Prefecture; Shen Axiang from Zhao'an County; Li Abu from Jian'an County; Wang Ming from Jinjiang County; Chen Wangying, Zhang Chao, Lai Azhang, Weng Agui, and Qiu Asheng from Heyuan County; Peng Acai, Liao Abing, Lin Abei, Chen Aren, Chen Aguang, Pan Ahe, and Liu En from Panyu County; Luo Afang and Kuang Renlian from Conghua County; Lu Shengying from Yong'an County; Huang Acheng, Xu Akang, Chen Axian, Zhong Amei, and Zhang Axian from Guishan County; Ding Atuan and Luo Alin from Raoping County; Chen Azhang from Longmen County; Hu Axian and Li Jinxing from Heshan County; Wu Afang, Gu Ageng from Huilai County; Xu Ahui, Wang Aman, and Chen Afu from Dongguan County; Huang Aliu and Li Youke from Jieyang County; Zhu Fu from Chenghai County; He Yinghua, Chen A'er, Huang Akuan, and Feng Asheng from Enping County; Chen Axing from Dong'an County; Chen Agang from Gaoyao County; Li Zhongji, Ou Ashu, Huang A'an, Su Achang, and Yu Dazhang from Nanhai County; Chen Aman and Mai Ayi from Xiangshan County; Liu Atang, Lin Changkun, Liu Ayang, Li Ajin, Cai Daji, Ou Ashi, Wu Shaoqing, Zeng Adong, and Cai Ashun from Chaozhou Prefecture; Liu De from Leizhou Prefecture; Zhang Awang and Xiao Achang from Huizhou Prefecture; Xie Asan, Ke Guansheng, Zhong Axi, Gu Guanqie, Zhu Axian, and Zhu Alian from Boluo County; Liang Acheng, Mo Afu, Huang Axing and Lei Bai'an from Xinhui County; Hu Linbao from Zengcheng County; Huang Aheng and Tan Yuankun from Shunde County; Chen Chunfu, Luo Ayao, Zhou Yi, Wen Asi, Xiao Liangxing, Li Ade, and Zhang Ayi from Jiayingzhou Prefecture; Xie Achang and Wu Jiuru from Kaiping County; Huang Amao and Wang Aman from Changle County; Lin Ashun from Zhenping County; Li Tingling and Chen Ashi from Xinning County; Wu Arong from Pingyuan County; Pan Chenglan from Wuchuan County; Chen Suixian and Jiang Ageng from Sanshui County; Xu Ashao

xxi. In other petitions/depositions, it was said that by mixing a human's bone ashes with the sugar, the sugar would be whiter. In regular sugar refining, animal bone ashes, sometimes called bone char, are used to filter raw sugar juice.

from Chaoyang County; Yang Akuan from Wenchang County; Lin Achang from Qingyuan County; Wu Lianfa from Xingning County, Guangdong Province:

In the last ten years, we were abducted by the Portuguese, shipped from Macao and sold in Cuba to different sugar plantations as slaves. We are tormented in every possible way. Those who are lucky enough to survive after eight years hoped that they could go back home. But if one does not have freedom paper, one cannot apply for the Go-Abroad Paper; if one does not have the Go-Abroad Paper, one is not permitted to take a ship back to China. In earlier years, when laborers fulfilled their contract after eight years, they could implore the master to sign a Proof. Then they could find a godfather as sponsor and apply for the paper from local officials. The fee required by officials varied from half gold to fifteen gold. And the fee for Go-Abroad Paper varied from half gold to twenty or thirty gold. When the officials received the money, they always put it off from one week to the next and even for tens of weeks. If during that waiting time officials were re-assigned, one would lose both one's money and paper. Even after you get the freedom paper and stay in Cuba temporarily, you have to pay about ten *yuan* to buy a Walking Paper in order to walk on the streets. This paper has to be renewed every year with several *yuan*. If the paper was lost or expired, one would be penalized heavily. Or if one wants to go to another port town in Cuba, one has to obtain a Go-to-another-port Paper from the local boss. Doctors have to apply for Doctor's Paper; beggars have to apply for a Begging Paper in order to beg. All require a fee. Small vendors have to get Open-Store Paper, which takes more time and more money to obtain. Even if you have all the papers that you should have, the street patrols could always stop you in the street; the patroller could always break into your residence to check them. Some take them away and say the paper is fake; some tear them apart and say you have no papers. They will put you into prison or the official workshop doing non-paid work with your feet and neck chained. This will last until some rich businessmen comes to declare you an "escapee" and claim you in a casual manner. You will be forced to sign another contract called "Tie-up" with the businessman. The payment is made a little high so the government officials can divide and take more than half of it. After fulfilling this bondage, you would be sent back to the official workshop to work for some time. Then you would be forced into bondage again. It is like a circle without an end, no matter how many times. The officials can have a construction project done for this entire island by not having to pay any wages. Businessmen use laborers who have finished the first contract and fill up government officials' pockets. The more associated the businessmen and the officials are, the more injustice and misery Chinese labor suffer. When we worked in a sugar plantation, we were slaves for one household. Now when we are sent to the official workshop, we are forced to be slaves for all. We are trapped and slaves for them for the rest our lives! Last year the forced labor service of La Trocha was close to a rebel

camp and was very dangerous. The natural surroundings and climate were bad. Officials sent 10 percent black people and 90 percent Chinese over to work. They said after six months the contract would be completed and freedom paper would be given upon return. Except one third who died there, two thirds have come back one by one. However, instead of being given freedom paper, the returning Chinese were sent to official workshops in different cities. They regard Chinese labor as profitable commodities. Since local officials and businessmen here ill-intentioned and untrustworthy, reason cannot even be talked about. We are trapped in this faraway land so that we are at our last gasp. But we have seen businessmen and civilians from other countries come and go freely. Why have only Chinese been so misfortunate in Macao and Cuba? Misery upon misery without end. We are especially petitioning here and hope that your Honor will take pity and will try every means to save us from this extreme suffering. We would be deeply grateful. As quoted.