Final Draft of Conclusion Episode Transcript

Caged Freedom Eagle

Jeffery - **J**, Dalton - **D**, Shane - **S**, Zach - **Z**, Ben - **B**, Ryn - **R**, Alaina - **A**

# A - Before we begin, we would like to warn you that this episode will contain references to some sensitive topics including detention.

*[Start with series intro music]*

| SECTION 1: **Ben’s** section reviewing the parole process of the passengers, relaying key details, playing an audio segment of the passenger’s parole speech \*if it’s fair use.\* |
| --- |

**B**: 53 *Golden Venture* passengers were still in detention in York in 1997.[[1]](#footnote-0) The York residents who had been advocating for the passengers’ release were finally able to get the attention of the wider public after getting the *New York Times* to publish a piece about their experience. It had been nearly four years since the *Golden Venture* had landed on Rockaway Beach and the passengers were still being held in detention around the country. Several years earlier, the attorneys representing the passengers in York had begun talking with their Congressional representative, Republican Bill Goodling, through a series of letters informing him about the situation involving the passengers.[[2]](#footnote-1) After Bill Clinton’s 1997 State of the Union address, Representative Goodling approached the president as he was mingling with the people. Goodling spoke with the president, reminding Clinton the passengers were still locked up in York. Clinton said to call him the next day to talk about it. Goodling had an ace up his sleeve: he was the Chair of the House Education Committee and Clinton had several pieces of legislation relating to education that he wanted to get passed through Congress. Goodling was given 45 minutes to talk with the president about education. During this meeting, Goodling showed Clinton a *Golden Venture* paper sculpture of an eagle.[[3]](#footnote-2) Clinton marveled at the sculpture saying,

**A:** They’re beautiful.

**B:** Representative Goodling reminded Clinton that the Passengers had four years in detention to make those sculptures. The next day, Clinton called up Goodling to tell him that he had made his decision: the passengers would be released from detention.[[4]](#footnote-3) The pressure from the media and the people supporting the passengers, as well as the passengers themselves through art, had persuaded President Clinton to parole the remaining passengers detained in the York County Prison. On February 27, 1997, the remaining passengers were finally able to leave the detention center.

*[Uplifting transition music]*

**B:** The passengers boarded buses from the Immigration and Naturalization Service which drove them to a church in the nearby town of Loganville, Pennsylvania. There, cameras and the media were waiting to greet them along with their supporters from the People of the Golden Vision. The passengers and their supporters greeted each other with tears of joy streaming from their faces.

*[Including the sound of* [*indistinct chatter*](https://www.storyblocks.com/audio/stock/crowd-chatter-ambience-04-bem74yc2iprk0wy4hpo.html) *in the background, acoustic guitar music in the background]*

**B:** One of the supporters even played a guitar for them.[[5]](#footnote-4) The Passengers walked into the church where they mingled with their supporters.

*[Cameras clicking]*

**B:**As the passengers emerged from the church, the reporters flocked to them and attempted to ask the passengers questions, one reporter can be heard saying:

**A:** “How’s it feel to be out?”[[6]](#footnote-5)

**B:** The passengers did not answer any of the reporter’s individual questions, but they did have a statement prepared:

**Z:** “We must say thank you to Mr. President Clinton. He helped us out a lot. He let us to be released.”[[7]](#footnote-6)

**B:** The passengers then began to sing “Amazing Grace” in Mandarin as one of their supporters strummed along on his guitar.[[8]](#footnote-7) The mood at this event was jubilant and victorious, but there was still one major issue: *[Cut music for effect]* While passengers were physically free from detention, their new parole status didn’t guarantee legal protections or a pathway to citizenship. Passengers were like birds halfway out the American cage: Not quite imprisoned, not quite free.

*[Short music transition to next section]*

| SECTION 2: **Shane** describes the episode sculpture, Caged Freedom Eagle.  |
| --- |

**S:** One particular sculpture passengers worked on while detained in York Prison represents their complex struggle for freedom. In this sculpture, a small bird sticks its head from a large silver cage, the cage itself capped off by a bald eagle’s head. The smaller bird rests between the inside and outside of the cage. Because you can see the bald eagle’s head sitting on top of the *outside* of the cage, it makes it seem like the smaller bird is under the constant watch of the eagle. It’s unclear if it’s a prideful gaze or one that is more authoritative. Like the small bird, passengers at the York prison, *even after* their parole from President Clinton, were only halfway out of the cage. The head of the small bird peeks out of the cage, just as passengers’ minds could freely chase the American Dream while still physically restrained. Again, the passengers, despite their paroled status, are not protected residents and have no path to citizenship. The legality of their presence remains in limbo.[[9]](#footnote-8)

**S:** Being made by *Golden Venture* passengers in 1996, after three years of detention, asylum case hearings, and uncertainty, the sculpture speaks to how *Golden Venture* passengers are still **othered** by the immigration system. They are caged under a guise of freedom, yet they’re American in every way that counts.

*[Short music transition]*

| SECTION 3: **Ryn & Dalton’s** section discussing current immigration policies and Golden Venture folding subreddit |
| --- |

**R:** Chinese migrants are one of many demographics fighting against the U.S. government to expand the rights of asylum seekers. Recent state legislation – both passed and proposed by state legislators – aims to restrict migrants from having access to legal status through continuing a trend of xenophobic policies. Take the Asylum Reform and Border Protection Act of 2023: this proposed legislation prevents the U.S. government from being held responsible for finding and providing funding for legal representation for asylum seekers. The language from the proposed bill would “...[raise] the burden on an alien to establish the alien's claimed fear of persecution when seeking asylum.”[[10]](#footnote-9) State Bill 4 in Texas allows police to arrest migrants on sight for entering the United States “illegally.”[[11]](#footnote-10) Along with current proposed federal legislation, states with anti-immigrant laws like Texas and Florida work tirelessly to bar access to status for asylum seekers.

**D**: Measures like State Bill 1036, proposed in Florida, impose harsher treatment for undocumented immigrants whom the government deported and who later returned to the U.S. The bill details the scope of first, second, and third degree charges that could place migrants in prison for up to thirty years.

**R**: The future of immigration legislation is *bleak*. How can stories such as the *Golden Venture* be brought to the **attention** of the public so that real change can be done to stop crackdowns like this?

**[Dalton’s section about the art subreddit]**

**D.** When trying to raise awareness of stories like this, you have to get creative. Since the early 2000s, Golden Venture folding has found a niche in the United States with tutorials and groups cropping up across the Internet inspired by the artwork created by the survivors of the *Golden Venture*. Americans have since created their own complex art, including anything from massive, majestic flowers to subjects such as poke-balls from the popular game series Pokemon. Interest in learning more about this style is centered on public forums such as Reddit’s r/GoldenVentureFolding, which has a community almost two thousand strong. Despite the increasing popularity of the art style, however, the source of Golden Venture Folding is seemingly lost on its practitioners. There is seldom mention of the *Golden Venture* story in any source that introduces the folding art style and the subreddit despite including “Golden Venture” in the name. The forum ultimately fails to properly educate on the subject. Imagine the work that can be accomplished in changing flawed immigration policy if the same people who appreciate the art style are inspired to speak out.

*[Uplifting transition music]*

| SECTION 4: **Jeffrey & Zach’s** section that narratively provides concise overviews of each series episode)  |
| --- |

**J**: We started the series discussing the long and treacherous journey made by the Chinese immigrants, and the reasons for choosing to risk their safety for a potential life in America with the specific details on the struggles they faced. [Episode 1]

Then we talked about the experience of the prisoners detained in York, and the impact on prison reform. [Episode 2]

Next, we covered the lives and experiences of the women of the Golden Venture, and how their experiences differ from that of the men, and discussed the gendered experience and why they were sent all the way down to New Orleans. [Episode 3]

**Z**: In the episode looking from the lawyers perspective, the discussion about the legal representation for the detainees in the York Prison from the York County Bar association illustrates the experiences of the lawyers as they fought to get asylum for their clients. [Episode 4]

The uphill battle that the lawyers faced in trying to get the immigrants released wasn’t the only effort being made. We talk next about how the York community became aware of the passengers held in the prison, and the actions taken by the York community, mainly showing support for their release, would ultimately lead to legislative action at the federal level and their freedom. [Episode 5]

We close with a discussion of how the political machine ignored immigration policies prior to the *Golden Venture*. The politics and history of immigration helps us to better understand current immigration policies and stances of the federal government. [Episode 6]

| SECTION 5: **Alaina’s** end of episode wrap up with big takeaway/series argument. |
| --- |

**A**: There is still so much work to be done. The *Golden Venture* passengers were not the first immigrants or refugees to be abandoned by the United States, and they won’t be the last. Keep in mind that **seeking asylum is not illegal.** The United States government criminalized *Golden Venture* passengers for fleeing their abusive government, therefore *becoming* an abusive government itself. Rejecting the very people it serves to help, wrongfully detaining migrants who keep the nation’s economy afloat, denying asylum to people whose determination for freedom fits every American virtue: these are all characteristics of an American immigration system failing to practice what it preaches.

As the story of *Golden Venture* passengers continues to unfold, so do countless others. American voters have the power to change this xenophobic pattern by holding politicians accountable. If this issue moves you, put your ballot behind your beliefs. The United States can’t claim to be the land of the *free*, it can’t declare itself *compassionate*, if its policies, its elected officials, and citizens create a culture that punishes asylum seekers like those aboard the *Golden Venture*.

*[Credits]*

This podcast is a production of the Spring 2024 Podcasting the Past class at York College of Pennsylvania taught by Doctor Jacqueline Beatty.

This episode was written and edited by Ben Werkley, Jeffery Parris, Zach Grossman, Ryn Johnson, Dalton Emig, Shane Mundis, and Alaina Crowell.

It was reviewed by Katie O’Neill, Sara Bokus, Sydney Slack, Kayla Buchanan, Laila Brown, and Sara Purdon.

Thanks to Professor Jeff Schiffman for access to the radio studio at York College of Pennsylvania as well as help with the podcast publishing and audios.

Theme music and sound effects courtesy of StoryBlocks.

1. *Golden Venture*, directed by Peter Cohn (2006; New Day Films), Digital Video, accessed through canopy, Accessed April 11, 2024, https://www.kanopy.com/en/ycp/video/150093. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. “RE: UNITED STATES CONDONES FORCED STERILIZATION OF CHINESE NATIONALS,” Letter from Craig Trebilcock to Congressman William Goodling, August 20, 1993, YCPBox#1Doc115, located in the class shared folder: YCP: Box #1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. Cohn, *Golden Venture.* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
4. Patrick Radden Keefe, *The Snakehead: An Epic Tale of the Chinatown Underworld and the American Dream* (New York: Anchor Books, 2009), 260. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
5. “USA: LAST OF GROUP OF CHINESE IMMIGRANTS ARE RELEASED FROM PRISON,” AP News Archive, Filmed February 27, 1997 in York, Pa. Video, 1:40. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
6. AP News Archive, “USA: LAST OF GROUP OF CHINESE IMMIGRANTS ARE RELEASED FROM PRISON,” 2:15. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
7. AP News Archive, “USA: LAST OF GROUP OF CHINESE IMMIGRANTS ARE RELEASED FROM PRISON,” 2:25. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
8. AP News Archive, “USA: LAST OF GROUP OF CHINESE IMMIGRANTS ARE RELEASED FROM PRISON,” 2:39. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
9. “Cage w/eagle head top & Golden Venture written on front,” Object Record, Museum of Chinese in America collections database, https://mocanyc.pastperfectonline.com/webobject/274231D2-EF16-4154-B29D-112225568934. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
10. U.S. Congress, House Judiciary Committee, Asylum Reform and Border Protection Act of 2023. 118th Cong. https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/1183?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%22asylum%22%7D&s=3&r=6. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
11. “S.B. 4” https://capitol.texas.gov/tlodocs/85R/analysis/html/SB00004I.htm. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)