

amnesty A one-time program to allow illegal aliens residing in the United States since January 1, 1982, or those who worked in agriculture for specified periods, to apply for legal temporary status. They had the opportunity to adjust to permanent resident alien status if they had none of the usual bars to becoming immigrants and, in addition, demonstrated knowledge of English and American civics.

assimilability The purported ability of ethnic groups to be absorbed into American society. It is presumed that, depending on how similar the basic values and world view of a culture are to American culture, persons from some cultural backgrounds can more easily adjust to and adopt an American way of life. The concept overlooks individual capacities, experiences and desires. The nature of the cultural background is presumed so strong that persons from some cultures ought to be banned or hindered from migrating.

asylee A person already in the United States who requests to be given a safe haven and permitted to stay in the United States.

Border Patrol Established in 1924, the Border Patrol is part of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) of the Department of Justice. The Border Patrol guards the land borders, inspects people entering the United States at border entry points and cooperates with other agencies (e.g., the Customs Service, Drug Enforcement Agency, Public Health Service, United States Department of Agriculture) in enforcing American laws affecting the border. INS inspectors, who are not Border Patrol agents, usually inspect airline passengers at United States international airports.

bracero program Begun as a wartime measure in 1942 to secure labor to harvest crops, the program continued by executive agreement until 1952 when Congress enacted Public Law 78 to control the terms of the program. P.L. 78 was in effect until 1964 when Congress, under pressure from religious and civil rights groups, farm workers' unions and others, failed to renew the act, thus terminating the program. As many as 400,000 workers per year were admitted for seasonal agricultural labor. Many dropped out of the migrant stream, however. Operation Wetback in 1953–1954 (see next page) led to the expulsion of about two million persons. Widely criticized, the *bracero* program and conditions of migrant workers were the subjects of Edward R. Murrow's widely acclaimed documentary, "Harvest of Shame."

Dillingham Commission A congressional commission (1907 to 1911) mandated to study the immigration issue. With a staff highly biased toward Anglo-Saxon superiority and similar genetic and racial theories, the commission issued 42 volumes of reports with a plethora of studies and statistics generally supporting the view that immigrants were inferior to American-born citizens and that the traditionally dominant ethnic groups were superior "races." The "new immigrants," eastern and southern Europeans and African Americans, were generally presented as intellectually and morally inferior in achievement and behavior.

employer sanctions Penalties for hiring illegal aliens or for failing to complete forms on employees' eligibility to work. The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 made it illegal for an American employer to hire a person not authorized to work, i.e., someone who was not a citizen, a permanent resident alien, a temporary visa holder with work authorization or someone waiting for an immigration decision who had permission to work — an applicant for asylum waiting for a decision on his or her case, for example. Any employer who knowingly hires someone unauthorized to work or fails to inspect documents and complete the proper form attesting that the employer inspected the required documents presented by the employee is liable for civil and even criminal penalties of fines and imprisonment.

Gentlemen's Agreement In 1907 President Theodore Roosevelt reached an agreement with Japan that the United States would not formally bar Japanese immigrants to the United States (as was done with Chinese) but Japanese authorities would limit emigration to the United States, with some minor exceptions of scholars, business people and students. Congress in effect abrogated the agreement by barring Asian immigration in 1917.

illegal alien Technically a person who has (1) surreptitiously entered the United States without inspection by the Immigration and Naturalization Service; (2) entered the United States legally, e.g., as a visitor who stayed beyond the expiration of a temporary visa; or (3) violated the terms of a temporary visa, e.g., taking employment. The first group is referred to as EWIs, entry without inspection; the second, visa overstayers; and the third, visa abusers. All three are technically deportable.

Know-Nothings Popular name for members of the American Party. The party was opposed to immigration, and members reportedly took oaths not to vote for or hire foreigners. When asked of these secret requirements of membership, the adherents said that they knew nothing. The American Party was quite successful at the polls in the 1850s, especially in state legislatures. Their appeal and power dramatically declined with the onset of the Civil War.

labor certification Introduced in the 1965 Immigration Act, it requires third, sixth and nonpreference visa applicants (see Table 7, page 21) to have the employer apply to the Department of Labor to certify that no American workers are available at prevailing wages and conditions, and that hiring an immigrant would not lower prevailing wages or conditions. Employers must show good-faith efforts to recruit workers and provide other documentation of wages and working conditions. The process and requirements are highly bureaucratic and legalistic and have been the subject of numerous court cases.

legalization See amnesty.

literacy test The requirement that a person read and write in some language in order to be admitted to the United States. This was the major mechanism promoted by restrictionists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to reduce immigration and to enhance its “quality.” It was aimed primarily at peasants from Italy, the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Russia.

Maríelitos Persons who entered the United States from the Cuban port of Mariel during the boatlift in the spring of 1980. Rather than being admitted as refugees, they were paroled into the United States and eventually allowed to adjust their status to permanent resident alien. Some *Maríelitos* were found to be ineligible to enter the United States because of past criminal and health records; some were excludable because of crimes committed between their arrival and their application to become permanent resident aliens. Many are still in custody, and their fate is a matter of controversy within the United States and of fitful negotiations with Cuba.

National Origins Quota System Originally introduced into immigration law in 1921 and ended by the 1965 Immigration Act, the quota system reserved the limited visas for the exclusive use of natives of certain countries. Various formulas were used, but northern and western European countries (e.g., England, Germany and Ireland) always received the lion’s share. The purpose of the system was to ensure that immigration reflected the United States ethnic composition and did not lead to ethnic change.

nativism “Intense opposition to an internal minority on the grounds of its foreign (i.e., ‘un-American’) connection.” (See page 6.) Nativism in various guises has been the motivating force to curtail or eliminate immigration in general or of specific groups. Nativists fear immigrants will destroy American values, prove unassimilable or in some way threaten the American way of life now or in the future. The three major strains of nativism have been antiradicalism, anti-Catholicism and Anglo-Saxon superiority.

naturalization The legal process by which a foreigner becomes a citizen after (usually) five years in permanent resident alien status. The Immigration and Naturalization Service processes the application and a federal judge administers the oath of citizenship to approved applicants.

new immigration Historically refers to eastern and southern Europeans (mainly Slavs, Jews and Italians) whose numbers in the 1880s started to overshadow the northern and western Europeans who had dominated migration to America.

Operation Wetback A mass deportation in 1953–1954 by the Immigration and Naturalization Service of temporary agricultural workers, primarily in the Southwest and West. Many of these temporary laborers, who were part of the *bracero* program, dropped out of the migrant stream rather than return to Mexico each year. Approximately two million persons were expelled.

parole The power of the attorney general to admit anyone whose entry is in the American interest for up to two years’ temporary stay. Originally intended for medical emergencies, it was widely used from the 1950s to 1980 to admit large groups of refugees and then have Congress pass legislation to let them stay. Hungarian, Cuban, Indochinese and Soviet citizens have all benefited. The 1980 Refugee Act expressly forbade use of parole for refugees. Nevertheless, as a way around the law, presidents have had attorneys general admit “refugee-like” persons but not call them refugees or give them refugee entitlements.

permanent resident alien A person admitted to reside in the United States indefinitely with the right to apply for citizenship, usually within five years of getting that status. Usually referred to as immigrants, persons who get permanent resident alien status are often already in the United States as students, visitors, refugees or some other temporary (nonimmigrant) status. Therefore, an immigrant may already be in the United States in the year he or she is counted as an immigrant. The number of immigrants reported by the government for each year is the number of people who received permanent resident alien status, not the number who actually physically entered the United States to reside permanently. Therefore, annual variation in “immigrant” statistics needs to be carefully interpreted.

preference system Introduced in 1924, the preference system is the priority in the distribution of visas given to family members and persons with skills. While the National Origins Quota System was intact, the preference system applied to each country’s quota. Since 1968, when the quota system was phased out under terms of the 1965 Immigration Act, it has been applied generally to the numerically limited immigrant visas.

refugee The international definition, reflected in current United States law, refers to a person outside his or her country of origin who has a well-founded fear of persecution because of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a social group. Technically in United States law individuals must demonstrate that they personally have a fear of persecution. Group determinations, however, still take place. The definition does not include persons displaced but still within their country or victims of natural disaster or of the general danger of devastation of war. In actual practice, the official definition is sometimes stretched to provide humanitarian aid overseas. For admission to the United States with the right to become a permanent resident alien, American authorities usually apply the definition more literally, although such criteria as “well-founded fear of persecution” leave them wide latitude for interpretation.

restrictionists Those favoring reduction or elimination of immigration. The term is usually applied to those who advocated reduction of the “new immigrants,” either a general reduction, a selective reduction or exclusion of certain groups.

scientific racism The attempt to use tools of science, such as body measurements and genetics, to classify people into very refined “racial” groups and to correlate “race” with social behavior and characteristics. The objective was to prove the inherent superiority of some “races” and to provide a ranking of various “races.” The desired outcome was maintenance of the social, economic and political dominance of some groups over others. Immigration restriction was one mechanism to accomplish this goal, justified as limiting inferior races who would mongrelize the American population.

Social Darwinism The belief that groups compete for political and economic power and that the stronger groups will dominate. Linked with a desire to maintain Anglo-Saxon superiority and global political and economic dominance by Europeans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Social Darwinism was a purported scientific theory to bolster northern and western European ethnic groups’ political, economic and social dominance within the United States, and to hinder immigration by other groups. According to this theory, intermarriage with non-Anglo-Saxons would dilute the gene pool and, through natural selection, lead to a weaker nation.