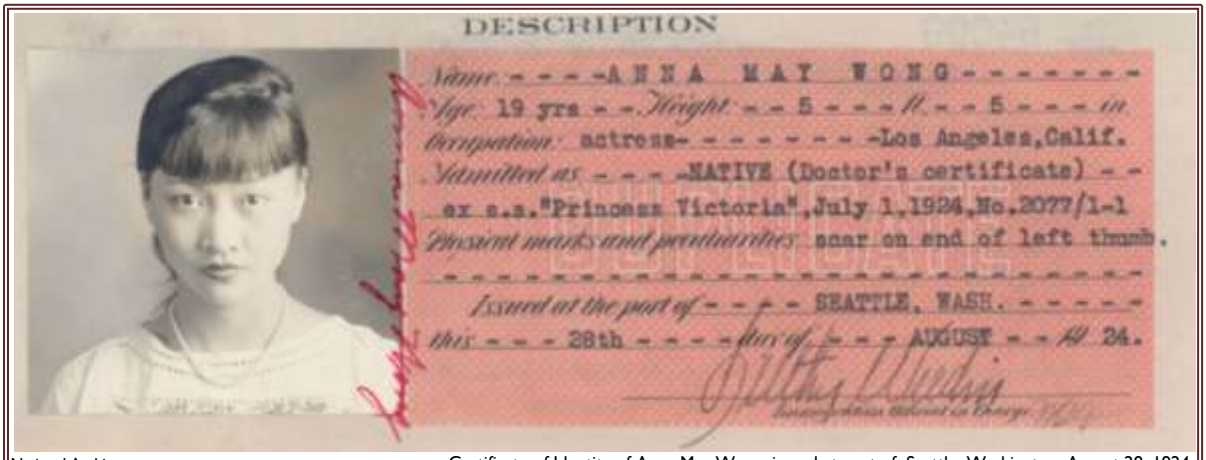
THE TWENTIES IN CONTEMPORARY COMMENTARY


DESCRIPTION

Name - - - - ANNA MAY WONG - - - - - - - -
Age 19 yrs - - Height - - 5 - - - ft. - - 5 - - - in
Occupation actress- - - - - - - - -Los Angeles,Calif.
Admitted as - - - - NATIVE (Doctor's certificate) - -
ex s.s."Princess Victoria",July 1,1924,No.2077/1-1
Present marks and peculiarities scar on end of left thumb.
- -
Issued at the port of - - - - SEATTLE, WASH. - - - - -
this - - - 28th - - - - day of - - - AUGUST - - 19 24.

National Archives — Certificate of Identity of Anna May Wong, issued at port of Seattle, Washington, August 28, 1924

— NATIVE & FOREIGN —

Inextricably linked in the Twenties' discussion of immigration, which led to the 1924 Immigration Restriction Act, were the postwar issues of national identity and "Americanism," heated by the growing support for eugenics and racial purity theories. To many, *native* meant not just "native-born," but "white Anglo-Saxon Protestant" with deep roots in British heritage. To others, *native* meant "American citizen," regardless of ancestry or nation of birth. These viewpoints, of course, implied quite different concepts of *foreign*. Foreigners threatened the nation: too many came without an understanding of democracy or a desire to assimilate. Foreigners strengthened the nation: they were the perennial source of American rejuvenation and progress. The clash of opinions put forth the question, How far should a nation go to preserve its native heritage? It depended on what you meant by *preserve*, *native*, and *heritage*. The debate was strident and divisive, as evident in this sampling of commentary.

A feminist and author of the well-known short story *The Yellow Wallpaper*, Gilman expressed the widely held perception that a widening and dangerous gap existed between the old *native* and the new *foreign*.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman "Is America Too Hospitable?" *The Forum*, October 1923

There is a question, sneeringly asked by the stranger within our gates: "What is an American?" The American, who knows he is one but has never thought of defining himself, is rather perplexed by the question. A simple answer is here suggested: "Americans are the kind of people who make a nation which every other nationality wants to get into." The sneering stranger then replies: "By no means. It is not your nation we admire—far from it! It is your great rich country we want to get into."

But Africa is a great rich country, too; why not go there? They do not wish to go there; the country is "undeveloped"; there are savages in it. True, but this country was undeveloped when we came here, and there were savages in it. Our swarming immigrants do not wish for a wilderness, nor for enemies. They like an established nation, with free education, free hospitals, free nursing, and more remunerative employment than they can find at home.

The amazing thing is the cheerful willingness with which the American people are giving up their country to other people, so rapidly that they are already reduced to a scant half of the population. No one is to blame but ourselves. The noble spirit of our founders, and their complete ignorance of sociology began the trouble. They honestly imagined that one kind of man was as good as another if he had the same opportunity—unless his color was different. Consequently they announced, with

more than royal magnificence, that this country was "an asylum for the poor and oppressed of all nations.". . .[1]

Never was a nation founded at so high a level of political idealism. However, there were three things our generous founders could not foresee: the development of steam manufacture, of steam transportation, and of colossal selfishness ready to sacrifice the good of the country to private profit. . . .

. . .[W]hen we scour Europe for "cheap labor," deliberately seeking poor citizens instead of good ones, baiting them with glowing advertisements, and arranging to be paid from the proceeds of their labor, the resultant flood of low-grade humanity is not immigration at all, but sheer importation, which should be dutiable [taxable]! . . .

We used fondly to take for granted that the incoming millions loved the country as we did, and felt eager to join it. Some of them do. Enormous numbers do not. It is quite true that we ourselves are a mixed race—as are all races today—and that we were once immigrants. All Americans have come from somewhere else. But all persons who come from somewhere else are not therefore Americans. . . .

The American people, as representing a group culture, brought with them from England and Holland and Scandinavia the demand for freedom and the capacity to get it. . . . [They] were able to add to their inherited tendencies a flexible progressiveness, an inventive ingenuity, a patience and broad kindliness of disposition which form a distinct national character. It is precisely this American character which is taken advantage of by the "poor and oppressed.". . .

The present-day idealists have two main grounds of appeal in their defense of unlimited immigration. One is the advantage to us of the special gifts of the imported stock, the other is the advantage to them of the benefits of democracy. This last may be promptly disposed of. Any people on earth who want a democracy and are able to carry it on, can have one at home. There is no power above them which can prevent it. But if they do not want a democracy, or are unable to carry it on, they are a heavy drawback to us. . . .

What is an American? The only kind of person on earth who invites all creation to crowd him out of house and home. And even he is beginning dimly to wonder if it is not time to withdraw the invitation.

[1] General George Washington, General Orders, April 18, 1783.

National Archives

The Twenties Presidents on IMMIGRATION

WARREN HARDING

State of the Union Address, December 8, 1922

There are pending bills for the registration of the alien who has come to our shores. I wish the passage of such an act might be expedited. Life amid American opportunities is worth the cost of registration if it is worth the seeking, and the nation has the right to know who are citizens in the making or who live among us and share our advantages while seeking to undermine our cherished institutions. This provision will enable us to guard against the abuses in immigration, checking the undesirable whose irregular willing is his first violation of our laws. More, it will facilitate the needed Americanizing of those who mean to enroll as fellow citizens.

Before enlarging the immigration quotas we had better provide registration for aliens, those now here or continually pressing for admission, and establish our examination boards abroad, to make sure of desirables only. By the examination abroad we could end the pathos at our ports, when men and women find our doors closed, after long voyages and wasted savings, because they are unfit for admission. It would be kindlier and safer to tell them before they embark.

Our program of admission and treatment of immigrants is very intimately related to the educational policy of the Republic. With illiteracy estimated at front two-tenths of one per cent to less than two per cent in ten of the foremost nations of Europe, it rivets our attention to it serious problem [sic] when we are reminded of a six per cent illiteracy in the United States. The figures are based on the test which defines an Illiterate as one having no schooling whatever. Remembering the wide freedom of our public schools with compulsory attendance in many states in the Union, one is convinced that much of our excessive illiteracy comes to us from abroad, and the education of the immigrant becomes [a] requisite to his Americanization. It must be done if he is fittingly to exercise the duties as well as enjoy the privileges of American citizenship. Here is revealed the special field for federal cooperation in furthering education.

John E. Milholland
"Immigration Hysteria in Congress"
The Forum, January 1921

Milholland was an Irish-American newspaperman and treasurer of the NAACP. In May 1921, Congress passed the first immigration restriction law in U.S. history.

For the first time in the history of this immigrant nation, it has been decided by the Federal House of representatives that, with three hundred years' wonderful experience behind us, we must go out of the Immigration business entirely.

A momentous step has been taken. And it was taken in haste. Much in fact suggestive of a stampede marred the proceedings. In portions of the debate, conditions of mind bordering on panic were reflected. To be sure, a certain amount of spontaneity was evidenced, but behind it all the familiar work of propaganda and prearrangement was distinctly visible, as it has been for years. Calm consideration was almost overwhelmed by vociferous demand and excited speech until methods prevailed that shocked the veteran members of a government that is supposed to represent deliberate action, an appeal to reason and a reasoning from sufficient data. . . .

Viewed in the light of actual statistics—and all these figures are taken from the official reports of the Government —the tide of immigration is certainly running very much below that of former prewar years. Considered in the light of what was predicted would happen immediately after the close of the World War, they are ridiculously small. In justification of such a drastic piece of legislation . . . it is enough to make the intelligent citizen rub his eyes in astonishment and wonder what all the fuss is about. It is a teapot tempest, . . .

Why is it among all the great questions that press upon us for solution, that of immigration is the one over which the American people become so easily excited? Immigrants ourselves, we should understand it fully, or at least consider it sympathetically, but we don't and in consequence even sensible legislators go into hysterics at certain frequently recurring intervals.

The solution of the immigration problem is summed up in one word—Distribution. Had we given as much time to this simple solution of the question as we have to discussing the evils or dangers that are supposed to lie in its wake, we would be free from all apprehension on the subject. All our troubles over the foreigner here are due to the disregard of this experience-born injunction. It accounts for all the racial troubles that California and other Pacific coast states have had over the Japanese and Chinese. If that contingent of Chinese, mostly of the coolie type, that came from Canton, Peking, and the other big Chinese cities about half a century ago, had been judiciously scattered throughout the country instead of being permitted to settle down in San Francisco, they never would have become such a disturbing factor in the situation. . . .

From East to West, the cry of every farmer, every contractor and employer is for labor—labor to sow and to reap and to gather into barns, labor for the public works, the [machine] shops, and for a thousand other forms of our activity. This labor must be found somewhere. . . . People must be fed. Crops must be raised. . . . Andrew Carnegie once said that every immigrant was worth $5000 to the country. Checking immigration is a menace to prosperity.

PREDICTS A RECORD IMMIGRATION RUSH

Caminetti Tells Senators It Is Due Before July 1, Unless Barred by Law.

SENATE HEARINGS CLOSED

Chairman Colt Thinks House Bill Will Be Radically Amended by His Committee.

The New York Times, Jan. 27, 1921

TREASURY DECRIES IMMIGRATION BAN

Reports Embargo at This Time Would Be "Unwarranted and Exceedingly Harmful."

REVIEWS FEDERAL PROGRAM

Message to Copeland Says Measures Taken to Keep Out Typhus Should Be Sufficient.

The New York Times, Feb. 23, 1921

NEW IMMIGRATION LAW NOW IN EFFECT

Number Permitted to Enter Limited to 3 Per Cent. of Various Nationals Here.

DEPORTATION FOR SURPLUS

When Quota for Month Is Reached Those Who Arrive Cannot Be "Passed"—Total for Year 77,206.

The New York Times, June 3, 1921

EUGENISTS DREAD TAINTED ALIENS

Believe Immigration Restriction Essential to Prevent Deterioration of Race Here.

MELTING POT FALSE THEORY

Racial Mixture Liable to Lower the Quality of the Stock—Prof. Osborn's Views.

The New York Times, Sept. 25, 1921

Langdon Mitchell
"The New Secession"
The Atlantic Monthly
August 1926

A noted playwright and poet, Mitchell wrote numerous essays of social and political commentary.

We are no longer a homogeneous people. There are some fourteen millions of foreign-born among us, whose ideals are not ours. When we seek to Americanize them, they tell us in their foreign tongues that the country is as much theirs as ours, and that they propose to remain themselves, to remain European, and even to Europeanize our social, moral, and political state of affairs. When we protest, these people accuse us of intolerance. And they are not beside the mark in doing so, for clearly we do not tolerate them as they are. But, on the other hand—a thing not so often mentioned —they do not tolerate us: our literature, art, morals, habits of life, our ideals, religion, traditions, and the Republic we have created. There is no mistaking their feelings in the matter, for they tell us in plain words, in editorials, in books, in plays, in political addresses, that they don't like us and our ways. We reply in as plain. And, as I have indicated, this growth of mutual intolerance has come about because our fundamental ideals are at variance.

To cover the whole immense and complicated state of affairs with a word, we are no longer "like-minded." And this, I take it, is the gravest mischance which can befall a people. Hence, and quite inevitably, the spirit of extremism, of unrest, of dissension, of dislocation, which, under a calm surface, is continually in evidence.

These various foreign races, often greatly gifted, and gifted in ways other than our own—peoples, therefore, that we like, or certainly admire—have really created, in their mass, a spirit which is in no wise different from the spirit of Secession. They are here; they are with us; we have one State and one Fate; but they have seceded in spirit, and they think it as right and reasonable as did John C. Calhoun.

National Archives

The Twenties Presidents on IMMIGRATION

CALVIN COOLIDGE

State of the Union Address, December 6, 1923

American institutions rest solely on good citizenship. They were created by people who had a background of self-government. New arrivals should be limited to our capacity to absorb them into the ranks of good citizenship. America must be kept American. For this purpose, it is necessary to continue a policy of restricted immigration. It would be well to make such immigration of a selective nature with some inspection at the source, and based either on a prior census or upon the record of naturalization. Either method would insure the admission of those with the largest capacity and best intention of becoming citizens. I am convinced that our present economic and social conditions warrant a limitation of those to be admitted. We should find additional safety in a law requiring the immediate registration of all aliens. Those who do not want to be partakers of the American spirit ought not to settle in America.

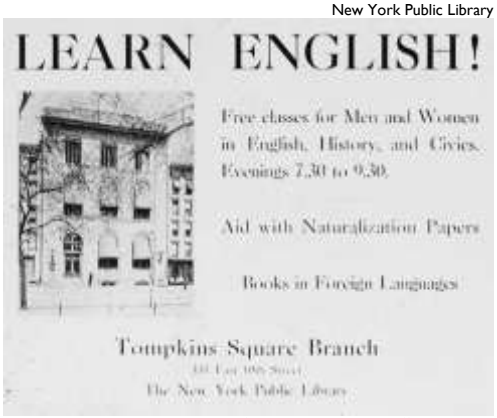
State of the Union Address, December 8, 1925

While not enough time has elapsed to afford a conclusive demonstration, such results as have been secured indicate that our immigration law is on the whole beneficial. It is undoubtedly a protection to the wage earners of this country. The situation should however, be carefully surveyed, in order to ascertain whether it is working a needless hardship upon our own inhabitants. If it deprives them of the comfort and society of those bound to them by close family ties, such modifications should be adopted as will afford relief, always in accordance with the principle that our Government owes its first duty to our own people and that no alien, inhabitant of another country, has any legal rights whatever under our Constitution and laws. It is only through treaty, or through residence here that such rights accrue. But we should not, however, be forgetful of the obligations of a common humanity.

While our country numbers among its best citizens many of those of foreign birth, yet those who now enter in violation of our laws by that very act thereby place themselves in a class of undesirables. Investigation reveals that any considerable number are coming here in defiance of our immigration restrictions, it will undoubtedly create the necessity for the registration of all aliens. We ought to have no prejudice against an alien because he is an alien. The standard which we apply to our inhabitants is that of manhood, not place of birth. Restrictive immigration is to a large degree for economic purposes. It is applied in order that we may not have a larger annual increment of good people within our borders than we can weave into our economic fabric in such a way as to supply their needs without undue injury to ourselves.

Frederic C. Howe, "The Alien," in H. E. Stearns, ed., *Civilization in the United States: An Inquiry by Thirty Americans*, 1922

New York Public Library



Posters promoting free English classes offered at the Tompkins Square Library in Manhattan's Lower East Side, 1920

Hungarian

Italian

Polish

Yiddish

As an immigration official I presided over Ellis Island for five years. During this time probably a million immigrants arrived at the port of New York. They were for the most part poor. They had that in common with the early immigrant. They had other qualities in common. They were ambitious and filled with hope. They were for the most part kindly and moved by the same human and domestic virtues as other peoples. And it is to me an open question whether the "new immigration," if given a virgin continent, and the hope and stimulus which springs from such opportunity, would not develop the same qualities of mind and of character that we assume to be the more or less exclusive characteristics of the Anglo-Saxon race. . . . For it is to be remembered that it was not political liberty, religious liberty, or personal liberty that changed the early immigrant of Northern Europe into the American of today. His qualities were born of economic conditions, of a free continent, of land to be had for the asking, of equal opportunity with his fellows to make his life what he would have it to be. The old immigrant recognized no master but himself. He was the equal of his neighbors in every respect. He knew no inferiority complex born of a servile relationship. It was this rather than our constitutions and laws that made the American of the first three centuries what he was. It was this alchemy that changed the serf of Northern Europe into the self-reliant freeman of America.

The immigration problem was born when this early economic opportunity came to an end. When the free land was all gone, the immigrant had to work for somebody else. He went to the mines and the city tenement not from the choice but from necessity. He took the first job that offered. When established he sent for his brother, his neighbor, or his friend. He, too, went to the mining camp or the slum. Colonies appeared. The alien became segregated. He lived by himself. And he developed the qualities that would be developed by any race under similar conditions. He, too, feared. . . . To him government meant a policeman, a health officer, and an immigration inspector—all agencies to be feared. He slowly learned to unionize. He came to understand group action. He found in his craft organization the only protection against the employers, and in the political boss the only protection against agencies that interfered with his personal and domestic life. The immigrant soon learned that our immigration laws were shaped by economic motives. He learned that he was in danger of being deported if he did not work. . . . So the immigrant feels and justly feels that what we want of him is to work, to work for someone else, and to accept what is offered and be content.

Rep. Albert Johnson [Republican, Washington] "The Coming Immigration Law" *Outlook*, January 23, 1924

Chairman of the House Committee on Immigration, Johnson wrote the immigration restriction bill that was passed by the House in April 1924, and one month later passed by the Senate and signed into law by Pres. Coolidge.


NEED OF ALIEN LABOR SHOWN

Spokesmen for Fourteen Industries Make Plea

Relaxing of Immigration Barrier Requested

Delegation Puts in Word for Colt Measure

Los Angeles Times, Feb. 22, 1923


SEEK TO STEM ALIEN DELUGE

House Soon Will Consider Immigration Bill

Flood of Foreigners Sure if Bars Let Down

Increase Restrictions to Hold Off Orientals

Los Angeles Times, Feb. 10, 1924

"We'll Tell the World," *Los Angeles Times*, April 15, 1924

The Outline of a Policy

I believe that the majority of the people of the United States, including even those of alien birth, have come to a very firm conclusion with respect to immigration. They think, and the majority of the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization agrees, I believe, that—

1. Immigrants shall never again come to the United States as mere commodities in the labor scheme.
2. That the name melting-pot is a misnomer and that the asylum idea is played out forever.
3. That the countries of the world shall no longer dump upon the United States their criminals, their feeble, their aged, and their undesirables.
4. That if we are to clean house and provide those guarantees for every last alien now within our borders, each one of whom is included in those magnificent words which begin the first sentence of the Preamble to the Constitution, "We the people of the United States," that we should, as far as possible, admit the husbands or wives, minor unmarried children, fathers and mothers, and even grandfathers and grandmothers, of those aliens now here, but decline to admit other dependents in any number under any quota scheme from any country; as a matter of fact, eighty-five percent of all immigrants who have come to the United States in the past ten years have come to relatives, and for the last fiscal year ninety-eight percent of all immigrants who came from Poland came to relatives, nearly all supplied with money furnished by these relatives; and although a very large number started without money and arrived without money, they were able within three weeks to find the money to send for more relatives.
5. That in order to prevent the growth of racial hatred, with its accompanying religious differences, it is highly desirable to keep out from the United States as many new arrivals as possible until we have thoroughly cleaned house.
6. That the United States should not continue to admit for permanent residence within its borders those who are, under the law, ineligible to citizenship, and that sooner or later the United States must amend its Constitution so as to deny citizenship to those born here whose parents were ineligible to citizenship.

"Preaches Sermon on Immigration in Poem of 38 Stanzas"
The Washington Post, July 15, 1923

From an Irish Catholic immigrant family, Terence V. Powderly had led the Knights of Labor in the late 1800s. From 1907 to 1921 he directed the Division of Information of the U.S. Bureau of Immigration, and in 1923 served on its review board.

Seeking to impress upon Americans the necessity for improved immigration laws that will regulate the tide of immigration at its source, T. V. Powderly, a member of the Department of Labor's board of review, has resorted to poetry.

The board of review is the last court to which an alien deportation case is taken. As a member of the board, Mr. Powderly has been enabled to study at close quarters problems facing American immigration authorities. He has compiled 38 stanzas of verse telling situations it must face and decisions it must make in accordance with prevailing laws. A few excerpts follow:

A man from old Scotland
Strong-bodied, clear-brained,
Comes with all the wealth
That his labor has gained—
Of the right kind of spirit
And good will there's no lack,
But the man cannot read,
And we must send him back.

A man from the Volga
Stands next in the line,
In appearance a villain
But his manners are fine.
In a language unknown
To me or to you,
He reads, and is passed
By the Board of Review

For such is the law
That stands as our guide,
And we cannot bend it
Or set it aside.
We must bar out the man
Who is illiterate
And admit one who reads,
Though his heart's full of hate.

American tourists,
Much money, less brains,
Travel through Europe
On profiteer gains:
Hear stories of pillage
And murder and rape:
They list[en] with ears open
And mouth all agape.

Then they grow maudlin
Over stories they're told,
They select a few orphans,
Some young and some old.
They pay their way over
On some sea-going "bus"
In defiance of law
They are loaded on us.

America's claim
To the world's leadership
May lose its strength,
It may weaken and slip.
If we give all out time
To those we reject
And pay little heed
To the minds we select.

Don't you see that the man
Who comes here selects us?
And that is what causes
Our worries and fuss.
Our selection of aliens
Should begin oversea
And not when they enter
This land of the free.

National Archives

The Twenties Presidents on IMMIGRATION

HERBERT HOOVER

State of the Union Address, Dec. 2, 1930

There is need for revision of our immigration laws upon a more limited and more selective basis, flexible to the needs of the country.

Under conditions of current unemployment it is obvious that persons coming to the United States seeking work would likely become either a direct or indirect public charge. As a temporary measure the officers issuing visas to immigrants have been, in pursuance of the law, instructed to refuse visas to applicants likely to fall into this class. As a result the visas issued have decreased from an average of about 24,000 per month prior to restrictions to a rate of about 7,000 during the last month. These are largely preferred persons under the law. Visas from Mexico are about 250 per month compared to about 4,000 previous to restrictions. The whole subject requires exhaustive reconsideration.

I urge the strengthening of our deportation laws so as to more fully rid ourselves of criminal aliens. Furthermore, thousands of persons have entered the country in violation of the immigration laws. The very method of their entry indicates their objectionable character, and our law-abiding foreign-born residents suffer in consequence. I recommend that the Congress provide methods of strengthening the Government to correct this abuse.

Lothrop Stoddard
The Rising Tide of Color Against White World Supremacy, 1920

A historian and prolific writer, Stoddard was one of the leading proponents of eugenics and white racial supremacy of his time, later visiting Nazi Germany and praising the its eugenics policies.

[E]ven under even the most favorable circumstances, we are in for generations of racial readjustment—an immense travail [project/challenge], essentially needless, since the final product will probably not measure up to the colonial standard. We will probably never (unless we adopt positive eugenic measures) be the race we might have been if America had been reserved for the descendants of the picked Nordics of colonial times.

But that is no reason for folding our hands in despairing inaction. On the contrary, we should be up and doing, for though some of our race-heritage has been lost, more yet remains. We can still be a very great people—if we will it so. Heaven be praised, the colonial stock was immensely prolific before the alien tide wrought its sterilizing havoc. Even today nearly one-half of our population is of the old blood, while many millions of the immigrant stock are sound in quality and assimilable in kind. Only—the immigrant tide must at all costs be stopped and America given a chance to stabilize her ethnic being.

One fact should be clearly understood: If America is not true to her own race-soul, she will inevitably lose it, and the brightest star that has appeared since Hellas [ancient Greece] will fall like a meteor from the human sky, its brilliant radiance fading into the night.

F. Scott Fitzgerald
The Great Gatsby
Novel, 1925

In Fitzgerald's classic novel of postwar America, young Tom Buchanan readily adopts racist ideology and encourages his wife Daisy, her friend Jordan Baker, and the narrator Nick Carraway to read the latest bestseller on the topic—a thinly disguised *Rising Tide of Color* by Stoddard.

"Civilization's going to pieces," broke out Tom violently. "I've gotten to be a terrible pessimist about things. Have you read *The Rise of the Colored Empires* by this man Goddard?"

"Why, no," I answered, rather surprised by his tone.

"Well, it's a fine book, and everybody ought to read it. The idea is if we don't look out the white race will be—will be utterly submerged. It's all scientific stuff; it's been proved."

"Tom's getting very profound," said Daisy, with an expression of unthoughtful sadness.

"He reads deep books with long words in them. What was that word we—"

"Well these books are all scientific," insisted Tom, glancing at her impatiently. "This fellow has worked out the whole thing. It's up to us, who are the dominant race, to watch out or these other races will have control of things."

"We've got to beat them down," whispered Daisy, winking ferociously toward the fervent sun.

"You ought to live in California—" began Miss Baker, but Tom interrupted her by shifting heavily in his chair.

"This idea is that we're Nordics. I am, and you are, and you are, and——" After an infinitesimal hesitation he included Daisy with a slight nod, and she winked at me again. "—And we've produced all the things that go to make civilization—oh, science and art, and all that. Do you see?"

Lothrop Stoddard
Re-Forging America: The Story of Our Nationhood, 1927

However, we know enough about present-day America to realize that it differs from the America of 1914 fully as much as the America of 1870 did from America before the Civil War. Happily, while the America of 1870 had changed for the worse, our America of today is vastly improved. Indeed, not since the nation's youthful days before 1850 have America's prospects been so bright as they are right now. We have already seen that the Immigration Restriction Act of 1924 marks the second great turning point in our national life. And we must remember that this momentous event was no chance happening, but was rather the deliberate enactment of the national will; the decision of an enlightened national consciousness which will endure. . . . .

. . . Now that the gates are closed to the alien flood, America can stabilize its national life and can steadily re-forge its racial and cultural unity. Slowly but surely, we will become again what we once were—an essentially homogeneous, like-minded people.

"America for the Americans"

MADISON GRANT

Eugenics proponent

The Forum, September 1925 [excerpts]

America, like all other nations, must consider immigration and its limitation solely from her own standpoint. Her first duty is to herself and to the people already here. No obligation or duty whatever in this connection is owing to anyone else. Whether or not we should admit any individual or racial group is a matter to be determined solely by the interest and welfare of Americans. Such is the national viewpoint.

The international viewpoint is that America should share its prosperity and the wealth of its citizens with the world at large and should admit anyone who desires to come here. . . .

The aliens in our midst are not assimilated as it was fatuously believed would be the case a few decades ago, when the "Myth of the Melting Pot" was enthusiastically accepted and welcomed. Recent discussions in the press have brought out clearly the fact that those who are alien in race and religion have not amalgamated with the native population. They largely marry among themselves, maintain their religions and customs, and retain their foreign connections and sympathies almost without abatement. . . .

We might as well recognize the fact once for all that, with the exception of individuals, the great mass of our foreigners remain foreign and will so remain as long as we allow them to recruit their numbers from abroad. . . .

Whether the foreigners remain in separate colonies, or whether they ultimately amalgamate with the stock of the native Americans [i.e., non-immigrants], the result will be a disharmonious community in the first case, or disharmonious individuals in the second case, all of which will prevent the natural development and free expansion of our national culture, which, after all, whether it be good or bad, is ours and belongs to us alone. . . .

Our form of government is based on the Constitution of the United States and *not* on the Declaration of Independence. It was fixed and settled more than a hundred years ago, and the principles formulated at the time of its foundation are far older, extending back throughout English history. Our institutions are Anglo-Saxon and can only be maintained by Anglo-Saxons and by other Nordic peoples in sympathy with our culture.

"This Nordic Nonsense"

FRANZ BOAS

Anthropologist, Columbia University

The Forum, October 1925 [excerpts]

When the agitation for restriction of immigration set in, it was based entirely on economic considerations. The first laws were passed under the pressure of the labor element, as a means of protecting the wages of the American workman against cheap European competition.

In course of time the point of view has changed considerably. The idea of the racial superiority of the "Nordic," or in other words of the Northwest European, combined with eugenic propaganda, has brought it about that we are possessed by the fear of being swamped by a people of inferior physical and mental endowment, and that immigration of southern and eastern Europeans will result in the degeneracy of our nation and the development of an inferior stock.

In consequence of this change in attitude, the recent laws regulating immigration discriminate, not in words, but in fact, against all people that are not considered as representatives of the "Nordic" type.

Boas reviews data on "racial types," intermixture of European groups, individual differences within groups, and the amalgamation, intermarriage, and fertility rates of immigrants in the U.S.

Notwithstanding all the criticisms that may be made against the data we have in hand, the unbiased observer will see that everywhere the process of amalgamation is proceeding rapidly, and that the dangers which are supposed to exist from a biological point of view are purely imaginary.

Whatever protective measures may seem commendable from an economic viewpoint, the only restriction of immigration that can be defended from a biological or sociological point of view is one based on the health of the family lines of the immigrants. Nationality is absolutely irrelevant. The fear of continued segregation of European national groups is not founded on facts, but on vague impressions obtained from the massing of immigrants in congested city quarters. It does not take into consideration the dispersion of the second and third generation, who become so thoroughly Americanized that in many cases it is quite impossible to obtain exact information in regard to the provenience of individuals. The social resistance to Americanizing influences is so weak that it may rather be regretted that we profit so little from the cultural heritage of the immigrants than that we should fear their modifying influence upon American thought and sentiment.

Alma White
Heroes of the Fiery Cross
1928

Founder of the Pillar of Fire Church in Denver, Alma White was a strong supporter of the anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic views of the Ku Klux Klan.

Pillars of Fire Church

White, *Heroes of the Fiery Cross*, 1928

In the past twenty-five years an innumerable host has crossed the ocean in the steerage quarters of the great, trans-Atlantic steamships, and landed on our shores, making America the dumping ground for every class of criminals and other undesirables. They have come out from old religious and political dynasties, as truly pagan as those of India and China, where the heathen in their blindness and superstition bow down to gods of wood and stone.

What respect have these persons for our laws? or what appreciation for the great achievements wrought out by the hands of toil and sacrifice? They have taken advantage of our hospitality, monopolized our American industries, and carried the spoils back across the seas. In some places—of which New York is a good example—under the leadership of corrupt politicians they have captured the government and subsidized it to their own purposes. Such persons are only waiting for the opportunity to substitute the green, yellow, or red flag for the Stars and Stripes.

Hiram Wesley Evans
"The Klan's Fight for Americanism"
The North American Review, March 1926

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Publication of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, cover image, 1924

And we deny that either bigotry or prejudice enters into our intolerance or our narrowness. We are intolerant of everything that strikes at the foundations of our race, our country, or our freedom of worship. We are narrowly opposed to the use of anything alien—race, loyalty to any foreign power or to any religion whatever—as a means to win political power. We are prejudiced against any attempt to use the privileges and opportunities which aliens hold only through our generosity as levers to force us to change our civilization, to wrest from us control of our own country, to exploit us for the benefit of any foreign power—religious or secular—and especially to use America as a tool or cat's-paw for the advantage of any side in the hatreds and quarrels of the Old World. This is our intolerance; based on the sound instincts which have saved us many times from the follies of the intellectuals. We admit it. More and worse, we are proud of it.

W. E. B. Du Bois
"The Shape of Fear"
The North American Review
June 1926

What is the cause of all this? There can be little doubt but that the Klan in its present form is a legacy of the World War. Whatever there was of it before that great catastrophe was negligible and of little moment. The wages of War is Hate; and the End, and indeed the Beginning, of Hate is Fear. The civilized world today and the world half-civilized and uncivilized are desperately afraid. The Shape of Fear looms over them. Germany fears the Jew, England fears the Indian; America fears the Negro, the Christian fears the Moslem, Europe fears Asia, Protestant fears Catholic, Religion fears Science. Above all, Wealth fears Democracy. These fears and others are ancient or at least longstanding fears. But they are renewed and revivified today because the world has at present a severe case of nerves; it feels it necessary to be nervous because the Unexpected has happened.

Anzia Yezierska
All I Could Never Be
Novel, 1932

Anzia Yezierska was a Polish Jewish immigrant who arrived in America as a child with her family about 1890. A prolific writer of the immigrant experience, she is most well known for her short story collection *Hungry Hearts* (1920) and novel *Bread Givers* (1925). In this scene from her 1932 semi-autobiographical novel, the young immigrant Fanya visits a sympathetic professor who plans a sociological study of Polish immigrants.

"Didn't you say in the paper that America was coming to be a meeting ground of all the peoples of the earth?" Her voice took on a sharp, shrill note of doubt. "I wonder—Where do we meet? How do we meet?"

He leaned toward her from his chair, holding her still with the steady gaze of his grey-blue eyes.

"Our whole history is one of assimilation. We began as Anglo-Saxons. And look at our country now! Jews, Italians, Poles—all the nations of the world are weaving themselves into this interracial symphony."

Deep lines knotted her forehead. There rose before her the thwarted, inarticulate, starved lives she knew in the factory. Crowded blocks of Poles, Jews, Italians who had lost their own national heritage and had not gained a true American one. Islands of foreign-born who remained shut out of America, shut out from one another, behind the barrier of their racial differences.

"Symphony of nations!" she reiterated his words in emphatic denial. "If you knew the rumble of discord, the jarring and clashing of nationalities that really goes on! Who cares for the culture immigrants bring with them? They may sell the labor of their bodies. But how many get the chance to give to America the hopes in their hearts, the dreams of their minds?"

"What about Michael Pupin, Edward Bok, Steinmetz?"

"What about the countless millions who remain hands for the machines? Fodder for mills and mines?"

"For those who are ambitious, there are free night schools," he countered, calmly.

"Yes. Night schools—after a long day's toil. We foreigners are the orphans, the stepchildren of America. The old world is dead behind us, and the new world—about which we dreamed and about which you lectured to us—is not yet born."

Michael Pupin: Serbian immigrant who arrived in the U.S. in 1874 at age sixteen; became a physicist whose innovations improved telephone communications. Memoir: *From Immigrant to Inventor*, 1924.

Edward Bok: Dutch immigrant who arrived in the U.S. in 1869 at age six; became an influential editor, including of the *Ladies Home Journal*. Bestselling memoir: *The Americanization of Edward Bok*, 1920.

Charles Steinmetz: German immigrant who arrived in the U.S. in 1888 at age thirty-three; became an innovative electrical engineer with General Electric.

He leaned back, looking at the ceiling, deeply thoughtful. Then he turned his gaze back at her as though seeing through her and beyond her.

"It's too bad that there should be this sense of barrier," he observed. "Certainly Americans are not conscious of causing it. Isn't it possible that the barriers you feel are to some extent in your own mind?"

"What do you mean?"

"Those barriers would cease to exist if you could be made to see that they do not exist. There's a story of a man who thought he heard a wolf scraping at his door. Terror gripped his heart and he died."

He paused, waiting for her to speak, but she was examining the old bitter grudge from the new perspective he opened. The whole picture of the way the immigrant built up a barrier of imagined insult and injury against America rose before her eyes. Jews lived in fear of persecution they had suffered in times past. And Gentiles resented what past persecution had made of Jews. She remembered the time when as a child she was turned out of her aunt's house because she was dirty. Ever since then, she had lived in fear of clean people. Cleanliness had come to mean to her heartlessness. And yet she knew there must be clean people in this world who were also human.

"It's the fear in us that kills us," she said, thinking aloud. "No wonder they say the fear of losing a job is worse than being without a job."

He turned to her with a look that made her aware of something special and rare in herself.

"I wonder whether I am as ready to learn from you as you are from me?"

She laughed freely, gaily. He made her feel that she knew more than she thought she knew.

"What have I to teach you? I have so much to learn."

He smiled down at her. Fanya marveled at the sudden release that filled the moment so completely—she could be so still. It was as though Henry Scott had touched her with his quieting hands and breathed over her his calm.

There was a sense of wide, unshadowed brightness about her as he shook hands at the door. Twice he had unbound her from the prison of her thoughts—by letting her talk, and by talking to her in his silence.