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## The Closing of the Gates "The Politics of Xenophobia in Immigrant Nations"

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The Closing of the Gates  
“The Politics of Xenophobia in Immigrant Nations”

Senior Project Submitted to  
The Division of Social Studies  
of Bard College

by  
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## Introduction

Across the globe countries are closing their doors to immigrants. We can see evidence of this happening everywhere, from “Brexit” in Britain and the rise of *Pegida* (Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the Occident) in Germany, to Trump’s plan for a wall on the US-Mexico border. While anti-immigrant policy is now a global phenomenon, the factors which drive tighter restrictions vary from country to country. For some countries it is economic concerns which fuel tighter restriction, for others it is a rise in xenophobia. While there are many factors which feed immigration restriction, this study will focus exclusively on identifying which factor feeds anti-immigrant policy in nations which have received large numbers of immigrants in the past. Nations which have come to identify as “immigrant nations” due to such large influxes of foreigners. Therefore this study poses the core research question, “*Why are immigrant-based countries becoming less tolerant of immigration?*” To answer this seemingly paradoxical question I will focus on the United States, and in my conclusion take a look at Argentina and Canada in order to add greater comparative leverage over the study’s agenda. All three of these countries: the United States, Argentina, and Canada, are nations built by immigrants. They are historically considered to be welcoming of immigrants and have relied on immigrant labor to become the nations which they now are. The restrictionist policies which we see coming to fruition appear to be antithetical to the proclaimed national identity of these countries, and therefore warrant investigation.

In order to fully address the question which I have posed, I will start with an analysis of three commonly cited factors used to explain the recent rise of anti-immigrant policies: right-wing populism, economic concerns, and security concerns. All three of these factors are



commonly thrown around in the media to explain why countries have become as anti-immigrant as they now are. It is undoubtedly true that a rise in right-wing populism, widespread fears that undocumented immigrants take jobs, and concerns that certain immigrant groups pose a security threat all have influenced recent anti-immigrant legislation. However, I believe these explanations are ultimately insufficient at explaining the complexities of immigration policy in “immigrant nations”. The unique “immigrant-based” history of these nations alludes to a more compelling explanation: *a xenophobia born out of an immigrant-based identity*.

In order to prove that a xenophobia born out of an “immigrant-based” identity is the most compelling explanation to the question at hand and not the three mainstream explanations, I will follow an examination of the mainstream explanations with an analysis of US history to demonstrate that long-standing xenophobic sentiment can be closely tied to large and recurring immigration waves. These historic junctures of large immigration waves have fostered an identity of the US as a “country of immigrants” which has been hailed many times by pro-immigrant groups as the basis for advancing immigration law in order to provide greater rights for immigrants. At times this has been successful and at other times not. While it is true that the United States has received many foreigners over the years it would be inaccurate to say that these immigrants have been welcomed with open arms. There has always been a deep-rooted fear of foreigners which has been present since the early years of the United States. From the anti-Catholic “Know Nothing” party of the 1840’s to the anti-Mexican rhetoric of President Trump, the United States has always had xenophobic sentiment present within its borders. While at times this fear of foreigners has been more visible than in other moments, it has always been

there and I aim to show that current immigration restriction is primarily the result of this unique xenophobia which is born out of an “immigrant-based” identity.

As shown in this study, the history of massive immigration waves had a dual and somewhat paradoxical legacy on immigration politics. On the one hand, it forged the image of an “immigrant nation”; on the other, it planted the seeds for a culture of deep-rooted xenophobia because while immigrants were desired, only those who could assimilate to the standing culture of the time were welcomed. These “welcomed immigrants” have always been the ones who fit the standing ethnic and racial norms of American society, and while these requirements have changed somewhat over the years, there is still an engrained notion of who can and who cannot assimilate into American norms. By examining this history I will prove my argument that a xenophobia born out of an “immigrant-based” identity, an identity which hand picks those who are welcome and those who are not, is ultimately the best explanation for increased anti-immigrant policy in “immigrant nations”.

After surveying the American experience, I will turn my attention to Argentina and Canada. These are two countries in the Americas that like the United States are “immigrant nations” now pursuing harsh anti-immigrant policies. Through a historical analysis of each I will show that the “immigrant-based” identity in both Argentina and Canada alludes to the same explanation for growing anti-immigrant policy as I have laid out in the United States, a xenophobia born out of an “immigrant-based” identity. In the conclusion I will summarize the study’s findings and reflect on how the unique factor which I have identified, a xenophobia born out of an “immigrant-based” identity, is the most compelling explanation for the puzzling phenomenon of anti-immigrant policy in “immigrant-based” nations.

## **Part 1: Contending Explanations**

The current phenomenon of increasing anti-immigrant policies around the globe has grasped the attention of scholars and political commentators all over. Needless to say this is a very divisive issue and sentiment about anti-immigrant policy ranges from disgust to admiration. Protests defending restrictions frequently pop up among Trump supporters, *Pegida* participants, and “UKIP” advocates to name a few examples. On the other side of the aisle, pro-immigration advocates counter supporters across the globe with their own displays of discontent against the restrictions. While emotions regarding walls, bans, and fences vary widely, there has been a great amount of discussion from people of differing viewpoints to try and understand why stronger restrictions are coming into place now as opposed to at any other time. Everyone from politicians, to journalists, to average citizens are discussing this current phenomenon and why they believe it is happening. In this section, I will examine three popular explanations in current discourse: a rise in right-wing populism, economic concerns, and security concerns. For each of these explanations, I will showcase their significance and why they are considered viable explanations for an increase in anti-immigrant policy.

### **Right-wing Populism**

Turn to any media outlet and you are likely to find a slew of articles explaining the correlation between right-wing populism and recent immigration restriction. When we think about right-wing populism, Europe is considered the hotbed of this political phenomenon. The popularity of *Rassemblement National* (National Rally) in France, *Alternative für Deutschland* (Alternative for Germany) in Germany, and “UKIP” (United Kingdom Independence Party) in

the United Kingdom are only a handful of examples which show the deep roots of right-wing populism across Europe. On the other side of the Atlantic, the 2016 presidential victory of Donald Trump in the US and the 2018 presidential victory of Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil prove that right-wing populists are not solely a European issue. Populism does not have a concrete definition as it takes many forms but there is a general consensus that the right-wing variant is comprised of a suspicion and denunciation of: the elite, mainstream politics, and established institutions.<sup>1</sup> Right-wing populists view each of these factors as a threat to the “common people” whom they declare to represent and protect. The “common people” whom right-wing populists address are normally defined along racial and ethnic lines and they are considered to be the “true citizens” of the nation. In order to maintain a bond between members of this group, immigrants are framed as a threat.<sup>2</sup>

The fact that more recent immigrants do not fall within the racial and ethnic categories of the populist voting bloc makes it easy for right-wing populist politicians to single them out for national problems in order to garner support among their followers. Since the 1970’s until now, voters have become more and more influenced by issues of cultural relevance rather than economic factors due to increased globalization and the merging of cultures.<sup>3</sup> Due to the ever increasing presence of individuals that do not look or sound like the “common people”, there has been growing uneasiness about the impact these change will have on a cultural level, and as a

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<sup>1</sup> Fareed Zakaria, “Populism on the March: Why the West Is in Trouble,” *Foreign Affairs* 95, no. 6 (November 2016): 9.

<sup>2</sup> Paul A Taggart, *Populism*, Concepts in the Social Sciences (Buckingham [England] ; Philadelphia : Open University Press, 2000, 2000), 94.

<sup>3</sup> Zakaria, “Populism on the March,” 13.

result greater support for the politicians that speak to these fears.<sup>4</sup> It is within this framework that right-wing populists are able to assume power as they speak to the cultural anxiety of their constituents. They promise their supporters that the culturally homogenous definition of the nation will be protected if they are elected. In the case of the United States, we can see how Donald Trump played to growing cultural fears in order to secure his election victory.

Throughout his campaign, Trump made his claims to build a wall on the US-Mexico border center stage. This was done to demonstrate a shared concern between himself and his voting bloc in regards to large numbers of Mexican and Central American immigrants entering the country. He repeatedly made claims that the United States was being flooded with the worst people. This is perfectly shown in his infamous quote about Mexican immigrants, “They’re bringing drugs. They’re bringing crime. They’re rapists.”<sup>5</sup> Claims such as these are made by President Trump to appeal to the concerns which his white, working class base harbor toward the arrival of Mexican immigrants. This demographic of white, working class America would be considered to be the “people” in the right-wing populist paradigm whose fear of cultural change is exploited by the politicians. This fear of “cultural change” which we see so often in the advent of right-wing populism is also reflected in official studies. An analysis of the 2016 Cooperative Congressional Election Survey shows that racist resentment and anti-immigrant sentiment were significant influencing factors for a vote in favor of Trump.<sup>6</sup> The exploitation of xenophobic sentiment and a

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<sup>4</sup> Martin A. Schain, “Shifting Tides: Radical-Right Populism and Immigration Policy in Europe and the United States,” *migrationpolicy.org*, August 14, 2018, 8, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/radical-right-immigration-europe-united-states>.

<sup>5</sup> Michelle Mark, “Trump Just Referred to One of His Most Infamous Campaign Comments: Calling Mexicans ‘Rapists,’” *Business Insider*, accessed January 2, 2019, <https://www.businessinsider.com/trump-mexicans-rapists-remark-reference-2018-4>.

<sup>6</sup> Marc Hooghe and Ruth Dassonneville, “Explaining the Trump Vote: The Effect of Racist Resentment and Anti-Immigrant Sentiments,” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 51, no. 3 (July 2018): 528–34, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096518000367>.

stated desire to protect the “people” which is insinuated to be white America, demonstrates how President Trump exhibits characteristics of a right-wing populist, much in the same framework as seen in other parts of the world. President Trump’s decision to demonize selected minorities in the name of protecting the “people” demonstrates how right-wing populism feeds off of cultural anxiety and as a result leads to the emergence of stronger immigration restriction.

### **Economic Explanations**

An increasingly globalized world has had many effects, not least of which is the intertwining of national economies. While this process has been positive for some, such as boosting export sectors in wealthier economies, it has also been devastating for others, ravaging domestic industry in poorer nations. One of the major consequences of globalization is that many individuals are forced to search for work abroad as opportunities become bleak in their home countries. Economic hardship and the prospects of better paying jobs in the global north are major push and pull factors for many immigrants. Examples of economic hardship driving individuals to new nations are abundant, however two of the most widely known instances include the migration of Mexicans to the United States and West Africans to Europe. Immigrants have always been viewed as an economic threat to native workers, but concerns have become more vocalized as workers have become more mobile over the past fifty years, specifically due to the growth of illegal immigration. It is for this reason that current immigration restriction is considered to be a result of a desire to protect the economy. This fear of the impact immigrants may have on the economy is best embodied by the rhetoric of the US anti-immigrant lobby group “Federation for American Immigration Reform”, or also abbreviated as “FAIR”. They have

claimed in the past that, “Mass immigration is displacing American workers by importing a constant flow of immigrants willing to work for substandard wages,” along with, “Large-scale immigration is flooding the labour market and driving down wages for everyone, immigrants and native-born workers alike.”<sup>7</sup> Such remarks made by “FAIR” are not unique and speak to the concerns of many blue-collar native workers. Polls have shown that people with lower household incomes are more likely than middle-class or well-off individuals to claim that immigrants take away jobs from natives.<sup>8</sup> This is because immigrants normally end up in agricultural, industrial, or service jobs which creates competition for lower income natives. Many of these economic concerns in the US are specifically focused on illegal immigrants as this has emerged to become the most hotly debated aspect of immigration since the 1970’s. Illegal immigrants are considered to be an even graver economic threat because not only do they create extra competition on the job market but on top of that are seen as taking advantage of social benefits which should be reserved for taxpayers.<sup>9</sup>

Regulationist politicians also view illegal immigrants as a threat to the national economy for creating an informal economy which contributes to tax evasion, breaks down competitive practices, and feeds criminal activity.<sup>10</sup> A perfect example of a piece of legislation approved with such concerns in mind is Proposition 187, passed in 1994 in California. The bill effectively prohibited illegal immigrants from accessing health benefits and public education.<sup>11</sup> Such

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<sup>7</sup> Philippe Legrain, “Stealing Our Jobs?: Do Immigrants Displace Local Workers?,” in *Immigrants, Your Country Needs Them* (Princeton University Press, 2006), 133–34, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9qh0hf.11>.

<sup>8</sup> Robert J. Blendon et al., “Immigration and the U.S. Economy: The Public’s Perspective,” *Challenge* 48, no. 2 (2005): 122.

<sup>9</sup> Blendon et al., 121.

<sup>10</sup> David Simcox, “Immigration and Informalization of the Economy: Enrichment or Atomization of Community,” *Population and Environment* 18, no. 3 (1997): 271.

<sup>11</sup> Blendon et al., “Immigration and the U.S. Economy,” 118.

economic concerns related to immigrant arrivals have not abated over the past twenty years and we can find them reflected in the most recent articles of anti-immigrant legislation. In April of 2017 President Trump delivered an executive order known as “Buy American and Hire American” which sought to increase regulations on foreign worker entry into the United States in a bid to protect the interests of the domestic economy.<sup>12</sup> There is a clear emphasis on protecting the national economy intertwined with current immigration restriction. The belief that immigrants steal jobs from native workers and take advantage of social programs still has major currency with large parts of the population. This belief demonstrates how economic concerns feed immigrant restriction.

### **Security Concerns**

While increasing globalization has brought a heightened level of mobility for people as demonstrated by the growth of immigration, the greater mobility of individuals has also resulted in the unfortunate rise of international terrorist attacks. The September 11th attacks of 2001 are by far the most well known example of this rise in terrorist activity. The list has expanded enormously since then with bombings, shootings, and truck attacks being carried out across the globe, often conducted by individuals with ties to terrorist organizations such as Al Qaeda and ISIS. Many governments have attempted to combat and prevent terrorist attacks by cracking down on immigration legislation with the belief that this will prevent the entry of foreign nationals wishing to cause harm. Such examples of security-focused legislation demonstrate how concerns over national security have come to be considered driving forces for immigration

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<sup>12</sup> “Presidential Executive Order on Buy American and Hire American,” The White House, accessed December 12, 2018, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/presidential-executive-order-buy-american-hire-american/>.



restriction. It of course must be noted that security concerns have always been a present factor in regards to the arrival of immigrants, especially during times of war. The internment of Japanese-Americans during the Second World War demonstrates a perfect example of a piece of immigration legislation being passed along security lines. The September 11th attacks changed the dynamic however as they made security concerns permanently present in immigration discussion. The post-9/11 world that we live in is one in which all immigrants are scrutinized as potential terrorists, specifically those of Muslim background.<sup>13</sup>

The most prominent manifestation of this new political climate was the creation of the “Department of Homeland Security” in 2002 which sought to securitize the US border and closely regulate all entries in an attempt to prevent future terrorist attacks.<sup>14</sup> The result of such securitization was that immigration enforcement became intertwined with the war on terror and the US-Mexico border came to be known in the media as America’s “third war zone” along with Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>15</sup> The climate of post 9/11 high securitization influences immigration legislation to this day. President Trump’s executive order proclaiming the creation of a wall on the southern border was designed in part to prevent the entry of those, “who seek to harm Americans through acts of terror or criminal conduct.”<sup>16</sup> And of course, President Trump’s infamous Muslim Ban barring visa access to seven predominantly Muslim countries was created

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<sup>13</sup> Ariane Chebel d’Appollonia, *Frontiers of Fear : Immigration and Insecurity in the United States and Europe* (Ithaca : Cornell University Press, 2012, 2012), 115.

<sup>14</sup> Tanya Maria Golash-Boza, *Immigration Nation: Raids, Detentions, and Deportations in Post-9/11 America* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Pub, 2012), 47.

<sup>15</sup> Reece Jones, *Violent Borders : Refugees and the Right to Move* (London : Verso, 2016, 2016), 42.

<sup>16</sup> “Executive Order: Border Security and Immigration Enforcement Improvements,” The White House, accessed December 12, 2018, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/executive-order-border-security-immigration-enforcement-improvements/>.

with the proclaimed objective of preventing the entry of individuals with terrorist ties.<sup>17</sup> The heavy emphasis on “security” and “protecting the interests” of the nation demonstrate the influence which the September 11th attacks have had on immigration law. Ever since the attacks, there has been an increased focus on security concerns. Due to this focus it is clear that now more than ever security concerns have a massive impact on the formation of immigration restriction.

## **Part 2: The American Experience**

As I have demonstrated, right-wing populism, economic concerns, and security concerns all have influenced recent legislation targeted at reducing waves of immigrants. Paying attention to current events such as campaign rhetoric about Mexican immigrants stealing jobs and societal fears that Muslim immigrants may pose a security threat reveal the weight some of these explanations have had on influencing current anti-immigrant policy. However while each of these explanations have their merit, there is another factor which is less discussed and better suited for the case of “immigrant-based” nations, a xenophobia which is born out of an “immigrant-based” identity. Few people want to discuss the influence of xenophobia in the United States and its historical roots. The reason for this is that the United States, along with other “immigrant-based” nations, presents an image to the world of being welcoming to foreign arrivals. Being a “melting pot” is part of the national identity of the United States and is a point of pride for many of its citizens. This multicultural identity is taught to children from a young

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<sup>17</sup> “Executive Order Protecting The Nation From Foreign Terrorist Entry Into The United States,” The White House, accessed December 12, 2018, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/executive-order-protecting-nation-foreign-terrorist-entry-united-states-2/>.

age and is often referenced by politicians pushing for pro-immigration reform. It is for this reason that few people in the media and in elected political positions address the fact that current anti-immigrant legislation is a continuation of a long-standing American tradition of fear and demonization of immigrants. The explanations of right-wing populism, economic concerns, and security concerns are discussed frequently and not the historical resonance of xenophobia in part because facing the reality of xenophobia in the United States damages an integral part of the nation's identity. This said, it can not be denied that the United States has a strong history of immigration. Countless immigrants from all corners of the globe have settled down on American land and have grown to call it home.

Since independence, the United States has received immigrants from near and far, however the era in which the United States began to truly develop an identity as a nation of immigrants was during the late nineteenth century and into the early years of the twentieth century. It was during this period that millions of immigrants, mostly European, came to US shores seeking a better life. This mass migration had many effects on US culture, one of which being the creation of a narrative of the United States as an "immigrant nation". While it is true that this was an era of open borders, it was also the era which gave birth to a deep rooted xenophobia. Foreigners who had not previously been part of US society were feared as a potential threat against the standing order of white Protestant culture. As time went by these groups which at one point were feared, such as Italians or Irish, settled into the fabric of US society.

However the xenophobia which the old waves once endured has remained present, being turned against the next wave of foreign arrivals. It is in this manner that xenophobia has

paradoxically persisted alongside the “immigrant nation” identity for generation after generation. There is a pride centered around an “immigrant-based” identity, but only if those immigrants are seen as capable of assimilating into society. Throughout US history, periods of growing xenophobia have resulted in the implementation of legislation designed to stem the flow of foreign arrivals and maintain the existing societal order. Anti-immigrant legislation as we are witnessing it currently, under the Trump administration and in other “immigrant-based” nations, is being fueled by this same cycle of xenophobia. We are living in an era in which new immigrants don’t fit within the existing societal fabric of the United States, resulting in a strong xenophobic response akin to what we experienced before. The Mexican and Muslim populations in the United States now, are generating the same xenophobic response which the Irish and Italians spurned a century ago. In this section I will first explore the concept of the “immigrant nation” and how it came to develop in the United States at the same time that strong xenophobia took hold in American society. After examining the birth of this juxtaposition, I will examine two historical periods which demonstrate the juxtaposition of the “immigrant nation” identity along with rising xenophobia. The first period I will focus on will be the implementation of “The Chinese Exclusion Act”, and the second will be “The Immigration Act of 1924”. Finally I will examine the current era of anti-immigrant legislation in the US to show how the juxtaposition of xenophobic sentiment and an “immigrant nation” identity still persists today and why it is the best explanation for the rise of current anti-immigrant policy.

## The Identity of Immigrant Nations

The United States is known as a “country of immigrants” for good reason. People from all around the globe have resettled in the US with hopes of building better lives for themselves and for their families. These immigrants have been propelled from their home countries for many reasons, whether it be war, persecution, or economic turmoil, and they establish themselves in the United States either as legal or illegal residents. Whatever the reasons pushing and pulling migrants to the US, or in what capacity they settle here, they come because the United States has established itself as the nation where people from all over the world can start anew and build better lives. How realistic this possibility is for immigrants comprises a different issue but the fact remains that the United States is known worldwide as a “country of immigrants”.

A diverse array of ethnicities has resided within the United States ever since independence was established from Great Britain. During these early years as a nation, the indigenous populations lived alongside a variety of European ethnicities as well as African slaves from West Africa and the Caribbean.<sup>18</sup> However, it would not be until the latter half of the nineteenth century and into the early years of the twentieth that the United States truly took on an identity as a “country of immigrants”. The reason this period of US history is noted as the birth of the “immigrant nation” identity is because of the noticeable switch in the ethnic makeup of new immigrant arrivals. From 1883 to 1907 eighty-one percent of immigrants to the United States were coming from Southern and Eastern Europe, from such countries as:

Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Poland, Serbia, and Spain.<sup>19</sup> Prior to this the majority

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<sup>18</sup> Anthony Daniel Perez and Charles Hirschman, “The Changing Racial and Ethnic Composition of the US Population: Emerging American Identities,” *Population and Development Review* 35, no. 1 (2009): 3.

<sup>19</sup> Charles Jaret, “Troubled by Newcomers: Anti-Immigrant Attitudes and Action during Two Eras of Mass Immigration to the United States,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 18, no. 3 (1999): 11.

of immigrants were coming from Northern and Western Europe, which meant that US society had not yet fostered the heterogenous melting pot identity which it now prides itself for. The arrival of so many immigrants of new ethnic backgrounds (some twenty-five million people)<sup>20</sup>, was met with mixed feelings across the United States. On one hand they were seemingly welcomed, not restricted by any passport, visa, or green card requirements; but on the other hand they were met with a fear that their foreign customs would alter the societal fabric of the United States. This was the era in which the juxtaposition of “immigrant nation” and xenophobia emerged. The era of the Statue of Liberty and her famous quote “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses...”, but also the era of Italian workers being burned and clubbed by nativists.<sup>21</sup> Despite the adversity faced by new immigrant arrivals during this period, the contributions which they left on US politics, economics, and culture have been enormous. They have contributed to established political parties, helped build unions, and infused traditions from their home countries into the culture of the United States. The lasting influence of immigrants on the United States during this era set the stage for a country in which the narrative of a “country of immigrants” would persist hand in hand with the xenophobia faced by foreign arrivals. Americans have taken on hyphenated identities and cite their ancestry generations after their families arrived in the United States, but at the same time fear the arrival of newcomers who look different from them. It has been a constant struggle between these two sides of the coin. When pro-immigration legislation is passed, it is the “country of immigrants” narrative which triumphs, but when restrictive measures are put in place, it is the darker side of the coin, the xenophobia, which takes the lead.

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<sup>20</sup> Mae M. Ngai, “Nationalism, Immigration Control, and the Ethnoracial Remapping of America in the 1920S,” *OAH Magazine of History* 21, no. 3 (2007): 11.

<sup>21</sup> Jaret, “Troubled by Newcomers,” 15.

While this paper is focused on anti-immigrant legislation and the factors which contribute to this legislation, it is important to acknowledge that the country of immigrants narrative still holds massive weight in the United States and has led to the creation of legislation that protects this identity. There are many pro-immigrant politicians and organizations in the United States, and they usually base their stance on: the tradition of immigration to the United States, the contribution which immigrants bring to American society, a need to uphold human rights and civil rights, the importance of certain ethnic groups, specifically Latinos, to party politics, and finally the trajectory of transnational labor migration.<sup>22</sup> It is specifically the tradition of immigration to the United States which has aided pro-immigration politics the most. Many have referenced this history in order to create liberal changes to immigration law, one such example can be seen in a speech which President George W. Bush gave regarding Hispanic migration to the US,

As a Texan, I have known many immigrant families, mainly from Mexico, and I have seen what they add to our country. They bring to America the values of faith in God, love of family, hard work and self reliance—the values that made us a great nation to begin with. We’ve all seen those values in action, through the service and sacrifice of more than 35,000 foreign-born men and women currently on active duty in the United States military.<sup>23</sup>

In this speech President Bush is praising the impact which Mexican immigrants have left on the culture of the United States, as well as the great sacrifices they have made in the name of US patriotism. Rhetoric such as this resonates with many Americans because the “country of

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<sup>22</sup> Luis Ricardo Fraga, “Building through Exclusion:: Anti-Immigrant Politics in the United States,” in *Bringing Outsiders In*, ed. Jennifer L. Hochschild and John H. Mollenkopf, 1st ed., Transatlantic Perspectives on Immigrant Political Incorporation (Cornell University Press, 2009), 181, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctt7z7pt.18>.

<sup>23</sup> Fraga, 182.

immigrants” identity which the United States adheres to is well ingrained in the nation’s psyche. It reminds average Americans that their own families had to go through the same difficulties of settling down as new arrivals have to go through. This has paid off for the pro-immigrant faction of US society during several noticeable moments. One of the more famous moments in which pro-immigrant forces achieved a remarkable victory was when “The Hart-Celler Act” was signed into law in 1965. This law was the result of many liberal factions; including religious groups, ethnic groups, and labor organizations, all of whom had many interests but chief among them was a desire to promote a more pluralist vision of the United States and break from discriminatory immigration law.<sup>24</sup> While the passage of “The Hart-Celler Act” undoubtedly was flawed in some regards, such as placing unreasonable quotas on Western Hemisphere immigration, it abolished the national origins quota system which diminished the blatant discrimination of certain ethnicities and placed entrance on the skills and family ties which immigrants had.<sup>25</sup> Over the years we have seen other victories which uphold the “country of immigrants” narrative, and they can not be forgotten. However while there have undoubtedly been strides which the United States has made that uphold the “immigrant-based” identity narrative, the otherside of the coin represented by xenophobia has won out many times as well. This xenophobia which coexists along with the “immigrant-based” narrative is predicated on the notion that there are desired immigrants as well as undesired ones. This division rests on the perceived ability of these immigrant groups to assimilate to American society and therefore depends on the racial, ethnic, and religious background of the immigrants. While the image of the “ideal American” has morphed over the years, there continues to remain a notion in US

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<sup>24</sup> Mae M Ngai, *Impossible Subjects : Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*, Politics and Society in Twentieth-Century America (Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, c2004, 2004), 240.

<sup>25</sup> Ngai, 259.



society that there are certain immigrants who lay outside of this framework. It is for these reasons that despite being an “immigrant-based” nation, the United States has also kept xenophobia alive and well for generation after generation.

### **The Chinese Exclusion Act**

While hostility toward immigrant groups existed well before the late nineteenth century, the first piece of legislation designed to officially regulate immigration came about in 1882. “The Chinese Exclusion Act” was approved in Congress on May 6th 1882<sup>26</sup> and was the culmination of a vigorous campaign dedicated to restricting immigration from China. Chinese immigration to the United States first began on a noticeable scale following the 1848 gold rush in California.<sup>27</sup> Even though Chinese migrants comprised a small percentage of the total number of immigrant arrivals (less than five percent of all immigrant arrivals between 1870 and 1880) their arrival spurred a great deal of xenophobia among many Californians. Chinese migrants were framed as a threat to the existence of Anglo-Americans who had settled the Western United States. Like the Mexican and Native American populations which also occupied the west, the Chinese were considered to not be compatible with the white population. Such descriptions as, “heathen, inherently inferior, savage, depraved, and lustful”<sup>28</sup> were used to describe the Chinese at the time, demonstrating the widespread belief that they were racially inferior to whites.

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<sup>26</sup> “An Act to Execute Certain Treaty Stipulations Relating to Chinese,” in *Asian American Society: An Encyclopedia*, by Mary Danico (2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks California 91320 United States: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2014), 3, <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452281889.n342>.

<sup>27</sup> Erika Lee, “The Chinese Are Coming. How Can We Stop Them?: Chinese Exclusion and the Origins of American Gatekeeping,” in *Asian American Studies Now*, ed. Jean Yu-wen Shen Wu and Thomas C. Chen, A Critical Reader (Rutgers University Press, 2010), 144, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1bmzn3s.13>.

<sup>28</sup> Lee, 146.

The popularity of such racist views is well-embodied by the rhetoric of a lawyer from San Francisco named H.N. Clement. He is recorded at a committee hearing as posing the following question, “Has the Caucasian race any better right to occupy this country than the Mongolian?” He firmly answered his own question with “Yes.”<sup>29</sup> Clement’s belief that Chinese migrants were a threat to the racial standing of the white population was also echoed in established political groups such as the Jacksonian Democratic Party. This political party was dedicated to maintaining a society in California that maintained the superiority of the white population above all others.<sup>30</sup> Once the Chinese began to arrive in noticeable numbers they shifted their focus from other minority groups such as African-Americans and Mexicans, to berating the Chinese migrants as the new threat to society. The popularity of anti-Chinese sentiment in California and other western states during the mid-nineteenth century and onward fed the campaign to make federal action possible against Chinese arrivals. In 1876 the California State Senate Committee arranged an, “Address to the People of the United States upon the Evils of Chinese Immigration” in an attempt to highlight Chinese migration to the west as an issue which the entire country should be concerned about. As one member of the committee pronounced, the people of California had, “but one disposition upon this grave subject... and that is an open and pronounced demand upon the Federal Government for relief.”<sup>31</sup> The efforts of the committee to get national attention paid off eventually and in 1882 “The Chinese Exclusion Act” was signed into law. The fear mongering of the west coast had gripped the attention of Washington and brought about the regulations anti-Chinese activists had demanded. What eventually provided the legitimacy to bring the law to fruition was framing Chinese immigration

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<sup>29</sup> Lee, 147.

<sup>30</sup> Lee, 146.

<sup>31</sup> Lee, 143.

as a labor issue. The law states, “the coming of Chinese laborers to the United States be, and the same is hereby, suspended; and during such suspension it shall not be lawful for any Chinese laborer to come, or having so come after the expiration of said ninety days to remain within the United States.”<sup>32</sup> While the act proclaimed to exclude Chinese laborers in an attempt to protect native American workers, it is clear that the true motivations were racial. The act stated that “skilled and unskilled” Chinese laborers were excluded from entry in order to make the ban as broad as possible. Furthermore, for the few Chinese who came to the United States for reasons other than labor (such as tourism for example) a rigorous clearance process was instituted. While at face value the act was directed at preventing laborers from influencing the market, the true intentions of preventing any Chinese individual from entering the United States are easy enough to see. The campaign to create federal action against Chinese immigration was fueled by a xenophobic fear of the effects Chinese migrants would have on white America and the act worked to protect the standing social order. The era of “The Chinese Exclusion Act” demonstrates the first time in American history in which the juxtaposition of an “immigrant nation” identity can be seen alongside a xenophobic backlash. As Chinese immigrants began to enter into the country, the United States was beginning to take on its identity as an “immigrant nation”. While this identity was taking root, so were the first signs of visible anti-immigrant sentiment due to fears regarding the impact Chinese migrants would have on American society. As a result, “The Chinese Exclusion Act” of 1882 can be considered a manifestation of xenophobia triumphing over the “immigrant nation” narrative.

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<sup>32</sup> “An Act to Execute Certain Treaty Stipulations Relating to Chinese,” 3.

## The Immigration Act of 1924

“The Chinese Exclusion Act” of 1882 kicked off an era of xenophobic fear of foreigners that was readily sustained by one of the largest immigrant waves spanning from the 1880’s to the First World War. This fresh wave of approximately twenty-five million arrivals was largely European and caused for concern to be directed from the Chinese toward the undesirables of Europe.<sup>33</sup> While European immigrants were overall more readily accepted due to their whiteness, those from the south and east of the continent faced their fair share of prejudice. Southern European immigrants such as Italians and Spaniards were singled out for their darker skin and Catholic beliefs, and those from Eastern Europe were largely Jewish which made them an unwelcome minority as well. Given that many of these new arrivals lived and worked in poor areas of cities, they came to be negatively associated in the public eye with unsanitary slums.<sup>34</sup> The prejudice directed toward these new southern and eastern European immigrants is well-embodied by the rhetoric of the Secretary of Labor in the 1920’s, James J. Davis, who referred to non-Nordic arrivals as, “undesirable, pestilential ‘rats’.”<sup>35</sup> While white Protestants had always been the most privileged group in the United States, this societal belief gained new traction with the growth of eugenics in combination with a new wave of xenophobia in the early years of the twentieth century. Eugenics is defined as a belief that the genetics of the human race can be improved and is often used to further racist ideologies. It was ultimately the popularity of such racist pseudoscience which helped create new immigration restriction.

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<sup>33</sup> Mae M. Ngai, “Nationalism, Immigration Control, and the Ethnoracial Remapping of America in the 1920S,” *OAH Magazine of History* 21, no. 3 (2007): 11.

<sup>34</sup> Ngai, 11.

<sup>35</sup> Kristofer Allerfeldt, “‘And We Got Here First’: Albert Johnson, National Origins and Self-Interest in the Immigration Debate of the 1920s,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 45, no. 1 (2010): 12.

One of the two main authors of “The Immigration Act of 1924”, Albert Johnson, was largely influenced by Harry H. Laughlin who was the director of the Eugenics Institute at Cold Spring Harbor, New York. Laughlin provided Johnson with data on, “crime, insanity, and feeble-mindedness” which he claimed was proof of the inferiority of Southern and Eastern Europeans and therefore proof that they could not assimilate.<sup>36</sup> The currency of these racist beliefs influenced the work of Albert Johnson to such a degree that they provided the backbone to the law which him and senator David Reed presented to Congress. “The Immigration Act of 1924”, also known as “The Johnson-Reed Act” after its two main authors, provided many stipulations but three of the most important included: restriction of immigration to 155,000 a year with visa quotas for each nationality set at two percent of the foreign-born population as shown in the census of 1890, continuing the exclusion of certain groups (such as the Chinese), and finally placing no visa restrictions on migration from Western Hemisphere countries in order to maintain good diplomatic relations with neighbors.<sup>37</sup> The act also declared that in 1927 new visa quotas would be established using the census of 1920 instead of the census of 1890. The quota for each nationality was to be the, “number which bears the same ratio to 150,000 as the number of inhabitants in continental United States in 1920 having that national origin (ascertained as hereinafter provided in this section) bears to the number of inhabitants in continental United States in 1920, but the minimum quota of any nationality shall be 100.”<sup>38</sup> In addition to adding quotas based on national origin, the act declared that it would not count the

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<sup>36</sup> Mae M Ngai, *Impossible Subjects : Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*, Politics and Society in Twentieth-Century America (Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, c2004, 2004), 24.

<sup>37</sup> Ngai, 23.

<sup>38</sup> Sam McSeveney, “Immigrants, the Literacy Test, and Quotas: Selected American History College Textbooks’ Coverage of the Congressional Restriction of European Immigration, 1917-1929,” *The History Teacher* 21, no. 1 (1987): 44, <https://doi.org/10.2307/492801>.

populations of: “aliens ineligible to citizenship or their descendents”; the descendants of slave immigrants”; and “the descendants of American aborigines.”<sup>39</sup> The impact of eugenicists and other racist parties appears in this act in several major ways. First of all the decision to set the original census year used to determine visa allocation as 1890 was done in order to diminish the representation of Southern and Eastern European immigrants. Nativists had calculated that this was approximately the year when immigrants from both of these regions were still minimal enough so that they would not be largely represented in the census.<sup>40</sup> This decision clearly echoes the anti-Catholic and anti-Semitic opinions which were popular at the time. Second of all it maintained the exclusion of “certain groups” as demonstrated in the continuance of “The Chinese Exclusion Act”, which by this point had actually been extended to consist of a “barred zone” which stretched from Afghanistan to the Pacific.<sup>41</sup> This decision showcases the clear discrimination toward non-white immigrants. And finally the exclusion of, “aliens ineligible for citizenship, descendants of slave immigrants, and the descendants of American aborigines” from the census figures of 1920 used in calculating the new visa allotment scheduled in 1927. This ensured that down the line only Europeans would be receiving the majority of immigration visas. All three of these measures demonstrate that the priority of the law’s architects was clearly to maintain a United States which was majority white Protestant. This was done in an attempt to maintain an image of the country as it appeared during its founding in the late eighteenth century. While the act received its fair share of criticism, it was defended for this very reason. Joseph A. Hill, one of the statisticians with the Quota Board, defended the act by saying, “The

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<sup>39</sup> Sam McSeveney, “Immigrants, the Literacy Test, and Quotas: Selected American History College Textbooks’ Coverage of the Congressional Restriction of European Immigration, 1917-1929,” *The History Teacher* 21, no. 1 (1987): 44, <https://doi.org/10.2307/492801>.

<sup>40</sup> Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 21.

<sup>41</sup> Ngai, “Nationalism, Immigration Control, and the Ethnoracial Remapping of America in the 1920S,” 13.

stream that feeds the reservoir should have the same composition as the contents of the reservoir itself.”<sup>42</sup> The motivation to maintain a homogenous nation was quite clear. “The Immigration Act of 1924” came about at the tale end of the era in which the United States was evolving into an “immigrant nation”. The juxtaposition of an “immigrant-based” identity along with growing xenophobia is present in this scenario and the passage of “The Immigration Act of 1924” represents the victory of xenophobic sentiment over the “immigrant nation” narrative.

### **The Trump Era**

It is important to focus on the passing of “The Chinese-Exclusion Act” as well as “The Immigration Act of 1924” as they share many parallels to the current era and thus can help us better understand modern immigration restriction. Both of these legislative acts came about as the result of fears surrounding the impact new immigrants would have on society and a desire to stem the flow. In the case of the former it was the Chinese who were the target and in the case of the latter it was Southern and Eastern Europeans, specifically Jews and Catholics. Through an analysis of both of these legislative acts, we can see how in the United States the “immigrant nation” identity persists alongside xenophobic sentiments and how eventually growing xenophobia can take precedence and influence legislation. The passing of both of these legislative acts represent two of the first official responses resulting from a general fear about the state of American identity. Prior to “The Chinese-Exclusion Act” and “The Immigration Act of 1924” American identity was not questioned due to the fact that the vast majority of US residents could trace their lineage to Protestant, Northern European nations such as the United Kingdom. It

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<sup>42</sup> Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 27.

was taken for granted that the concept of an “American” was a white, Protestant individual. However as mass numbers of immigrants began to populate the country who did not fit into the previous mold, the United States began to take on an identity as a “nation of immigrants” as it became more and more of a melting pot. As shown, this was an identity which was not welcomed with open arms by everyone as many Americans began to harbor a growing concern that their way of life was being threatened. Fears that American identity would be altered fed a growing consensus that “good” immigrants were those who fit into the preexisting majority demographic of white, Protestants while “bad” immigrants were those who did not. It was in this sense that a very specific xenophobia emerged in the United States which was based on only admitting immigrants who fit into the preexisting ethnic and religious make up. Those outside of this framework were ranked in desirability based on how close they were to the ideal immigrants, as seen in “The Immigration Act of 1924”. While it is fair to say that the scope of “desirable” immigrants has since expanded in the United States since the early twentieth century (an Italian immigrant would hardly face the same backlash now as he/she once did) this notion that certain groups don’t fit into the fabric of the US still exists today and is what is at the center of President Trump’s immigration restrictions. The United States still claims an “immigrant nation” identity while xenophobic fears fueled by the prospect of change remain present. The only difference between the xenophobia which fueled the passing of “The Chinese Exclusion Act” and “The Immigration Act of 1924” and current restriction is the target which it focuses on. In this regard, President Trump and his base of voters have decided to focus their attention specifically on Mexican and other Latino immigrants as well as Muslim immigrants.



Both Mexican and broader Latino immigration along with Muslim immigration to the United States has become noticeable since the passing of “The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965” which resulted in immigration flows coming more from the non-European world compared to before hand. While this new bill allowed migrants from Asia and Africa to come to the United States legally, it resulted in widespread illegal immigration from Mexico and other Latin countries.<sup>43</sup> New visa restrictions placed on Latin countries did not take into consideration the growing demand for cheap Mexican labor nor a worsening economic and political situation in Mexico.<sup>44</sup> The tremendous “push and pull” factors in regards to Mexican immigration to the US naturally held more weight than the scheduled visa allotment, meaning that illegal entry became the only realistic way for many Mexican migrants to enter the country. Advocates of stronger immigration reform on the southern border cite the illegal nature of Mexican migration as the reason for reform. They discuss a need to uphold law and order and a concern for the economic impact illegal labor has on the workforce. While this is what they claim at face value the real reason they want to strengthen the southern border is a xenophobic fear of the effects Mexican migration will have on the standing order of US society.

As a result of the steady flow of Mexican illegal immigration from the 1970’s onward, by the 1990’s a significant level of anti-immigrant rhetoric had become noticeable in the United States.<sup>45</sup> By the 2000’s Mexicans had become the largest minority in the United States proving their growing visibility in US society.<sup>46</sup> As the Mexican population grew, so did immigration opposition among American whites. The cause of this immigration opposition was a growing

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<sup>43</sup> Ngai, 263.

<sup>44</sup> Timothy J Henderson, *Beyond Borders : A History of Mexican Migration to the United States*, Viewpoints/Puntos de Vista (Malden, Mass. : Wiley-Blackwell, 2011, 2011), 102.

<sup>45</sup> Henderson, 126.

<sup>46</sup> Henderson, 125.

fear that the standing order of white America was under attack. A number of studies have shown that ethnocentrism has a greater influence on support for immigration restriction among the white population than other factors do such as economic concerns.<sup>47</sup> A growing fear that Mexican immigrants would alter the fundamental structure of US society manifested itself in many ways. By the early 2000's, public figures were making anti-immigrant claims on the basis of ethnocentric arguments. For example, the conservative political commentator Pat Buchanan published a book in 2006 titled "State of Emergency: The Third World Invasion and Conquest of America" which essentially made the argument that Mexicans wanted to reconquer the Southwest of the United States and that drastic measures should be taken to prevent such an event.<sup>48</sup> Another high profile figure Bill O'Reilly made the claim in a 2008 interview that immigrants should be feared as they may, "break down the white, Christian, male power structure" of the United States.<sup>49</sup>

Probably the most famous manifestation of an ethnocentric argument being made by a public figure can be seen in the release of the book "Who Are We?" By Samuel P. Huntington who essentially made the claim that immigrants, specifically Hispanics, were eroding the preexisting white, Protestant makeup of the United States and that this must be stopped.<sup>50</sup> Such xenophobic fears obviously manifested themselves in general society as well and in some instances in rather violent ways. By 2007, 144 citizens' groups had emerged on the US-Mexico border which were comprised of anti-immigrant individuals determined to keep illegal migrants

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<sup>47</sup> Nicholas A. Valentino, Ted Brader, and Ashley E. Jardina, "Immigration Opposition among US Whites: General Ethnocentrism or Media Priming of Attitudes about Latinos?," *Political Psychology* 34, no. 2 (April 2013): 150, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9221.2012.00928.x>.

<sup>48</sup> Henderson, *Beyond Borders*, 145.

<sup>49</sup> Henderson, 147.

<sup>50</sup> Blendon et al., "Immigration and the U.S. Economy," 124.

from entering the United States. Some of these groups had clear anti-Mexican racial messages such as the “Border Guardians” who have been known to burn Mexican flags and yell Mexican slurs on the border. Christian-right groups and white supremacists have joined into this fray as well.<sup>51</sup> As a result of the rise in xenophobic attitudes, President Trump was able to win the 2016 election as a great deal of his campaign was pandering to such ethnocentric concerns. During the campaign, Trump made several comments which showed his attempts to amplify the xenophobic concerns directed towards Mexicans. Most infamous was during a campaign speech in 2015 when he referred to Mexicans as, “rapists, criminals, and drug dealers.”<sup>52</sup> Comments such as these were meant to speak to the xenophobic fears of his base, and demonstrate just how prevalent racism was in motivating his voters. The presence of racism in the decision to vote for Trump in the 2016 election is demonstrated in surveys as well. In a study conducted by Karen L. Blair between April 2014 and February 2015, participants were surveyed about their attitudes and opinions in regards to certain groups of people.<sup>53</sup> The researchers discovered that individuals harboring racist attitudes and opinions were more likely to vote for Trump as opposed to Clinton.<sup>54</sup> Upon taking office, Trump has proved that he will continue to channel xenophobic sentiment directed toward the Mexican community. This has manifested itself in several ways, most obvious includes the implementation of easier deportation measures and his push to construct a physical wall on the US-Mexico border. We can see this in an executive order delivered on

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<sup>51</sup> Henderson, *Beyond Borders*, 145.

<sup>52</sup> Mark, “Trump Just Referred to One of His Most Infamous Campaign Comments.”

<sup>53</sup> Karen L. Blair, “Did Secretary Clinton Lose to a ‘Basket of Deplorables’? An Examination of Islamophobia, Homophobia, Sexism and Conservative Ideology in the 2016 US Presidential Election,” *Psychology & Sexuality* 8, no. 4 (October 2, 2017): 339, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19419899.2017.1397051>.

<sup>54</sup> Karen L. Blair, “Did Secretary Clinton Lose to a ‘Basket of Deplorables’? An Examination of Islamophobia, Homophobia, Sexism and Conservative Ideology in the 2016 US Presidential Election,” *Psychology & Sexuality* 8, no. 4 (October 2, 2017): 344, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19419899.2017.1397051>.

January 25, 2017 titled, “Border Security and Immigration Enforcement Improvements.” In this executive order issued early on in the Trump presidency, he states his commitment to the construction of a physical wall on the southern border as well as measures to expedite the removal of undocumented individuals through the expansion of cooperation between immigration officials and local law enforcement.<sup>55</sup> While the stated claim of the order is to protect national security and prevent transnational criminal organizations, we can tell from his rhetoric on the campaign, and the sentiment of his base supporters that what is really driving current restriction of Mexican and Latino migration is a xenophobic fear of the effects Mexican/Latino immigration will have on the fabric of US society.

The other main target of current anti-immigration legislation is the Muslim community in the United States. As was the case with Mexican migration, large-scale immigration of Muslims to the United States started to occur following the approval of “The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965”, which allowed for a great deal more immigration from the non-European world in contrast to prior years.<sup>56</sup> Many who are skeptical of Muslim migration base their arguments in concerns about security, largely due to the post-9/11 political climate we live in. As is the case with claims that Mexican illegal migration should be stopped for “economic or legal reasons”, the security concerns surrounding Muslim immigrants is just another front hiding the ugly truth that they are not wanted due to deep-rooted xenophobia in US society.

Even before immigration from Muslim countries became substantial, Islamophobia was present within the borders of the United States. As early as the pre-revolutionary era, Islam was

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<sup>55</sup> “Executive Order.”

<sup>56</sup> Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 263.

regarded as a creation by Satan and Muhammad was considered to be the antichrist.<sup>57</sup> Since then Muslims were not a centerpiece in the American consciousness until the US became more heavily involved in the Middle-East in the late 1970's. Growing animosity between Muslim nations and Israel (a staunch US ally), the Iranian Revolution of 1979, and a growing number of terrorist attacks starting in the 1980s by Islamic terrorist organizations began to fuel expanding animosity by Americans toward Muslim individuals.<sup>58</sup> Of course the largest spike in Islamophobia came in the wake of the September 11th attacks of 2001. Following these attacks Muslim-Americans as well as those mistaken to be Muslim became the targets of government agencies, the media, and general US society as a whole.

The passing of "The USA Patriot Act" (Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act) in October 2001 was one of the first major instances of Muslim-Americans becoming targets of the US government in the post-9/11 era. "The USA Patriot Act" allowed the government to use surveillance without showing probable cause, permit secret searches by agents without government oversight, and authorized the detention of immigrants on alleged suspicion, among other decrees.<sup>59</sup> While many US citizens experienced the violation of their rights as a result of "The USA Patriot Act", the Muslim/Arab communities of the United States were a top priority target of the government. The first batch of 1,200 individuals arrested and detained was overwhelmingly Arab and Muslim. Very few of these individuals had any ties to terrorism and often had a clean record save for a

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<sup>57</sup> Michael Charles Grillo, "The Role of Emotions in Discriminatory Ethno-Religious Politics: An Experimental Study of Anti-Muslim Politics in the United States," *Politics, Religion & Ideology* 15, no. 4 (December 2014): 590, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21567689.2014.959504>.

<sup>58</sup> Grillo, 591.

<sup>59</sup> John Tirman, *The Maze of Fear : Security and Migration after 9/11* (New York : New Press, c2004, 2004), 216.

visa violation.<sup>60</sup> Another notable example of a government measure taken in the post 9/11 era which placed extra scrutiny on the Arab and Muslim populations of the US was the creation of a special registration program known as the “National Security Entry and Exit Registry System” (NSEERS). This program was created one year after the attacks on September 11, 2002 which required that “certain non-immigrant aliens” register with US immigration authorities, be fingerprinted and photographed, and respond to questioning.<sup>61</sup> Both “The USA Patriot Act” and the special registration program are examples of the government taking specific measures which infringed upon the rights of Muslim-Americans. This was just one example of Muslims being “other-ized” in the post 9/11 era.

The media also contributed to this trend, most notably through such mainstream outlets as Fox, MSNBC, and CNN.<sup>62</sup> While special government programs and media hosts certainly had a monumental impact on the Muslim community in the United States, the greatest impact came from the general population. “The Council on American-Islamic Relations” reported 1,717 hate crimes carried out against Muslims in the United States during the first six months following the September 11th attacks.<sup>63</sup> While this figure did drop in subsequent years it remained substantial enough for Muslims to continue feeling insecure. The yelling of racial slurs and attacks on Muslim women wearing *hijabs* (head scarves) has remained consistent long after 9/11 until today. This anti-Muslim sentiment which spiked sharply following the attacks has also been recorded in several Gallup polls which found that a majority of Americans favored monitoring Muslim and Arab communities.<sup>64</sup> A US society defined by an entrenched fear and rejection of

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<sup>60</sup> Tirman, 216.

<sup>61</sup> Tirman, 218.

<sup>62</sup> Tirman, 230.

<sup>63</sup> Tirman, 223.

<sup>64</sup> Tirman, 225.

Muslims and Arabs was formed following the September 11th attacks and has remained in place ever since. While a great deal of the concern related to Muslims is claimed to be about security issues (similar to the way that concern related to Mexicans is claimed to be about economics) it is important to acknowledge that this is covering up the reality that the true concern related to Muslims is that they present a racial threat to the dominant white population. A study focused on the treatment of Muslim women in the Chicago area revealed that many of the participants viewed their mistreatment as a message from white America that they will never be included into the rights and privileges owned by others. As several of these participants pointed out, following the Oklahoma City bombing, Irish Christians were not placed under the same inspection as Muslims have experienced (taking into consideration the background of the bomber Timothy McVeigh).<sup>65</sup> This double standard shows the xenophobic undertones of the “security concerns” regarding Muslim-Americans. It is the presence of this xenophobia directed at Muslims which President Donald Trump fed off of during his campaign and which he continues to feed with certain executive action he has taken. During his campaign some of his main selling points for his supporters included: a ban on Muslim immigration to the United States, a national registry for all Muslims living in the US, and surveillance of mosques.<sup>66</sup> Upon taking office, Trump has proved to stay true to his treatment of Muslims. Most notably through his executive order “Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States”. This act called for the suspension of entry into the US for individuals from several predominantly Muslim countries on the basis of, “security concerns.”<sup>67</sup> In addition to Trump’s commitment to legislation focused

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<sup>65</sup> Tirman, 230.

<sup>66</sup> Nazita Lajevardi and Marisa Abrajano, “How Negative Sentiment toward Muslim Americans Predicts Support for Trump in the 2016 Presidential Election,” *The Journal of Politics* 81, no. 1 (December 11, 2018): 296, <https://doi.org/10.1086/700001>.

<sup>67</sup> “Executive Order Protecting The Nation From Foreign Terrorist Entry Into The United States.”

on Muslims, public opinion polls also indicate a strong presence of xenophobia involved in the victory of Trump. In a study carried out between May 2016 to June 2017 by researchers Nazita Lajevardi and Marisa Abrajano, resentment of Muslim-Americans was measured as the variable “Muslim American resentment” or “MAR”. The results of the study showed that high levels of “MAR” indicated a stronger possibility that one would support Trump.<sup>68</sup> By looking at levels of anti-Muslim sentiment in society and the substance of President Trump’s executive orders, we can see that as is the case with Mexican migrants, Muslim immigration is being restricted for xenophobic reasons as well.

The restrictions implemented against both Mexicans and Muslims under the Trump administration echo the xenophobic sentiments of the two historical examples I have analyzed, “The Chinese Exclusion Act” and “The Immigration Act of 1924”. In the current era, as is the case with the historical moments I have analysed, there is a struggle between the identity of “immigrant nation” and xenophobia and in the end the xenophobic sentiment prevails due to a fear that the new arrivals will not be able to assimilate.

### **Part 3: Comparative Insights from Argentina and Canada**

The xenophobic cycle stemming from a long history of immigration we see occurring in the United States is not confined to its borders. The same phenomenon can be observed in Argentina and Canada; both nations which experienced massive waves of immigration at the same time period as the United States. While the stock of immigrants which set foot on each of these three countries did vary slightly, the final result in each nation was the creation of the same

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<sup>68</sup> Lajevardi and Abrajano, “How Negative Sentiment toward Muslim Americans Predicts Support for Trump in the 2016 Presidential Election,” 297.



“immigrant-based” identity. As was the case in the United States, the formulation of an “immigrant-based” identity in Argentina and Canada also fed the creation of a xenophobia founded on the notion of “good” and “bad” immigrants which was also predicated on racial lines and a desire to maintain a homogenous identity.

While the same contending explanations of right-wing populism, economic concerns, and security concerns are posited in the context of these nations to explain recent anti-immigrant policy, I believe the unique history of heavy immigration which Argentina and Canada both share with the United States alludes to a similar explanation for growing anti-immigrant policy. In order to prove that xenophobia born out of an “immigrant-based” identity is the primary factor for growing restriction in each of these countries, I will conduct a historical analysis of Argentina and then Canada to gain comparative insight.

## **Argentina**

The late nineteenth century through the beginning of the twentieth was the era of mass immigration to Argentina as it was for the United States. However the main difference between these two nations is that Argentina exerted great efforts to entice immigrants to its soil while the United States did not. The desire to bring immigrants to Argentina was shared by many notable Argentine politicians and intellectuals but the most influential among them was undoubtedly Juan Bautista Alberdi. Alberdi was an Argentine political thinker from San Miguel de Tucumán who largely influenced the constitution of 1853.<sup>69</sup> Alberdi wanted his nation to be as developed and respected as the United States and Western Europe, and he was convinced that one factor

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<sup>69</sup> “Juan Bautista Alberdi | Argentine Political Philosopher,” Encyclopedia Britannica, accessed March 5, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Juan-Bautista-Alberdi>.

was holding Argentina back, the large indigenous population in the interior. In one of his writings he stated, “the most beautiful part of South America is today deserted and abandoned to the indigenes.”<sup>70</sup> In order to bring Argentina to an equal playing field with its northern neighbors, he believed it was necessary to populate his nation with Europeans. His thoughts on how to advance Argentina are carefully laid out in his book *Bases y Puntos de Partida para la Organización Política de la República Argentina*, or (Bases and Starting Points for the Political Organization of the Argentine Republic). In chapter fifteen of this book he writes, “How and in what form will the enlivening spirit of European civilization come to our shore? It will come as it has come in all ages: Europe will bring us its new spirit, its habits of industry, its experiences in civilization, in its immigration to our country.”<sup>71</sup> Alberdi’s strong pro-immigration stance eventually came to life as it was codified in the 1853 constitution, which articulated a legal framework which was designed to generate European immigration. Alberdi’s thoughts on immigration in *Bases y Puntos de Partida para la Organización Política de la República Argentina* can be seen throughout the framework of the 1853 constitution. For example article twenty of the constitution reads, “Aliens enjoy in the territory of the Nation all the civil rights of citizens...”<sup>72</sup> which directly reflects Alberdi’s desire to make Argentina an immigrant friendly nation. Thus starting in 1853, Argentina was officially a nation open to immigrant arrivals. However even this was not enough for some lawmakers. In order to further stimulate European immigration to Argentina, several statesman introduced legislation to encourage what was meant to be a natural process. Under the presidency of Nicolás Avellaneda, *La Ley Nacional de*

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<sup>70</sup> Sam Schulman, “Juan Bautista Alberdi and His Influence on Immigration Policy in the Argentine Constitution of 1853,” *The Americas* 5, no. 1 (1948): 6, <https://doi.org/10.2307/978129>.

<sup>71</sup> Schulman, 8.

<sup>72</sup> Schulman, 12.

*Inmigración y Colonización* or (The National Law of Immigration and Colonization) was approved in 1876.<sup>73</sup> This law designated agents to go to Europe to promote Argentina as a place to live, provided free transportation from country of origin to Argentina, and spread information about work and land being sold.<sup>74</sup> Under the presidency of Juárez Celman two other developments came with the implementation of information offices in: Paris, London, Vienna, Berlin, New York, Brussels, and Berne in 1876 and the decision to subsidize immigrant travel by the Argentine national bank in 1887.<sup>75</sup> As demonstrated by the Argentine constitution of 1853 along with the subsequent pieces of legislation under the presidencies of Avellaneda and Celman, immigration was strongly desired rather than something to be controlled. Eventually the subsidization of immigrant passage to Argentina dropped off but this was due to financial issues not a rise in anti-immigration sentiment. While xenophobia was not directed at immigrants in Argentina, this does not mean that such vitriol was not present. It was the indigenous population of the interior which was the target of xenophobic sentiment.

Juan Bautista Alberdi's claims about the need to civilize Argentina best showcase the presence of this racism, afterall xenophobia fuelled immigration rather than immigration fueling xenophobia. Fast forward to the modern day and immigration law is rather different than it once was, being much more restrictive. However the xenophobia which once spawned the desire to bring immigrants to Argentine soil is still at work. The administration of president Mauricio Macri has issued a decree to accelerate the deportations of undocumented immigrants and

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<sup>73</sup> Alejandro Fernández, "La Inmigración Subsidiada En La Argentina y La Crisis Económica de 1890," *Subsidized Immigration in Argentina and the Economic Crisis of 1890*. 22, no. 2 (May 2018): 158, <https://doi.org/10.4013/htu.2018.222.01>.

<sup>74</sup> Fernández, 159.

<sup>75</sup> Fernández, 159.

prohibit the entry of foreigners with criminal records.<sup>76</sup> While this decree is grounded largely on security reasons, it has a clear xenophobic underpinning as the target of its measures are the Paraguayan and Bolivian communities. Often immigrants from these countries are singled out by officials and media outlets for their more indigenous features, in order to differentiate them from the predominantly white Argentine populace.<sup>77</sup> The ridicule which immigrants of indigenous descent experience along with the initiatives to stem the flow of immigration from more heavily indigenous nations shows the racial underpinnings of current anti-immigration policy in Argentina. While the issuance of this new decree directed at more tightly controlling immigration may seem like a change compared to Argentina's long history of open borders, it is driven by the same xenophobia of the indigenous population that incentivized immigration in the first place. It is for this reason that the same juxtaposition between "immigrant-based" identity and xenophobia is present in Argentina as it is in the United States. Current immigration restriction under the Macri government is a result of this xenophobia rooted in an "immigrant-based" identity which establishes the "good" immigrants as those of European descent and the "bad" ones of indigenous descent.

## **Canada**

By far considered the most welcoming of all the "immigrant-based" nations, even Canada has witnessed a re-emergence of restrictive policies directed at immigrants. As is the case with the United States and Argentina, the first major waves of immigration emerged at the end of the nineteenth century into the early years of the twentieth. As this was the era of nation building and

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<sup>76</sup> Alejandro Grimson, "Argentina's Anti-Immigrant About-Face," *NACLA Report on the Americas* 49, no. 2 (June 2017): 124, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10714839.2017.1331792>.

<sup>77</sup> Grimson, 123.

Canadians were witnessing the make-up of their nation change, xenophobic sentiment emerged to drive the formation of immigration law. During the 1880's most immigrants to Canada were settling in the east, and few were making their way to the western territories where the government was trying to settle the land and build the economy. The government of Canada had a very set idea of who would settle these land. In order to preserve western Canada's strong Anglo-Saxon heritage, representatives were sent to the United Kingdom to promote homesteading opportunities and subsidized travel to British audiences.<sup>78</sup> These early efforts to bring immigrants to western Canada who fell in line with the standing demographic makeup was largely a failure, as the Canadian representatives were targeting audiences with wealth who really had no need to resettle. By the final years of the nineteenth century, notably after the election of 1896, the Canadian government began to open its doors to Southern and Eastern European poorer immigrants who were more willing to resettle from their home lands.<sup>79</sup> Even though immigration requirements relaxed for a bit, restrictions were levied against Asians and Blacks, and the general sentiment was that Anglo-Saxon immigrants remained the ideal group to settle the west. This sentiment is expressed in the "Grain Growers' Guide" which was a publication for the prairie wheat farmers of the west. One excerpt read, "We do not want the scum of Continental Europe; we do not want men and women who have behind them a thousand years of ignorance, superstition, anarchy, filth and immorality."<sup>80</sup> A great deal of the concern surrounding the new wave of immigrants to Canada had to do with the arrival of Italians. The commissioner of immigration in Winnipeg, J. Obed Smith, expressed his opinions about Italian

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<sup>78</sup> Jeremy Adelman, *Frontier Development: Land, Labour, and Capital on the Wheatlands of Argentina and Canada, 1890-1914*, Oxford Historical Monographs (Oxford : New York: Clarendon Press ; Oxford University Press, 1994), 148.

<sup>79</sup> Adelman, 149.

<sup>80</sup> Adelman, 151.

arrivals in a letter to a deputy, “I think it my duty to call your attention to this fact as these people are quite well known to be quite useless as settlers and have ruined to a large extent the prosperity of Boston, Mass., it seems to me unfortunate that this class of immigrant should be brought in by the Railway Company for any kind of work at all except it be work in the coal mines.”<sup>81</sup> This growing xenophobia following the arrival of large amounts of Southern and Eastern European immigrants eventually prompted the Canadian government to do an about face on their previous decision to open their doors. In 1910 a new immigration act was passed which gave the government greater control over the ethnic makeup of new immigrant arrivals. Section 38 of the act read, “The Governor in Council may prohibit for a stated period, or permanently the landing in Canada, or the landing at any specific port of entry in Canada, of immigrants belonging to any race deemed unsuited to the climate or requirements of Canada, or of immigrants of any specified class, occupation or character.” Immigrants which had the greatest chance of entry into Canada came from such countries as: Britain, the United States, the Irish Free State, Newfoundland, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa.<sup>82</sup> As was the case in my other two countries of analysis, the United States and Argentina, we can see that the era of nation-building in Canada was largely defined by a concerted attempt to build the ethnic homogeneity of the nation. Since the era of concerted immigrant recruiting ended, recognized to be approximately 1930,<sup>83</sup> Canada has made great advancements to become a much more multicultural nation. In 1962 a new immigration act was passed which abolished restrictions on certain ethnic groups and placed the emphasis of admission on skill set and family ties.<sup>84</sup> Shortly

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<sup>81</sup> Adelman, 152.

<sup>82</sup> Alan G. Green and David Green, “The Goals of Canada’s Immigration Policy: A Historical Perspective,” *Canadian Journal of Urban Research* 13, no. 1 (2004): 108.

<sup>83</sup> Alan G. Green and David Green, 112.

<sup>84</sup> Alan G. Green and David Green, 116.

after in 1969 Canada ratified “The United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its Protocol”, which solidified Canada’s commitment to grant asylum to individuals who fit certain categories of persecution.<sup>85</sup> Canada has proven to stick true to its immigration and refugee commitments and as a result has emerged to become a much more diverse nation. Amid the Syrian refugee crisis Prime Minister Justin Trudeau took the opposite approach of many western leaders and committed Canada to accepting large numbers of refugees, with a commitment in the tens of thousands.<sup>86</sup>

But while Canada has shown itself to be a great deal more welcoming than many other western nations, that does not mean that xenophobic whispers from the past are not at play. Conservative MPs often advocate for greater restriction against refugees or immigrants, contrasting the old waves of “good” immigrants from more recent waves of “bad” ones. Claims such as these have clear racial undertones as more recent arrivals do not conform to the dominant white Canadian society. Ironically, many of the MPs who advance these ideas are immigrants themselves, some from visible minority communities such as Asian-Canadians.<sup>87</sup> These conservative immigrant MPs espouse such rhetoric in a bid to assimilate themselves at the cost of newer immigrant waves. The new group of immigrants which is most often scrutinized in Canada is the Muslim population, most notably in the province of Quebec. The majority French speaking province of Quebec has invested great measures to preserve its linguistic heritage in the

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<sup>85</sup> Innessa Colaiacovo, “Not Just the Facts: Adjudicator Bias and Decisions of the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (2006-2011),” *Journal on Migration and Human Security*, no. Issue 4 (2013): 123.

<sup>86</sup> Julie F. Gilmour, “The Trudeau Government, Refugee Policy, and Echoes of the Past,” in *Justin Trudeau and Canadian Foreign Policy*, ed. Norman Hillmer and Philippe Lagassé, Canada and International Affairs (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018), 233–46, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-73860-4\\_12](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-73860-4_12).

<sup>87</sup> Laura J. Kwak, “Still Making Canada White: Racial Governmentality and the ‘Good Immigrant’ in Canadian Parliamentary Immigration Debates,” *Canadian Journal of Women & the Law* 30, no. 3 (September 2018): 468, <https://doi.org/10.3138/cjwl.30.3.005>.

predominantly anglophone Canadian society. One major result of this is that multiculturalism in Quebec is viewed with a greater degree of speculation as a potential threat to the French heritage.

<sup>88</sup> The most visible manifestation of a fear of multiculturalism in Quebec is expressed by the political party *Parti Québécois* (Quebec Party) which has shown an apprehensiveness about the impact of the Muslim population, as shown in its proposal for a ban on the hijab.<sup>89</sup> Another prominent political party, the *Coalition Avenir Québec* (Coalition for Quebec's Future) has aligned even more with typical right-wing populist cultural fears, declaring an initiative to reduce immigration quotas, and to test French proficiency of new arrivals along with conformity to, "Québec values."<sup>90</sup> A growing popularity of ideas which revolve around cultural anxiety demonstrate the resurgence of xenophobic fear in Quebec. On the more extreme side, the January 2017 shooting at a mosque in Quebec City demonstrates the ugly side of entrenched xenophobia in Québécois society.<sup>91</sup> Discussion of tighter immigration and refugee selection by conservative MPs and islamophobic sentiment in Quebec demonstrate that even a relatively open country such as Canada is experiencing a closure to immigrants. As is the case with the United States and Argentina, the juxtaposition of "immigrant-based" nation and xenophobia is present within Canada, and current measures to prevent immigrant entry are a result of this xenophobia rooted in an "immigrant-based" identity based on the same notion of "good" immigrants as those

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<sup>88</sup> Jeffrey G. Reitz et al., "Race, Religion, and the Social Integration of New Immigrant Minorities in Canada," *The International Migration Review* 43, no. 4 (2009): 701.

<sup>89</sup> Martin Patriquin, "The Pq's Identity Crisis," *Maclean's* 127, no. 13/14 (April 7, 2014): 20–21.

<sup>90</sup> "Canadian Anti-Immigrant Party Thrives with Landslide Victory in Québec," USA TODAY, accessed March 31, 2019, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2018/10/03/anti-immigrant-party-canada-thrives-big-victory-quebec/510886002/>.

<sup>91</sup> Amina Moustaqim-Barrette · for CBC News · Posted: Feb 01, 2017 5:00 AM ET | Last Updated: February 1, and 2017, "Quebec's Ugly Ethnic Nationalism: Opinion | CBC News," CBC, February 1, 2017, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/opinion/ethnic-nationalism-quebec-1.3960340>.



aligning with the previous European stock while the “bad” immigrants are non-Europeans and specifically in the case of Quebec, Muslim immigrants.

## **Conclusion**

As countries around the globe turn toward closing their borders, everyone from media pundits to politicians to average citizens toss around different theories as to why countries are implementing more restrictive measures. As I have laid out in my analysis, right-wing populism, economic concerns, and security concerns are all commonly cited explanations to this current phenomenon. Each of these explanations has validity and deserves attention. Right-wing populists feeding off of cultural anxiety, fears that illegal immigrants are stealing jobs, and concerns that Muslim communities pose a security threat are all a reality of the world we live in and have their influence on increased anti-immigration policy. However the unique history of “immigrant-based” nations means that none of these theories is ultimately sufficient enough to touch upon the xenophobia arising in countries which have long histories of receiving large amounts of immigrants. This is why I propose that the best explanation is a xenophobia born out of an “immigrant-based” identity.

A history of large scale immigration in these nations has paradoxically created the narrative of an “immigrant nation” while at the same time feeding a deep-rooted xenophobia built on the notion of what comprises “good” immigrants from “bad” ones. This division is normally built on ethnic lines, and I demonstrate the long standing presence of this xenophobia born out of an “immigrant-based” identity by conducting a historical investigation of “The Chinese Exclusion Act”, “The Immigration Act of 1924”, and highlighting the similarity of both

of these acts to the present era of restriction and the legislation which it has given rise to. From my historical analysis, we can see that while the target of xenophobia may change, at one time being an Italian and at another point being Mexican, the same xenophobic sentiment remains. At each new juncture of history, there is a group of immigrants which is perceived by the general population to not hold the capacity to assimilate and for that reason is resisted. It is in this way that an “immigrant-based” identity has fed xenophobia in the United States. This explanation clearly runs contrary to what we would expect given that “immigrant-based” countries are perceived to be welcome beacons for those seeking a new home, but my analysis shows the contrary.

I follow my historical investigation of the United States by introducing the similarities of my countries of comparison, Argentina and Canada, in order to prove that the explanation which I propose pertains to other “immigrant-based” nations as well. The history of Argentina and Canada demonstrates that a similar history of large immigration waves to each of these countries has built a similar xenophobia based on a notion of “good” and “bad” immigrants determined by racial categories. In each of these countries we can see this xenophobia rooted in an “immigrant-based” identity being the driving factor behind current restriction. The similarities which the United States shares with Argentina and Canada prove that while each of these countries have accepted many foreigners over the years, and have become “countries of immigrants”, there remains a xenophobic undercurrent which prevents all from being welcome.

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