

## The Unwelcome Servant

Xenophobia is not new to the 21st century. It has deep roots stretching to the very beginning of colonization, holding origins to even before the advent of expansion into the New World. As early as the 14th century, the Statute of Kilkenny separated the "dangerous", different, Irish from the pure English. Unfortunately, this distaste for the different did not stay in the Old World. Early immigrants came to the Americas fleeing persecution. Protestant pilgrims who were heavily persecuted in Europe due to their minority religion came to the New World to start a new life. In order to achieve the exact same status as those whose only difference was the mere location they were born, immigrants have always been forced to work much harder. Subsequently, these early immigrants were known for their work ethic which came to be known as the "protestant work ethic." Waves of immigrants continued flooding America fleeing famine, war, and persecution. In the mid 19th century underlying tensions between the North and South in America reached fever pitch, shattering the nation like glass. The Civil War between the Union, where many of these immigrants lived, and the Confederacy, presented these immigrants with a puzzling quandary. To fight and support their new home, the Union, was in direct conflict with their own interests. These immigrants fought a war whose basis was to free slaves they had no reason to care about; slaves, who, if freed would crowd an already cut throat job market. The ideals of the Union, freedom, liberty, democracy, resonated with immigrants. In order to protect these values, their home, their country, these immigrants fought. Despite facing widespread xenophobia, immigrants fought for the Union in the American Civil War to preserve the ideals of a democracy. However, even after fighting for their country immigrants continued to face discrimination.

Immigrants, before the Civil War, faced intense discrimination stemming from a deep Xenophobia. Coming from humble origins, immigrants fled many types of persecution or famine. The Irish Potato famine of the 1840s, right before the Civil War, pushed many immigrants to emigrate from their homes to find a new, more prosperous life, in America. In her letter, "Hannah Curtis to John Curtis, April 21, 1847", Curtis writes to her brother who had emigrated to America of the complete desolation that the Irish Potato Famine has left. Immigrants are shown to have nothing to their name except the clothes on their back. Instead of being welcomed, pitied, and supported, these immigrants are shunned, ostracized, and discriminated against. One political party that gained prominence in American politics for a short period time, The Know Nothing Party, built their entire platform on anti-immigrant policy and was tremendously successful. In his address to the Massachusetts Legislature, Henry J. Gardner, the Massachusetts governor and party leader of the Know Nothings, vehemently attacked the poor immigrants. Gardner explicitly stated that poor immigrants should be quickly deported, continuing his address he renounces immigrants with no sympathy. These attacks were not limited to not only the address of prominent American politicians but also seeped into the very legislation that governed America. Despite being forward thinking and progressive in many other aspects, including, government regulation of railroads as well as rudimentary insurance the 1855 Acts themselves, passed by the General Courts in Massachusetts, attempted to undermine immigrants. The very law stated immigrants were, "aliens unfitted to appreciate or rightly use the great trust". The law, as the voice of the people sets a pretense for how immigrants of the time were treated. In addition, the law appointed paid officers to "control" immigrants and attempted to simply kick them out. In the span of a mere century, a country that had been a safe haven for the immigrant refugees had become their worst nightmare.

Despite widespread hatred towards immigrants, the ideals of a democracy resounded with the immigrants, causing them to fight to protect a country that had yet to accept them. Basic logic would dictate that fighting in the American Civil War was in direct conflict with the immigrants own ability to survive. The basis of the Civil War was the freeing of slaves which the immigrants had absolutely no reason to care about. In addition, it was already notoriously hard for immigrants to get jobs. If slaves were freed, an already extremely tight market would be flooded with millions of competitors. However, the basis of liberty and freedom that the Union fought for was one that the immigrants could empathize well with. At an Anti-Slavery Rally in 1863 Mrs. Chalkstone revealed the mind of immigrants in fighting in the civil war: “We foreigners know the preciousness of that great, noble gift a great deal better than you, because you never were in slavery, but we are born in it.”. She shows that immigrants are able to understand the plight of slaves and are willing to fight for the liberty and freedom that they also once lacked. In her book, “The Harp and the Eagle: Irish-American Volunteers and the Union Army”, historian, Ural, reveals that over 150,000 Irish immigrants fought for the Union army. While a majority of these fighters were volunteers some also were forced to fight as a result of prejudicial legislature. The Conscription Act of 1863 made immigrants who planned on becoming citizens also apply for the draft; however, there was a caveat, if one could pay a certain amount they were exempt from the draft. This forced immigrants, who were mostly poor, to fight in the war while citizens were given a fair choice. In another one of her books, “Civil War Citizens: Race, Ethnicity, and Identity in America’s Bloodiest Conflict”, Dr. Ural reveals that more than just the Irish fought in the war. Germans and even Jews fought in the Civil War. Both groups had also faced immense persecution in Europe and as a result fought to protect the

ideals of the democracy. The Union can also be seen appealing to this desire, by creating recruitment posters in various languages in order to lure more immigrants to fight. In addition, the posters evoke senses of nationalism and freedom in order to convince immigrants to fight. In his book, "The Cause of All Nations: An International History of the American Civil War", Dr. Doyle reveals that 43% of the union army was immigrants and sons of immigrants and that every 1 in 4 in the union army was foreign born. The extreme participation of immigrants to this extent can only be seen in the union army. As the Union fought for liberty, whereas the Confederacy fought for oppression and the ability to exploit human life for fiscal reasons, immigrants only had reason to fight for the Union. While it may not at first have seen to be in the interests of the immigrants to fight in the war, the desire to protect the values of liberty and freedom pushed many immigrants to fight for the Union, as many of them did.

Even while fighting, even after fighting in the Civil War immigrants were still discriminated against and persecuted. Even while the war raged on immigrants were attacked. In his pamphlet to the French in 1862 Edwin De Leon referred to immigrants as the "refuse of the old world" and insulted the union army for being made up of such "unsavory" people. While one would think that the Union army would defend their soldiers who were giving up their very lives, this could not be farther from the case. In his novel, "The Cause of All Nations: An International History of the American Civil War" Dr. Doyle reveals that the Union army defensively claimed that immigrant soldiers only enlisted for the stipend, deserted, and then returned later to pull the same scam. This could not be farther from the truth, immigrants fought with everything they had but were still treated like criminals. Xenophobic feelings towards immigrants permeated so deep into society that even a popular cartoonist, who himself was an immigrant, created many

cartoons depicting the Irish in a bad light. Notably, his cartoon, "The Usual Irish Way of Doing Things", 17 years after the Irish fought with their lives for America, depicted the Irish as an ape and sitting on "Uncle Sam", in essence calling them "un-American". Even after the incredible sacrifices the immigrants made, the Xenophobia that was still everywhere caused them to continue to be discriminated against and seen as "less than".

Almost two whole centuries since the Civil War and little has changed. African Americans suffer under the shadow of slavery, adherents of minority religions are demonized, and immigrants are ostracized. Rather than simply shifting form, the exact same Xenophobia that existed during the Civil War exists now. Freed slaves were lynched with nothing, no one, to stop them; today their sons and daughters are shot with no consequences. Irish Catholics were seen as evil puppets of the pope, come to destroy the free world; today, Muslims are seen as evil terrorists come to set fire to the nation. Refugees of the Great Potato Famine were denied entry, today, Middle Eastern refugees are denied entry. There has been little change. Immigrants have proven their value through their hard work ethic time and time again. They have fought for their country; they love their country. Despite this, Xenophobia ultimately prevails. The current leader of this free world himself continues to propagate negative views on immigrants stating, "They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists". Immigrants are forced to work harder in order to gain respect or status but are still treated as terrorists and rapists. Immigrants love this country, they are willing to fight and die for this country; but, only once this country begins to value immigrants for what they're worth, the hands and feet that built, the hands and feet that continue to build this nation, will strife, division, and ignorance end.

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