**IMMIGRATION 1917-80**

**‘Open door policy’ before WW1 with only 3 acts restricting the types of immigrants:**

* + Chinese immigrants in 1882 and those who were disabled
* No restrictions on yearly numbers of immigrants or where they were from
* Around 170,000 immigrants each year for up to 100 years after it broke away from British rule – was a welcoming land of the free
* Numbers rose to 1.2 million in 1907 – most were coming from southern and eastern Europe rather than northern Europe unlike earlier immigration:
  + 1882 – 13% from southern and eastern Europe – 81% in 1907
  + More from southern and eastern = large group that couldn’t integrate into the established group of US citizens since they had immigrant roots
  + Large group of these new immigrant went to live and work in cities – which were growing quickly from industrialisation

**1920s:**

**Dillingham Commission:**

Investigated the impact of immigration on USA from 1907 and reported in 1911:

* Report stated that immigration was beginning to pose as a serious threat to American society and culture
* Distinguished between ‘old’ immigrants from England, Ireland, Germany, who had adapted to life in the USA and the ‘new’ immigrants from southern and eastern Europe who were apparently racially inferior and were not adapting to USA lifestyle
* Findings set the idea that immigrants weren’t fitting in and were then used to identify Immigration Acts in 1920s including…
  + **1917 Immigration Act –** a number of immigrants listed as *undesirable* and excluded such as homosexuals, insane persons and criminals + a literacy qualification for all over 16.
  + **Emergency Quota Act of 1921** – restricted yearly number of immigrants from any country to 3% of the total number of people from that country in the USA.
  + **1924 Johnson-Reed Immigration Act –** changed quota system to 2% of people from the country of origin in the 1980 census (to further favour northern Europe) until 1 July 1927 where immigrants restricted at fixed number of 150,000 based on 1920 census.
  + **1929 National Origins Formula** – confirms 150,000 limit and bans Asian immigrants altogether.

**REASONS FOR LEGISLATIONS**

* Post-war isolationism – government wanted less contact with the rest of the world and immigration would be a controllable point of contact.
* The Dillingham Report
* The Red Scare of 1919 – 20 led to fears the many of these immigrants would be communists, anarchists or worse and would spread these ideas to others as there had already been bombings by anarchists and strikes
* Spike in unemployment – 950,000 in 1919 to over 5 million in 1921, causing social discontent like protests, strikes and riots
* Led to deportation of thousands of people during Red Scare by the government of anyone they thought posed a threat to the government.

1. Newcomers were creating competition for everything – jobs, housing, facilities. In 1910, 1.2 US urban population was black 🡪 4.1% in 1920 whereas the % of foreign-born/ with foreign-born parents rose from 74% - 85%.
2. During Great Depression, immigration from Europe slowed down to less than the quota system whereas from South America, where there were no quotas set, increased, especially from Mexico to fill cheap labour in states like California and Texas in sectors like mining and railroad buildings. Some immigrants were ‘official’ and registered with the Bureau of Immigration whereas others crossed the border illegally but high demand for workers meant employers didn’t ask questions and exploited the new workers with threats of deportation and around 400,000 Mexicans were deported during the depression.
3. 1920s – industry was expanding and needed more workers so immigrants, mostly those who couldn’t speak English, moved to towns and cities that already had immigrants from their place of origin and made connections as they shared the same language connection so **certain cities had large immigrant populations** from one place of origin
4. USA was called a ‘melting pot’ because of the various immigrant nationalities living there – most urban cities were informally broken down into segregated sections with separate districts for most ethnic groups with grocery shops, churches following the practices of their country as well as newspapers with local and nation news from their country – e.g.` some towns and cities were nicknamed ‘little Italy’ with large Italian immigrants and customs and a strong Catholic life, *Chinatowns* even though immigration from China had been banned since 1882 – Chinese community was often self-isolating because of the important and large cultural differences 🡪 years passed + foreign-born immigrants had American children and so old traditions were forgotten as the children adopted US lifestyle 🡪 1300 foreign-language newspapers in 1914 and only 75 in 1960 – parents spent all money and time on improving their children’s lives to make sure they were educated and worked hard to become successful in the future as they couldn’t.

Irish and Italian politicians, lawyers and policemen in New York setting an example that education and working hard could get you good jobs

1. Most immigrants landed low wages and bad working conditions as they came after most other immigrants – newest immigrants usually worked for small family businesses so that they could help their children get an education

* **Ford in Detroit – 70.7%** of the 12,880 workers were foreign born, mostly from south/east Europe and only 29% American. Unlike other businesses, he went to great extent to try and ‘Americanise’ his immigrant labour force to make the working relation easier – they were taught English so that in 1914, only 59% workers spoke English which was 88% in 1917 – he also encouraged them to adopt American ways and lifestyle, encouraged by having graduating ceremonies from their English classes.

1. They had a large influence on politics locally, state and federal. Their votes could change an election results and so during the depression, many immigrants voted and largely campaigned for FDR since under Hoover’s policies, they worked hard yet got little money since there was free enterprise and businesses could exploit the workers without government interference

**1940s:**

1. After the entry to war, Italian (14%), German (10.8%) and Japanese (less than 1%) Americans were classed as enemy aliens rather than Americans:

* Even though Japanese were the fewest, they were treated the worst because of Japanese bombing Pearl Harbor. As a result, 75% of US Japanese Americans – 120,000, were set to internment camps, having their property confiscated and only allowed possessions they could carry.
* Less than 1% of Germans and Italians were interned but all had to obey certain restrictions. As war progressed, attitudes to the ‘enemy’ immigrants worsened even if some had lived for several generations in the USA, some had their shop windows broken and lost customers.
* Hundreds of thousands of young men classed as enemy aliens volunteered for US military but were under suspicion
* Some Japanese men were allowed to join the army to serve – but were sent to fight in Europe and not against their country of origin – Japan. Many Italians and Germans also joined but were asked not to fight their own countrymen.

**1950s and 60s:**

1. After WW2, government passed 1952 Immigration and Nationality Acts using quotas but most people thought it wasn’t useful and was now out-dated:
   1. Didn’t take into consideration refugees – during the Cold War, USA wanted to help refugees escaping from communism/communist countries but had to then pass new refugee law each time since they weren’t immigrants.
   2. Difficult dealing with large numbers of refugees – when Fidel Castro seized power of Cuba in 1959, 200,000 Cubans fled to USA so **Cuban Refugees Program** was set up by government to deal with the large numbers as few politicians wanted to return to the ‘open door’ policy as it was before WW1 but instead wanted a sensible renewed immigration regulation system 🡪 attitudes to immigration replaced after 1960s
2. Kennedy opposed the quota system and pressed Congress to make changes even before he became president:
   1. Wrote a book in 1958 called *Nation of Immigrants* outlining after the first European immigrants in 1607, there had been large waves of immigrants that wouldn’t stop.
   2. Immigrants were enriching the country yet are being seen as suspicious
   3. Was working on new immigration law that’d abolish quotas but was assassinated so President Johnson brought bill to Congress after his death and it became a law in 1965.
3. **Asian immigrants –** large numbers applied for entry to USA. In first 5 years of the 1965 Act, immigration from Asia quadrupled – largely because of the Vietnam War since after the fall of Saigon, USA took in over 130,000 Vietnamese refugees and as communism spread, they took in even more so that by 1985, there were over 700,000, changing the ethnic make0up of the cities.
4. **Central and South American immigrants –** immigration laws initially didn’t apply to South America, especially Mexico:
   1. **1954 Immigration and Naturalisation Service [INS]** tried to control immigration by deporting illegal immigrants from Southern and Western states in ‘Operation Wetback’
   2. **Hispanic immigrants** and families working in agriculture started to move to cities – 83% of Hispanic population was in cities by 1980, which became a concern for the government

**1970s and 80s:**

1. **Illegal immigrants:**
   1. **20,000 limit** on entry in 1976 added – **didn’t** stop immigration as people there had been so used to no numerical limits that they continued to come to join previous family or to find work so they crossed the border in secret and became **illegals.**
   2. No exact record after 1975 but around 60,000 a year in 70s from Mexico with most going to California and Texas
   3. 645,000 jobs created in Los Angeles – 1/3 taken by Mexicans – INS tried to patrol borders and stop illegal immigration but since border was over 3000km, even with guards and electrified gences, it was impossible to stop smugglers sneaking in illegals into the USA
   4. **1980 –** 1 million illegals found, arrested and deported but more came and employers happily hid their identities for cheap labour so tracking down illegals became even more expensive
2. Eventually attitudes shifted back to ‘nativism’ – a form of isolationism in the in the 1920s, where immigration was restricted again and people deported. Many people started to feel that black people were a drain on the economy since during spikes of unemployment when the economy was doing badly, black people would be fired first and so became dependant on welfare from the government. Many people argued that their taxes were being spent on supporting not only black people, but also foreigners who didn’t have jobs.
3. To make things worse, when there were housing and job shortages in Cuba, boats of refugees were sent to Florida in 1980 including government officials. This further irritated American people especially as they were eventually unable to keep the refugees out and had to offer them accommodation in refugee camps but in bad conditions as they also struggled.