

Fearful Times in the 1920s

Document 3A

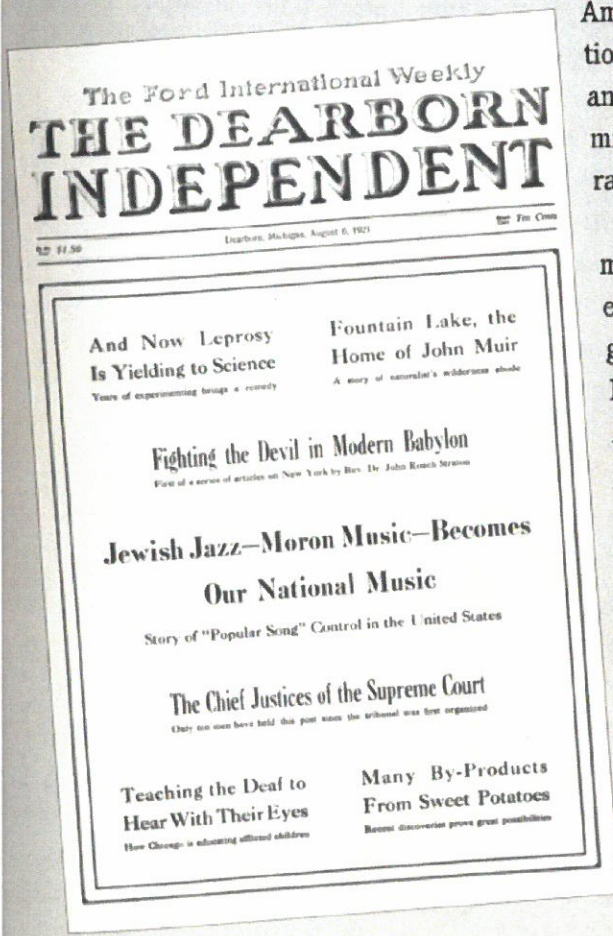
Nativism and Anti-Immigrant Feelings

A wide range of immigrants from all over the world had been coming to North America for hundreds of years. Employers particularly liked immigrants because they worked for low wages. But the majority of Anglo-Americans (those of British descent) looked with disdain at immigrants in big cities. Their dress was foreign, their languages were foreign, and their religions were foreign—and some of them clamored about Socialism and anarchy.

Nativism—the notion that native-born Americans were superior to immigrants—had increased steadily through the early 1900s. In the 1910s, many

Americans called for stricter limits on immigration. Congress responded with literacy (reading and writing) tests to weed out poorly educated immigrants, as well as with deportations of foreign radicals.

By 1920 nativism was in full force. A nativist magazine called the *Menace* railed against foreigners, especially Catholics. The *Dearborn* (Michigan) *Independent*, published by automaker Henry Ford, attacked Jews. In late 1919 and early 1920, Attorney General Mitchell Palmer arrested and jailed thousands of suspected Communists and anarchists. The suspects included many immigrants, including well-known anarchists Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, who were deported to Russia.



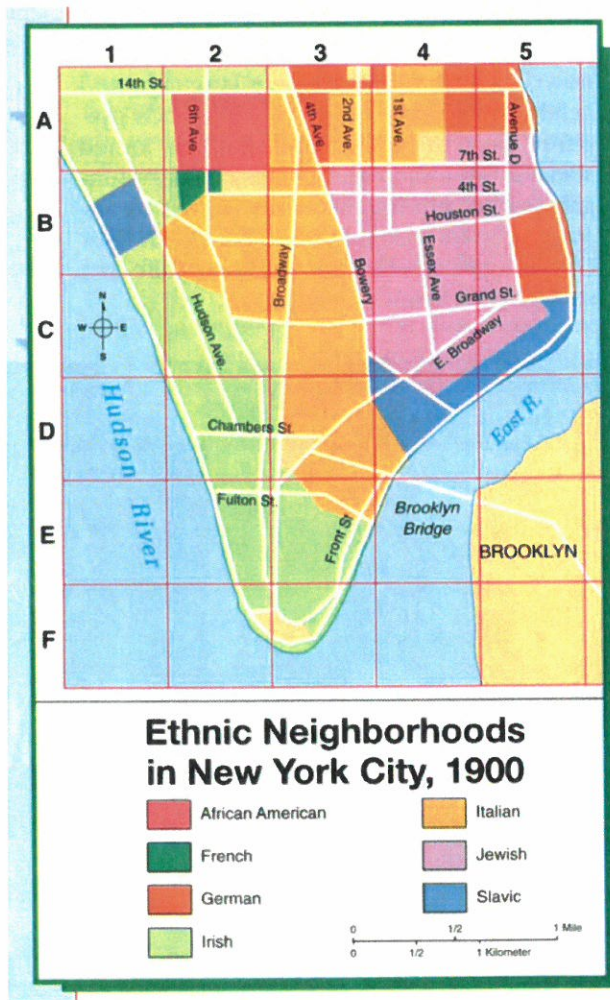
Henry Ford's newspaper, the **DEARBORN INDEPENDENT**, regularly included attacks on Jews in its selection of articles.

In 1921 Congress passed a quota act. The law restricted yearly immigration from any one country to 3 percent of its representation in the United States in 1910. In 1924 Congress strengthened the quota. It passed the National Origins Act, which reduced immigration from any one country from 3 percent to 2 percent and based the percentage on the U.S. population of 1890 instead of 1910.

The new law ensured that most future immigrants would be from northern Europe—places such as Scandinavia, Germany, and France—since in 1890, the U.S. population had been largely northern European. The law severely limited immigration from Russia and the nations of eastern and southern Europe—since very few immigrants from these nations were living in the United States in 1890. The United States already prohibited immigration from China and many other Asian nations. The 1924 law excluded Japanese immigrants as well.

Very few people protested against the new restrictions. Most immigrants—having fled oppressive regimes in Europe and elsewhere—were happy to be living in the United States. Most endured nativist taunts and slurs silently.

Document 3B



Fearful Times in the 1920s

Document 3C

■ KLANSMEN

“Are you a native-born, white gentile [non-Jewish] American? Will you faithfully strive for the eternal maintenance of white supremacy?”

By answering yes to those questions, men became members of the Ku Klux Klan, a secret, nativist organization—dedicated to the supremacy of the white race and the repression of blacks, Jews, Catholics, and other minority Americans. The Klan had its peak between 1920 and 1925—with a top membership estimated at four million.



The Klan of the 1920s drew its membership largely from rural America—although many big cities had chapters. Members were white Protestants. By and large, they supported Prohibition and traditional religious values. Only men could be official Klan members, while women joined the auxiliary Women of the Klu Klux Klan. The Klan also ran children's auxiliaries.

Klan operations were shrouded in secrecy. Members met at night in remote outdoor locales. Sentries made sure that no outsiders saw the proceedings. Klansmen dressed in white robes and peaked hats, with masks covering their faces. They ended their nighttime gatherings with dramatic cross burnings. Klan leaders had magical-sounding titles, such as imperial wizard and grand dragon.

The Klan of the 1920s was a terror organization. It threatened, beat, and sometimes murdered those who challenged Anglo-American supremacy. The Klan's primary target was African Americans, but it also terrorized

Jews and Catholics. The Klan was also a political organization. It ran members for local, state, and national office. In many cities, it took control of local school boards. Once in office, Klansmen pushed an anti-immigrant, antiminority, pro-Protestant agenda.

The Klan reached its high-water mark on August 9, 1925, when about twenty-five thousand Klansmen and auxiliary members paraded in their robes, sixteen abreast, down Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C., the nation's capital. Shortly afterward, Klan membership began to decline. Its leadership was rocked by scandal and infighting. In some cities, groups formed to oppose the Klan. And with the 1924 National Origins Act having reduced immigration, the Klan could no longer stir up much anger about a foreign “menace.” By 1927 Klan membership had fallen to about 350,000.

Fearful Times in the 1920s

Document 3D



ITALIAN AMERICAN ANARCHISTS

Bartolomeo Vanzetti (*left*) and Nicola Sacco (*right*) arrive at a Massachusetts courthouse around 1927. The two men were executed for murder that year.

Later in 1920, Italian American anarchists Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti were arrested for murder. Because they were anarchists—and immigrants—public opinion weighed heavily against them. “The jury [hated] us,” Vanzetti explained. It was a “time when there was a hysteria of resentment and hate against the people of our principles, against the foreigner.” Although the evidence against them was slim, they were both found guilty and sentenced to death.

Document 3E

Why were Americans so scared of the color red after the war?

It wasn't the color but what it stood for: Communism.

Communism is an economic system in which the government owns almost all the land, industry, and business; controls work; and gives out goods according to need instead of according to how hard a person works. Communism is usually paired with a totalitarian government, where the leader has total control. These forces, under the leadership of dictator Vladimir Lenin and his successor, Joseph Stalin, came to rule Russia during World War I. Russia then merged with several neighboring

Fearful Times in the 1920s

republics and formed the larger Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), or Soviet Union. Many Americans were scared that Communists, or “Reds” (named after the color of their flag), would take over the United States. They also feared anarchists. These two groups, though unrelated, were lumped together because both seemed to threaten the American way of life.



USSR dictator Stalin (center) at the Sixth Party Congress in 1930

Americans were suspicious because, after World War I, the United States was a turbulent place. During the war, prices had gone up, and many factory workers didn't feel their wages were keeping up with inflation. Unhappy workers, looking for someone to blame for their troubles, turned their frustration against foreigners, especially Russians.

After a series of bombs targeted famous Americans like J. P. Morgan and Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer, Palmer unleashed a “Red Scare” against those he thought were dangerous or undesirable. He ordered the arrest of six thousand suspected Reds on one night, six hundred of whom were deported to other countries. Soon thereafter, in 1921 and again in 1924, the government cut the number of immigrants allowed into the country.



Perhaps the most famous casualties of the Red Scare were two Italian immigrants, Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti. Sacco and Vanzetti were known anarchists who were arrested in 1920 and accused of robbery and murder. They were tried and convicted, and eventually executed for crimes that, even today, no one is sure they committed. (Years later, reports showed that Sacco was probably guilty and Vanzetti probably innocent.) Many people said it was their radical beliefs that were really on trial.

Eugenics → “the science of improving a human population by controlled breeding to increase the occurrence of desirable heritable characteristics”

THE EUGENICS MOVEMENT

Darwin's ideas transformed scientific thought in many positive ways. However, some scientists—including prominent APS Members—extended Darwin's theories to human society to justify racism, imperialism, and xenophobia. These beliefs produced the eugenics movement in the early 20th century.

Eugenicists believed that controlling human reproduction would improve society. They discriminated against physical, mental, and emotional conditions as well as certain racial and ethnic groups. Their efforts had harmful consequences for America and the world, promoting

hateful policies and intolerance.

Today, scholars use the APS Library's extensive eugenics collections to shed light on this dark history.

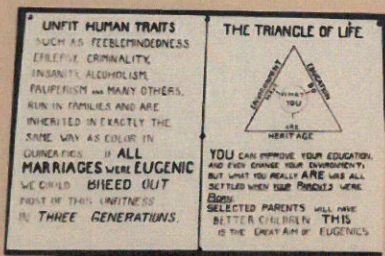
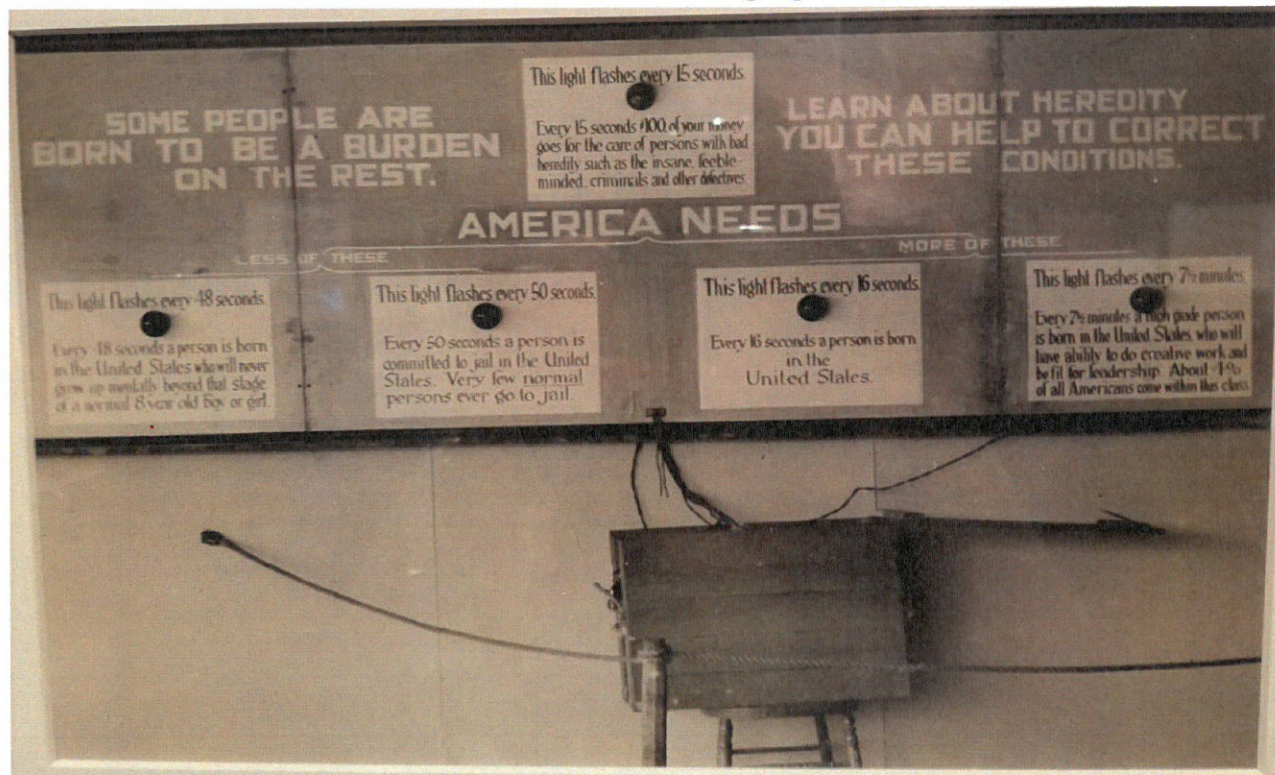


Chart Used at Kansas Free Fair Describing "Unfit Human Traits" and the Importance of Eugenic Marriage, American Eugenics Society, c. 1929. APS, American Eugenics Society Records.

Photograph of Flashing Light Sign from Fitter Family Contests (c. 1926) American Eugenics Society

Eugenicists promoted their discriminatory agenda at state fairs. Flashing signs like the one shown here highlighted the spread of supposed “unfit” traits believed to be hereditary, such as “feeble-mindedness, epilepsy, criminality, insanity, alcoholism, pauperism, and many others”.



Fearful Times in the 1920s
Treatment of Native Americans

■ NATIVE AMERICANS

Immigrants were not the only ones who faced discrimination in the early 1900s. Native Americans also suffered the effects of racial prejudice in the United States. After resettling entire Native American nations onto reservations in the mid-1800s, U.S. government bureaucrats hoped to “humanize and civilize [Native Americans] . . . into hard-working Christian taxpayers.” They decided that

the easiest way to do this was to focus on Native American children—the future of Native American communities.

Reformers decided to set up separate schools for Native American children. These schools would be boarding schools (schools at which meals and lodging are provided), and they would be located miles away from the children’s homes and communities. Eager reformers tore Native American children ages six to sixteen from their families and placed them in the schools. Everything about the schools was designed to wipe out the children’s Native American heritage. Students weren’t allowed to have long hair (an important cultural tradition for many Native Americans). Instead of traditional clothing, the children had to wear Victorian-style uniforms consisting of long dresses for girls and pants and jackets for boys. They also had to give up their traditional footwear in favor of stiff shoes and stockings.

Children were expected to speak and think only in English and not in their own languages. They were taught the value of individual wealth and property—ideals not recognized in Native American communities. Teachers told the students that Christopher Columbus had discovered America even though the

children’s ancestors had been there long before Columbus arrived in the 1400s. Teachers also forced their Native American students to pledge allegiance to the U.S. flag, which represented the people who had brutally conquered them.

As reform intensified, Native American children were required to attend Christian church services and Sunday school. Anyone who protested received physical punishment. Many children were psychologically abused. Teachers told the students that their culture was savage and inferior.

Some experts of the day realized that the boarding schools were harming Native American students. They urged teachers in such schools to respect the students’ cultures and beliefs. For instance, psychologist and educator expert G. Stanley Hall encouraged instructors to “build on an Indian child’s natural capacities and background rather than obliterate them.” He preferred that teachers “make [the students] good Indian[s] rather than a cheap imitation of the white man.” In spite of such urging, abuses continued in the boarding schools. And although the schools were failing in their mission, the U.S. government did not begin to close them until the 1920s.

Fearful Times in the 1920s

Document 3H

The Carlisle Indian Industrial School (1879-1918)

The Carlisle Indian Industrial School was sent up for Native American youth by the U.S. government to sever their ties to the tribal community, convert them to a more “Americanized” lifestyle, and have them assimilate into “mainstream society”. There are reports that parents were forced to send their children to this school. Those promoting this type of education at the time claimed that it was the best way to “save” Native Americans as the buffalo disappeared and more settlers traveled West and took up residence where Native Americans lived.

Below is an excerpt of one Native American’s experience at the school as well as images of those who attended.

Luther Standing Bear was a member of the Lakota tribe and attended the Carlisle Indian Industrial School beginning in 1879. After graduating, he became a Lakota chief and advocated for Native American rights and sovereignty. The following are excerpts from a book he wrote in 1933 about his experiences at the school.

At the age of eleven years, **ancestral** life for me and my people was most abruptly ended without regard for our wishes, comforts, or rights in the matter. At once I was thrust into an alien world, into an environment as different from the one into which I had been born as it is possible to imagine, to remake myself, if I could, into the likeness of the invader. . . .

At Carlisle . . . the “civilizing” process began. It began with clothes. Never, no matter what our philosophy or spiritual quality, could we be civilized while wearing the moccasin and blanket. The task before us was not only that of accepting new ideas and adopting new manners, but actual physical changes and discomfort had to be **borne** uncomplainingly until the body adjusted itself to new tastes and habits. . . . Of course, our hair was cut, and then there was much disapproval. But that was part of the transformation process, and in some mysterious way long hair stood in the path of our development. . . .

Almost immediately our names were changed to those in common use in the English language. . . . I was told to take a pointer and select a name for myself from the list written on the blackboard. . . . By that time we had been forbidden to speak our mother tongue, which is the rule in all boarding schools. . . .

Of all the changes we were forced to make, that of diet was doubtless the most injurious, for it was immediate and drastic. . . . Had we been allowed our own simple diet . . . we should have thrived. But the change in clothing, housing, food, and **confinement** combined with lonesomeness was too much, and in three years nearly one half of the children from the Plains were dead and through with all earthly schools. In the graveyard at Carlisle most of the graves are those of the little ones. . . .

Source: *Luther Standing Bear, Land of the Spotted Eagle, 1933.*

Fearful Times in the 1920s

Document 3H – Continued



Sioux boys as they arrived at the Indian Training School at Carlisle Barracks – October 5, 1897



Group of Carlisle School students in 1890



Carlisle Band, 1901



Ironing Class, 1901

Man and Monkey

It was more like a circus – or a county fair – than a trial. People poured into the usually quiet town of Dayton, Tennessee, in unheard-of numbers. Some drove old-fashioned wagons pulled by mules; others came in noisy Model Ts. Hot dogs and lemonade were for sale on the street. Reporters from all over the United States were there, too. The clack-clack of the telegraph mixed with the buzz of excited talk. Most incredible of all, big-city radio had come to Dayton: station WGN from Chicago was broadcasting the trial. It was the great “Monkey Trial” of 1925 – a lively battle

Biology teacher John T. Scopes listens to his sentence in 1925. He was found guilty, but was given a fine of only \$100.



between believers in science and believers in religion.

In March of 1925, the state of Tennessee had passed the Butler Act, a law about the theory of evolution. According to this law, no teacher in a public school could teach “any theory which denies the story of the Divine creation of man as taught in the Bible [and says] instead that man has descended from a lower order of animals.” The Tennessee lawmakers were challenging “modern thinkers” to risk time in jail for their beliefs.

John T. Scopes, a high school biology teacher, took the challenge. He taught Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution – that humans developed from “a lower order of animals” – to his students. He did this knowing he would be arrested and tried. He was one of a group of people who wanted to test the law. They wanted to get a court to rule on whether the law violated “free speech” rights, which are guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution.

So, in the intense heat of a Tennessee July, the trial began. If it was a circus outside the courtroom, it was a bitter fight inside. Two legal giants from outside Dayton fought this battle. William Jennings Bryan, famous speaker and politician, was the lawyer for the state. Clarence Darrow, fresh from the Leopold-Loeb case, defended Scopes.

A Great Battle

From the beginning, the two lawyers argued about more than the case. Bryan claimed that he was defending religious faith – fundamentalism, which means the belief that the Christian Bible is fact. Darrow said he



was defending free thought and modern science.

Near the end of the trial, something very unusual happened. Darrow asked Bryan to testify as a Bible expert. Darrow made Bryan look foolish by pointing out inconsistencies in the Bible. The trial had been moved outdoors, and a crowd of hundreds saw Bryan lose his temper time after time.

What was the outcome? Scopes was found guilty of breaking the law. But his punishment was very light: a \$100 fine. Perhaps the judge who decided the sentence realized that the law was shaky.

Scopes's lawyers appealed the verdict to the Tennessee supreme court. The court reversed the conviction because it disagreed with the way the trial had been handled. But it did *not* rule on whether the law was constitutional, which was what Scopes and his lawyers had really wanted. So, in a way, neither side won. ■

Do public schools in your area allow prayer in the classroom?

Do you believe prayer and religious groups belong in the public schools? Why or why not?

THEN & NOW

The controversy behind the "Monkey Trial" is still going on, generations after John Scopes got a "slap on the wrist" from a Tennessee judge. In recent years, fundamentalist groups have worked to have "Creation Science" taught in schools. Creation Science is a set of ideas and theories that ties scientific explanations to parts of the Bible's creation story. Supporters of Creation Science say it should be taught side by side with evolution. Critics say it shouldn't be, because it isn't really science.

The Scopes trial goes on.

The Scopes trial (above left) was moved outdoors. A crowd of hundreds gathered to hear the legal battle. Inside the Dayton, Tennessee, courtroom, opposing lawyers Clarence Darrow (left) and William Jennings Bryan chat.

In 1925, Tennessee passed the following law, called the Butler Act:

It shall be unlawful for any teacher . . . to teach any theory that denies the story of the Divine Creation of man as taught in the Bible, and to teach instead that man has descended from a lower order of animals.

The Butler Act made it illegal to teach from textbooks like the one below.

Textbook – A Civic Biology, 1925

The Doctrine of Evolution.

We have now learned that animals may begin with very simple one-celled forms and end with a group which contains man himself. The great English scientist Charles Darwin explained the theory of evolution. This is the belief that simple forms of life on the earth slowly gave rise to more complex forms.

Man's Place in Nature.

We see that man must be placed with the vertebrate animals because of his vertebral column. We place man with the apelike mammals because of structural likeness. The group of mammals which includes the monkeys, apes, and man we call the primates.

Evolution of Man.

There once lived races of men who were much lower in their mental organization than present people. If we follow the early history of man, we find that at first he must have been little better than one of the lower animals. Gradually he must have learned to use weapons and kill his prey, first using rough stones for this purpose. Man then began to farm the fields, and to have permanent houses. Civilization began long ago, but even today the earth is not entirely civilized.

Source: *Excerpt from widely-used biology textbook, A Civic Biology, written in 1914 by George W. Hunter, a biology teacher from New York City.*