



White Riot

Henry Tsang
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May is Asian Heritage Month and Henry Tsang (Associate Dean of Emily Carr University) came to our school to give us a history lesson on the “tradition of racism” that prompted a 2-day riot in Vancouver’s Chinatown in September 1907. The series of events that led up to the systemic racism towards the first

Chinese immigrants to the anti-Asian hate sentiments some experience today can be read about in Tsang’s book *White Riots*.

Tsang also documents a project called the 360 Riot Walk (<https://360riotwalk.ca/>), which allows present-day people to follow the pathway of destruction as thousands of members of the White Asiatic Exclusion League plundered, pillaged, and vandalized their way through the livelihoods of the local Chinese and Japanese communities in Vancouver’s Chinatown. The virtual tour (iPad or phone recommended) starts on Pender Street and tracks 13 stops showing incredible 360 scenes of the local businesses and happenings during the vicious procession.

Property damage, gun fights, and hand-to-hand combat took place from September 7-8th, 1907. The Chinese and Japanese resisted as best they could, and when the riots were over, the labourers took a stand by striking for 2 nights, essentially halting commerce in the city.

Henry’s visit brought insight and clarity to the systemic racism that is embedded in our world past and present. He shared a local incident that many of us were unaware of. The anti-Asian sentiments that resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic again test the resilience of the Asian diaspora.

The book *White Riots* provides background, and inspired art projects and essays around the issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion. I highly recommend this book, and the website <https://360riotwalk.ca/>, as an important resource for any classroom.

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