LESSON 10

Nativism and Myths about Immigrants

*It is not new or unusual for the real Americans, meaning those immigrants who came to America a little bit longer ago, to fear the outsiders, the pretenders, the newcomers.*

Lesson 10
Nativism and Myths about Immigrants

Goals
» Understand nativism and anti-immigrant prejudice in U.S. history and relate it to present-day movements.
» Learn how to recognize myths and find accurate information to refute them.

Objectives
» Students will learn to distinguish between fact, myth, and opinion.
» Students will understand why myths about immigrants are created and spread.
» Students will recognize nativism as a recurring problem in U.S. history that still exists today.
» Students will learn how to evaluate the accuracy of information about immigrants in the United States.

Essential Question
» Where do anti-immigrants myths come from, and how can I refute them?

Key Skill
» Critically analyzing media and identifying reliable sources (Activity 2 & 3).

Teacher Advisory
Some of the images and quotes in this lesson are racist and disturbing, but are included for historical understanding. Please warn your students and offer them an opportunity to discuss their reactions. All dialogue should be respectful.
Additionally, please read the Advisory on Immigration Status on page 20 before beginning this lesson.

Materials
☑ Handout 1: Fact, Myth, or Opinion
☑ Handout 2: Gallery of Nativism
☑ Handout 3: Nativism in U.S. History Timeline
☑ Handout 4: Guide to Sources
☑ Tape (for 10 groups), colored paper
☑ Scissors
☑ Sticky notes (optional)

Time Frame
3-4 class periods

Vocabulary
bias
fact
myth
native-born
nativism
nativist
opinion
reliability
**Procedure:**

1. **Prepare.** Cut out the cards (being careful not to include the answers) from *Handout 1: Fact, Myth, or Opinion* and set them aside.

2. **Think.** Ask students to define the terms “fact,” “myth,” and “opinion.” Explain that opinions reflect personal beliefs, but they are often based on information a person has read, heard, or seen. The information on which we base our opinions may be true (a fact) or false (a myth).

Further explain that the opinions we hold have consequences on the human rights and daily lives of immigrants. Opinions that are based on negative myths or false information can be very harmful. Draw a shorthand version of the following sequences on the board.

3. **Identify.** Divide students into small groups of three or four. Give each group one card from *Handout 1: Fact, Myth, or Opinion*. Go over the example card about human rights as a class, having students vote on which statement they think is fact, myth, or opinion before revealing the answers. Have the small groups repeat the process with the statements on their cards. After they have finished, have the groups share their answers with the class, and then tell them how their results compare to the real answers.

4. **Discuss.** After students have correctly identified the fact, myth, and opinion about immigration, have the small groups discuss the following questions:

   **Questions for Discussion**
   
   ? How or why do you think the myth on your card started?
   
   ? Is the opinion based on the myth or the fact on your card?
   
   ? How might the opinion impact the human rights of immigrants?
Procedure:

1. **Prepare.** Print out all pages from *Handout 2: Gallery of Nativism*. Cut out the date range cards and hang them around the classroom in chronological order. Group the images and quotes by their respective historical periods (Early American Intolerance, Anti-Catholicism, etc.). (Note: If you can have students cut them out, it will save time.)

2. **Define.** Explain that negative myths about immigrants are often created and spread by people known as nativists. Ask students what they think the term nativism might mean. Provide them with the following definition:

   *Nativism: the policy or practice of prejudice against immigrants in favor of the native-born, established inhabitants of a country.*

   Point out that the meaning of “native inhabitants” in this definition is not Native Americans, but instead whatever group is the hegemony currently residing in the United States when a new, distinctive group of immigrants arrive.

3. **Create the gallery.** Divide the class into ten groups (2-4 students in each group). Give all students *Handout 3: Nativism in U.S. History Timeline*. Also give each group one or two pieces of colored paper and one of the sets of images and quotes from a particular time period, created in Step One: Prepare. Explain that the class is now going to be creating a “Gallery of Nativism” around the classroom. Tell students that each group should use the information in their handouts to create a sign (with the information below) and a collage (made up of the images and quotes from their time period) for their section of the gallery. Tell them to tape/glue the images and quotes to the colored sheet/s of paper, and have them get out a sheet of paper and write the following information on their signs:

   - the immigrant group being targeted;
   - the main stereotypes, myths, or prejudice being perpetuated; and
   - possible reasons why nativism occurred at that time.

   Let students know that some of the time periods overlapped, and that there were resurgences in prejudice against certain groups. The date ranges provided reflect the most intense anti-immigrant sentiment toward a particular group. When they have finished their sign, each group should find the relevant time period and hang their quotes, images, and write-up on the wall.

4. **Walk the gallery.** Now have the class walk around the timeline and write down the myths about immigrants that appear more than once in the timeline. You can choose to have the class walk it independently or together, taking turns having a representative from each group give a brief summary of their time period as they go along.

   (continued on next page)
5. Discuss. Bring the class back together to discuss what they learned from the timeline. Have students first share anything they found particularly surprising or disturbing. Next, ask them to share the myths that they saw repeated at different eras and with different immigrant groups. Use the following questions to explore what might lead to the same anti-immigrant myths appearing repeatedly throughout U.S. history.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions for Discussion</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>? Was this exercise disturbing for you? Were you surprised by the levels of animosity?</td>
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<tr>
<td>? What are some common myths, stereotypes, or prejudices about immigrants that appear many times for different immigrant groups?</td>
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<td>? Why would the same myths be applied to immigrant groups from very different countries and cultures?</td>
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<tr>
<td>? Are the groups that are considered “native” in a particular time period always the same? Are the “natives” of the 1790s the same as the “natives” of today?</td>
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<tr>
<td>? Do we still apply the anti-immigrant myths, stereotypes, or prejudices used in the past to the same ethnic or cultural groups today? For instance, do people still think that Irish-Americans or German-Americans will never learn English? What changed?</td>
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<tr>
<td>? Are anti-immigrant myths today similar to ones from the past, even though they target different ethnic and cultural groups? Why or why not?</td>
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<tr>
<td>? Why would someone create or spread anti-immigrant myths, stereotypes, or prejudices? What purpose do they serve?</td>
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<tr>
<td>? How is nativism a reaction to feeling threatened, and why do we feel threatened by immigration?</td>
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<tr>
<td>? How do you think these myths, stereotypes, or prejudices affected the human rights of immigrants over the years?</td>
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<tr>
<td>? How would you feel if you were the target of one of these myths?</td>
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</table>
Procedure:

1. **Brainstorm.** Explain that many times, when people hear a piece of information, they do not know whether it is true or not, and so they believe anything that matches what they already think and reject new ideas. Instead of relying on our instincts, which can be wrong, it would be better if people tried to find out from reliable sources if the new information they heard is a fact or a myth.

Ask students to give an example of a rumor that might be told about a person or group of people. How could they figure out if the rumor is true or not? If the rumor is not true, how could they stop it? Write down their ideas on the board.

Just as there are ways to stop rumors at school or among friends, people can also stop anti-immigrant myths through these three steps:

- Question new information that you hear or read, instead of just accepting it as true.
- Go to reliable sources to verify the information.
- If the information is untrue, speak up when you hear the myth and make an effort to spread the truth.

2. **Question.** Have students revisit the myth from their fact, myth, and opinion card. Pose the following question to students: “If you had never seen this myth before, how could you try to find out if it was a fact or a myth?” Explain that one way to find out the truth is to seek out reliable sources of information. For this exercise, they will be provided with a trustworthy source. Have students go online and access the Immigration Policy Center’s 2010 report “Giving Facts a Fighting Chance,” which can be found with a simple Google search.¹

Have students look for the section of the report that relates most closely to their myth and then read the section in its entirety for facts that disprove their myth and for more information about the topic. Have them write down any original sources they find (e.g., “The National Research Council reported that…”) and why they think the sources may or may not be reliable.

3. **Check.** Pass out **Handout 4: Guide to Sources.** Have students read through it, then go over the main points with them as a class. Allow them to ask questions about vocabulary or ideas they do not understand. Next, ask students to form pairs (with a student not from their original Fact, Myth, and Opinion group) and use the credibility checklist on **Handout 4** to determine the reliability of the sources they found in “Giving Facts a Fighting Chance.” When they are finished, have groups share what reliability criteria matched the sources they found.

4. **Make the connection.** Explain that part of the reason it is important to find reliable sources is that sometimes myths are intentionally spread by people with hidden agendas. In the case of immigration, much of the misinformation and ill feelings spread in the media and elsewhere originate from nativist organizations. Many modern anti-immigrant myths, stereotypes, and prejudices are sustained through a highly organized network of groups with distinct messages and audiences that are designed to look independent, but in fact share funding, resources, supporters, founders, key leaders, and tactics. Some of these founders and supporters hold controversial or even racist views on immigration, and some have been connected to white supremacist groups.

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Have students study the map created by the Center for New Community to show all the anti-immigrant organizations connected to this network (found at www.newcomm.org/pdf/CNC-Tanton_Network_2009.pdf). Point out the variety of niches that the network fills. For example, FAIR has established itself as an expert group; the Center for Immigration Studies describes itself as a think tank and provides data that it and FAIR frequently use in the media; ProEnglish provides template language for city councils to pass English-only policies (see www.energyofanation.org/English-only_ordinance_in_mn.html for an example); and there are many local groups that have sprung up as smaller affiliates of FAIR that feed off of its information and tactics. As a class, discuss some of the potential problems and implications of this anti-immigrant network.

**Questions for Discussion**

? Do you think that it matters that these groups have connections to white supremacist or racist people or organizations? What if they only receive money from such groups?

? Some of these organizations have publicly distanced themselves from the most controversial founders and leaders in the network. Do you think that their credibility is still in question?

? Should people know the background of these organizations when reading or hearing the facts and opinions they provide?

? Until recently, most people did not know about this anti-immigrant network. Why do you think that is?

? Do you think something should be done to counter myths started or perpetuated by nativist groups? If so, what?

**5. Practice.** Explain to students that it can seem discouraging to learn about the long history of nativism in the United States that is still being sustained today by an influential network of anti-immigrant organizations. However, remind students that previous cycles of nativism have been overcome by people willing to stand up and tell the truth when confronted by anti-immigrant myths and stereotypes. It can be difficult or intimidating to challenge someone who is repeating incorrect information, so students will get now a chance to practice refuting a myth.

Have students return to the pairs they were in when they checked the reliability of their sources. Have the students take turns practicing refuting a myth. One student should read one of the myths they originally researched, as if they were telling a friend or family member something they just learned (e.g., “It makes me so mad that...” or “Did you hear that immigrants...?”). The other student should reply using the fact that they discovered that refutes the myth (e.g., “That’s not actually true. Did you know...?” or “That’s a common myth about immigrants, but the reality is...”).

After one exchange, the students should switch roles and refute the other myth.

If students created the “Gallery of Nativism” in Activity 2, one powerful end to the lesson is for each student to write down the statement they practiced refuting an anti-immigrant myth on a sticky note (or write down another action they can take to refute myths and bias). Students can then take their sticky notes and cover up one of the images or quotes that they found particularly offensive in the gallery.
### CARDS

**EXAMPLE – Human Rights**

Human rights include family unity, access to just working conditions, and freedom from discrimination on the basis of national origin for everyone.

People who immigrate illegally should not be guaranteed any rights.

Only documented immigrants have human rights.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>FACT</th>
<th>MYTH</th>
<th>OPINION</th>
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<tbody>
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</table>

### #1 – Economy

Immigrants help improve the U.S. economy, adding over $37 billion to the gross domestic product (GDP) each year.

Immigrants are a drain on the economy.

I think the U.S. needs immigrants to be prosperous.

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### #2 – Undocumented Immigration

Undocumented immigrants could come legally, they just don’t want to.

Many people have no way to legally immigrate to the U.S., because there are very few visas for low-skill workers, and wait times for family members can stretch for decades.

I think the immigration system should be changed so more people can immigrate legally if they want to.

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<thead>
<tr>
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### #3 – Integration

Immigrants should only be allowed into the country if they already speak English.

By the second generation, nearly all (98%) immigrants know English.

There is less of a need to learn English now, so immigrants stay within their own communities and speak their own languages.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>MYTH</th>
<th>FACT</th>
<th>MYTH</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opinion</td>
<td>Fact</td>
<td>Myth</td>
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### #4 – Immigration Enforcement

Having local police enforce immigration law leaves immigrants too frightened to report crimes or serve as witnesses, making communities less safe.

Everyone, including individuals and local police officers, should be part of the effort to get rid of undocumented immigrants.

If someone knows their neighbor is undocumented, they are legally obligated to call the police.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fact</th>
<th>Opinion</th>
<th>Myth</th>
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### #5 – Crime

New immigrants are more likely to be criminals than native-born residents.

My neighborhood is lucky that several immigrant families are moving in.

Immigrants’ incarceration rate is five times less that of the native-born population.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Myth</th>
<th>Opinion</th>
<th>Fact</th>
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### #6 – Taxes

Immigrants do not pay taxes.

Even undocumented immigrants pay taxes. The majority pay income tax, and everyone pays sales and property taxes.

Immigrants are enjoying services that are paid for with my tax money, and they should be fined because they are not contributing otherwise.

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Fact</th>
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### #7 – Benefits

I think that immigrants who are hardworking and law abiding should not have to struggle so hard to make ends meet because of a lack of social benefits.

Immigrants are bankrupting public benefit systems.

Undocumented immigrants are not eligible for food support, Social Security, or Medicaid. In fact, they are restricted from all public benefits, except from emergency medical care in the case of life-threatening situations.

| Opinion | Myth | Fact |

## Early American Intolerance

**Pre-1830**

### Anti-Catholicism

**Mid- to Late 19th century**

(1830-1860s)

### Chinese Exclusion

**Late 19th century**

(1870-1890s)

### Americanization Campaign

**Late 19th century/Early 20th century**

(1890-1920)

### World War I

**Early 20th century**

(1910-20)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-20th century</td>
<td>Ethnic Quotas (1920s-30s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-20th century</td>
<td>World War II (1940s-50s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Late 20th century</td>
<td>English-only Movement (1980s-present)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Late 20th century/Early 21st century</td>
<td>Undocumented Immigration (1990s-present)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early 21st century</td>
<td>Post-September 11 (2001-present)</td>
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Early American Intolerance

[Regarding the Germans] “…Those who come hither are generally of the most ignorant Stupid Sort of their own Nation. Few of their children in the Country learn English … the Signs in our Streets have inscriptions in both languages, and in some places only German … I suppose in a few years they [interpreters] will be also necessary in the Assembly, to tell one half of our Legislators what the other half say … they will soon so out number us, that all the advantages we have will not in My Opinion be able to preserve our language, and even our Government will become precarious.”

~ Benjamin Franklin, “A Letter to Peter Collinson,” May 9, 1753

“Do we not know that the French nation have organized bands of aliens as well as of their own citizens, in other countries, to bring about their nefarious purposes … By these means they have overrun all the republics in the world but our own.”

~ Representative Harrison Otis, statement on floor of U.S. House of Representatives, June 1798

“Why should Pennsylvania, founded by the English, become a Colony of Aliens, who will shortly be so numerous as to Germanize us instead of our Anglifying them, and will never adopt our Language or Customs, any more than they can acquire our Complexion.

Which leads me to add one Remark: That the Number of purely white People in the World is proportionably very small … in Europe, the Spaniards, Italians, French, Russians and Swedes, are generally of what we call a swarthy Complexion; as are the Germans also … And while we are, as I may call it, Scouring our Planet, by clearing America of Woods, and so making this Side of our Globe reflect a brighter Light to the Eyes of Inhabitants in Mars or Venus, why should we in the Sight of Superior Beings, darken its People? why increase the Sons of Africa, by Planting them in America, where we have so fair an Opportunity, by excluding all Blacks and Tawneys, of increasing the lovely White and Red? But perhaps I am partial to the Complexion of my Country, for such Kind of Partiality is natural to Mankind.”

~ Benjamin Franklin, “Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind, Peopling of Countries, etc,” 1751
Anti-Catholicism

“If the potentates of Europe have no design upon our liberties, what means the paying of the passage and emptying out upon our shores of such floods of pauper emigrants—the contents of the poor house and the sweepings of the streets—multiplying tumults and violence, filling our prisons, and crowding our poor houses, and quadrupling our taxation, and sending annually accumulating thousands to the polls to lay their inexperienced hand upon the helm of our power?”

~ Beecher, “A Plea for the West”

“The Roman Catholic Church claims infallibility for itself, and denies Spiritual Freedom, Liberty of Mind or Conscience to its members. It is therefore the foe to all progress; it is deadly hostile to Democracy. She is the natural ally of tyrants, and the irreconcilable enemy of Freedom.”

~ Theodore Parker, “A sermon of the dangers which threaten the rights of man in America,” July 2, 1854
GALLERY OF NATIVISM

“The Mortar of Assimilation — And the One Element that Won’t Mix (the Irish)”

“Uncle Sam’s Lodging House”
Uncle Sam [to Irishman]: “Look here, you, everybody else is quiet and peaceable, and you’re all the time a-kicking up a row!”

“The Ignorant Vote — Honors Are Easy”
[African American man on left, Irishman on right]
GALLERY OF NATIVISM

Chinese Exclusion

“The Chinese Question”
“The Remedy Too Late”
“During their entire settlement in California, they have never adapted themselves to our habits, modes of dress, or our educational system, have never learned the sanctity of an oath, never desired to become citizens, or to perform the duties of citizenship, never discovered the difference between right and wrong, never ceased the worship of their idol gods, or advanced a step beyond the musty traditions of their native tribe.”

~California Senate, Special Committee on Chinese Immigration, 1877

“Why They [the Chinese] can live on 40 cents a day, and They [Americans] can’t”
“A Picture for Employers”
Americanization Campaign

“There may be those who can contemplate the addition to our population of vast numbers of persons having no inherited instincts of self-government and respect for law; knowing no restraint upon their own passions but the club of the policeman or the bayonet of the soldier; forming communities, by the tens of thousands, in which only foreign tongues are spoken, and into which can steal no influence from our free institutions and from popular discussion. But I confess to being far less optimistic.”

~ Francis A. Walker, “Restriction of Immigration,” June 1896.
Americanization Campaign

But when alien immigration pours its stream of half a million yearly, as has been frequently done during the last decade, and when that stream is polluted with the moral sewage of the old world, including its poverty, drunkenness, infidelity and disease, it is well to put up the bars and save America, at least until she can purify the atmosphere of contagion which foreign invasion has already brought.

~ The Ram’s Horn, April, 1896
“If there are any German-Americans here who are so ungrateful for all the benefits they have received that they are still for the Kaiser, there is only one thing to do with them. And that is to hog-tie them, give them back the wooden shoes and the rags they landed in, and ship them back to the Fatherland.”

~ James Gerard, “Loyalty,” 1917
“The Hun within our gates is the worst of the foes of our own household, whether he is the paid or the unpaid agent of Germany. Whether he is pro-German or poses as a pacifist, or a peace-at-any-price-man, matters little. He is the enemy of the United States … The German-language papers carry on a consistent campaign in favor of Germany against England. They should be put out of existence for the period of this war … Every disloyal native-born American should be disfranchised and interned. It is time to strike our enemies at home heavily and quickly.”

~ Theodore Roosevelt, The Foes of Our Own Household, 1917
America was beginning also to smart under the irritation of her ‘foreign colonies’—those groups of aliens, either in city slums or in country districts, who speak a foreign language and live a foreign life, and who want neither to learn our common speech nor to share our common life. From all this has grown the conviction that it was best for America that our incoming immigrants should hereafter be of the same races as those of us who are already here, so that each year’s immigration should so far as possible be a miniature America, resembling in national origins the persons who are already settled in our country.

~ “Our New Nordic Immigration Policy,”
Literary Digest, May 10 1924

“Regarding the Italian Population:
A Nuisance to Pedestrians. Their Sleeping Apartments. Afternoon’s Pleasant Diversions.
The Way to Dispose of Them. The Way to Arrest Them.”
My information showed that communism in this country was an organization of thousands of aliens who were direct allies of Trotzky. Aliens of the same misshapen caste of mind and indecencies of character, and it showed that they were making the same glittering promises of lawlessness, of criminal autocracy to Americans, that they had made to the Russian peasants.

~ Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer, “The Case Against the Reds,” 1920
GALLERY OF NATIVISM

World War II

“A Jap’s a Jap. It makes no difference whether he is an American citizen or not. I don’t want any of them ... They are a dangerous element, whether loyal or not.”

~General DeWitt, in congressional testimony.

GALLERY OF NATIVISM

Lesson 10: Handout 2

World War II

Image 1: A sign reading "JAPS KEEP MOVING. THIS IS A WHITE MAN'S NEIGHBORHOOD."

Image 2: A poster with the text "STAMP 'EM OUT! YOU and I BEAT YOUR PROMISE."
“In short: The situation today is far different from in the past, and unfortunately, presages trouble in the future. The rules are different and the aims are new. For example, assimilation and learning English do not seem to be high priorities.”

~John Tanton

Source: Southern Poverty Law Center, Intelligence Report, Summer 2002, Issue Number: 106.

GALLERY OF NATIVISM

Undocumented Immigration

“The current situation, which seems so bad to us, could be -- indeed will be -- vastly worse in another decade. The political power of the immigrants -- legal and illegal -- will be so great that nothing can stop it, and the greatest migration in the history of the United States will fundamentally transform our society and economy.”

~John Tanton


“[A]t the very least, illegal immigrants are attacking our culture, and our way of life. They are not melting into our melting pot -- they’re here for the cash.”

~Glenn Beck

“Beck listed the only three reasons a Mexican would come to the United States on his CNN show: ‘One, they’re terrorists; two, they’re escaping the law; or three, they’re hungry. They can’t make a living in their own dirtbag country.’”

Islam is more than just a spiritual system — it’s also a political system, a system regulating economics, war, the subjugation of infidels, personal hygiene, and every other aspect of life. And of course radical elements - i.e., orthodox Muslims - are behind the construction of many, if not most mosques in the West. Both of these facts make Islam a unique danger to our Republic and are arguments for enhanced scrutiny of mosques and all Muslim organizations, the use of undercover agents to infiltrate them and track their activities, a resumption of the use of ideological exclusion in visa and immigration matters, and the categorical rejection of all special demands, whether wearing a hijab in a driver’s license photo or giving legal authority to sharia courts in family-law matters.

Islamists arrive in the United States despising the country and all it represents, intending to make converts, exploit the freedoms and rights granted them, and build a movement that will effect basic changes in the country’s way of life and its government…Islamists do not accept the United States as it is but want to change it into a majority Muslim country…"

Early American Intolerance. From the very beginning of written U.S. history, immigration has brought with it fear of newcomers and the changes they might bring to the economy, culture, and national security of the country. Areas with high concentrations of immigrant groups, like the Germans in Pennsylvania, were especially likely to provoke resentment. Politicians also encouraged ethnic divisions as a way of securing political power. One early anti-immigration law was the 1798 Alien and Sedition Acts, which gave the President the power to exclude or deport foreigners who were considered dangerous or who had criticized the government. The supporters of the law played on anti-French and anti-radical feelings inspired by the French Revolution in order to gain support for the law. Though most of the Act expired with the end of President John Adams’ term in office, the Alien Enemies Act, which allows the President to arrest and deport without judicial review the nationals of any country with which the U.S. is at war, remains in effect today.

Anti-Catholicism. In the 1830s and 40s, immigration grew sharply with the arrival of many Roman Catholics from Ireland and Germany. Simultaneously, a Protestant revival flourished in a climate of economic insecurity. Evangelists demonized Catholics as immoral “Papists” who followed authoritarian leaders, imported crime and disease, and stole native jobs. A convent near Boston was burned and dozens of people were killed in anti-Catholic riots in several other cities. Political parties, collectively referred to as the “Know-Nothings,” sprang up to oppose Irish Catholic immigration and won large victories in state and federal government. They enacted numerous laws that penalized immigrants (as well as newly annexed Mexicans), including the first literacy tests for voting, which disfranchised the Irish in particular. Anti-Catholicism had a revival following the Civil War, but was soon eclipsed by a more general anti-immigrant movement directed against a new wave of immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe.

Chinese Exclusion. Nativists in the West singled out Chinese immigrants for violence and legalized discrimination, claiming that white wage earners could never compete with so-called “coolies” willing to live in squalor. The nativist Workingmen’s Party led a movement for a new state constitution in California in 1878-79, adopting provisions to ban Chinese immigrants from employment by corporations or state government, segregating them into Chinatowns, and seeking to keep them from entering the state. When Congress changed the naturalization statute to reflect the newly-freed status of African Americans, legislators pointedly excluded Asian immigrants from citizenship – only white people and people of African descent were eligible. Anti-Chinese sentiment culminated in the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the nation’s first immigration restriction targeting immigrants on the basis of national origin alone. In 1907, in another move to limit Asian immigration, the United States entered into an informal “Gentlemen's Agreement” with Japan. As part of this arrangement, the United States agreed to allow for family reunification among current Japanese immigrants, and in exchange, the Japanese government agreed not to issue passports to most emigrants to the United States.

Americanization Campaign. By the turn of the century, public attention began to focus on poverty, disease, and crime rates of immigrant ghettos, as well as the cultural distance between newcomers and the native-born. Around 1890, fewer immigrants came from Ireland, England, Germany, and Scandinavia as more arrived from Italy, Greece, Poland, Hungary, and Russia. In 1911, a federal commission issued a 42-volume study of the foreign-born population, alleging that the new immigrants were less skilled and educated, more clannish, slower to learn English, and generally less desirable as citizens than the “old immigrants.” A campaign to “Americanize” these Eastern and Southern European immigrants began in an attempt to change their cultural traits, civic values, and especially their languages. The U.S. government’s Bureau of Americanization encouraged employers to require English classes for foreign-born workers. Most states banned teaching in other languages. Congress repeatedly tried to pass a literacy test requirement for incoming immigrants. After being vetoed four times by three different Presidents, Congress finally overrode President Wilson’s veto to pass the law in 1917.
World War I. The Americanization campaign received renewed energy with the beginning of World War I, which aroused suspicions of immigrants from Germany, Austria, and Hungary. The large German populations of many Midwestern states were viewed with hostility, and faced harassment and occasionally violence. German place names were changed, German businesses were vandalized, and German-language books, schools, and newspapers were banned or shut down.

Ethnic Quotas. Following World War I, nativists predicted a flood of foreign radicals from Europe, especially Communists (“Reds”). Immigrants from places outside of Northern Europe were seen as genetically inferior to the English, Germans, and Scandinavians. Their perceived inferiority supposedly made them unable to function in a democratic society and a threat to American democratic institutions. Anti-Semitism (discrimination against Jewish people) was strong during this time period. As a result of these racist theories, Congress passed legislation in 1921 and again in 1924 designed to favor Northern Europeans while strictly limiting immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe and prohibiting Asian immigration entirely.

World War II. As in World War I, the United States’ entry into the war sparked suspicion and hostility towards immigrant groups connected to enemy nations. The President ordered the internment of these “enemy aliens,” primarily the Japanese, but also Germans and Italians suspected of sympathizing with the governments of their home countries. As a result of an Executive Order, more than 110,000 people of Japanese ancestry, including many citizens, were forcibly evicted from their homes and detained in internment camps for up to four years. Additionally, due to continued anti-Semitism, quotas, and departmental policies, many refugees from Germany and Austria fleeing the horrors of the Holocaust were denied entrance to the United States.

English-Only Movement. The 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act ended the racial quotas first established in the 1920s. Immigration increased, bringing to the United States a new diversity of national origin, culture, and language. Americans who felt unsettled by these changes found a symbolic target for their discontent: “bilingualism.” In the early 1980s, nativists launched a movement to make English the official language of the United States and restrict the use of other languages, especially by the government. Twenty-six states have passed English-only laws, which often deny non-English speakers essential rights and services, including health care, public safety, and the right to vote. This movement continues to some degree today.

Undocumented Immigration. Immigration from Latin America rose dramatically beginning in the 1990s. At the same time, rates of undocumented immigration also increased, with the largest proportion of undocumented immigrants coming from Mexico. Worries about the cultural and economic impact of large numbers of Hispanic immigrants combined with concerns about widespread violation of immigration laws led to new attacks against “illegal immigrants” that focused almost entirely on Hispanics, even when most Hispanics in the United States are citizens or legal permanent residents. The nativist movement against undocumented immigration has pushed for harsh immigration enforcement measures at the federal level and then moved to enacting increasingly punitive laws at the state and local level. Many of the laws, like the nativist rhetoric that inspired them, encourage discrimination against Hispanics under the guise of fighting undocumented immigration.

Post-September 11. After the terrorist attacks on September 11, anti-Muslim sentiment increased. In some cases, this lead to vandalism and violence. The government passed new immigration restrictions on immigrants coming from predominantly Muslim or Arab countries, and rounded up thousands of Muslim immigrants for special questioning. The anti-Muslim movement has opposed granting Muslims the same religious freedom as other faiths, including blocking the construction of mosques and opposing workplace accommodations.

Part I: Your Source Matters

Imagine that you read the following excerpt on a friend’s blog: “Biting dogs are an increasing problem in our city. In one neighborhood, 50% of dogs have caused serious injury to children. This problem has got to be addressed!”

1. What might your opinion be, based on this information? Would you agree that biting dogs are a problem?

2. Now, what if you discovered the following facts?
   - There are only two dogs in the neighborhood, so 50% is actually only one dog.
   - The dog in question did bite a child – a four-year-old who took away its bone and struck it in the face.

   How might these facts change your opinion?

3. Think about the source of the information. Is a personal blog the best place to find statistics on dog bites in a given area? If you did read this, and you questioned it, what are some sources you could turn to in order to check the facts?

Generally, you want your source to match the material you are looking for. If you want to know what your friend thinks about his neighbor’s dog, then his personal blog is a great source. If, however, you want to find out statistics on neighborhood dog bites, you should turn to a government agency that collects such data, such as your city’s Department of Animal Care or Control. Even if that agency does not have the data, someone there can probably direct you to another reliable source.

Part II: Credibility Checklist

When researching social or policy issues that can be considered controversial, such as immigration, it is especially important that you find and use reliable sources. The following ten criteria in the “Credibility Checklist” can help you determine whether a source is appropriate when looking for accurate information about such a topic. The best place to start is to follow links to the original research, article, or report, and then use the list from there to judge its reliability.
GUIDE TO SOURCES

1. ___ The source matches the kind of information I am looking for.
2. ___ The article or report is hosted on the author’s website, or else I am looking at a published copy of the material.
3. ___ The source is highly respected, with a good reputation. For example, it is a government agency, professional journal, national/international news agency, university, think tank, or a reputable organization.
4. ___ The source does not have an inappropriate agenda, bias, or conflicts of interest that are obvious in its programs or funding. (For example, it does not have racist or sexist language on its website, receive funding from political parties or companies looking to sell a product related to the research, or have close allies that are aligned with an unsuitable agenda.)
5. ___ The content in the article or report seems to be objective, reasonable, and fair.
6. ___ The research is either original (conducted by the source) and provides information about the scientific methods used, or it provides citations to the original research.
7. ___ If a group is claiming to be neutral, and opinions or individual stories are provided, there seems to be reasonable attention given to both/all sides of an issue.
8. ___ There is a publication date, and this seems to be some of the most current research available on the topic.
9. ___ I can find other reliable sources online that corroborate, or agree with, the information I found in the article or report.
10. ___ I can do an online search with the source’s name with words like “controversial,” “political,” or “watchdog” and there does not seem to be information to suggest that other credible sources believe they are biased.

Part III: Sources to Use with Caution

Try to avoid using the following sources when conducting objective research. If you do use them, understand their limitations and/or biases before reading the content.

- Blogs (personal or informal)
- Organizations labeled as “hate groups” (see http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/hate-map for a list of active hate groups in the United States)
- Political party websites (except where they are being used to describe a candidate’s position or provide information about upcoming events, etc)
- Social media (If someone is linking to a credible source, go to that site and use the information from the original source.)
- Websites that appear outdated or non-credible
- Wikipedia (This can be a nice source for informal research on a subject, but go to other sources to get information to use in reports.)