

# The Delray Democrat

## Immigration Racism Rears Its Ugly Head Again<sup>1</sup>

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We are a nation of immigrants. That we are better for it is axiomatic. Immigrants were welcomed for the first century after our founding, perhaps because they had the “right” skin color, religion, and nationality, namely, White, Protestant, and northern and western [European](#).

Attitudes towards immigration changed in the latter part of the Nineteenth Century, as those with the wrong skin color, religion, and nationality began to arrive, first from China and then from Southern and Eastern Europe.

Chinese immigrants helped build railroads, roads, and bridges, making America a better place. America rewarded them by passing a series of “Chinese Exclusion” laws that first limited and then barred immigration from China.

During the Progressive era that spanned the first two decades of the Twentieth Century, tens of millions of immigrants came from southern and eastern Europe. The Immigration Act of 1917 (also known as the “Literacy Act” or “Barred Zone Act”) differentiated between “desirable” and “undesirable” immigrants based on nationality, race and religion.

Northern European Protestants were desirable while southern and eastern European Catholics and Jews were non-desirable. Non-Europeans were “highly undesirable.”

The literacy requirement imposed by the Act would have barred Ron DeSantis’s great-great-grandmother from entry, but fortunately for her and her “anchor baby” (if not necessarily for Floridians), she [arrived](#) only weeks before the act took effect.

Things became truly ugly in the 1920s, when the hysteria about undesirable aliens reached a pitch as fevered as it is today. Congress passed the Reed-Johnson Immigration Act of 1924, which greatly restricted immigration from southern and eastern Europe and entirely barred immigration from Asian countries.

The share allocated to immigrants from southern and eastern Europe fell from 41% to 11%. To employ the degraded imagery of a disgraced former president, those were the “shithole countries” of that era. Of course, there is no such thing as “shithole countries,” shithole *people*, perhaps — many of them native-born Americans — like Donald Trump and his minions and enablers.

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<sup>1</sup> [The Delray Democrat](#), June 2024, page 2.



From the May 16, 1923, edition of the Klan newspaper, [Fiery Cross](#).

A closer look at The Twenties reveals that the Ku Klux Klan did then what Donald Trump has done today. They normalized racism. The March 14, 1924 issue of the Klan newspaper [Fiery Cross](#) exhorts: "It is God's purpose that the white man should preserve purity of blood and white supremacy in this country."

We know that Adolf Hitler studied and learned from the American racism of that era—in *Mein Kampf*, he praised the fact that American law "simply excludes the immigration of certain races." So while Trump was probably parroting Hitler when he referred to immigrants "poisoning our blood," the concept was, a century ago, as American as apple [pie](#).

America eventually rejected the naked racism of the 1924 law. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 abolished quotas. In a signing statement, President Lyndon Baines Johnson said:

Over my shoulders here you can see Ellis Island, whose vacant corridors echo today the joyous sound of long ago voices. And today we can all believe that the lamp of this grand old lady is brighter today—and the golden door that she guards gleams more brilliantly in the light of an increased liberty for the people from all the countries of the globe.

Trump and his minions have resurrected the racism and hatred of the 1920s. Respondents to the latest Gallup [poll](#) independently cited immigration as “the most important problem” facing America. Between January and March 2024, there was a 40% jump in respondent selecting that response.

That is a condemnation of Americans who swallow the same racist lies that circulated a century ago. It is also a condemnation of the media that either promote them or refuse to debunk them. Here are the facts.

### **Immigrants do not pose a danger**

“They’re bringing drugs. They’re bringing crime. They’re rapists,” sayeth the Father of Lies. This is stood on its head by a comparative [study](#) published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* that used a database supplied by the Texas Department of Public Safety:

Relative to undocumented immigrants, US-born citizens are over 2 times more likely to be arrested for violent crimes, 2.5 times more likely to be arrested for drug crimes, and over 4 times more likely to be arrested for property crimes.

### **Immigrants do not take jobs away from Americans**

A recent [study](#) published in the *National Bureau of Economic Research* found that “immigrants act more as ‘job creators’ than ‘job takers.’” And many of the jobs they take are jobs that Americans do not want.

### **Immigrants are not a drain on services.**

Rick Scott falsely [claims](#) that President Biden is forcing “American taxpayers to fund services for illegal aliens.” He adds, “Enough is Enough.”

Leaving aside the utter obscenity of NRA-whore Scott using a slogan associated with the Marjory Stoneman Douglas massacre, undocumented immigrants are [ineligible](#) to receive most federal benefits.

Moreover, immigrants who *are* eligible pay far more in taxes than they receive in benefits. They use government services at a far lower rate than native-born Americans. They pay taxes but are ineligible for Medicaid, food stamps, or other “means-tested welfare benefits” until they have resided in the United States for five years, and they are ineligible for Social Security or Medicare until they have paid payroll taxes for 10 years.

### **“Illegal” immigration is not above historical norms**

According to a recent analysis (“[US immigration policy: A classic, unappreciated example of structural racism](#)”), “illegal” immigration is no more common today than between 1900 and 1960. The difference is that the millions of predominantly white immigrants who entered illegally during that period faced no threat of being apprehended or deported.