

Brief Overview of US Immigration Policy History

- I. No immigration restrictions exist until 1882; The **Chinese Exclusion Act** excludes only Chinese persons.
- II. **The Gentleman's Agreement** results in the exclusion of Japanese immigrants in 1908.
- III. Congress enacts a literacy test requirement for all immigrants in 1917 and also excludes all Asian immigrants.
- IV. Congress enacts its first comprehensive national immigration policy in 1921---**The National Origins Act**; this legislation intentionally discriminates against all nationality groups apart from the "old immigrants" such as English, Scots, Irish, Dutch, Germans, and Scandinavians; under this Act all Asian immigrants are barred completely while other groups are restricted to a maximum annual quota of two percent of the total of foreign-born residing in the US in 1890 from their respective nationality.
- V. The **Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965** replaces the prior National Origins Act and creates hemispheric quotas giving preference to immigrants with close biological ties to US citizens and to immigrants with marketable job skills.
- VI. The **Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA)** of 1986
- VII. The **1990 Immigration Act** raises the annual total immigration cap to 675,000 effective in 1995 with a 20,000 maximum ceiling of immigrants from any one nationality group.