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## Property, Politics, and Immigration

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The ongoing political season has witnessed a plethora of anti-immigration rhetoric. The most notorious are Donald Trump's statements about Mexicans: "When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best. They're not sending you. They're not sending you. They're sending people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems with us. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people." And, of course, he has promised to bar the immigration of Muslims into the country and to build a wall to halt immigration from the south. While these may be the best-known comments on the subject, they are by no means isolated remarks emanating just from his campaign. Trump's rallies and the rhetoric of his supporters resonate with hateful comments, racist discourse, and anti-immigrant fervor.

Many liberal Americans react as if such discourse has never been present in our political culture with similar intensity and vitriol. Even Hillary Clinton, in a speech delivered on August 25, indicated that Trump revealed something new in American politics. She said: "Everywhere I go, people tell me how concerned they are by the divisive rhetoric coming from my opponent in this election. It's like nothing we've heard before from a nominee for President of the United States." Later she claimed that, "Ever since the Pilgrims landed on Plymouth Rock, America has distinguished itself as a haven for people fleeing religious persecution."

Well, not really. Railing against the foreign born has been a staple of the American political scene for a very long time. It has hit peaks during periods of economic disarray or wartime, when particularly disfavored populations seek admission in large numbers, or when the proportion of foreign born in the population edges toward fifteen-percent. When two or more of these factors merge, as they have in the present, limits on political nastiness disappear among large segments of the body politic. There is no dearth of examples. Limiting Chinese immigration in the 1880s, virulent anti-Catholicism in the nineteenth century, Red Scares and deportations in the second decade of the nineteenth century, adoption of quota bills in 1920 and 1924 that dramatically reduced immigration from all but a few favored nations, refusal to admit large numbers of Jews after the Nazis took over Germany, and internment of Japanese Americans during World War II are among the most notorious. Anti-Catholicism, with its roots in English antipathy to the Church during the colonial era, reared up in ugliness before the Civil War with riots and church burnings as those opposed to large scale Irish immigration let their feelings be known. The American Party, better known as the Know-Nothings, emerged from the cultural conflicts and ran Ex-President Millard Fillmore as its candidate for President in the 1856 election.

Much of this historical rhetoric has been about a very "territorial" notion of the past. Those opposed to large scale immigration often speak in terms of preserving a romantic, prior time when all was well and the best Americans lived a good life. Allowing in those unfamiliar with such supposedly widely accepted social understandings are viewed as threats to national well-being. Such movements must become territorial. They must claim property-like rights in the past—surrounded by emotional if not physical walls. In that sense there is nothing new about Donald Trump's anti-immigrant rhetoric. It is as old as the nation. The only change might be that his views don't prevail—that neither Mexicans nor Muslims will be cast aside like Asians from China and Japan, Catholics

from Ireland, Jews from Central Europe, or blacks from slavery were in prior generations. Though scars will be left, there will be some solace if today's voters decide to forego such territorial intolerance.

Epilogue (November 21, 2016): My hopes were obviously deflated by the election outcome. But, I hope, there will be serious public resistance to any serious moves to deport, register, or otherwise single out for harsh treatment large segments of our society. The cabinet choices now being announced strongly suggest that such resistance will be necessary.