



Mary Sue Coleman  
President

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Dear CSG members,

I am writing in response to CSG's Assembly Resolution 11-048, "A Declarative Resolution to Remove James B. Angell's Name from Angell Hall and the Angell Scholar Award," submitted in November 2021.

As you will see in the accompanying memo and report, the President's Advisory Committee on University History (PACOUH) performed an initial exploration of your request to remove the Angell name. I urge you to review the report in its entirety. The committee found that in his work on the Angell Treaty, James Angell was attempting to prevent the worst outcomes of a rising tide of anti-Chinese sentiment in the United States; and they also found no ties between Angell and the organization Michigamua. PACOUH does not recommend a full-scale review at this time, and I have accepted that recommendation.

Thank you for participating in the important and often challenging work of exploring the history of the University of Michigan and its leaders. The involvement of our community, and particularly of our students and student leaders, is a key part of what makes Michigan so strong.

I hope you and your peers will continue this engagement, especially as we strengthen and build upon ways to better understand the University's past and present, including the launch of DEI 2.0, the Inclusive History Project, and other related efforts. With your voices, we will be able to achieve Michigan's brightest possible future.

Thank you again and I offer my best wishes for a fabulous fall semester.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Sue Coleman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mary Sue Coleman  
President

To: President Mary Sue Coleman

From: Terrence J. McDonald, Chair, President's Advisory Committee on University History *TJM*

Re: Response to Central Student Government Resolution 11-048

In November of 2021 the Office of the President received a copy of Resolution 11-048, "A Declarative Resolution to Remove James B. Angell's Name from Angell Hall and the Angell Scholar Award." Because the resolution involved removal of an historical name on a University building it was forwarded to your Presidential Advisory Committee on University History for review.

According to our procedures, once such a proposal is referred to the Committee, "the Committee will determine whether such a proposal is within its purview, seek additional information if necessary, and then offer a recommendation on whether such a review should proceed... The results of this initial Committee review will be shared with the President...who will have the authority to accept, reject, or modify any Committee report or proposal."

As we write to the current leaders of Central Student Government in our proposed response, the action proposed in this resolution is within our purview and the thoughtful resolution meets the test of our other requirement that all such requests come from members of the University community.

Nonetheless, we do not recommend a full scale review of this issue based on this resolution. Our own relatively brief investigation of the topic suggests that the resolution understates the complexities of the role James B. Angell played in the move toward Chinese Exclusion in American in the 1880s and wrongly attributes a "founding" role for President Angell in the problematic campus organization Michigamua.

We do believe that the resolution raises an important issue worth further investigation and we urge those interested in it – whether CSG or others – to conduct the more thorough analysis along the lines we suggest would be necessary.

We also believe that this issue and Angell's overall role on campus could be germane to the work of the Inclusive History Project that you recently announced.

To: Noah Zimmerman, President, Central Student Government; Karthik Pasupula, Speaker of the Assembly

From: President's Advisory Committee on University History

Re: Central Student Government Assembly 2021/2022 Resolution 11–048 "Angell Name Removal"

During the last academic year the Central Student Government Assembly passed this resolution and, following current policy, the President's Office forwarded it to this Committee for review. The role of the President's Advisory Committee on University History is to "determine whether such a proposal is within its purview, seek additional information if necessary, and then offer a recommendation on whether such a review should proceed." Certainly the action proposed in this resolution is within our purview and the resolution meets the test of our other requirement that all such requests come from members of the University community. We are not recommending a review at this time, however, for reasons explained further in this memo.

We are delighted that the University has responded positively to the resolution's call "to perform a holistic assessment on racist aspects of the foundations of the University, [and] their continuing impacts today." President Coleman has recently announced the Inclusive History Project to understand the history of race and racism at the University.

The issues raised by this resolution are certainly germane to any such review of that history. James B. Angell gave his inaugural address as University President on June 28, 1871 and resigned from the position on October 1, 1909. He was both the University's longest serving President and President during the time when the University took on its characteristic shape as a research university combining undergraduate and graduate education and, therefore, his influence on University history was profound.

The resolution's call for investigation of Angell's role in the history of Chinese exclusion specifically and anti-Asian racism more generally is, therefore, crucial to our understanding of University history. In 1880 Angell was recruited by the then Secretary of State to head a treaty delegation to China and, strictly speaking, as the resolution points out, the Angell treaty of 1880 which those negotiations produced could be seen as laying some of the groundwork for the passage by two houses of Congress of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act which was signed into law by President Chester A. Arthur in May of that year.

We respond to the CSG resolution now for two reasons. First, for the reasons above, we strongly recommend that the Inclusive History Project consider adding this topic and period to its agenda. And, second, we do so to suggest issues that need to be considered when that topic does emerge whether on the agenda of the Project or elsewhere. While we do not agree with the arguments and conclusions of the resolution

we are grateful to have it and intend our response not to close off discussion of this issue but to outline points at issue that will need further research and argumentation.

The Central Student Government resolution makes two arguments about James Angell's participation in racist practices:

1. That Angell is morally responsible for paving the way to the Chinese Exclusion Act, in virtue of his participation in the negotiation of the Angell Treaty of 1880.
2. That Angell helped found the racist organization Michigamua.

Our reading of the latest historical scholarship, summarized in parts A and B below, does not support either argument:

A. The historical record, based on the latest scholarship, indicates that in negotiating the terms of the Angell Treaty, Angell was attempting to prevent the worst outcomes of a rising tide of anti-Chinese prejudice in the U.S., rather than to promote its aims.

B. We find no evidence that Angell had any relationship with the organization that came to be known as Michigamua.

Of course, it is possible that further research could uncover facts, and further argumentation could uncover reasons, that challenge claims A and B, which we support below. We invite anyone who wishes to do so to address these claims in detail. In case it is helpful in such an effort we have attached to this response is a copy of a previously successful such petition involving the names of C. C. Little, and Alexander Winchell. You can also see another recent recommendation, that involving Fielding Yost, here: <https://pacouh.umich.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/96/2021/05/Historical-Analysis-on-Yost-Name-4-27-21.pdf>

A. The resolution thoughtfully acknowledges that a full understanding of Angell's role in these events is "complicated," and identifies two of the crucial issues any such investigation must consider: Angell's own attitudes and intentions in negotiating the Angell Treaty of 1880 and the role of that treaty in the ultimate passage of the exclusion legislation. We here provide a brief summary and analysis of secondary literature on these questions.

The distinguished historian of Asian-Americans Lon Kurashige has argued in his important 2016 book, *Two Faces of Exclusion: The Untold History of anti-Asian Racism in the United States*, that the passage of the Chinese exclusion act was the result of a "perfect storm" of social and political changes and conflicts in the years before its passage. In his deeply researched analysis, now regarded by many as the "standard" interpretation of these years, these factors included a virulent anti-Asian racism beginning on the West Coast, the end of the reconstruction process in the South which made possible the election of white supremacist members of the House and Senate from the former Confederate states, and a split in the Republican Party itself pitting Midwestern representatives in Congress against those from the East, who had long

opposed the passage of anti-Chinese legislation at the behest of Eastern capitalists engaged in projects in which either Chinese trade or Chinese labor was important.

As Kurashige points out, the politicization of popular misunderstandings between whites and Chinese immigrants began in California as early as the 1850s and developed, becoming more violent, over the next 30 years up and down the West Coast until the Chinese became what historian Alexander Saxton called the "indispensable enemy" of both political parties. Meanwhile, though, those involved in railroad building, the textile industry or the China trade, who in many ways influenced both national political parties, steadfastly opposed measures to ban immigration or even to penalize Chinese immigrants in the West. These mostly Eastern factions were behind the so-called Burlingame treaty between the United States and China in 1868, which recognized the "inherent and inalienable right of man to change his home and allegiance, but also the mutual advantage of the free migration emigration of their citizens and subjects, respectively for purposes of curiosity, of trade, or as permanent residence." Although this treaty opened the door for increased Asian immigration to the Pacific Coast states it specifically withheld the right of naturalization from Chinese immigrants, a prohibition that would never change in the years we are discussing.

The political dominance of the Republican Party, which had sponsored the Burlingame Treaty and opposed further restriction on Chinese immigrants, began to be challenged with the end of Reconstruction in the South beginning in 1876. In this context the electoral votes of the western states – and thus their racist legislation against the Chinese -- became more influential within both national political parties. This change was clear in the disputed Presidential election of 1876, which was so close that it was thrown into the hands of Congress, which determined Republican Rutherford Hayes was elected by one electoral vote in spite of losing the popular vote. That year a variety of anti-Chinese resolutions were introduced into both houses of Congress requesting the president to modify or abrogate the Burlingame Treaty, arguing that China had already violated it because the majority of Chinese immigrants were contract laborers and not really "voluntary" immigrants. In February of 1879 Maine Senator James G. Blaine broke ranks with Republican leadership to introduce the so-called Fifteen Passenger Bill which would have limited the number of passengers from China on American ships. That bill passed both houses of Congress with an amendment authorizing the president to notify the Chinese government that the US intended to abrogate the Burlingame Treaty. Hayes vetoed the bill but it became clear that a renegotiation of the treaty might be necessary to head off more extreme anti-Chinese action.

It was in this political situation that Hayes's Secretary of State William Evarts reached out to James Angell about serving on the commission to re-negotiate the Burlingame treaty and permit at least some regulation of Chinese immigration in order to head off more drastic action by Congress. Angell's career before coming to Michigan had been varied, but since the Civil War he had been a well-known Republican affiliated with the

“eastern” bloc. Angell had been born in Rhode Island, had graduated with a bachelor’s degree from Brown University, spent two years travelling and acquiring the French and German languages, and then returned to the Brown faculty, teaching modern languages. In 1859 he left Brown to become editor of the Providence *Journal* newspaper then owned by a Republican party activist. He left there in 1866 to become President of the University of Vermont and it was there that he met and became friends with Republican Vermont Senator George F. Edmunds who recommended him for this treaty work to the secretary of state.

The CSG resolution acknowledges that Angell was personally opposed to the absolute prohibition of Chinese immigration, which he told Evarts “would be diametrically opposed to all our national traditions and would call down the censure of a very large portion, if not a majority of our most intelligent and high-minded citizens.” He was selected, in part, because it was known that he had no connection with the forces advocating restriction, and he said he would refuse the appointment to the commission if the goal was to persuade the Chinese to accept that. Assured that this was not the goal, Angell accepted the appointment but did not control the selection of the other members, both of whom it turned out favored complete exclusion. Throughout the treaty negotiations, it was Angell almost alone who strove to produce a moderate outcome which, he hoped would preserve the dignity of the Chinese government and important segments, at least, of the Chinese immigrants. The two other commission members were variously less supportive of these goals.

The treaty commissioners arrived in Beijing China in September of 1880 and negotiations were concluded by mid-November. In the meantime Republican James A. Garfield was elected president in the November 1880 election on a Republican platform advocating the restriction of Chinese immigration and he immediately appointed James G. Blaine – the author of the Fifteen Passenger Bill demanding revision of the Burlingame Treaty – as Secretary of State. The signal this sent was unmistakably that the new administration would be much more sympathetic to the restriction of Chinese immigration. The Angell treaty went into effect in July 1881 shortly after President Garfield was shot by an assassin and later died. The new president, Chester A. Arthur, took office on September 20, 1881 and only about two months later a bill was introduced in Congress prohibiting the immigration of Chinese laborers for 20 years. Arthur vetoed this bill but another that prohibited the immigration of Chinese laborers for 10 years quickly passed both Houses and Arthur signed it into law on May 9, 1882.

It is true that, as the resolution states, the Angell treaty, strictly speaking, laid the ground work for the restriction acts; conversely, it also likely postponed the implementation of full restriction. In the political context, it ultimately made relatively little difference because the restrictionists had decided that the political costs of restriction were minimal and the Chinese had already abrogated the Burlingame treaty. Kurashige suggests as much, too. The Angell Treaty, he argues, “was truly a work of diplomacy as both exclusionists and egalitarians claimed victory. Its key clause stated that the United

States may “regulate, limit, or suspend [Chinese labor migration] . . . but may not absolutely prohibit it.” The treaty also established teachers, students, merchants, and their household servants as classes of Chinese exempt from exclusion and declared that “Chinese laborers who are now in the United States shall be allowed to go and come of their own free will,” and reaffirmed that Chinese persons possessed “all the rights, privileges, immunities, and exemptions which are accorded to the citizens and subjects of the most favored nation.”

In what we think is the sole published detailed account of the negotiations in China, Susan Capie’s 1982 essay, “James B. Angell, Minister to China 1880-1881: His Mission and the Chinese Desire for Equal Treaty Rights,” the author argues that “it is evident that he was a moderating force in the clamor to oust the Chinese and he negotiated according to his conscience and what he perceived to be the prevailing sentiment of the American public. Subsequent legislation demonstrated he was wrong and overshadowed his accomplishment of convincing the Chinese the American government would be judicious in the use of the power granted to it.”

So Angell stepped into Kurashige’s “perfect storm” that led to restriction, but he himself strove to achieve a more moderate outcome. One could question the ethics of participating in what could be viewed as an immoral compromise with racism. Should he have rather publicly condemned the whole movement to restrict Chinese immigration as wrong in principle, rather than suggest a compromise to head off a worse thing which comes to pass anyway? These questions have long-term implications because of the number of University faculty called to serve as advisors by various levels of government. Because they rarely control the political process in which they serve what is their responsibility for inadequate or even negative outcomes?

On our reading of the account of it in the *Michigan Daily* we believe that Professor Ian Shin from the history department emphasized some of these complexities in his recent talk to the United Asian American Organizations:

<https://www.michigandaily.com/campus-life/addressing-james-b-angells-legacy-csg-united-asian-american-organizations-south-asian-awareness-network-host-teach-in/>

It would also be worth wondering about Angell’s attitudes and conduct on campus after he returned. His national reputation was of someone sympathetic to diversity based on his commencement speech from 1879, “The Higher Education: A Plea For Making It Accessible to All,” which can be found in his *Selected Addresses* in Hathitrust here: <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.49015003097871&view=1up&seq=9&skin=2021>. Capie argues that “Angell’s admiration for the Chinese efforts to modernize seems to have been reciprocated as evidenced by the inordinate number of Chinese students who flocked to the University of Michigan after Angell’s service in China, leading the University to host more Chinese students than any other American institution.”

B. But in this context his connection with Michigamua would be troubling. Looking at available sources, however, we were unable to find such a connection. No available

record from Michigamua itself suggests that he was a founder, "honorary sachem," or even member. There is no mention of Angell, for example, in the history of Michigamua in the University's "Encyclopedic History":

<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/u/umsurvey/AAS3302.0004.001/1:3.3.1.1?rgn=div4;view=fulltext>. And a 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary booklet in the Bentley Library's image bank does not list

Angell as an "honorary sachem," though it lists Presidents Hutchins and Ruthven and those who are generally recognized as faculty founders and advisers, Professors Robert Wenley, Henry Carter Adams, and John Allen and Dean Mortimer Cooley:

<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/b/bhl/x->

[hs16464/HS16464?from=index;lasttype=boolean;lastview=thumbnail;med=1;resnum=1;size=20;sort=relevance;start=1;view=entry;rgn1=ic\\_all;q1=michigamua](https://quod.lib.umich.edu/b/bhl/x-)

Once again, new evidence could be found on this point after deeper research.

If these existing interpretations Angell's character and conduct in these events are correct then they would not point in the direction proposed by the resolution.

As we ourselves have said and truly believe, however, historical interpretations change over time in response to a variety of factors, new research, and new perspectives on the past stimulated by contemporary events, new theoretical frameworks for interpreting the existing information. In citing these "standard" interpretations we do not suggest that they are historical gospel, but rather hope to map out the terrain for those who wish to do the work necessary to challenge or change them. The CSG resolution raises some important questions, but our statement of principles is clear that "those who wish to change the formally designated names of spaces or buildings carry a heavy burden of argument to justify it." More research would have to be done to support the claims made in the resolution, and the moral conclusions the Central Student Government draws from the established facts require further argumentation.