

The Role of Chinese Americans in the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945)

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Abstract: The Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945) reshaped East Asia and fostered new transnational connections. This article examines the often-overlooked contributions of Chinese Americans to China's resistance against Japan, despite their own experiences of exclusion and discrimination in the United States. Drawing on archival records, organizational documents, wartime journalism, and memoirs, it analyzes how diaspora communities mobilized financial aid, medical assistance, military volunteers, political advocacy, consumer boycotts, and cultural campaigns. Through organizations such as the Chinese War Relief Association, United China Relief, and the American Bureau for Medical Aid to China, community leaders raised substantial funds, supplied critical resources, and influenced American public opinion. The participation of wartime volunteers in aviation, logistics, and humanitarian relief further linked diasporic identity to China's wartime survival. This article argues that such activism not only strengthened China's war effort but also reshaped Chinese American civic identity and laid foundations for postwar Asian American political consciousness.

Author keywords: Chinese Americans; Second Sino-Japanese War; diaspora mobilization; transnational activism; wartime humanitarian aid

Introduction

The Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945) was one of the most consequential conflicts in modern East Asian history. Its origins can be traced to the 1931 Mukden Incident and the subsequent occupation of Manchuria by Imperial Japan, while full-scale war began following the Marco Polo Bridge Incident in July 1937.^{1,2} Over eight years of conflict, China suffered immense human and material losses. According to historian Rana Mitter, more than thirty-five million Chinese soldiers and civilians were killed or wounded, while vast regions of the country experienced destruction, displacement, and economic disruption.²

The war transformed modern China. Politically, it weakened the Nationalist government while creating conditions that facilitated the rise of the Chinese Communist Party. Economically and socially, it disrupted existing institutions but also fostered new forms of national mobilization and resistance.^{3,4} Following the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, the conflict became integrated into the broader Allied struggle of World War II, linking China more closely with the United States and other Allied powers.⁵

Although historians have extensively examined military campaigns, diplomacy, and domestic resistance during the war, the contributions of overseas Chinese communities have received comparatively less attention. Existing scholarship has acknowledged overseas fundraising and political

activism, yet Chinese Americans are often treated as a peripheral component of the war effort rather than as significant actors whose transnational networks connected the United States and China during a period of global crisis.^{6,7} As a result, the full scope of Chinese American involvement in supporting China's resistance remains underexplored.

This study addresses that gap by examining how Chinese Americans mobilized financial, medical, military, political, and cultural resources in support of China between 1937 and 1945. Rather than viewing Chinese Americans solely as immigrants responding to events abroad, this paper analyzes them as transnational actors who shaped wartime outcomes through organized community action. By integrating diaspora history with wartime studies, the paper offers a broader perspective on the relationship between migration, identity, and international conflict.

The study employs a qualitative historical methodology based primarily on published scholarly works, archival collections, organizational records, government documents, wartime newspapers, and contemporary reports. Particular attention is given to sources produced by organizations such as the American Bureau for Medical Aid to China (ABMAC), United China Relief, and Chinese American community associations. To ensure reliability, claims are evaluated through comparison across multiple scholarly and archival sources, especially where wartime statistics and fundraising estimates vary among historians.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. Precise measurements of financial contributions, remittances, and

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humanitarian assistance often differ among contemporary records and later historical studies. In addition, some wartime sources reflect political agendas associated with either the Chinese Nationalist government, American relief organizations, or diaspora advocacy groups. This paper therefore emphasizes evidence supported by multiple independent sources and presents quantitative figures as historical estimates rather than definitive totals.

This study argues that Chinese Americans played a significant yet often underrecognized role in China's resistance to Imperial Japan by mobilizing financial, medical, military, political, and cultural resources. It further contends that this transnational activism not only strengthened China's wartime resilience but also reshaped Chinese American community identity, expanded civic participation, and reinforced claims to belonging within American society.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative historical methodology that integrates archival research, organizational analysis, and diaspora studies to examine the contributions of Chinese Americans to the Second Sino-Japanese War. Three complementary approaches guide the research design:

Documentary and archival analysis

Primary sources including wartime newspapers, organizational records from the Chinese War Relief Association (CWRA), United China Relief (UCR), and the American Bureau for Medical Aid to China (ABMAC), as well as U.S. government documents, were analyzed to reconstruct the scope and mechanisms of Chinese American wartime mobilization. These materials illuminate how community institutions coordinated fundraising, medical aid, political advocacy, and cultural campaigns.

Historiographical synthesis

Major scholarly works on the Chinese diaspora, U.S.–China wartime relations, and Asian American political development were examined to situate Chinese American activism within broader debates about transnational identity, racial exclusion, and wartime nationalism. Historians such as Him Mark Lai, K. Scott Wong, Erika Lee, Madeline Hsu, Charlotte Brooks, and Gordon Chang provide frameworks for understanding how Chinese American communities navigated discrimination while asserting political agency.

Narrative and biographical reconstruction

Memoirs, oral histories, and biographical accounts of Chinese American aviators, volunteers, and activists were incorporated to capture lived experience. These narratives, such as those of Arthur Chin, Hazel Ying Lee, and community organizers in San Francisco and New York, offer insight into motivations, sacrifices, and the emotional dimensions of wartime participation.

Together, these methods allow for a multidimensional analysis that integrates institutional history, cultural politics,

and personal testimony, revealing how Chinese American activism operated simultaneously as a transnational patriotic project and a struggle for civic belonging in the United States.

Description/Research Findings

Historical background

The Second Sino-Japanese War emerged from escalating tensions between China and Imperial Japan during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Following the Meiji Restoration, Japan rapidly industrialized and developed a modern military, pursuing expansionist policies designed to secure resources and regional influence.⁸ Japan's victory in the First Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895) resulted in the Treaty of Shimonoseki, which forced China to cede Taiwan and pay a substantial indemnity, demonstrating the growing imbalance of power between the two nations.⁹

Japanese expansion accelerated in 1931 with the Mukden Incident and the subsequent occupation of Manchuria, where the puppet state of Manchukuo was established.^{10,11} International condemnation proved ineffective, and tensions continued to rise throughout the decade. Full-scale war began in July 1937 following the Marco Polo Bridge Incident near Beijing, marking the start of an eight-year conflict that became one of the principal theaters of World War II in Asia.²

The war inflicted enormous human and material losses on China while generating widespread international sympathy for the Chinese resistance. It was within this context that Chinese American communities mobilized financial, humanitarian, political, and military support for China, transforming overseas Chinese activism into a significant component of the broader wartime effort.

Chinese American mobilization for China's war effort

Fundraising and financial assistance

Chinese Americans organized extensive fundraising campaigns to support China's resistance against Imperial Japanese aggression. The most important organization was the Chinese War Relief Association (CWRA), established in 1937 with the support of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA). Operating through a nationwide network of local chapters, the CWRA became one of the most influential overseas Chinese relief organizations during the war. Within weeks of the outbreak of full-scale hostilities, Chinese American communities mobilized through public meetings, business donations, wage pledges, and community fundraising drives. In San Francisco alone, relief organizations raised approximately US\$30,000 during their first week of operation, while businessman Joe Shoong contributed US\$15,000 and encouraged employee participation.¹²

Fundraising efforts extended beyond major donors. Community organizations organized “Bowl of Rice” campaigns, charity events, and neighborhood collections that encouraged participation from individuals of varying economic

backgrounds.¹² Although historians differ on the precise value of wartime remittances and relief contributions, scholarship consistently demonstrates that Chinese American communities provided substantial financial support for military relief, refugee assistance, and humanitarian programs in China.^{6,7} These campaigns illustrate how diaspora networks transformed ethnic solidarity into practical support for China's war effort.

Medical relief and humanitarian assistance

Chinese Americans also played an important role in providing medical and humanitarian aid. Working through organizations such as the American Bureau for Medical Aid to China (ABMAC), United China Relief (UCR), and the China Defense League, community leaders helped deliver medical supplies, equipment, and public health assistance to wartime China. ABMAC, established in 1937, coordinated the shipment of medicines, hospital equipment, and medical literature while supporting hospitals and public health initiatives in areas affected by the war.¹³

According to ABMAC reports, the organization provided more than US\$10 million worth of medical assistance between 1937 and 1945, including hospital equipment, medical supplies, educational materials, and support for public health programs.^{13,14} Contemporary reports published in *Western Medicine in China, 1850–1950* indicate that ABMAC-funded initiatives assisted hospitals treating air-raid casualties, supported epidemic-prevention campaigns, and contributed to vaccine production efforts in wartime China. United China Relief likewise directed significant resources toward medical and public health work. Its programs supplied pharmaceuticals, supported hospitals, funded ambulance services, and trained medical personnel for emergency relief operations.^{15,16} Chinese American physicians and medical professionals also contributed through fundraising, professional exchanges, and direct service. Among the most prominent was Dr. Robert Lim, who worked with the Chinese Red Cross Medical Relief Corps to improve wartime medical care.¹³

While the precise humanitarian impact is difficult to quantify, historians agree that these efforts alleviated suffering among both soldiers and civilians and strengthened China's wartime medical capacity.^{2,7} Beyond immediate relief, Chinese American medical assistance contributed to the development of public health infrastructure and reinforced transnational networks linking Chinese and American medical communities.^{13,15}

Military participation and the spirit of volunteering

Chinese American pilots and aviators

The most visible and celebrated form of Chinese American participation occurred in the air. During the late 1930s, before the United States formally entered World War II, a small but dedicated group of Chinese American pilots joined the Chinese Air Force's 14th Volunteer Squadron, a unit that predated the better-known American Volunteer Group ("Flying Tigers"). Among them were pioneering aviators such as Arthur Chin, John "Buffalo" Huang, Hazel Ying

Lee, and Chan Kee-Wong, whose experiences reflected the courage and sacrifice of a generation determined to support China's resistance against Imperial Japanese aggression.^{2,7}

Arthur Chin, born in Portland, Oregon, trained as part of a cohort of Chinese American pilots sponsored by the Chinese government to receive advanced aviation instruction abroad. He joined the Chinese Air Force in 1937 and quickly distinguished himself in combat, reportedly shooting down multiple Japanese aircraft before being severely wounded in action. After months of recovery, Chin returned to duty and became one of China's first recognized fighter aces.¹⁷ Hazel Ying Lee, one of the few female pilots of Chinese descent in the United States, also sought to contribute to the war effort. Although initially constrained by gender barriers, Lee eventually joined the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) program. Her death in 1944 while ferrying aircraft for the U.S. military symbolized both the opportunities and risks faced by Chinese American women in wartime aviation.¹⁸

The 14th Volunteer Squadron rarely numbered more than a dozen Chinese American pilots, yet its symbolic and operational significance exceeded its size. Many members received training in foreign aviation academies and flew under difficult combat conditions against better-equipped Japanese forces. When the squadron was disbanded in 1938, several pilots continued serving in the Chinese Air Force or alongside Soviet advisors who arrived following the Sino-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact. Their service helped establish a tradition of Chinese American military participation that later extended to the Flying Tigers, organized in 1941 under Claire Lee Chennault.^{7,17}

A number of Chinese American pilots and support personnel later served with the Flying Tigers. Their responsibilities ranged from aerial combat to aircraft maintenance and intelligence support, often in cooperation with Chinese civilian workers who constructed runways and maintained airfields under difficult wartime conditions. These efforts demonstrated the growing military cooperation between China and the United States during the war.¹⁹

Other volunteers: army, navy, and logistics

While aviation attracted considerable public attention, a larger number of Chinese Americans contributed through less visible but equally important logistical and technical service. Historical estimates suggest that more than 3,200 overseas Chinese, including many from the United States, traveled to China to assist as truck drivers, mechanics, engineers, and support personnel to help sustain wartime supply networks.²⁰

These volunteers played important roles in maintaining the Burma Road and other transportation routes linking China to Allied forces in Southeast Asia. Within the U.S. Army Air Forces operating in the China–Burma–India (CBI) theater, Chinese Americans served in maintenance, communications, and logistics units that repaired aircraft, managed supplies, and supported air operations under constant operational pressures.⁷ Their technical expertise and bilingual abilities often facilitated communication between American personnel and Chinese counterparts.

These contributions illustrate how Chinese Americans functioned not only as military personnel but also as vital intermediaries within a transnational wartime network. Their skills helped sustain operations such as the hazardous “Hump” airlift over the Himalayas, one of the most challenging logistical undertakings of World War II.²¹

Sacrifice, casualties, and wartime memory

The sacrifices made by these volunteers were considerable. Many never returned to the United States, losing their lives in combat, aviation accidents, or logistical operations throughout the China–Burma–India theater. Precise casualty figures remain uncertain because surviving records are incomplete, but numerous Chinese American aviators and support personnel died during wartime service.¹⁷

Others survived despite severe injuries. Arthur Chin, for example, endured extensive medical treatment following combat wounds and became a lasting symbol of Chinese American sacrifice. Hazel Ying Lee’s fatal crash in 1944 likewise underscored the dangers faced by military aviators and support personnel during the war.¹⁸

Some volunteers have since been commemorated in community histories, veterans’ organizations, and museum collections. Works such as *In the Shadow of the Tiger* preserve the experiences of Chinese American servicemen and help situate their contributions within the broader history of the Chinese diaspora during World War II.²² Other individuals who died in China, including American servicemen involved in the 1937 Shanghai hostilities, briefly attracted national attention but were later overshadowed by larger wartime events.²³

Although the exact number of Chinese American wartime casualties remains unknown, their service remains an important example of transnational commitment during a period of global conflict. Their participation demonstrated how members of a marginalized immigrant community contributed both to China’s resistance against Imperial Japan and to the broader Allied war effort, linking the histories of China and the United States through shared sacrifice and cooperation.⁷ Table 1 summarizes the principal forms of Chinese American military and logistical contributions during the war.

Political activism and economic boycotts

Chinese American communities in the United States responded vigorously to the outbreak and escalation of the Second Sino-Japanese War through activism that sought to shape public opinion, influence American policy debates, and mobilize relief for China. Their efforts ranged from political advocacy and coalition building to consumer boycotts, dock protests, mass rallies, and media campaigns. These activities not only supported China’s resistance but also enabled Chinese Americans to assert a stronger public and political presence within American society.

Political advocacy and relief mobilization

In the early years of the war, Chinese American organizations rapidly organized relief agencies and advocacy

networks. Among the most prominent were the Anti-Japanese Association, National Salvation Association, and Chinese War Relief Association (CWRA), many operating through local Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Associations (CCBAs). These organizations coordinated fundraising, relief shipments, and political outreach across Chinese American communities in San Francisco, New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, and other cities.⁷

Petitions and appeals to U.S. government officials and international organizations became common forms of advocacy. Chinese American leaders framed China’s struggle as a defense of national sovereignty and civilian welfare while drawing parallels with American ideals of liberty and opposition to aggression. They urged the United States to adopt a more sympathetic stance toward China and to reconsider trade relations with Imperial Japan.⁷

Relief efforts were equally widespread. Public events such as Rice Bowl fundraisers, donation drives, benefit dinners, parades, and door-to-door collections generated substantial support for medical supplies, refugee assistance, and humanitarian relief. In San Francisco’s Chinatown, a four-day Rice Bowl campaign in 1938 reportedly raised approximately \$93,000 for China. Similar fundraising initiatives appeared in dozens of cities, combining traditional Chinese symbolism with American civic activism.¹²

Anti-Japanese boycotts and dock protests

One of the most visible forms of activism was the boycott of Japanese goods. Chinese American organizations encouraged consumers to avoid products imported from Japan, particularly silk, one of Japan’s most important exports to the United States. Newspapers, pamphlets, and public campaigns promoted alternative products while linking consumer choices to wartime developments in Asia. Historians have noted a significant decline in Japanese silk exports to the United States during the late 1930s, although multiple economic factors contributed to this trend.¹²

Chinese American activists also organized demonstrations at ports handling cargo destined for Japan. In December 1938, protesters gathered at San Francisco’s Pier 45 to oppose the loading of scrap iron aboard the SS *Spyros*, a vessel carrying materials viewed as potentially useful to the Japanese war effort. Approximately 200 Chinese American demonstrators joined hundreds of supporters from labor and community organizations in drawing public attention to American trade with Imperial Japan.¹²

Organizations such as the Chinese Hand Laundry Alliance (CHLA) used their business networks to distribute information, collect donations, organize petitions, and encourage political participation. Through these efforts, Chinese American activists expanded public awareness of the war and connected local community concerns with broader international developments.¹²

Print media and public communication

The press played a central role in Chinese American wartime activism. Newspapers, journals, and pamphlets in both Chinese and English reported battlefield developments,

Table 1. Major forms of Chinese American military and logistical contributions during the second Sino-Japanese war

Contribution type	Examples	Legacy
Aviators	Arthur Chin, John “Buffalo” Huang, Hazel Ying Lee, Chan Kee-Wong; 14th Volunteer Squadron; Flying Tigers	Helped establish the legacy of Chinese American military service; commemorated in museums and historical archives
Logistics and maintenance	Chinese American personnel serving in maintenance, communications, and support units in the CBI theater	Sustained Allied air and supply operations under difficult wartime conditions
Transportation and engineering	Overseas Chinese volunteers serving as drivers, mechanics, and engineers	Supported key supply routes including the Burma Road and related logistics networks

Note: Source: Compiled by the author from Lai,¹⁹ Ford,¹⁶ Engelmann,²¹ and Wong⁷.

documented civilian suffering, publicized fundraising campaigns, and encouraged support for China. Publications such as *Chinese Digest* frequently combined news coverage with photographs and commentary intended to build sympathy among American readers.

Chinese American organizations also helped circulate wartime messages from China to American audiences. Beginning in the early 1940s, letters from Chinese civilians, students, and officials were published and distributed through newspapers and community organizations. These communications sought to strengthen public understanding of China’s wartime experience and reinforce support for Sino-American cooperation.²⁴

The Chinese News Service, operating under China’s Ministry of Information, maintained offices in major American cities and distributed translated speeches, photographs, and informational materials to newspapers, churches, and civic organizations. These efforts further expanded public awareness of China’s wartime experience and strengthened support networks for relief and advocacy campaigns.²⁵

Public demonstrations and community mobilization

Large public demonstrations became another important component of Chinese American activism. In New York’s Chinatown, for example, thousands participated in fundraising parades and public events that featured banners, traditional cultural performances, and both Chinese and American flags. Such events attracted media coverage while highlighting Chinese American support for China’s resistance.¹²

These demonstrations blended Chinese cultural traditions with American civic practices, helping Chinese Americans present themselves as both loyal members of American society and active participants in international humanitarian causes.

Impact and legacy

Chinese American wartime activism achieved several important outcomes. Fundraising campaigns generated significant humanitarian assistance; boycott movements increased public awareness of events in Asia; and public demonstrations brought greater visibility to Chinese American communities. Just as importantly, these activities enabled Chinese Americans to develop new forms of civic participation and

political engagement during a period when discrimination and exclusion remained widespread.²⁶

Although their influence on U.S. foreign policy was necessarily limited and difficult to measure directly, Chinese American activists helped keep China’s wartime struggle visible within American public discourse. Their efforts demonstrated how diaspora communities could mobilize resources, shape public conversations, and participate actively in international affairs while simultaneously advancing their own claims to citizenship and belonging within the United States.⁷

Media, propaganda, and public opinion

Filmmaking, documentaries, and visual media

Cultural production formed another important dimension of Chinese American engagement during the Second Sino-Japanese War. Through film, photography, exhibitions, and visual media, Chinese Americans sought to inform American audiences about the conflict and encourage support for China’s resistance.

One of the most influential examples was *Kukan* (1941), co-produced by Li Ling-Ai and Rey Scott. Featuring footage of wartime China, the documentary introduced American audiences to the experiences of Chinese civilians and soldiers during the conflict. The film received an Academy Honorary Award in 1942 and remains one of the most significant Chinese American cultural contributions of the wartime period (*Kukan*, 1941).

Other films, including *Shadows Over Shanghai* (1938), dramatized the conflict and introduced American audiences to developments in East Asia. Chinese American organizations also sponsored photographic exhibitions, poster campaigns, and public displays that highlighted wartime destruction, refugee suffering, and Chinese resistance efforts.²⁵

Shaping public perception

Through films, newspapers, public exhibitions, and community events, Chinese Americans contributed to a broader effort to explain China’s wartime situation to American audiences. Rather than focusing exclusively on military

strategy, many of these materials emphasized civilian experiences, humanitarian concerns, and the resilience of ordinary people.

These cultural efforts complemented fundraising and relief campaigns by encouraging sympathy and engagement among non-Chinese Americans. While their precise influence is difficult to quantify, they contributed to growing American awareness of China's role in the wider conflict against Axis powers.

Legacy

Many wartime films, newspapers, photographs, and cultural materials produced by Chinese Americans have since been preserved by libraries, archives, and historical organizations. The restoration of *Kukan*, in particular, has renewed scholarly interest in Chinese American contributions to wartime media and public diplomacy.

By producing journalism, cultural works, and public messaging in support of China's resistance, Chinese Americans demonstrated the importance of culture as a form of wartime mobilization. Their efforts not only supported humanitarian and political objectives during the war but also helped establish a lasting historical memory of Chinese American activism, transnational engagement, and civic participation.^{27,28}

Relevance, Legacy, and Historical Memory

Postwar recognition and Chinese American identity

Following the Allied victory in 1945, Chinese Americans who had contributed to China's wartime resistance received only limited recognition in mainstream American historical narratives. While China was celebrated as a wartime ally, public attention soon shifted toward postwar reconstruction and the emerging Cold War. As a result, Chinese American fundraising, relief work, and political activism were largely overshadowed by broader accounts of military operations and diplomatic developments.²

The wartime alliance nevertheless contributed to important changes in Chinese American civic status. The repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1943 reflected a changing perception of China as an ally and helped improve the public image of Chinese Americans within U.S. society.²⁹ Wartime participation strengthened community confidence and encouraged many Chinese Americans to view their identities as compatible with both American citizenship and cultural ties to China.³⁰

However, these gains proved fragile. Following the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 and the onset of the Cold War, Chinese Americans again faced suspicion regarding their political loyalties. Activities once celebrated as support for an allied nation were sometimes viewed through the lens of Cold War anxieties, complicating public memory of wartime transnational engagement.³¹

Historical memory and the recovery of forgotten contributions

The historical memory of Chinese American wartime activism faded for several decades after World War II. In the

United States, dominant narratives emphasized American military leadership and battlefield victories, often overlooking the contributions of ethnic minority communities and diaspora networks.³² In China, political changes after 1949 reshaped interpretations of wartime history, frequently minimizing overseas Chinese participation and activities associated with the Nationalist government.²

Generational change further contributed to this decline in public awareness. Many first-generation activists passed away without recording their experiences, while community newspapers, pamphlets, and organizational records were dispersed or lost. Beginning in the late twentieth century, however, scholars, archivists, and community organizations began recovering these materials through oral histories, archival projects, and museum exhibitions.²⁸

Enduring legacy

Recent scholarship has highlighted the importance of Chinese American participation in the broader history of World War II and Asian American civic engagement. Exhibitions organized by institutions such as the Chinese Historical Society of America have helped restore public awareness of wartime fundraising campaigns, relief efforts, military service, and political activism.²⁷

The significance of these contributions extends beyond wartime history. Chinese American activism demonstrated how diaspora communities could mobilize resources across national borders while simultaneously expanding their civic participation within American society. Their efforts challenged stereotypes of political passivity and illustrated the capacity of immigrant communities to influence humanitarian, political, and cultural affairs on an international scale.⁷

Today, the story of Chinese American support for China during the Second Sino-Japanese War serves as an important example of transnational citizenship, diaspora engagement, and collective action. Recovering this history enriches our understanding of both World War II and the development of Chinese American identity, while demonstrating that immigrant communities played a meaningful role in shaping global events during the twentieth century.

Discussion and Recommendations for Future Research

This study demonstrates that Chinese American participation in the Second Sino-Japanese War extended far beyond symbolic support for their ancestral homeland. Through fundraising, medical relief, military service, political activism, and media outreach, Chinese Americans mobilized transnational networks that strengthened China's resistance while simultaneously advancing their own claims to civic belonging within the United States. The findings support recent scholarship that interprets diaspora activism as a form of transnational political engagement rather than solely an expression of homeland nationalism. Chinese Americans navigated dual commitments to China and the

United States, illustrating how wartime mobilization contributed both to China's war effort and to the evolution of Chinese American identity and public visibility.

Future research could further expand this field through comparative studies of overseas Chinese communities in Southeast Asia, Canada, and Latin America; greater attention to the experiences of Chinese American women in fundraising, medical relief, and cultural diplomacy; and detailed examinations of local Chinatown organizations and wartime networks. Additional research on Chinese American veterans, aviators, and support personnel in the China–Burma–India theater would also help recover overlooked individual experiences. Finally, scholars may explore how wartime activism influenced postwar civil rights advocacy, Cold War political identities, and the broader development of Asian American political consciousness.

Conclusion

The Second Sino-Japanese War demonstrated the significant role that diaspora communities could play in international conflicts, and Chinese Americans emerged as one of the most active overseas Chinese groups supporting China's resistance. Through fundraising, medical relief, military service, political activism, and media campaigns, they mobilized transnational networks that provided material assistance to China while increasing awareness of the war among the American public. These efforts strengthened China's war effort and reflected the growing political engagement of Chinese Americans during a period of widespread discrimination in the United States.⁷

This study argues that Chinese American wartime activism was more than an expression of homeland loyalty. By participating in relief campaigns, public advocacy, and military service, Chinese Americans also challenged exclusionary stereotypes and asserted their place within American civic life. Their contributions reveal how diaspora communities could simultaneously support international causes and pursue greater recognition within their adopted country.

Recovering this history broadens our understanding of both the Second Sino-Japanese War and Chinese American history. It demonstrates that the struggle against Imperial Japanese aggression extended beyond China's borders and that overseas communities played an important role in shaping wartime outcomes. More broadly, the experience of Chinese Americans illustrates how transnational activism, civic participation, and cultural identity intersected during a critical moment in twentieth-century history, leaving a legacy that continued to influence Chinese American identity and U.S.–China relations long after the war ended.

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Supplemental Materials

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