

Turn of the Century Immigration

What was it like to be an immigrant to the US during the early 1900s?

Why Europeans Immigrated to the US

- **New European immigrants** = Italians, Greeks, Hungarians, Poles, Russians
- **Push Factors** (reasons for leaving country)
 - Population Growth
 - Hunger
 - Lack of land
 - Religious persecution
- **Pull Factors** (reasons for coming to US)
 - Free, democratic society
 - Land and natural resources
 - Jobs for unskilled workers
 - Letters from other immigrants already in US



Ellis Island

- Rich immigrants → easily entered US through NY
- **Poorer immigrants → had to go through Ellis Island**
 - Medical Exam: poor health could lead to deportation
 - Legal Interview: demographic questions
 - However, only about 2% of all immigrants were deported
- **Most jobs were in cities → city pop. exploded**
- Most immigrants lived in cheapest parts of cities that were run down
- Most immigrants lived with others from their home countries
 - Led to segregated neighborhoods



Responses to New European Immigrants

- Some offered help
 - Settlement houses provided aid for struggling immigrants
 - Political bosses provided jobs in exchanges for votes
- Some wanted assimilation
 - Wanted immigrants to adopt American values
- Some rejected them
 - **Nativism: favor native-born Americans over immigrants**
 - Blamed immigrants for lack of jobs, lowering wages
 - **1920s, Congress started passing quota laws (limiting # of immigrants from each country)**



Immigration from Asia

- **Chinese immigrants**
 - Built railroads, searched for gold in CA, farm labor in Hawaii and CA
- **Chinese Exclusion Act (1882)**
 - Economic downturn caused Americans to blame Chinese workers for low wages
 - Racism was prevalent
 - 1st time US restricted immigration solely on race
 - Caused shortage of farm labor → more immigrants from Japan, Korea, Philippines
- **Angel Island**
 - “Ellis Island of the West”



Immigration from Mexico & Canada

- Restrictions on Asian immigration caused farm labor shortage in West
- **Mexican immigration**
 - Came to work farmland, escape poverty, war (Mexican Rev. 1910)
 - Experienced racism from white Americans
- **French-Canadian immigration**
 - Came to work in textile factories in New England states
 - Were accused of not wanting to Americanize

