

U.S. Immigration History: A Few Illustrations



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How do immigrants become Americans?



- In *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782), J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, describing how “a mixture of English, Scotch, Irish, French, Dutch, Germans, and Swedes” melting into “a new race of men” called Americans, proclaimed, “There is room for everybody in America.”
- Crèvecoeur declared, “*He* is an American, who leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds,” that of American citizen.



TO BE SOLD, on board the
 Ship *Bance-Island*, on Tuesday the 6th
 of *May* next, at *Ashley-Ferry*; a choice
 cargo of about 250 fine healthy

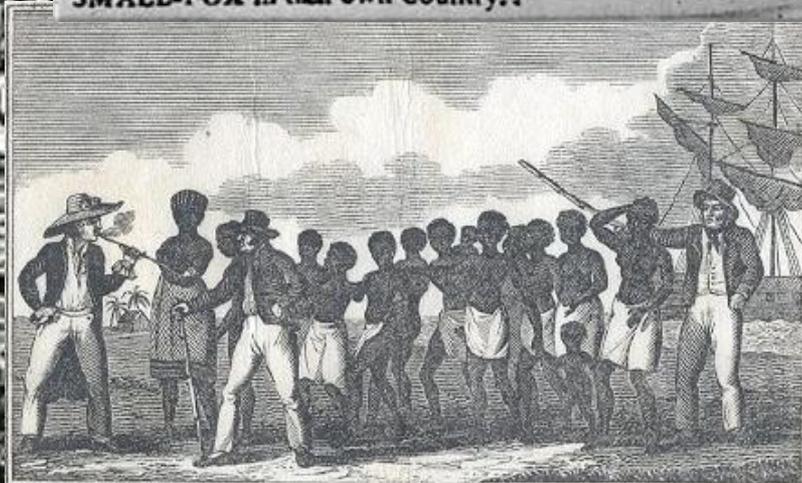
NEGROES,

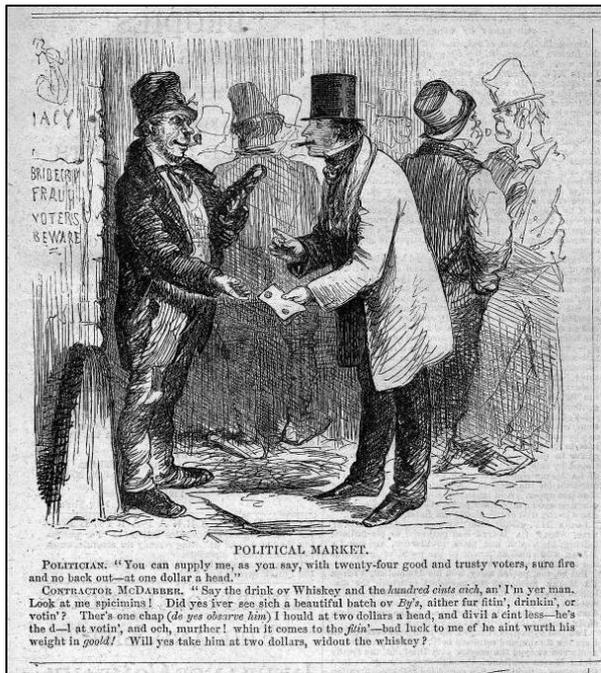
just arrived from the
 Windward & Rice Coast.

—The utmost care has
 already been taken, and
 shall be continued, to keep them free from
 the least danger of being infected with the
SMALL-POX, no boat having been on
 board, and all other communication with
 people from *Charles-Town* prevented.

Austin, Laurens, & Appleby.

N. B. Full one Half of the above Negroes have had the
SMALL-POX in their own Country..





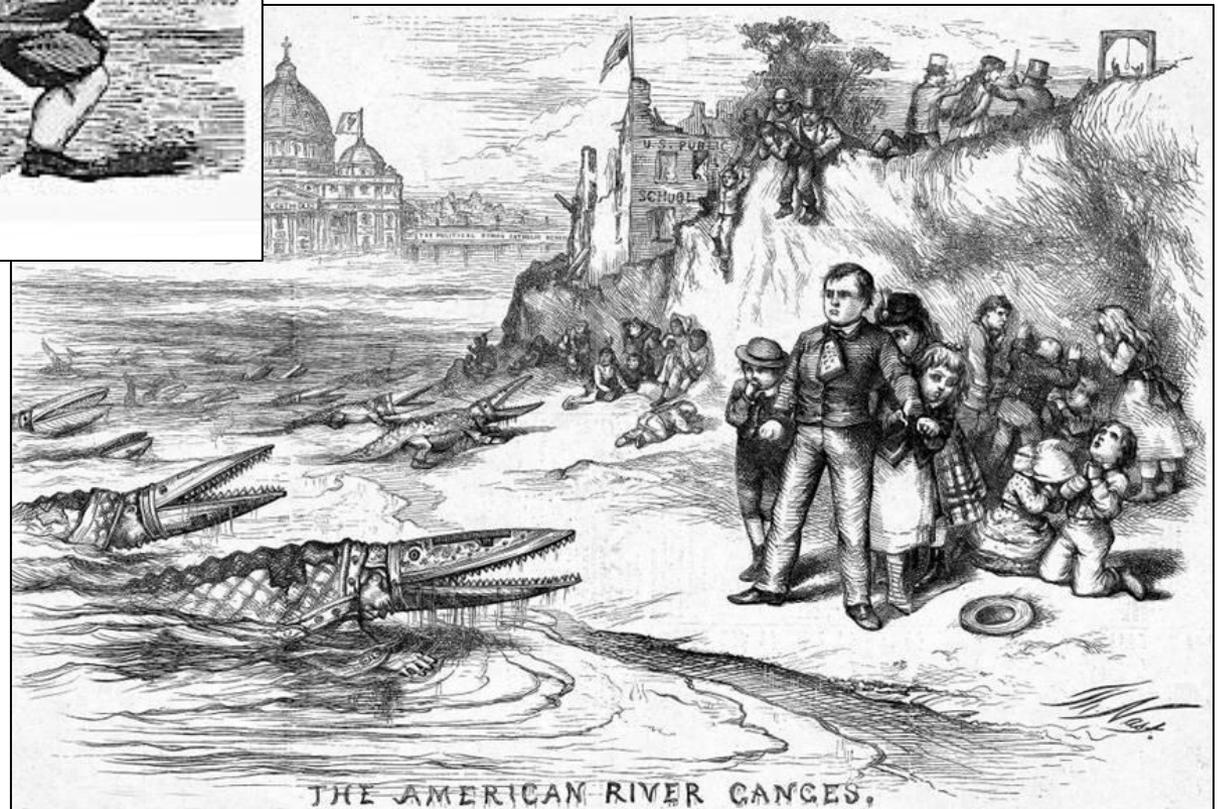
An influx of Irish immigrants during the antebellum period sparked native-born opposition because of the Irish newcomers' poverty, Catholicism, and supposedly corrupt natures.

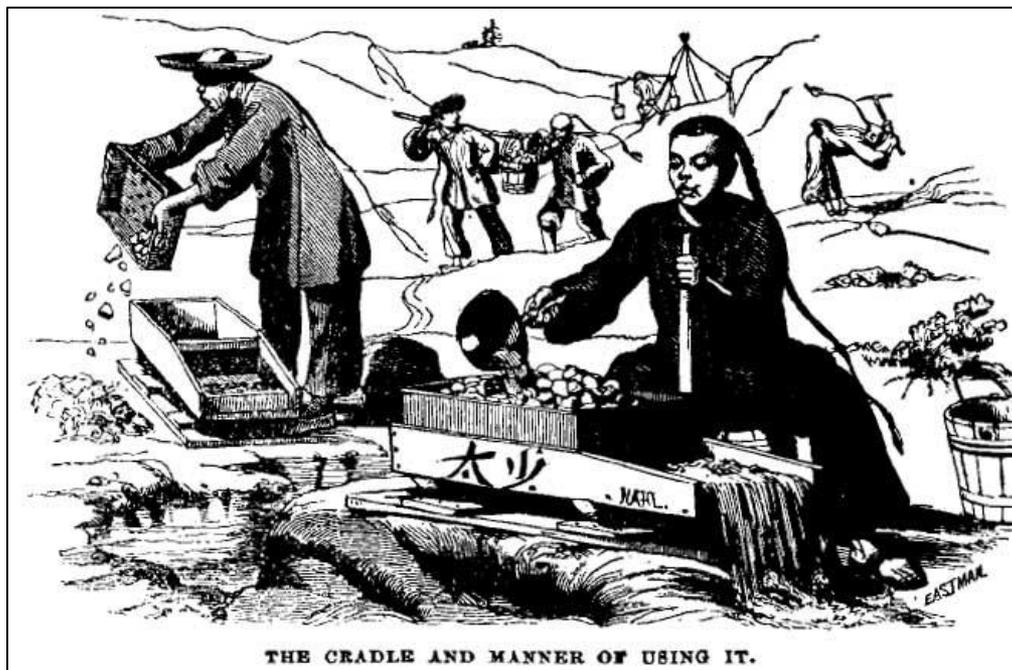




Know-Nothing cartoon from the 1850s shows Irish and German immigrants as drunken rowdies carrying off a ballot box on election day.

“The American River Ganges. The Priests and their Children,” Thomas Nast, *Harper’s Weekly*, September 30, 1871

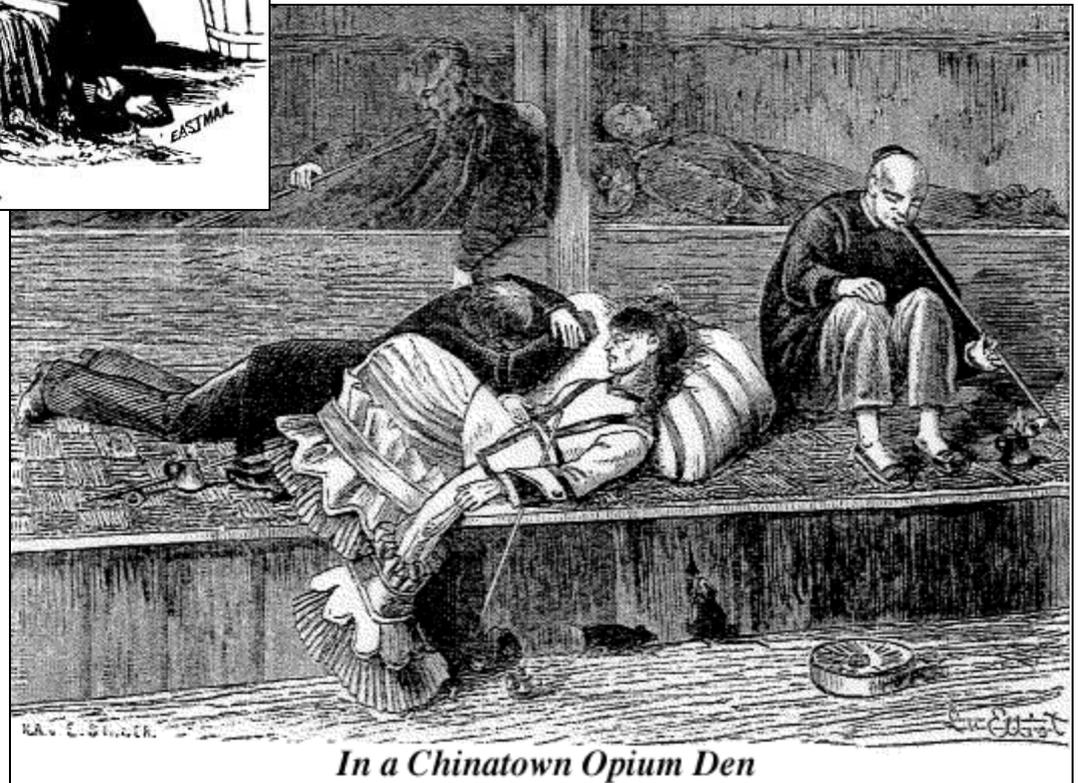




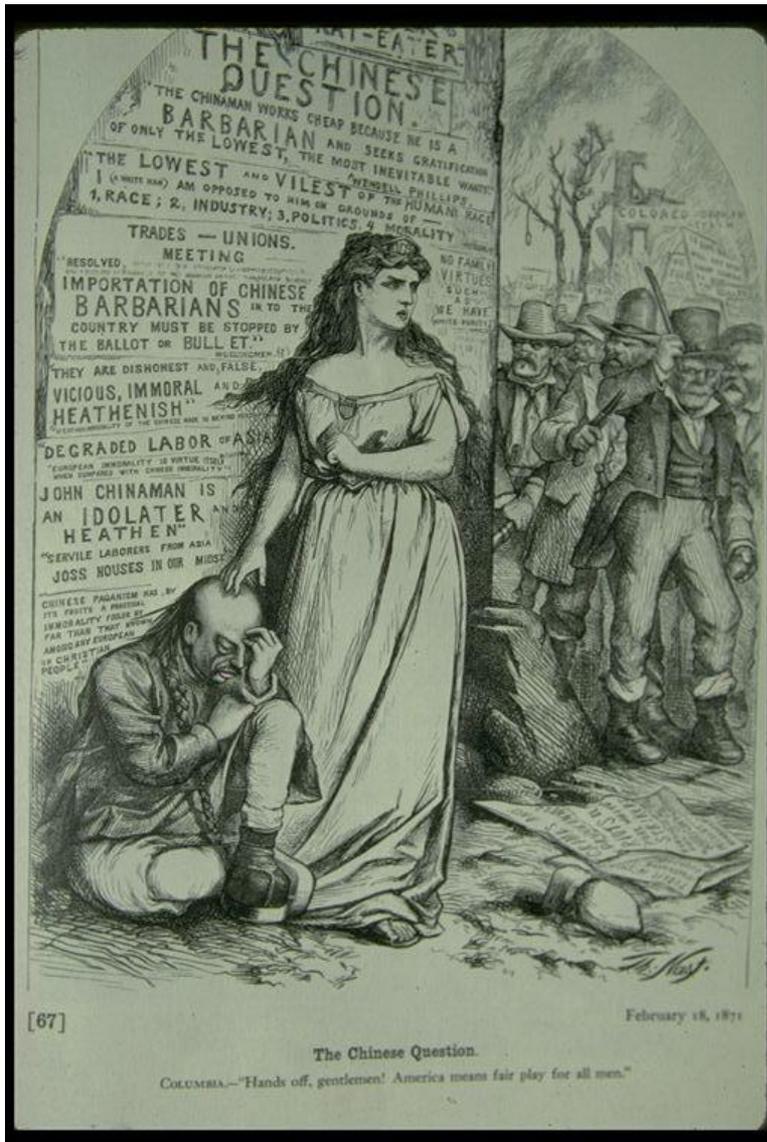
THE CRADLE AND MANNER OF USING IT.

Charles Christian Nahl, “The Cradle and the Manner of Using It,” *Hutchings’s California Magazine*, 1860; “San Francisco Chinatown Opium Den,” ca. 1870s, Virtual Museum of the City of San Francisco.

Conflicting images of Chinese immigrants: careful mine workers or demonic opium pushers



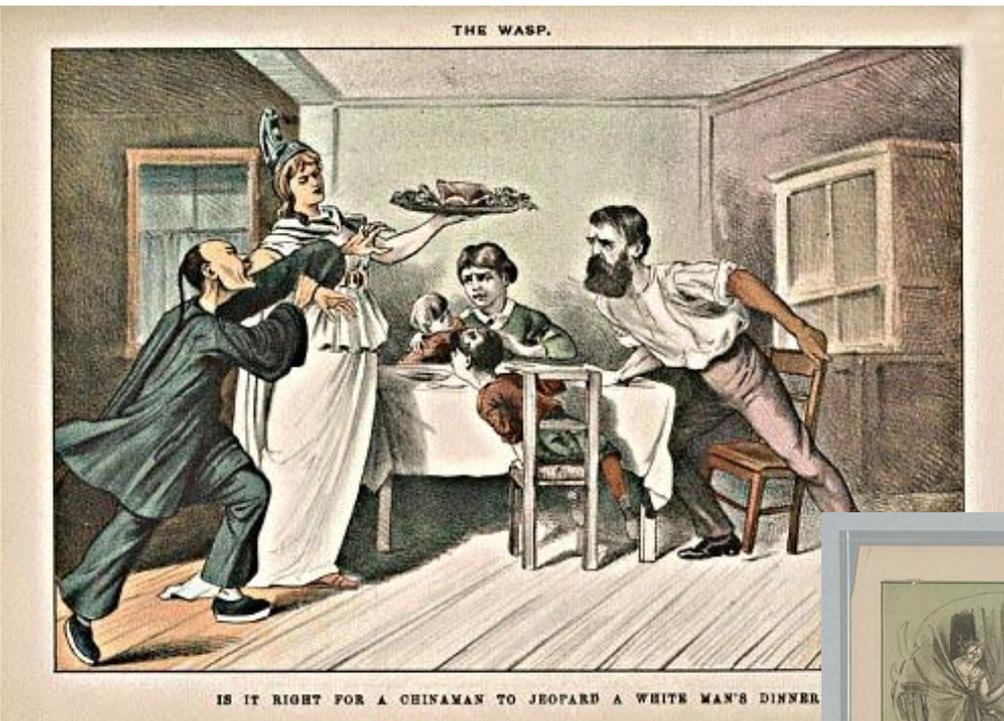
In a Chinatown Opium Den



“The Chinese Question,”
Thomas Nast, *Harper's Weekly*
February 18, 1871

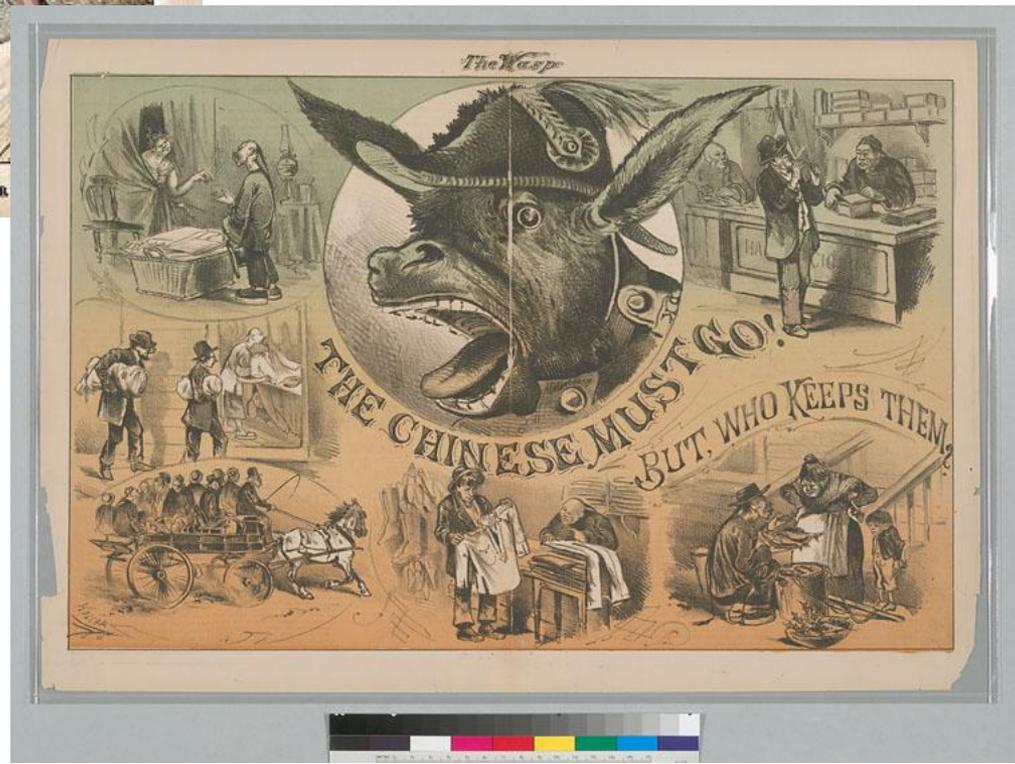
Columbia—“Hand off, gentlemen!
America means fair play for all
men.”

Nast portrays the “Chinese
Question” as a battle among recent
immigrants over jobs, but it was in
truth a battle over whether native-
born Americans would continue to
welcome all comers to the United
States as equals.



Anti-Chinese Cartoons show demand for and conflict over low-wage jobs in California.

“Is It Right for a Chinaman to Jeopard a White Man’s Dinner?” (1885), and “The Chinese Must Go! But, Who Keeps Them?” (1877), *The Wasp*, San Francisco

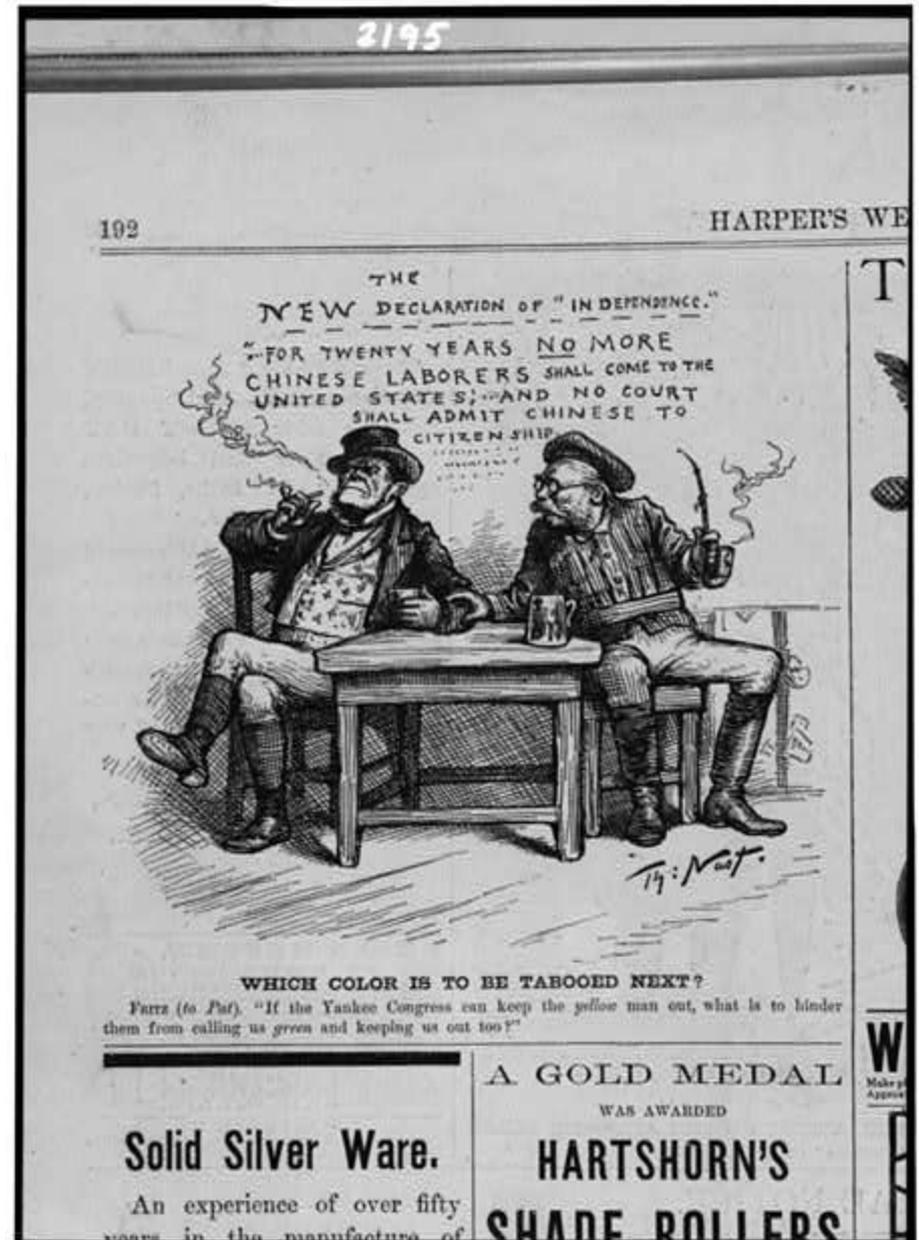


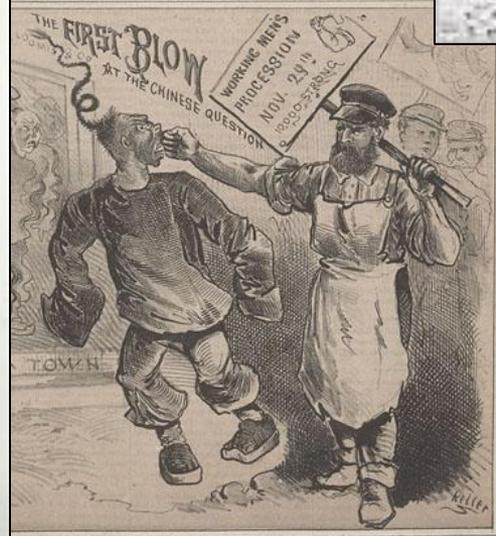
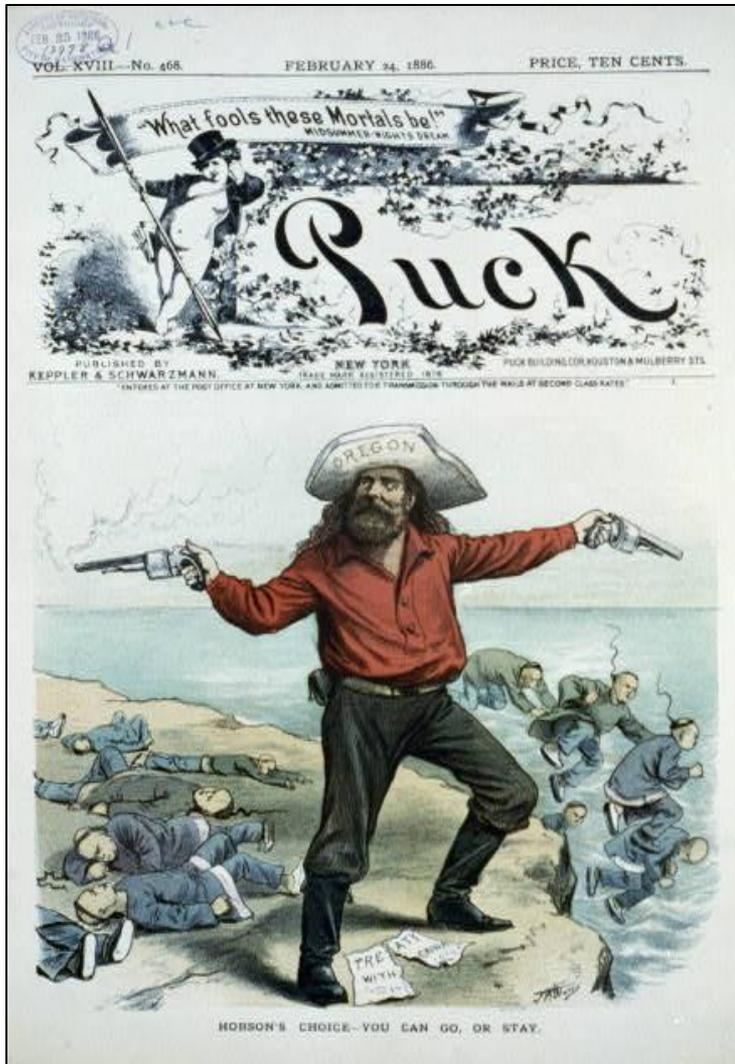
“Which Color is to be
Tabooed Next?”

Thomas Nast, *Harper's Weekly*,
March 25, 1882

Fritz (to Pat): “If the Yankee
Congress can keep the yellow
man out, what is to hinder them
calling us green and keeping us
out too?”

The Chinese Exclusion Act of
1882 was the first step in U.S.
adoption of comprehensive
immigration restrictions based
on racial prejudice.

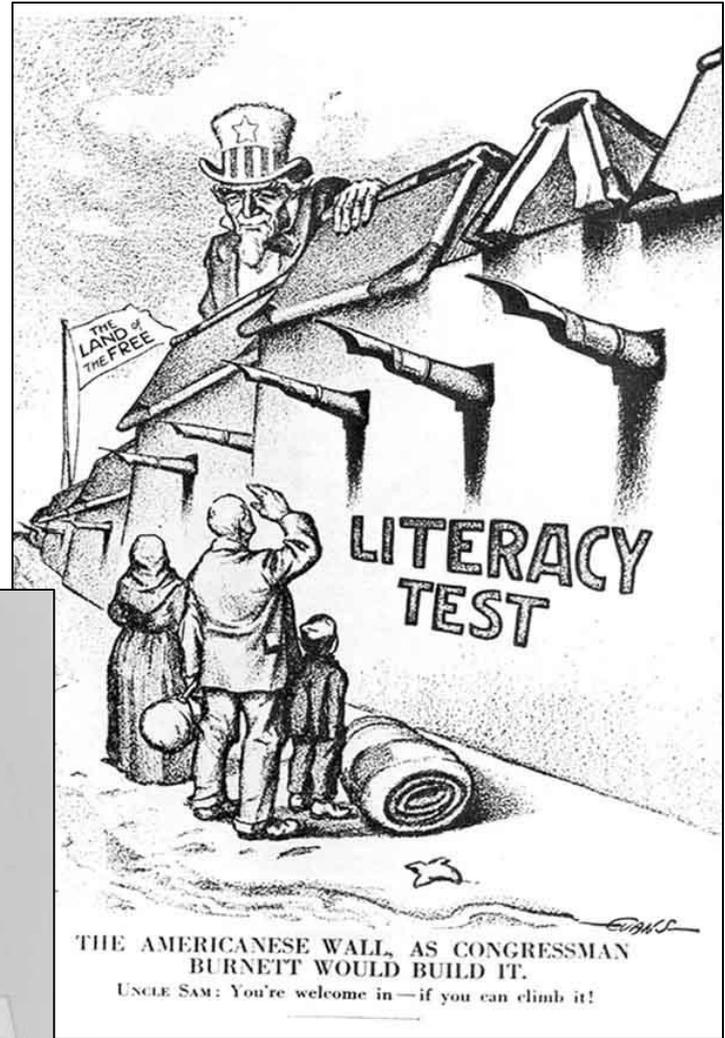




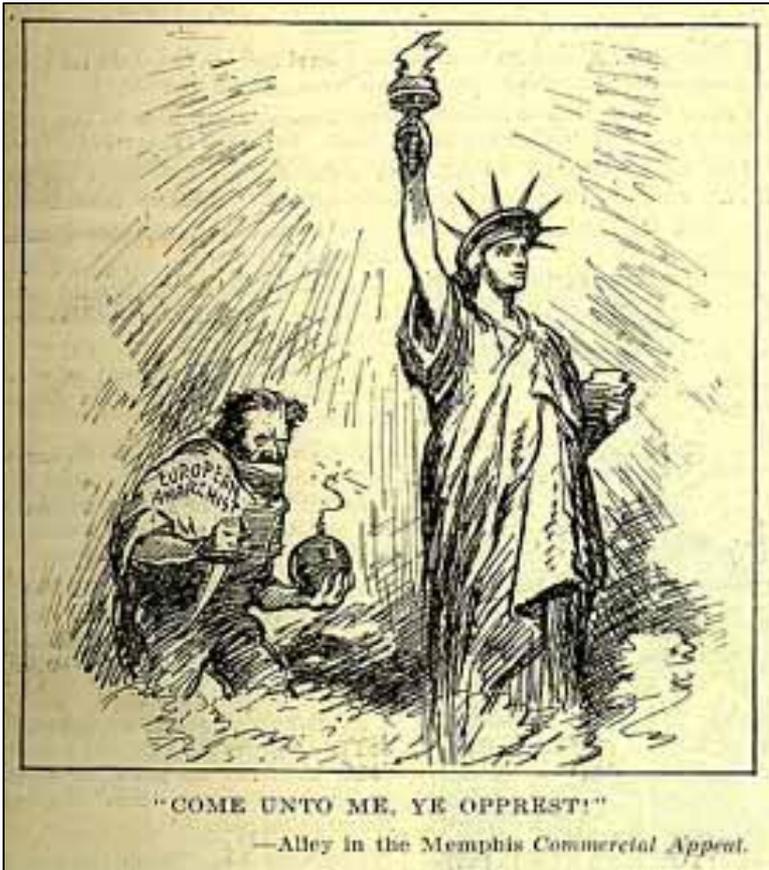
Anti-Chinese violence in Oregon (1886), San Francisco (1877), and Denver (1880)

Leaving Ellis Island, ca. 1890s

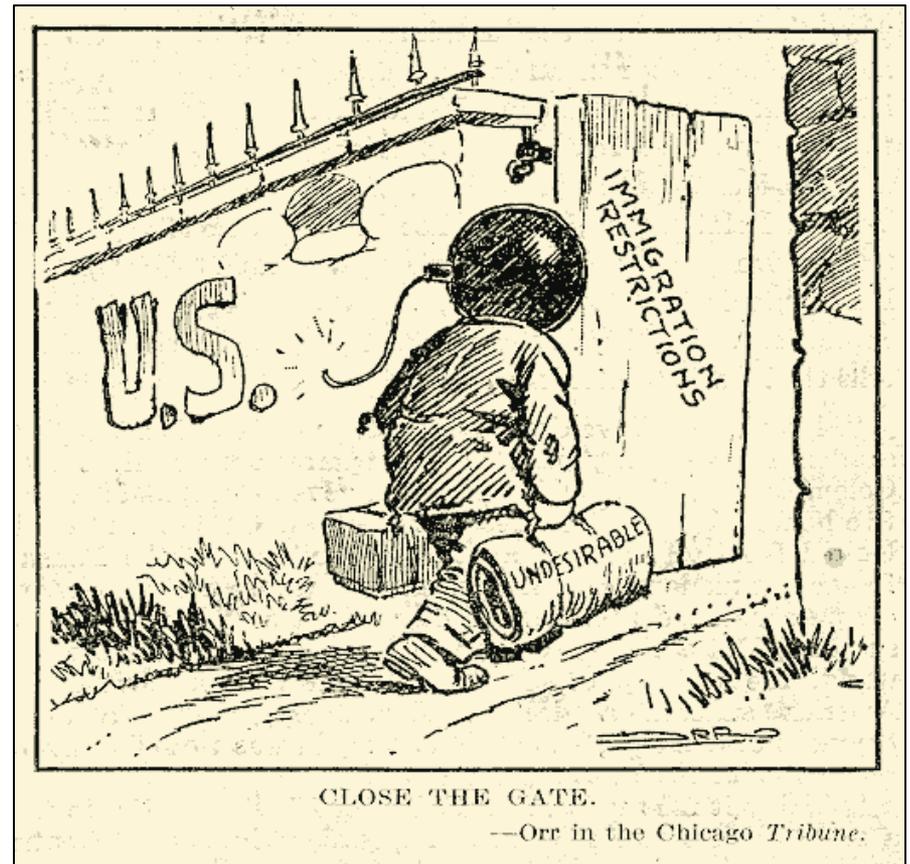




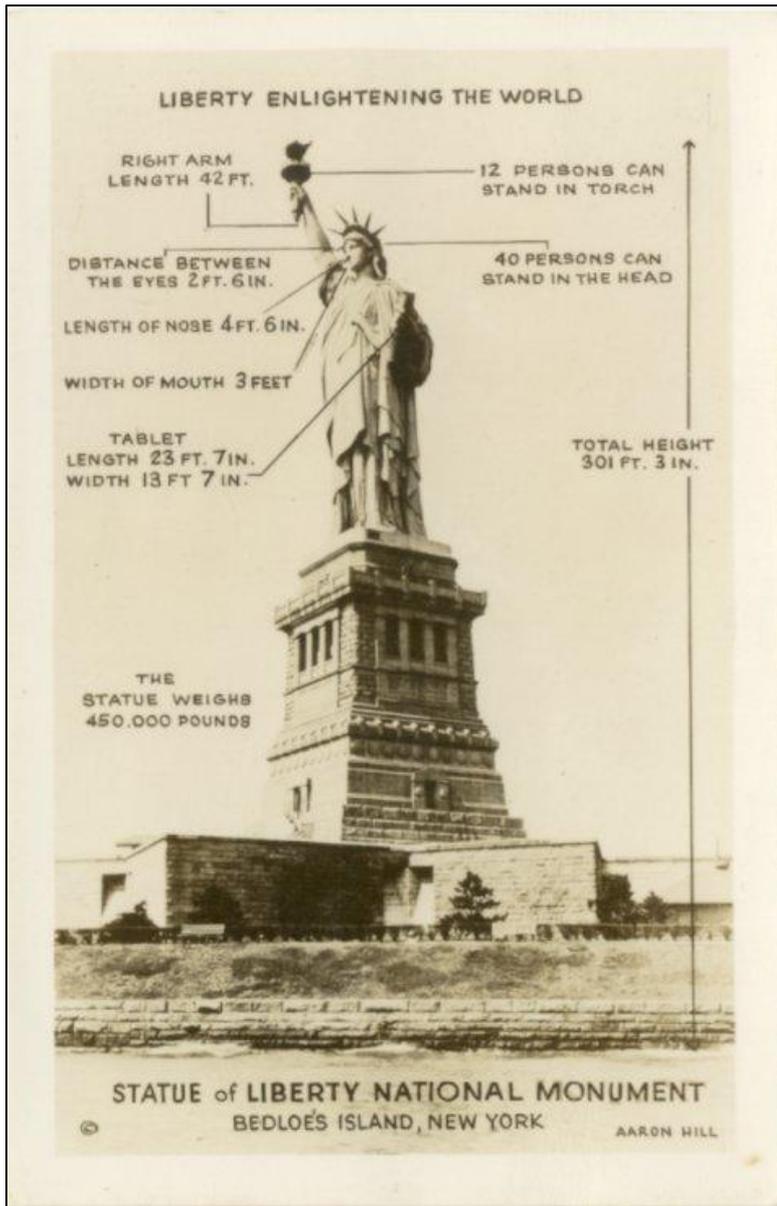
Literacy test imposed 1917;
Inspecting immigrants at Ellis
Island, ca. 1900



Red Scare, 1919,
leads to deportation of political radicals,
including U.S. citizens



Anti-immigration cartoons
reprinted in *Literary Digest*,
July 1919



In October 1924, President Calvin Coolidge declared the Statue of Liberty, or Liberty Enlightening the World, a National Monument.

“Whose Country Is This?”



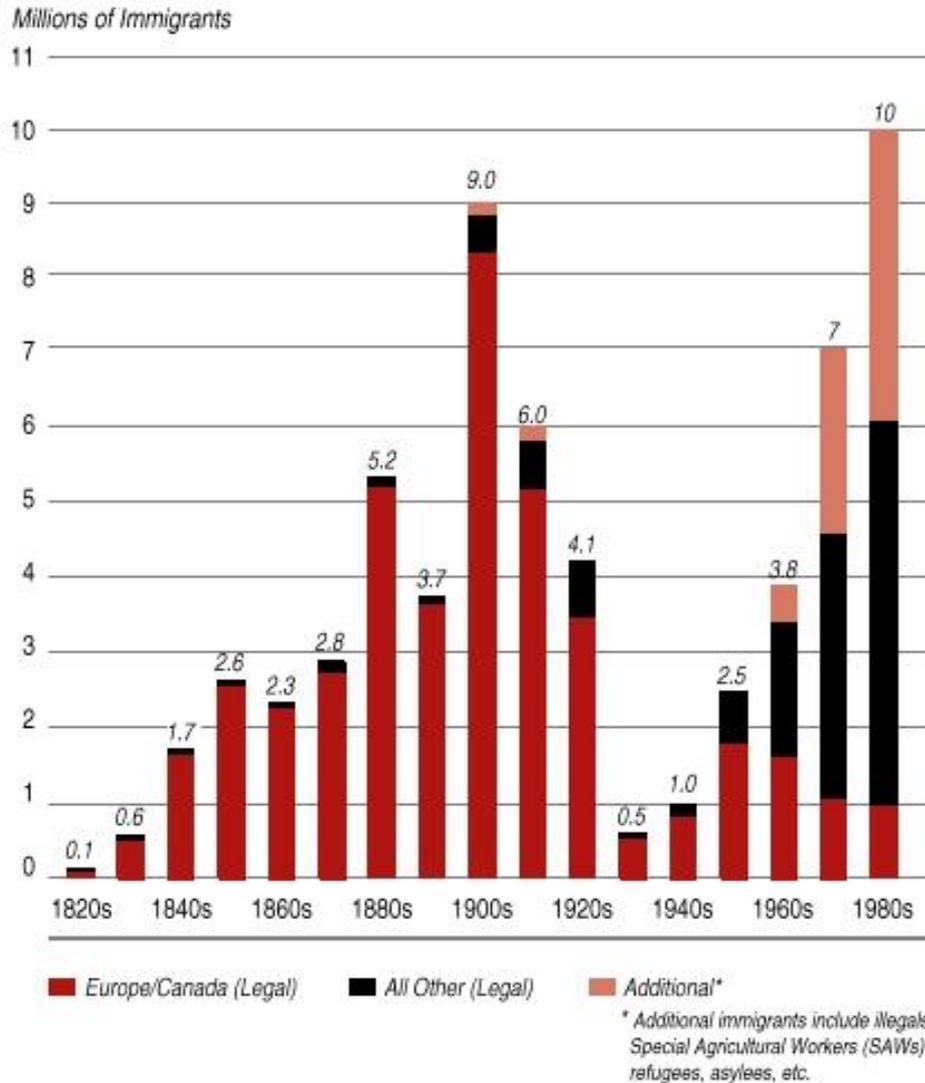
- Congressman Albert Johnson (R-Wa), 1927:
“Today, instead of a well-knit homogeneous citizenry, we have a body politic made up of all and every diverse element. Today, instead of a nation descended from generations of freemen bred to a knowledge of the principles and practice of self-government, of liberty under the law, we have a heterogeneous population no small proportion of which is sprung from races that, throughout the centuries, have known no liberty at all”

“The United States is our land.”



“In other words, our capacity to maintain our cherished institutions stands diluted by a stream of alien blood, with all its inherited misconceptions respecting the relationships of the governing power to the governed. . . . It is no wonder, therefore, that the myth of the melting pot has been discredited. . . . The United States is our land. . . . We intend to maintain it so. The day of unalloyed welcome to all peoples, the day of indiscriminate acceptance of all races, has definitely ended.”

Figure 1 Immigration to the U.S., by Decade, 1821–1830 through 1981–1990



Source: Urban Institute and Immigration and Naturalization Service estimates.

The Immigration Act of 1924 effectively restricted immigration to the U.S. until changes made through the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, and the Immigration Act of 1965, which repealed national origins quotas.

The Immigration Reform Act of 1986 further amended U.S. law, and provided amnesty for 3.1 undocumented immigrants.