

Restrictions on Immigration

- ◆ United States a nation of immigrants from the beginning
 - ◆ "Old Immigrants" = Northern & Western European immigrants
 - ◆ "New Immigrants" = Southern & Eastern European immigrants
 - ◆ Italians, Poles, Russians
 - ◆ Prior to 20th century, Americans generally welcomed immigrants
 - ◆ Immigrants were needed to dig canals, build railroads, farm the west, and work in the factories.
 - ◆ America was growing and was able to absorb the new people
 - ◆ "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breath free."
 - ◆ By end of 19th century, attitudes changed for several reasons
 - ◆ Close of the frontier - no more free land in the West
 - ◆ Immigrants were willing to work for low wages, threatening jobs and wage scale of American workers
 - ◆ Illiterate immigrants were easy prey for corrupt politicians
 - ◆ Difficult for new immigrants to assimilate - they continued to speak their own languages and lived in "ethnic islands"
 - ◆ In the 1880's - steps were taken to limit immigration
 - ◆ 1882 - laws passed to keep out criminals, insane, diseased
 - ◆ 1882 - Chinese Exclusion Act
 - ◆ prohibited Chinese immigration - cheap "coolie" labor
 - ◆ Restrictions continued into the 20th century
 - ◆ Gentlemen's Agreement (1907)
 - ◆ An agreement between U.S. and Japan to reduce # of Japanese immigrants
 - ◆ National Origins Plan of 1924 - Congress cuts off all Asian immigration
 - ◆ One of a series of quota laws that restricted immigration from all but "old immigrant" countries
 - ◆ Many of these laws would remain in place until the 1960's