APUSH

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The 19th and 20th centuries meant new beginnings for many immigrants coming to the US. However, for American nativists, it was a threat. Many of the immigrants came fleeing persecution, conflict and poverty. These immigrants came to the US looking for a better life and settled in places like California or large cities like New York City where they could find work. However, many nativist felt that the immigrants were a threat to the US because of they were often very poor and uneducated. Nativist fought for restrictions on immigration because of their feeling of superiority, view of immigrants and belief that immigration was ruining American politics and society.

Immigrants from all over Asia and Europe were coming to the US seeking new opportunities. Which meant they helped provide labor for America’s growing industry, however, not everyone saw it this way. Nativist felt that immigrants coming into the US would not be able to assimilate to the American life and government. They would instead try to change it which would cause conflicts and could ruin the US. As seen in Document 1, The American Federation of Labor says that allowing Chinese immigrants in would risk every part of the US including politics and cultures because the two races could not get along. This document shows the belief that people from foreign countries could not get along with Americans because they were just too different. As a result, many nativist argued that the government should just keep all foreigners out.

The nativist had a negative view of the American people which added to their negativity towards them. Nativists viewed the foreigners as dirty people who brought along with them disease. This often resulted in segregation for the new-comers. Also, they were often seen as criminals which resulted in little to no trust for immigrants. As seen in Document 2, when Reverend Strong who says, “immigration not only furnishes the great portion of our criminals”. Here the Reverend clearly singles out immigrants as being untrustworthy lawbreakers and goes as far as blaming immigration for most of the criminals that are in the US. Like I mentioned before, immigrants were seen as dirty people who carried disease; this caused the rest of the population to avoid coexisting with them. As seen in Document 4, some Nativists like Madison Grant believed that these foreigners were a lesser people who were supposably crippled or mentally disabled. Then he mentions that they are ruining the American people on all aspects including morally. Through his words, Grant expresses the feelings of many Americans at this time which resulted in the proposition and passing of restricting immigration laws. These words even express a feeling of superiority over other, non-American people.

During this time, many of the people who were born and raised in the US had the privilege of attending school, which often made them better educated than the immigrants. As a result, Nativists used this to shows that the immigrants were wild and uneducated, thus unworthy. Sometimes, Nativists went as far as saying that the immigrants were of an inferior race and should not be allowed into the US because they would mix and contaminate the superior American race. As seen in Document 5, the author says that the inferior races put the “master race” in immediate danger. Eventually, Nativists began to speak out and demand for the closure of the US borders. When they weren’t granted this they demanded that restrictions and requirements be set like an immigrant having being literate to be allowed in. In Document 6, Senator Henry Cabot Lodge says, “if a lower race mixes with a higher in sufficient numbers...the lower race will absorb the higher…” Then he goes on to say that to avoid this, the government must set restrictions to immigration. As seen in his statement, the nativists were convinced that the immigrants were un-American due to their ignorance, untrustworthiness, and for being an overall inferior race.

In conclusion, during the 19th and 20th centuries, there were many conflicts regarding immigration to the US. Tensions between immigrants and nativists grew as a result of the nativists view of the immigrants. They avoided mixing with them because they saw them as people who were diseased. In addition, they felt that their ignorance and culture had negative effects on American society, politics and society. This view was topped of with the feeling of superiority that many natives had, as they believed themselves to belong to a “master race” which would be stained by foreigners. Overall, the 19th and 20th century conflict on immigration was largely caused by the stereotypical view that many Americans held against foreigners entering the US.