

While it should have been empathy on ground of compassion and acceptance in the perspective of the others as in "*You never truly know someone until you've walked a mile in their shoes*" - the common American adage but on June 13, 1870, practically the whole town of North Adams, Massachusetts were out by the thousands lining the street, and waiting in hostility. Some up in arms and the rest with rocks and stones watching 75 Chinese with the state police on guard walking into the Sampson Shoe Factory. In 1957 Little Rock, Arkansas, nine African American kids had to be escorted by the armed National Guard in walking into their school building. Forward yet another 60 years, with the world at large watching when will we put our feet down to those hateful walks and what boundaries and lines still need to be crossed?

As shoe is individual and personal with its selfish vanities and fetishism, the focus on the rhetoric of its allegory, association, and symbolism is easy but with 75 of them quickly transformed its significant over its mere identity. These 75 miniatures to life size white ceramic foot wears from the 1840s to the present, in men and women, young and old, that span the cultures of traditional East to Victorian West from over a dozen countries, as a whole presents a diverse and inclusive profound reflection in our current discourse.

The US Women's suffrage in 1920 were able to vote, however in 1979 Katherine Lawrence and Marianne Schreiber had to create a fresh visual metaphor to express the impenetrable tough barrier in the workplace advancement for women - "*Glass Ceiling*," other minorities know well that it is applicable to them too.

The naïve Chinese were surely walking on thin ice of a "*Glass Floor*," a loaded minefield when escorted with pistols and clubs into the Shoe Factory. Purposefully brought there as strikebreakers by the factory owner Calvin T. Sampson (1826? - 1893) to the fury of mostly French Canadian factory shoe laborers, and the anger of the 50,000 national members strong *Order of the Knights of St. Crispin* shoemakers' union, the US biggest and strongest union of that time. A bloodbath was assured till the 75 innocent Chinese boys, as young as 10-year-old and no older than 22, only one knew English walked up! They were never told of the predicament when first contracted out in San Francisco, and sent across the US on the First Transcontinental Railroad, built by their fellow countrymen in the year before in 1869.

Chinese were regularly regarded as the "*Celestial*," the few Massachusetts seaports with early Old China Trade may had an occasional Chinese visitor; far fewer had actually met a Chinese in person. Suddenly, the Chinese were degraded and stereotyped; H.D. Ward of North Adams had "*Ye Heathen Chinees* - Simpson's Shoe Shop" labeled on the 1875 stereoview card of the Sampson Chinese shoemakers taken outside the factory. This ugly epithet was taken from the 1870 Bret Harte (1836 - 1902) satirical poem "*Plain Language from Truthful James*" more popularly known as "*The Heathen Chinees*" which was the rage of the era of intense racial bigotry, jealousy, and in demonizing the

Chinese as cheat, untrustworthy, and being "ruined by Chinese cheap labor."

"The line was crossed" - Sampson's unprecedented action was the last straw that broke the camel back and threw the Chinese immigration into the US nation-wide bi-coastal political focus as the "*Chinese Question*" which led to US breaking the 1868 *Burlingame Treaty* by the passing of the *Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882*.

Within three months, though untrained but diligent, the Chinese were producing more and better shoes, saving \$40,000 (at 1870 value) in that first year alone. By 1874 *The Order of the Knights of St. Crispin* was gone; by 1880 the tedious manufacturing tasks were replaced by more efficient machinery. As the town came to embrace the Chinese, only five remained. Among the biggest legacy of those few was Lue Gim Gong (1860?-1925) - "*The Citrus Wizard*." In 1886, Lue cross-pollinated a groundbreaking new crop of hardier cold resistant orange that was sweet, and most importantly would also ripen in the Fall rather than in the Spring thus able to avoid the damaging frosts. Lue's Valencia hybrid revolutionized and gave Florida a modern orange industry.

"*Little Rock Nine*" was on the right direction in crossing the US racial segregated barrier in education, it was more than just courage that was transforming. From wise policy makers to tolerant, supportive, and dedicated layperson all had contributed to make great changes possible. Love harder; think deeper. Our global social injustice got too many lines to cross, and in dire need of that "*One Giant Leap for Mankind*."

"*A Journey of A Thousand Miles Begins with A Single Step*" begins in correcting our biases. One step at a time with dignity and respect to our dynamic differences, in shoe or in barefoot, changes from within in crossing and breaking the cycle into the glorious future. - *We all leave nothing but our footprints of time.*