
Chapter

6

Ideology and History: Closing the “Golden Door”

The sources in this chapter offer information on the attitude of Americans toward immigrants in the early twentieth century.

Secondary Source

1. Racism and Immigration Restriction (1984), JOHN HIGHAM

Primary Sources

2. The Passing of the Great Race (1916), MADISON GRANT
3. Whose Country Is This? (1921), CALVIN COOLIDGE
4. The Klan’s Fight for Americanism (1926), HIRAM W. EVANS
5. Because You’re a Jew (1908)
6. Her Father’s Daughter (1921), GENE STRATTON-PORTER
7. A Congressman Calls for Restriction (1921)
8. The Bootleggers (1925)
9. Immigrant Occupation Groups, 1899–1924
10. Unemployment Rates, 1900–1924

5. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 36.
6. Quoted in Clark, *American Family Home*, p. 153.
7. Quoted in Eileen Boris, "The Gendered Meaning of Arts and Crafts," in Kardon, *The Ideal Home*, p. 44.
8. Quoted in Dolores Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1981), p. 239.

Give me your tired, your poor,
 Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
 The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
 Send these, the homeless, tempest tossed to me,
 I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

—Emma Lazarus

The majestic statue commemorated in Emma Lazarus's poem was the first glimpse many immigrants had of their new home. Despite its welcoming words, many of the newcomers were also aware of other attitudes in their new country, since news, letters, and even immigrants traveled both ways across the Atlantic. They might not know that native-born Americans did not see the Statue of Liberty as a national symbol of refuge, yet some of them surely suspected that they might not be welcome.

Their suspicions were well founded. Growing numbers of Americans at the turn of the century were convinced that there was too much "wretched refuse" pouring in from the Old World's "teeming shores." Such sentiments had already led Congress to exclude Chinese immigrants and soon thereafter led it to restrict Japanese immigration. The doors to European immigration—through most of the nineteenth century white, overwhelmingly Christian, and mostly Protestant—remained wide open. Yet that too would change when Congress severely restricted European immigration in the early 1920s.

Although restrictions on immigration and hostility toward immigrants remain today, by World War II intense hostility toward European immigrants had subsided. Only then did Lazarus's poem, engraved on Lady Liberty's pedestal and in the minds of countless schoolchildren, help to transform the Statue of Liberty into an enduring symbol of asylum. Today the national self-image embodied in the statue still obscures other images Americans have had of immigrants. We often forget that in the early twentieth century many Americans looked at newcomers through a filter of beliefs, values, fears, and prejudices that historians call an ideology. This powerful ideological filter prevented many people in this country from seeing it as a haven for all of the oppressed. In this chapter we examine the nature of this ideology and its role in closing the "golden door" after World War I.

SETTING

America had never experienced the sheer numbers of immigrants that arrived in the first fifteen years of the twentieth century. Between 1900 and 1914, more

than 13 million immigrants arrived, mostly from Europe. Yet this European immigration was changing. Since the mid-1880s, the percentage of southern and eastern European immigrants had risen steadily, from about 16 percent of total immigration in 1885 to 75 percent in 1914. This dramatic shift alarmed many observers, especially after the U.S. Immigration Commission concluded in 1911 that the “new” southern and eastern European immigrants differed from the “old” northern European immigrants. The commission declared that the old immigrants had “entered practically every line of activity” and had “mingled freely” with native-born Americans. On the other hand, the new immigrants were mostly unskilled laborers who “congregated together in sections apart from native Americans.”¹ They seemed unable to become American.

Doubts about the ability or willingness of immigrants to assimilate were nothing new. Nativism—hostility to groups because of their foreignness—had a long history in the United States. In the 1790s Federalists pointed to foreign radicals as a threat to the republic. When Irish immigrants fled oppression and famine in their homeland a half century later, many Americans flocked into the Know-Nothing party to battle the “menace” of Catholicism. In 1882, a growing fear of a “yellow menace” on the West Coast led Congress to exclude the Chinese from further entry. A Gentleman’s Agreement between the United States and Japan denied entry to Japanese laborers in 1907. Asian immigrants were also denied the benefits of citizenship.

Meanwhile European immigration policy reflected a demand for cheap labor and optimism about America’s ability to absorb white newcomers. But here too doubts were growing at the end of the century. In 1894, the Immigration Restriction League began a campaign to close America’s doors even to European immigrants. The league’s immediate goal was to impose a literacy test on immigrants, a goal it achieved in 1917. Then in 1921 Congress enacted a provisional measure that established annual quotas on European immigration, and in 1924 it passed the Johnson-Reed Act, which set a total annual limit of European immigrants at 150,000. The act distributed annual quotas on the basis of the proportion of each nationality in the existing American population, and it also banned Japanese immigration entirely, making Asian exclusion virtually complete. Since southern and eastern European nationalities made up far smaller percentages of the population than northern European groups, their quotas were tiny. At the same time, the larger quotas of more prosperous northern European countries went mostly unfilled. By closing the doors to the worrisome Asians and “new” immigrants, restrictionists had ended a century of massive immigration to America.

INVESTIGATION

Historians point to many reasons for growing hostility to immigrants in the first decades of the twentieth century: fears about radical influence, the fact that

most new immigrants were Catholics or Jews, a perception that they took jobs from native-born Americans, and the general hostility to foreigners aroused by the loyalty campaigns during World War I. Others insist that immigration restriction cannot be understood apart from a nativist ideology that led many Americans to see racial distinctions among immigrant groups. Your main job in this chapter is to explain why the United States ended Japanese and unrestricted European immigration after World War I. To do that, you must analyze the role that ideology—a complex of values, fears, interests, and prejudices—played in immigration restriction. Answering the following questions will make it easier to assess this ideology:

1. **What is historian John Higham’s explanation in Source 1 for the restriction of European immigration?** What role did a racist ideology play in closing the doors? What does Higham mean when he says that race was a “vehicle for thinking about culture”?
2. **What do the primary sources reveal about the racial differences many native-born Americans saw among immigrants?** What qualities did nativists assign to “racially inferior” groups? What other factors contributed to restrictionist sentiment after World War I?
3. **Were the fears about “inferior racial stock” deeply held or simply a convenient weapon for nativists who were interested in closing the doors for other reasons?** Do you agree that the “race-menace” argument actually reflected deeper fears about maintaining cultural homogeneity?

Before you begin, read the sections in your textbook on immigration. Pay special attention to the role it assigns to racial thought in the restriction of immigration.

SECONDARY SOURCE



John Higham is a leading immigration scholar. In the following essay, he discusses the role that racial theory in the early twentieth century played in defining a nativist ideology and in closing the gates to unrestricted European immigration. Note how ideas about race change in the late nineteenth century, according to Higham. What influences transformed the concept of race from a simple notion of white supremacy to something much more elaborate? What is Higham’s evidence that Americans became increasingly concerned about the “unity of their culture” after World War I?

Racism and Immigration Restriction (1984)

JOHN HIGHAM

In the decade from 1905 to 1914 an average of more than a million people annually crowded past the immigration inspectors. After 1896 the great majority derived from southern and eastern Europe. Thereafter, the outflow from the more highly developed countries of northwestern Europe declined as the movement from distant lands increased. . . . Whereas nativists in the nineties had very generally disliked the foreigner as such, the "new immigration" now stood out sharply as the heart of the problem. All of the regressive and antisocial qualities once imputed to the immigrants in general could now be fixed upon this more specific category. In fact, the major theoretical effort of restrictionists in the twentieth century consisted precisely in this: the transformation of relative cultural differences into an absolute line of cleavage, which would redeem the northwestern Europeans from the charges once leveled at them and explain the present danger of immigration in terms of the change in its sources. . . .

. . . The earliest attacks stressed a social and economic peril. Pennsylvania coal miners denounced the Italian, Hungarian, and Polish labor arriving among them as a degraded, servile class whose presence frustrated efforts to improve wages and conditions. Economists and a growing number of labor leaders generalized the argument into a plea for saving "the American standard of living." The economic case was systematized by the United States Immigration Commission of 1907-11, whose forty-two-volume report comprised the most massive investigation of immigration ever made. The Commission worked out, in vast detail, an unfavorable contrast between the northwestern and southeastern Europeans in the United States *at that time*. The latter were more highly concentrated in cities and in unskilled jobs and were more inclined to return to Europe. These figures obscured significant differences between particular nationalities and did not take account of a marked improvement in the social-economic caliber of northwestern European immigration since the time when it had led the way. Other critics, beginning with the Immigration Restriction League, produced even more misleading figures, correlating the new immigration with the growth of slums and with a high incidence of crime, disease, and insanity.

A second line of argument concerned a racial menace. Here, the case against the new nationalities was harder to build. In popular parlance, race meant color. Since no very clear-cut difference of complexion was apparent between native Americans and any European group, the old instincts of

white supremacy did not extend to the new immigration as easily as they did to the Chinese. To a large extent, race lines would have to be manufactured. Their construction was a gradual process, long impeded by the democratic tradition. Ultimately, however, the racial attack on the new immigration emerged as a powerful ideological weapon of the restriction movement.

For a starting point, restrictionist intellectuals had a romantic, traditionalist concept of race that was different from the popular spirit of white supremacy. Throughout the nineteenth century patrician writers often acclaimed the American people as the finest branch of the Anglo-Saxon race. The Anglo-Saxon myth was somewhat inconsistent with the cosmopolitan ideal of nationality; but originally no race feelings (in the sense of biological taboos) were involved. In the Anglo-Saxon sense "race" meant essentially the persistence of national character; it expressed a cultural nationalism. In time, however, Anglo-Saxonism expanded and sharpened. It became permeated with race feelings. Increasingly, Anglo-Saxon culture seemed to depend on the persistence of a physical type. Nationalism was naturalized; and "race" in every sense came to imply a biological determinism.

Darwinism was a preliminary influence in the confusion of natural history with national history. By suggesting that a biological struggle underlies all of life, Darwinism encouraged Anglo-Saxon theorists to think of nations as species engaged in a desperate battle for survival. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, a number of patrician intellectuals turned the Anglo-Saxon tradition into a defensive attack on immigrants and an aggressive doctrine in foreign policy. They summoned Anglo-Saxon America to protect herself at home and to demonstrate her mastery abroad. Consequently, the victory of imperialism in 1898 gave racial nationalism an unprecedented vogue. Ideas that had been the property of an intellectual elite permeated public opinion.

Yet, race thinking still did not satisfactorily define the danger of the new immigration. Why would they or their children not respond favorably to the American environment? Indeed, what were the racial differences between southeastern Europeans and old-stock Americans? Darwinism was little help in answering these questions. Answers came only in the early twentieth century through new scientific and pseudoscientific ideas imported from Europe. The dazzling development of modern genetics around 1900 revealed principles of heredity that seemed entirely independent of environmental influences. Genetics inspired many scientists, led by Sir Francis Galton in England and Charles B. Davenport in the United States, to hope for the improvement of society by preventing the inheritance of bad traits. Under the banner of "eugenics," these biological reformers gave a presumably scientific validation to immigration restriction; for how could a nation protect and improve its genes without keeping out "degenerate breeding stock"?

Simultaneously, a new school of anthropology was reeducating Anglo-Saxon nationalists on the racial composition of European man. William Z.

Ripley's *The Races of Europe* (1899) conveyed to American readers a tripartite classification of white men recently developed by European scholars. The new race lines conformed not to national groups, but to physical types: the Nordics of northern Europe, the Alpines of central Europe, and the Mediterraneans of southern Europe. The latter two corresponded roughly to the new immigration. A number of writers combined the new anthropology with eugenics to produce a racist philosophy of history. Probably the most influential of these was Madison Grant, whose pretentious tract, *The Passing of the Great Race* (1916), delivered a solemn warning that the Nordics were making their last stand against the inferior races pouring in from southern and eastern Europe.

These ideas did not develop autonomously. Their importance was chiefly in giving clarity, definition, and some intellectual substance to fears and anxieties that were much more broadly based. The new racism seems to have reflected a wider tendency to make racial categories ever more rigid and impermeable; for this was also the period when lynchings and other measures to degrade and isolate southern Negroes reached an all-time high. Moreover, allegations of a racial peril in the new immigration rationalized an underlying concern about cultural homogeneity. At the deepest level, what impelled the restriction movement in the early decades of the twentieth century was the discovery that immigration was undermining the unity of American culture and threatening the accustomed dominance of a white Protestant people of northern European descent. The science of the day, together with America's traditional susceptibility to race feelings, made the language of race an impelling vehicle for thinking and talking about culture.

The mounting sense of danger—even dispossession—among millions of native-born white Protestants in the period 1910–30 is not hard to understand. A people whose roots were in the towns and farms of the early republic saw great cities coming more and more under the control of strangers whose speech and values were not their own. A people who unconsciously identified Protestantism with Americanism saw Catholic voters and urban bosses gaining control of the industrialized states. A people whose religion was already badly damaged by modern ideas saw the compensating rigors of their lifestyle flouted in the saloons and cabarets of a more expressive, hedonistic society. In reaction, the older America mounted a cultural counteroffensive through the prohibition movement, immigration restriction, and a sharpened racism.

At first the counteroffensive made headway slowly. Statewide prohibition took hold in the South after 1907 but spread widely in the Midwest only after 1912. In Congress an effort to pass the literacy test failed in 1906. No further attempt was made until six years later. Not until 1914 did the restriction movement regain the momentum it had in the mid-nineties. The main reason for this slow recovery was the generally optimistic spirit of the first years of the twentieth century—an optimism reflected in the progressives' absorption

with internal reform and the industrialists' unconcern with foreign radicalism. Another constraint was imposed by the ballots of the new immigrants. By the early twentieth century their voting strength in northeastern industrial areas was attracting Republican as well as Democratic politicians. Republicans could sometimes offset Democratic strength in the big cities by appealing to Jews, Slavs, Italians, and French Canadians who fell out with the Irish. Consequently, the G.O.P. could not afford to identify itself with restriction as openly as it had in the nineties. The immigrants made use of their growing influence whenever restriction bills came up. No legislative issue was closer to their hearts, and congressional committees had to face troops of immigrant representatives whenever hearings opened. Jews generally took the lead; a National Liberal Immigration League under Jewish auspices did much to rally the opposition to the literacy bill in 1906 and in succeeding years.

Against this opposition, the restrictionist forces drew on three centers of strength. Patrician race thinkers supplied intellectual leadership. A stream of books and articles urged the eugenic implications of immigration policy and the danger of "race suicide." Meanwhile, a second group, the trade unions, lobbied energetically against the business apologists for immigration. The American Federation of Labor had moved far enough from its immigrant past by the early twentieth century to adopt an uncompromisingly restrictionist position. But its agitation did not count for much in actuality. The Congressmen who might have done labor's bidding were swayed by the stronger pressure of the immigrants; the big cities and industrial centers voted regularly and overwhelmingly against restriction.

Most of the support for restriction in Congress came from a third sector. From 1910 to 1952, the common people of the South and West formed a massive phalanx in favor of rigid legislation. This regional grouping represented a major shift in the alignment of forces. Initially, restriction sentiment had congealed in the Northeast, where the impact of immigration was most quickly and directly felt. In the 1890's the South and West had responded to the issue slowly and uncertainly. But in the twentieth century, while industrial and immigrant opposition thwarted northeastern restrictionists, the South and West emerged into the forefront of the movement. Appropriately, the political leadership passed from Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts, who retired into the background after 1906, to more demagogic men like "Cotton Ed" Smith of South Carolina, Albert Johnson of Washington, and Pat McCarran of Nevada.

The essential explanation is to be found in racial and cultural defensiveness. The Deep South and the Far West, where the new regional lineup started, had long been the areas of most intense race feelings. Even without the sophisticated rationale of the new racial science, southerners and westerners could regard the unfamiliar peoples of southeastern Europe as less than completely white. Moreover, the Deep South and the western frontier had long been the sections with the most militant consciousness of having to

fight to maintain a culture against external enemies. As racial lines hardened in the early twentieth century and the torrent of immigration mounted, community leaders from Seattle to Savannah raged at the great alien cities of the East and Midwest for polluting the purity of an Anglo-Saxon country and corrupting an individualistic, Protestant culture.

The first operative demonstration of the new racial emphasis came in 1905 with the outbreak of an anti-Japanese movement on the West Coast. Restrictionist leaders sensed that the Japanese issue might enable them to get the kind of general legislation they wanted. As matters turned out, the immigration law enacted in 1907 began the process of Japanese exclusion but otherwise contained only administrative reforms. Nevertheless, it was significant that Asiatic and European immigration were now, and would henceforth be, treated as different phases of a single question, not as entirely separate from one another. . . .

From 1911 (when the United States Immigration Commission made its report) to 1917, a general bill that included a watered-down literacy test was continually before an increasingly race-conscious Congress. Despite vociferous support from the South and West, the bill did not become law until the eve of America's entry into the war. In even years, Congress stalled for fear of antagonizing the foreign vote in the November elections. In odd years, the bill passed by large majorities but succumbed to a presidential veto. Taft, in 1913, argued that America needed the immigrants' labor and could supply the literacy. Wilson, in 1915 and 1917, appealed to the cosmopolitan ideal of America as a haven for the oppressed.

Enacted finally over Wilson's second veto, the immigration law of 1917 was the first general and sweeping victory for the restrictionists in their thirty-five-year crusade. . . .

Though the whole law grew out of prewar trends, the First World War created the extra margin of support that carried it past a veto. And before long, the war generated a climate of opinion that made these restrictions seem perilously inadequate. Although the war temporarily deferred further action by interrupting migration automatically, the European holocaust unleashed the forces that brought immigration restriction to its historic culmination.

The struggle with Germany stirred public opinion like a cyclone. America's isolation from European affairs, taken for granted in 1914, dissolved. Though statesmen tried to restore it after the war, henceforth it would have to be a deliberate contrivance rather than a natural condition. No longer could the American people feel providentially exempted from any international crisis. The new sense of danger came with such devastating force that it produced very little of the caution and restraint that had marked Roosevelt's Japanese policy. Instead, in every section of the country, men reacted toward all ethnic minorities as Californians had reacted toward the Japanese. Suddenly conscious of the presence of millions of unassimilated people in their midst,

Americans quaked with fear of their potential disloyalty. Roosevelt himself signaled the change; for now he led the clamor for repressing any kind of divided loyalty.

The chief victims during the war years, the German-Americans, were soon thereafter restored to public favor, but the new emotional climate was not a passing phenomenon. Other minorities inherited the hysteria because it arose from a structural change in American nationalism. Known at the time as 100-percent Americanism, the new spirit demanded an unprecedented degree of national solidarity; loyalty and social conformity became virtually synonymous. The slack and gradual processes of assimilation characteristic of the past no longer seemed tolerable. Thus the war destroyed most of what remained of the old faith in America's capacity to fuse all men into a "nation of nations." The development of social stratification had weakened that faith; racial and cultural cleavage had narrowed it; and international stresses dealt it a final blow.

Once immigration revived in 1920, stringent restrictions seemed instantly imperative. Outside of immigrant groups and a few sympathetic social workers, the question no longer concerned the desirability of restriction, but simply the proper degree and kind. Even big business conceded the value of a "selective" policy. Furthermore, the 100-per-cent-American impulse created by the war greatly intensified the racial attitudes evolved in earlier years. For the first time the demand for Japanese exclusion met a general sympathy in eastern opinion; and everywhere a large sector of both the public and the intelligentsia echoed Madison Grant's pleas for preserving Nordic America from the mongrel hordes of southeastern Europe.

Two laws resulted. The first of them, though frankly a makeshift designed to hold the gate while a permanent plan was worked out, established the underlying principle of national quotas based on the preexisting composition of the American population. The law of 1921 limited European immigration to 3 per cent of the number of foreign-born of each nationality present in the United States at the time of the last available census, that of 1910. This would hold the transatlantic current to a maximum of 350,000 and assign most of that total to northwestern Europe. Ethnic affiliation became the main determinant for admission to the United States.

Restrictionists remained dissatisfied, partly because of administrative snarls in the law but chiefly because it was not sufficiently restrictive. In fact, a good many people were pressing for complete suspension of immigration. After three years of bickering, a permanent law passed on a landslide of southern, western, and rural votes. The only opposition came from industrial areas in the Northeast and Midwest. Owing to considerations of Pan-American goodwill and to the southwestern desire for Mexican "stoop-labor," the act of 1924 left immigration from the western hemisphere unrestricted; but it perfected the structure of Oriental exclusion and drastically tightened the quota system for the rest of the world.

PRIMARY SOURCES

The primary sources in this section illustrate nativism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They also reflect developments that may have influenced perceptions of immigrants. As you analyze these sources, keep in mind the argument you just read about the role of racial thought as an “ideological weapon” to restrict immigration. One approach is to make a brief list of the most important immigrant characteristics that the primary sources mention, and then determine if nativists saw them as racial traits. What evidence is there that a racist ideology helped to define deeper fears among many Americans?



Madison Grant’s book, which helped popularize turn-of-the-century theories about “race suicide,” went through four editions by 1921. His discussion is based on the assumption that “Nordics” or northern Europeans were racially superior to other “racial stocks.” What fears about immigrants does Grant reveal?

The Passing of the Great Race (1916)

MADISON GRANT

The prosperity that followed the [Civil War] attracted hordes of newcomers who were welcomed by the native Americans to operate factories, build railroads and fill up the waste spaces—“developing the country” it was called.

These new immigrants were no longer exclusively members of the Nordic race as were the earlier ones who came of their own impulse to improve their social conditions. The transportation lines advertised America as a land flowing with milk and honey and the European governments took the opportunity to unload upon careless, wealthy and hospitable America the sweepings of their jails and asylums. The result was that the new immigration . . . contained a large and increasing number of the weak, the broken and the mentally crippled of all races drawn from the lowest stratum of the Mediterranean basin and the Balkans, together with hordes of the wretched, submerged populations of the Polish Ghettos. Our jails, insane asylums and almshouses are filled with this human flotsam and the whole tone of American life, social, moral and political has been lowered and vulgarized by them.

With a pathetic and fatuous belief in the efficacy of American institutions and environment to reverse or obliterate immemorial hereditary tendencies, these newcomers were welcomed and given a share in our land and pros-

Source: Excerpted from Madison Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, third edition (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1916) as in Oscar Handlin, ed., *Immigration as a Factor in American History* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1959), pp. 184–185.

perity. The American taxed himself to sanitize and educate these poor helots and as soon as they could speak English, encouraged them to enter into the political life, first of municipalities and then of the nation. . . .

These immigrants adopt the language of the native American, they wear his clothes, they steal his name and they are beginning to take his women, but they seldom adopt his religion or understand his ideals and while he is being elbowed out of his own home the American looks calmly abroad and urges on others the suicidal ethics which are exterminating his own race. . . .

As to what the future mixture will be it is evident that in large sections of the country the native American will entirely disappear. He will not intermarry with inferior races and he cannot compete in the sweat shop and in the street trench with the newcomers. Large cities from the days of Rome, Alexandria, and Byzantium have always been gathering points of diverse races, but New York is becoming a *cloaca gentium* which will produce many amazing racial hybrids and some ethnic horrors that will be beyond the powers of future anthropologists to unravel.

One thing is certain: in any such mixture, the surviving traits will be determined by competition between the lowest and most primitive elements and the specialized traits of Nordic man; his stature, his light colored eyes, his fair skin and light colored hair, his straight nose and his splendid fighting and moral qualities, will have little part in the resultant mixture.

3

Calvin Coolidge quickly signed the Johnson-Reed Act when it passed Congress in 1924. Three years earlier, Vice President Coolidge had expressed his views on immigration in this *Good Housekeeping* article.

Does his warning about racial “deterioration” reveal other anxieties that Americans may have had after World War I?

Whose Country Is This? (1921)

CALVIN COOLIDGE

We want no such additions to our population as those who prey upon our institutions or our property. America has, in the popular mind, been an asylum for those who have been driven from their homes in foreign countries because of various forms of political and religious oppression. But America cannot afford to remain an asylum after such people have passed the portals and begun to share the privileges of our institutions.

These institutions have flourished by reason of a common background of experience; they have been perpetuated by a common faith in the righteousness of their purpose; they have been handed down undiminished in effectiveness

Source: Lewis H. Carlson and George A. Colburn, *In Their Place: White America Defines Her Minorities, 1850–1950* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1972), pp. 342–343.

from our forefathers who conceived their spirit and prepared the foundations. We have put into operation our faith in equal opportunity before the law in exchange for equal obligation of citizenship.

All native-born Americans, directly or indirectly, have the advantage of our schools, our colleges, and our religious bodies. It is our belief that America could not otherwise exist. Faith in mankind is in no wise inconsistent with a requirement for trained citizenship, both for men and women. No civilization can exist without a background—an active community of interest, a common aspiration—spiritual, social, and economic. It is a duty our country owes itself to require of all those aliens who come here that they have a background not inconsistent with American institutions.

Such a background might consist either of a racial tradition or a national experience. But in its lowest terms it must be characterized by a capacity for assimilation. . . . It would not be unjust to ask of every alien: What will you contribute to the common good, once you are admitted through the gates of liberty? Our history is full of answers of which we might be justly proud. But of late, the answers have not been so readily or so eloquently given. Our country must cease to be regarded as a dumping ground. Which does not mean that it must deny the value of rich accretions drawn from the right kind of immigration.

Any such restriction, except as a necessary and momentary expediency, would assuredly paralyze our national vitality. But measured practically, it would be suicidal for us to let down the ban for the inflowing of cheap manhood, just as, commercially, it would be unsound for this country to allow her markets to be overflowed with cheap goods, the product of cheap labor. There is no room either for the cheap man or the cheap goods. . . .

If we believe, as we do, in our political theory that the people are the guardians of government, we should not subject our government to the bitterness and hatred of those who have not been born of our tradition and are not willing to yield an increase to the strength inherent in our institutions. American liberty is dependent on quality in citizenship. Our obligation is to maintain that citizenship at its best. We must have nothing to do with those who would undermine it. The retroactive immigrant is a danger in our midst. His discontent gives him no time to seize a healthy opportunity to improve himself. His purpose is to tear down. There is no room for him here. He needs to be deported, not as a substitute for, but as a part of his punishment.

We might avoid this danger were we insistent that the immigrant, before he leaves foreign soil, is temperamentally keyed for our national background. There are racial considerations too grave to be brushed aside for any sentimental reasons. Biological laws tell us that certain divergent people will not mix or blend. The Nordics propagate themselves successfully. With other races, the outcome shows deterioration on both sides. Quality of mind and body suggests that observance of ethnic law is as great a necessity to a nation as immigration law. . . .



By 1923, the Ku Klux Klan had attracted millions of members. Hiram Evans's article, published in the *North American Review* in 1926, offers some clues about the fears of many of them. Does his article support John Higham's contention that race was only a "vehicle" for expressing anxieties about culture?

The Klan's Fight for Americanism (1926)

HIRAM W. EVANS

The Klan, therefore, has now come to speak for the great mass of Americans of the old pioneer stock. We believe that it does fairly and faithfully represent them, and our proof lies in their support. To understand the Klan, then, it is necessary to understand the character and present mind of the mass of old-stock Americans. The mass, it must be remembered, as distinguished from the intellectually mongrelized "Liberals."

These are, in the first place, a blend of various peoples of the so-called Nordic race, the race which, with all its faults, has given the world almost the whole of modern civilization. The Klan does not try to represent any people but these. . . .

[T]hese Nordic Americans for the last generation have found themselves increasingly uncomfortable, and finally deeply distressed. There appeared first confusion in thought and opinion, a groping and hesitancy about national affairs and private life alike, in sharp contrast to the clear, straightforward purposes of our earlier years. There was futility in religion, too, which was in many ways even more distressing. Presently we began to find that we were dealing with strange ideas; policies that always sounded well but somehow always made us still more uncomfortable.

Finally came the moral breakdown that has been going on for two decades. One by one all our traditional moral standards went by the boards or were so disregarded that they ceased to be binding. The sacredness of our Sabbath, of our homes, of chastity, and finally even of our right to teach our own children in our own schools fundamental facts and truths were torn away from us. Those who maintained the old standards did so only in the face of constant ridicule. . . .

One more point about the present attitude of the old-stock American: he has revived and increased his long-standing distrust of the Roman Catholic Church. It is for this that the native Americans, and the Klan as their leader, are most often denounced as intolerant and prejudiced. . . .

There are three of these great racial instincts, vital elements in both the historic and the present attempts to build an America which shall fulfill the aspirations and justify the heroism of the men who made the nation. These are

Source: Hiram W. Evans, "Klan's Fight for Americanism," from *North American Review*, March/April/May 1926, pp. 37–63. Reprinted by permission of the University of Northern Iowa.

the instincts of loyalty to the white race, to the traditions of America, and to the spirit of Protestantism, which has been an essential part of Americanism ever since the days of Roanoke and Plymouth Rock. They are condensed into the Klan slogan: "Native, white, Protestant supremacy."

5

The author of this article, published in *The Independent* magazine, asked several Gentiles why anti-Semitism existed. What stereotypes are evident in the responses? How do the stereotypes here compare to group stereotypes in the other sources?

Because You're a Jew (1908)

It was not easy to get frank testimony. Merchants, officials, hotel men, did not care to speak out. When they spoke at all they stipulated that their names should not be mentioned. It was only by putting many testimonies together that one was enabled to get the Gentile side of the case, which may be fairly presented in this manner:

"We have no prejudice against the Jews. We do dislike them but it is dislike based on knowledge and evidence which is so widespread and so general that it has resulted in an instinctive dislike. It is because of qualities which are manifested by Jews. The dishonest among them are out of all proportion to their numbers. No other people so persistently, shrewdly, cunningly, constantly, skim the very verge of crime, and many go over the verge." . . .

"There is another thing against the Jew. They are too prosperous. Where they contest they win. Five or six years ago, after the French Ball, there was a fight and the victor stood over the body of his antagonist and proudly proclaimed: 'The Jew is always on top.' The fact that the man whom he had defeated was also a Jew did not affect the truth he had uttered. The Jew is winning everywhere. By fair means or by foul means he wins. He has the commerce of the city in his hands now, and the signs on Broadway make one think of the main street in New Jerusalem and make Gentiles curse Titus* and wish that he had never been born. Why couldn't he leave them alone in Judea? Perhaps he might have stayed there? As to the possibility of a great Zionist movement, it's too good to be true!

"One tentacle of the Hebrew octopus has caught our newspapers now, and we also see Jews running our theaters and giving us a drama that never before was so low. We see the Hebrew octopus seizing one enterprise after the other, and we can't stop it. They are beating us. . . ."

"Two or three Jews at a summer resort utterly spoil the place for the Gen-

*The Roman who conquered Jerusalem, destroyed the great temple, and sold many of the city's residents into slavery.

tiles. The first thing that the Jew does when he gets in a hotel is to bribe the head waiter. He must have the best steak, the best of everything, and be served first, and he is so persistent, so acute, so eager and so willing to resort to anything to get his way that he does get his way and makes every less strenuous person about him so uncomfortable that they'd sooner leave the place than contend. If he sits at a table near you and you have secured something especially good, his greedy eyes boring into you utterly spoil your repast. If you give your children new toys and send them out to play you will find in half an hour that the Jew children have the new toys while your youngsters are looking on. The young Jews are not violent, but they get what they want by reason of their greater appetite for it. They're insatiable and can only be repressed by force . . ."

"How foolish, then, to associate with these people when there can by no means be any real assimilation."



Gene Stratton-Porter was a best-selling novelist whose works were popular with young readers in the early twentieth century. In *Her Father's Daughter*, heroine Linda Strong bore a striking resemblance to Stratton-Porter herself. In this excerpt, Linda advises a fellow student at a Los Angeles high school how to overtake a Japanese American student at the head of the class. How does the fear of the Japanese compare to the fear of Jews in the previous source?

Her Father's Daughter (1921)

GENE STRATTON-PORTER

An angry red rushed to the boy's face. It was an irritating fact that in the senior class of that particular Los Angeles high school a Japanese boy stood at the head. This was embarrassing to every senior.

Shortly after this, Sweet Linda is discussing the problem with a fellow student:

"I am getting at the fact that a boy as big as you and as strong as you and with as good brain and your opportunities has allowed a little brown Jap to cross the Pacific Ocean and in a totally strange country to learn a language foreign to him, and with the same books and the same chances, to beat you at your game. You and every other boy in your class ought to be thoroughly ashamed of yourselves. Before I would let a Jap, either boy or girl, lead in my class, I would give up going to school and go out and see if I could beat him growing lettuce and spinach." . . .

"For God's sake, Linda, tell me how I can beat that little coconut-headed Jap."

Source: Lewis H. Carlson and George A. Colburn, *In Their Place: White America Defines Her Minorities, 1850-1950* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1972), pp. 225-227.

Linda slammed down the lid to the lunch box. Her voice was smooth and even but there was battle in her eyes and she answered decisively: "Well, you can't beat him calling him names. There is only one way on God's footstool that you can beat him. You can't beat him legislating against him. You can't beat him boycotting him. You can't beat him with any tricks. He is as sly as a cat and he has got a whole bag full of tricks of his own, and he has proved right here in Los Angeles that he has got a brain that is hard to beat. All you can do, and be a man commendable to your own soul, is to take his subject and put your brain on it to such purpose that cut pigeon wings around him. . . . There is just one way in all this world that we can beat Eastern civilization and all that it intends to do to us eventually. The white man has dominated by his color so far in the history of the world, but it is written in the Books that when the men of colour acquire our culture and combine it with their own methods of living and rate of production, they are going to bring forth greater numbers, better equipped for the battle of life, than we are. When they have got our last secret, constructive or scientific, they will take it, and living in a way that we would not, reproducing in numbers we don't, they will beat us at any game we start, if we don't take warning while we are in the ascendancy, and keep there." . . .

"I'll do anything in the world if you will only tell me how," said Donald. "Maybe you think it isn't grinding me and humiliating me properly. Maybe you think Father and Mother haven't warned me. Maybe you think Mary Louise isn't secretly ashamed of me. How can I beat him, Linda?" . . .

"I have been watching pretty sharply," she said. "Take them as a race, as a unit—of course there are exceptions, there always are—but the great body of them are mechanical. They are imitative. They are not developing anything great of their own in their own country. They are spreading all over the world and carrying home sewing machines and threshing machines and automobiles and cantilever bridges and submarines and aeroplanes—anything from eggbeaters to telescopes. They are not creating one single thing. They are not missing imitating everything that the white man can do anywhere else on earth. They are just like the Germans so far as that is concerned." . . .

Donald started up and drew a deep breath.

"Well, some job I call that," he said. "Who do you think I am, The Almighty?"

"No," said Linda quietly, "you are not. You are merely His son, created in his own image, like Him, according to the Book, and you have got to your advantage the benefit of all that has been learned down through the ages. . . . All Oka Sayye knows how to do is to learn the lesson in his book perfectly, and he is 100 per cent. I have told you what you must do to add the plus, and you can do it if you are that boy I take you for. People have talked about the 'yellow peril' till it's got to be a meaningless phrase. Somebody must wake up to the realization that it's the deadliest peril that ever has menaced white civilization. Why shouldn't you have your hand in such wonderful work?"

7

Speeches by members of Congress often reflected popular attitudes toward immigrants. In this selection, Representative Lucian W. Parish, a Democrat from Texas, compares old and new immigrants. How does he compare them? Look for evidence of anxieties about postwar American society.

A Congressman Calls for Restriction (1921)

We should stop immigration entirely until such a time as we can amend our immigration laws and so write them that hereafter no one shall be admitted except he be in full sympathy with our Constitution and laws, willing to declare himself obedient to our flag, and willing to release himself from any obligations he may owe to the flag of the country from which he came.

It is time that we act now, because within a few short years the damage will have been done. The endless tide of immigration will have filled our country with a foreign and unsympathetic element. Those who are out of sympathy with our Constitution and the spirit of our Government will be here in large numbers, and the true spirit of Americanism left us by our fathers will gradually become poisoned by this uncertain element.

The time once was when we welcomed to our shores the oppressed and downtrodden people from all the world, but they came to us because of oppression at home and with the sincere purpose of making true and loyal American citizens, and in truth and in fact they did adapt themselves to our ways of thinking and contributed in a substantial sense to the progress and development that our civilization has made. But that time has passed now; new and strange conditions have arisen in the countries over there; new and strange doctrines are being taught. The Governments of the Orient are being overturned and destroyed, and anarchy and bolshevism are threatening the very foundation of many of them, and no one can foretell what the future will bring to many of those countries of the Old World now struggling with these problems.

Our country is a self-sustaining country. It has taught the principles of real democracy to all the nations of the earth; its flag has been the synonym of progress, prosperity, and the preservation of the rights of the individual, and there can be nothing so dangerous as for us to allow the undesirable foreign element to poison our civilization and thereby threaten the safety of the institutions that our forefathers have established for us.

Now is the time to throw about this country the most stringent immigration laws and keep from our shores forever those who are not in sympathy with the American ideas. It is the time now for us to act and act quickly, because every month's delay increases the difficulty in which we find ourselves and renders the problems of government more difficult of solution. We must protect ourselves from the poisonous influences that are threatening the very foundation of the Governments of Europe; we must see to it that those who

Source: Congressional Record, April 20, 1921, p. 450.

come here are loyal and true to our Nation and impress upon them that it means something to have the privileges of American citizenship. We must hold this country true to the American thought and the American ideals. . . .

8

As you examine this cartoon, pay attention to the fears about immigrants that it reflects. What developments after World War I reinforced the fear of immigrants?

The Bootleggers (1925)



Source: *The Independent*, March 14, 1925.

Tables on Unemployment and Immigrant Occupations

Do these tables provide evidence for additional reasons why many Americans, including organized labor, supported immigration restriction after World War I?



Immigrant Occupation Groups, 1899–1924

Year	Total	Professional, technical, and kindred workers	Farmers and farm managers	Managers, officials, and proprietors, exc. farm	Clerical, sales, and kindred workers
1924	706,896	20,926	20,320	15,668	27,373
1923	522,919	13,926	12,503	12,086	17,931
1922	309,556	9,696	7,676	9,573	10,055
1921	805,228	12,852	22,282	18,286	18,922
1920	430,001	10,540	12,192	9,654	14,054
1919	141,132	5,261	3,933	4,247	6,524
1918	110,618	3,529	2,583	3,940	4,239
1917	295,403	7,499	7,764	8,329	10,554
1916	298,826	9,024	6,840	8,725	9,907
1915	326,700	11,453	6,518	10,728	9,377
1914	1,218,480	13,454	14,442	21,903	17,933
1913	1,197,892	12,552	13,180	19,094	15,173
1912	838,172	10,913	7,664	14,715	13,782
1911	878,587	11,275	9,709	15,416	14,723
1910	1,041,570	9,689	11,793	14,731	12,219
1909	751,786	7,603	8,914	11,562	8,467
1908	782,870	10,504	7,720	16,410	11,523
1907	1,285,349	12,016	13,476	20,132	12,735
1906	1,100,735	13,015	15,288	23,515	12,226
1905	1,026,499	12,582	18,474	27,706	12,759
1904	812,870	12,195	4,507	26,914	11,055
1903	857,046	6,999	13,363	15,603	7,226
1902	648,743	2,937	8,168	9,340	3,836
1901	487,918	2,665	3,035	8,294	3,197
1900	448,572	2,392	5,433	7,216	2,870
1899	311,715	1,972	3,973	6,815	2,473

(cont. on next page)

Source: "Occupations," *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1957* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1960), p. 60.

Craftsmen, foremen, operatives, and kindred workers	Private household workers	Service workers, exc. private household	Farm laborers and foremen	Laborers, exc. farm and mine	No occupation
123,923	51,680	29,261	27,492	112,344	277,909
87,899	52,223	22,244	25,905	86,617	191,585
40,309	44,531	12,340	10,529	33,797	131,050
109,710	102,478	24,298	32,400	162,859	301,141
55,991	37,197	18,487	15,257	83,496	173,133
21,671	6,277	11,571	4,412	18,922	58,314
17,501	7,816	6,367	4,538	15,142	44,963
38,660	31,885	11,784	22,328	52,182	104,418
36,086	29,258	10,989	26,250	56,981	104,766
45,591	39,774	11,976	24,723	49,620	116,940
149,515	144,409	19,621	288,053	228,935	320,215
139,091	140,218	17,609	320,105	223,682	297,188
107,893	116,529	13,580	184,154	137,872	231,070
128,717	107,153	11,051	176,003	158,518	246,022
121,847	96,658	8,977	288,745	216,909	260,002
75,730	64,568	5,849	171,310	176,490	221,293
106,943	89,942	10,367	138,844	147,940	242,677
169,394	121,587	13,578	323,854	293,868	304,709
156,902	115,984	10,439	239,125	228,781	285,460
159,442	125,473	5,849	142,187	290,009	232,018
133,748	104,937	6,400	85,850	212,572	214,692
110,644	92,686	11,482	77,518	321,824	199,701
71,131	69,913	6,298	80,562	243,399	153,159
57,346	42,027	5,352	54,753	162,563	148,686
54,793	40,311	4,406	31,949	164,261	134,941
38,608	34,120	4,580	17,343	92,452	109,379

10

Unemployment Rates, 1900–1924

Year	Unemployed*	Percent of civilian labor force
1924	2,440	5.5
1923	1,380	3.2
1922	3,220	7.6
1921	5,010	11.9
1920	1,670	4.0
1919	950	2.3
1918	560	1.4
1917	1,920	4.8
1916	1,920	4.8
1915	3,840	9.7
1914	3,110	8.0
1913	1,680	4.4
1912	1,960	5.2
1911	2,290	6.2
1910	2,150	5.9
1909	1,870	5.2
1908	2,960	8.5
1907	600	1.8
1906	280	0.8
1905	1,000	3.1
1904	1,490	4.8
1903	800	2.6
1902	800	2.7
1901	710	2.4
1900	1,420	5.0

*In thousands.

Source: "Unemployment," *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1957* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1960), p. 73.

CONCLUSION

Like the newcomers sailing through the Golden Gate, steaming by the Statue of Liberty, or crossing the Rio Grande, historians often find themselves strangers in the land. As we saw in the last chapter, houses and furniture in the past were often different from ours. More important, the ideological "filter"—the complex

of beliefs, values, fears, prejudices, and interests that people in the past used to make sense of their world—was also different from ours. Because these differences make the past a foreign place for us, we cannot expect to get very far without understanding what people thought—their ideology. Although that alone may not make their motives clear, no explanation of motivation is complete without it. And when historians know the motives of people in the past they can better comprehend historical causes—one theme of the coming chapters.

FURTHER READING

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- Dale Steiner, *Of Thee We Sing: Immigrants and American History* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987).

NOTE

1. Maldwyn Allen Jones, *American Immigration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), p. 177.