

## Handout 2.4 10 Historical Anti-Immigrant Quotes That Sound ... Familiar

By Gabriela Garcia on Change.org under Immigrant Rights, posted August 15, 2010, with emphasis added.

([http://immigration.change.org/blog/view/10\\_historical\\_anti-immigrant\\_quotes\\_that\\_sound\\_familiar](http://immigration.change.org/blog/view/10_historical_anti-immigrant_quotes_that_sound_familiar))

In our young history as a nation, we've always held a complicated relationship with immigration. We've gone from open border policies, to semi-open border policies (only white people!), to exclusionary laws, to our current jumbled up mix of craziness that makes legal entry near-impossible for most. In between all of that, we've blamed immigrants, from a variety of countries, for ... well, the same things. Over and over again.

Want some concrete proof? I present to you (drumroll, please) quotes from nativists past that are pretty much saying *the exact same thing* as nativists present.

1. Few of their children in the country learn English ... The signs in our streets have inscriptions in both languages ... Unless the stream of their importation could be turned they will soon so outnumber us that all the advantages we have will not be able to preserve our language, and even our government will become precarious. - *Benjamin Franklin, Founding Father, on **German** immigration to Pennsylvania, 1750s*
2. We should build a wall of brass around the country. - *John Jay, first chief justice of Supreme Court, regarding "**Catholic** alien invaders," 1750s*
3. What means the paying of the passage and emptying out upon our shores such floods of pauper emigrants — the contents of the poor house and the sweepings of the streets? — multiplying tumults and violence, filling our prisons, and crowding our poor-houses, and quadrupling our taxation, and sending annually accumulating thousands to the poll to lay their inexperienced hand upon the helm of our power? - *Lyman Beecher, Leader of the Second Great Awakening, on **English** immigrants, 1834*
4. The enormous influx of **alien foreigners** will in the end prove ruinous to American workingmen, by REDUCING THE WAGES OF LABOR to a standard that will drive them from the farms and workshops altogether. - *Opinion article in the Philadelphia Sun, 1854*
5. Standing behind them are Christian employers of this land, who would rather import heathen willing to work for barely enough to sustain life than retain a brother Christian at a wage sufficient to live as becomes a Christian. We do not want Opium or the **Chinese** who grow it. - *Terence Powderly, Irish-American labor leader, 1892*

6. We demand the change of the national naturalization laws by the repeal of the act authorizing the naturalization of minors...We demand for the protection of our citizen laborers, the prohibition of the importation of **pauper labor**, and the restriction of immigration...We protest against the gross negligence and laxity with which the Judiciary of our land administer the present naturalization laws, and against the practice of naturalizing aliens. - *statement of principles of the American Protective Association, 1894*

7. Not a day passes but families are ruthlessly turned out to make room for **foreign invaders**. The rates are burdened with the education of thousands of foreign children. - *William Evans Gordon, British nativist, 1905*

8. The people of this country are too tolerant. There's no other country in the world where they'd allow it... After all we built up this country and then we allow a lot of foreigners, the scum of Europe, the offscourings of **Polish** ghettos to come and run it for us. - *John Dos Passos, early 20th century novelist, on U.S. immigration policy*

9. They are coming in such numbers and we are unable adequately to take care of them...It simply amounts to unrestricted and indiscriminate dumping into this country of people of every character and description...If there were in existence a ship that could hold three million human beings, then three million **Jews of Poland** would board to escape to America. - *Congressional hearing, 1920*

10. Now, what do we find in all our large cities? Entire sections containing a population incapable of understanding our institutions, with no comprehension of our national ideals, and for the most part incapable of speaking the English language. Foreign language information service gives evidence that many **southern Europeans** resent as an unjust discrimination the quota laws and represent America as showing race hatred and unmindful of its mission to the world. The reverse is true. America's first duty is to those already within her own shores. - *Representative Grant Hudson, 1924*

Conclusion: Anti-immigration, selective immigration, screaming at people with no documents? We've been there, done that for centuries, mostly in times of economic hardship and almost always followed by cries about immigrants taking jobs from "real" Americans, spreading crime, and refusing to assimilate. All of our fears and predictions proved un-founded. The nation didn't collapse "overrun by foreign invaders." In fact, our nation was founded on immigration, and immigration has always strengthened, enriched, and shaped our identity. How ironic then that the very descendants whose ancestors were targets of demonization are now the leaders of anti-immigrant movements. Perhaps the most timeless quote of all is "Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it."