



## American Intolerance: Our Dark History of Demonizing Immigrants

**Robert E. Bartholomew**

**Anja E. Reumschüssel**

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Despite the poignant poetry adorning the Statue of Liberty, aspiring citizens of various ethnicities and religions have not been warmly welcomed to the US, as documented in Robert E. Bartholomew and Anja E. Reumschüssel's dispiriting history of racist, xenophobic, and nationalist policies in the United States.

The authors attribute such intolerance to a national predilection for social panics in times of economic hardship, war, and social unrest. Scapegoating immigrants and ethnic minorities has been a politically expedient strategy to explain away social problems and to justify land grabs, mob violence, and other shameful repressions. Some of the book's information is familiar, like the World War II internment of Japanese Americans, but the book ferrets out many lesser-known instances of anti-Asian discrimination dating back to the turn of the century, when West coast immigrant populations boomed. Labor unions, politicians, and newspaper editors blamed the new arrivals, whom they likened to insect hordes, for everything from unemployment to outbreaks of the plague.

Vivid documentation runs throughout other chapters, detailing the American treatment of Catholic, Chinese, and Japanese immigrants, German Americans, Jewish refugees, Muslims, and Native Americans and Chicanos, whose ancestors predated white settlement within their lands. The authors tap a huge range of research material, including doctoral dissertations, speeches, interviews, and scholarly journals. Instances of specific violence against individuals, while difficult to read, reinforce the ugliness of these eras, like the 1830s anti-Catholic propaganda wars, twentieth-century eugenics-based immigration restrictions, and, sadly, contemporary stereotyping of Muslims as terrorists.

The authors contend that simplistic policies marginalizing immigrants and minorities endanger American economic and social progress. They call for honest reexamination of the darker corners of our national history and discuss ways to meaningfully address the complex problems we confront today. *American Intolerance* is timely reading for anyone concerned about recent changes in immigration policy and ramped-up white supremacy rhetoric and violence.

RACHEL JAGARESKI (November/December 2018)

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