Nativism
Reaction to Immigration

Theories of Americanization

- Homogenous Culture Theory
  – Immigrants will be changed and assimilate to American Culture.
- Melting Pot Theory
  – Immigrants will blend with the society forming a homogenous, yet ever changing society.
- Cultural Pluralism "Mosaic" or "Salad Bowl"
  – Emphasizes the diversity of the country while recognizing a common center (political and economic institutions, including language)

Nativism

- The "different" nature of the new immigrants frightened many middle and upper class Americans.
- Felt Immigrants were:
  – The wrong religion and a threat to Protestant traditions
  – Would not be readily assimilated – culture too different.
  – Of "lesser" races who would drag the country down
  – Brining in un-American ideas (Socialism)
  – Taking jobs from Americans
- Groups like the KKK and American Protective Association are examples of Nativist Groups

Religion

- Anti-Catholicism
  – Felt it was a plot by the pope to take over.
- Anti-Semitism
  – Had been in America before, but fairly tame until the turn of the century
  – Some claimed that Jews were also part of a conspiracy to take over the country.

Xenophobia

- Fear of outsiders, foreigners
- Sporadic in America – focusing on different groups at different times.
- Americans commonly blamed outsiders for unforeseen and uncontrollable economic events/social changes.
  – Chinese (CA 1870s), Blacks (South 1890s), European Immigrants

(1900s-1920s), Mexicans (SW 1990s) Arabs and Muslims (1970s 2000s)

Know-Nothing (American) Party

- Party members worked during the 1850s to:
  - limit the voting strength of immigrants
  - Keep Catholics out of public office
  - Require a lenghty residence before Citizenship.
- Achieved none of their goals and died out by the late 1850s

Successful Nativist Efforts

- Many local and state governments passed laws discriminating against the Chinese
  - Segregated Schooling, boycotts of Chinese businesses
  - Violence flared
- 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act
  - Prohibited Chinese immigration for 10 years, except students, teachers, merchants, tourists & government officials.
  - Extended in 1892 for another 10 years.
  - In 1902 Chinese immigration prohibited indefinitely.
  - Repealed in 1943.
- Violence did subside as immigration dropped.

Successful Nativist Efforts

- 1907 Gentleman's Agreement
  - Japan agreed to limit emigration in return for ending school segregation in the US.
- 1907 the Immigration Restriction League pressed Congress to require a literacy test for immigrants wishing to enter the U.S.
  - Vetoed repeatedly by Taft & Wilson but overridden by congress in 1917.
  - Had to read no less than 30 words of English.

Later Legislation

- 1921 Emergency Quota Act
  - Sharply limited the number of immigrants to about 350,000
- 1924 National Origins Quota Act
  - Further limited immigration and biased it toward Northern & Western Europeans.
- 1929 National Origins Act
  - Further limited immigration to 150,000 a year.