Trouble in Paradise

A Historical Perspective on Immigration in Oregon

ROBERT BUSSEL
AND DANIEL J. TICHENOR

ON NOVEMBER 16 AND 17, 2016, on the heels of a polarizing national election fueled by nativist, anti-immigrant appeals, a diverse group of scholars, public historians, community leaders, and students convened at the University of Oregon (UO) for a symposium on "Oregon Migrations." Organized by the Oregon Historical Society, the UO Labor Education and Research Center, and the Wayne Morse Center for Law and Politics, the gathering offered an opportunity for extended reflection on the complex ways human migration has shaped the state's economic, cultural, social, and political life.

The essays in this collection convey the rich diversity of this experience, ranging from the appearance of Indigenous peoples as Oregon's earliest inhabitants to the subsequent arrivals of varied domestic and international migrants before and after statehood. Our contributors offer powerful insights into the stories of these migrants, including the experiences of tribal peoples asserting their rights to use their ancestral lands, Roma from eastern Europe who pursue "selective integration" in their adopted environment, and Mam refugees from Guatemala who rely on transborder connections and dense social networks to maintain their identity and cohesion. Contributors also chronicle the migration stories of African Americans from the U.S. South and Midwest, as well as temporary and undocumented farm workers from Mexico. All the groups considered by our contributors made claims for recognition and belonging that reflect a long tradition of challenging the hegemony of Euro-American settler-colonialists in Oregon who consciously created mythic images of pioneer virtue to reinforce their sense of entitlement and privilege. These conflicts continue into contemporary times, a reality explored by a distinguished panel of scholars and activists whose observations appear at the conclusion of this issue. In addition, contributors to "Oregon Migrations" discuss the use of art and public history in telling important yet often sub-

OHS digital no. bb016441

MEXICAN LABORERS pick potatoes in central Oregon in 1943. During World War II, the United States began the Mexican Farm Labor Program (Bracero program), which imported workers from Mexico for agricultural labor. Many laborers in the Pacific Northwest experienced poor living conditions and were paid substandard wages.

merged stories of the migration experience and demonstrate the ability of creative methodologies to assist in the essential task of historical excavation.

To set the stage for these rich accounts of migration, it is useful to understand the uneven welcome that has persistently greeted new arrivals to Oregon. We focus this analysis on the period following statehood, when Oregon's economic needs, along with larger geopolitical developments, created circumstances that inspired immigrants to leave their countries of origin for the United States and eventual settlement in the Pacific Northwest. Over time, Oregon emerged as something of a hybrid between states like California, which developed strong policy commitments to immigrant inclusion, and states like Arizona, which maintained harsh restrictions on Latino immigrants. Oregon's is a story of durable tensions between rival nativist, capitalist, and egalitarian traditions that have confronted new immigrant groups with a distinctive set of both openings and barriers to inclusion over time.[1] As historians from John Higham to Mae M. Ngai have chronicled, race-based nativism — an

"intense opposition to an internal minority on the ground of its foreign (i.e., un-American) connections" — has influenced U.S. society and politics from Chinese exclusion to contemporary battles over unauthorized immigration.[2] This ignoble strain on American identity also has been a persistent although not unchallenged feature of the Oregon experience for generations.

Lafayette Grover, one of state's most influential and longest-serving governors, forcefully reflected Oregon's enduring ambivalence toward immigrants in his 1870 inaugural address. Grover urged his fellow citizens to welcome large numbers of European immigrants whose "industry and genius" would enrich and benefit a state with untapped potential for growth. He warned, however, that Chinese immigrants threatened to "unhinge labor; derange industry; demoralize the country; and by claiming and receiving the ballot may upturn our system of government altogether."[3] Grover proved to be among the first of many Oregon political leaders who expressed deep reservations about newcomers. While welcoming certain idealized immigrants to a state blessed with resources but in need of a sufficient "producing and consuming population," most Oregon officials and Anglo citizens routinely sought to exclude immigrants whom they deemed racially inferior, economically dependent, or politically subversive.[4] These concerns have persisted in Oregon life from the 1850s into the twenty-first century.

Oregon's status as one of the most racially homogenous states in both the West and the nation stemmed from conscious decisions made by its founders and subsequent leaders. Believing that their state was a special Edenic place whose pristine beauty, pioneer ethos, economic progress, and social harmony would be subverted by uncontrolled Native populations, African Americans, and immigrants from unfamiliar lands, Oregon's early Anglo political and civic leaders explicitly distinguished between "desirable" and "undesirable" immigrants. Yet even as many of these leaders and their supporters drew distinctions among newcomers on the basis of ethnic, racial, and other ascriptive hierarchies, they also evaluated immigrants in light of the state's insatiable appetite for fresh (often cheap) labor. Indeed, distinctions between immigrants long have been made in the context of the state's ongoing labor needs related to infrastructure, agriculture, and more recently, service and high-tech industries that continue to make immigrants an integral part of Oregon's economic and social landscape. Moreover, throughout the twentieth century and especially after World War II, enduring nativist traditions have been counterpoised by more cosmopolitan and tolerant attitudes toward new arrivals as Oregonians joined other Americans in debating the inclusion or exclusion of immigrants in their state's progress and development. In the pages that follow, we track this debate during three broad periods covering 150 years of Oregon history.

COMPLEXIONS OF PARADISE AND EXCLUSION: IMMIGRANT OREGON AT HIGH TIDE (1850–1910)

Before internal migrants and immigrants from abroad came to Oregon, Native peoples lived in the region for thousands of years. During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Natives had extensive commercial interaction with European and American traders, especially in the lucrative fur trade, and frequently intermarried with them. This racial and ethnic intermingling and the relatively cooperative relations that accompanied it deteriorated in the mid-nineteenth century, when large numbers of ambitious Anglo settlers migrated to Oregon. Imbued with feelings of superiority and belief in a "manifest destiny" to extend the American republic's dominion from coast to coast, these settlers and their allies in the U.S. military battled Native peoples across Oregon over whose authority would determine the use of land and the allocation of resources. As a result of disease and warfare, many Tribes suffered grievous losses of life and land, with survivors often facing forced relocation to reservations.[5]

Mid-nineteenth-century Anglo settlers acted decisively to control Oregon's small African American population, determined to preserve their hegemony and promote notions of racial purity in the American Northwest. In 1849, the territorial government barred Blacks, both free and enslaved, from entering Oregon. This move reflected the fear that, as the exclusion law stipulated, "it would be highly dangerous to allow free negroes and mulattoes to reside in the territory or to intermix with the Indians, instilling in their minds feelings of hostility against the white race." Oregon was the only non-slave state admitted to the union with a constitutional provision barring Blacks altogether. After it gained statehood in 1859, Oregon continued to erect barriers aimed at preserving Anglo domination in social, political, and economic affairs. This strong antipathy toward people of color, legitimated through law and reinforced by custom, set the tone for how Oregonians would evaluate the credentials of internal and external migrants subsequently seeking to enter their new state.[6]

Immigration to Oregon accelerated following the granting of statehood in 1859. Only one out of every ten Oregonians was foreign-born at the time of statehood, with the majority of Oregon's U.S.-born population hailing from Midwestern, Southern, and Middle Atlantic states. Many were secondary migrants who had first settled in the Midwest and were attracted to Oregon's moderate climate and fertile farmlands, or to the chance to cash in on the discovery of gold.[7]

From the outset, Oregon's political and business leaders articulated clear preferences for the kinds of immigrants they wanted to attract.

Seeking to avoid "the dregs of European society" who were populating Eastern and Midwestern cities, a group of Portland businessmen formed the Labor Exchange Association in 1869 to recruit a "farming population" that would settle in undeveloped rural areas. Policy makers especially valued immigrants from northern and central Europe, who they believed came with financial resources, specific skills, and "industrious habits" that quickly made them valued social and economic contributors. For these reasons, the Immigration Board declared in its 1887 report that "Germans and Scandinavians make up the best of foreign-born immigrants." Over the next two decades, the board focused its outreach on those Europeans it believed could be most successfully incorporated into the economic and social mainstream.[8]

According to the 1910 census, immigrants from Germany represented the largest group of Oregon's foreign-born, followed by new arrivals from Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and Finland. Upholding the expectations of their recruiters, a familiar pattern of economic advancement and social integration greeted many of these immigrants: assistance from an already existing network of fellow immigrants; the availability of remunerative labor with the chance for upward mobility; additional income from their spouses; limited hostility from the incumbent population; and the opportunity for their children to surpass their achievements. Men from these countries found employment as carpenters, longshoremen, loggers, fishermen, and sawmill workers, while many Nordic women worked outside the home as domestics or operated boarding houses to supplement family income.[9]

It was not only immigrants from northern and central Europe whose acculturation in Oregon unfolded with minimal social conflict. Jews from Germany and eastern Europe, who had experienced extreme prejudice in their homelands, first came to Oregon in the mid 1800s and found in Portland's expanding economy a congenial environment for their ambitions. Many fit the pattern of gradual migration that often characterized immigrant arrival in Oregon, landing first in the Midwest and other parts of the West Coast before permanently settling in the Portland area. In a city where competition from other ethnic groups was limited, many enterprising Jewish immigrants did not experience the intense anti-Semitism that their compatriots often encountered in cities east of the Mississippi River and were able to succeed as merchants and small business owners.[10]

For two groups of late-nineteenth-century immigrants, however, Oregon was distinctly unwelcoming. Like their neighbors in other states on the West Coast, many Oregonians viewed Chinese immigrants with suspicion. Attempting to escape opium wars, poverty, and political upheaval in their native land, Chinese immigrants flocked to the Pacific Northwest between

the 1850s and 1880s. Attracted by news of the discovery of gold, they often worked abandoned claims once held by Anglo miners. Aided by a tradition of working cooperatively and sharing resources, Chinese miners experienced a measure of success. Other Chinese immigrants found work in coastal canneries, opened businesses in Portland, or undertook truck farming and land clearance as occupations.[11]

With few exceptions, many Anglo Oregonians and their political allies soon sought to circumscribe the economic options of Chinese immigrants. Shortly after the federal government granted statehood, the Oregon legislature imposed taxes and licensing fees on Chinese miners and merchants, and several localities in eastern Oregon passed laws barring the Chinese from mining. Anglo workers also bristled when employers sought to undercut their wages by replacing them with lower-paid Chinese. Even after the federal Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 barred further importation of Chinese workers, Oregon mobs took matters into their own hands to force the Chinese out of places such as Oregon City, east Portland, Salem, and Yamhill. Efforts to expel the Chinese from Portland failed, but their numbers plummeted following these events. Anti-Chinese sentiment resulted in an especially shocking act of violence in 1887, when thirty-four Chinese miners were murdered by horse thieves northeast of Enterprise along the Snake River. A local jury subsequently acquitted the alleged perpetrators, attesting to the disdain many Oregonians held for the Chinese in their midst.[12]

What accounts for this virulent reaction to the Chinese? For many Anglo Oregonians, the Chinese were interlopers who had immigrated to make a quick fortune and displayed neither loyalty nor gratitude toward the country that was offering them the opportunity for advancement. According to this critique, their apparent willingness to work for low wages reintroduced images of wage slavery and indentured servitude, thereby supporting the view that Chinese immigrants were too culturally different to assume the social status of "pioneers" or "freemen" popularly associated with Euro-American whiteness.[13]

Although Chinese victimization was widespread, this portrayal neglects to recognize their resourcefulness, agency, and periodic resistance to the abuses they suffered. Through the creation of benevolent associations and businesses, and the pursuit of legal claims, Oregon's Chinese immigrants displayed considerable resiliency in the face of hostility and condemnation. In eastern Oregon, due to a more limited labor pool and less direct competition with Anglo workers, Chinese workers faced less overt forms of repression and played a notable role in helping develop a remote part of the state in keeping with the aspirations that Oregon's leaders had largely ascribed to more "desirable" types of immigrants.[14]

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SIKH RAILROAD WORKERS are pictured here in the 1890s in Washington State. During the early twentieth century, five to six hundred East Indian men settled in Oregon along the Columbia River, with the largest populations in St. Johns and Astoria.

Following the passage of draconian Chinese exclusion laws in the Gilded Age, Japanese and other Asian immigrants became the targets of increased scrutiny and racial animus. By the 1890s, Japanese immigration had risen substantially, and in Oregon they found work on railroads and in canneries and sawmills. From their beginnings as laborers, some Japanese immigrants branched out to become successful hotel operators and business owners in Portland. In places such as Gresham and especially Hood River, Japanese immigrants established themselves as successful farmers. Their success, however, incurred the resentment of many Anglo farmers, who accused the Japanese of selecting the best land and exhausting it through intensive farming techniques. This resentment led some Anglo Oregonians to act aggressively in seeking to curb Japanese economic advancement. In 1907, a mob in Woodburn stormed the quarters of Japanese workers and demanded their dismissal, claiming that they worked for substandard wages and took jobs away from Anglo workers. Three years later, Punjabi laborers, whose numbers had also increased during this era, suffered similar treatment at the hands of outraged Anglo workers at a North Portland mill.[15]

As this brief summary demonstrates, the reception that immigrants received during Oregon's first half century after statehood varied dramatically on the basis of race and national origin. Europeans, who comprised the overwhelming majority of new arrivals, generally enjoyed broad economic opportunities and social legitimacy. In contrast, Asian newcomers frequently encountered popular hostility and official acts of repression. Nonetheless, there were occasions where political and civic leaders refused to support legislative initiatives and citizen efforts to suppress Asian immigrants. In the 1870s, Portland mayor Philip Wasserman vetoed a city council ban on the use of Chinese workers on public projects, and judge Matthew Deady later ruled that the city violated both international treaties and the state constitution by barring Chinese employment. In 1886, Portland mayor John Gates denounced efforts to encourage anti-immigrant vigilantism similar to events that had occurred elsewhere on the West Coast, and the Multnomah County district attorney prosecuted community and political leaders who had condoned anti-Punjabi violence in the 1910 North Portland incident. Although far from reflecting majority sentiment or an embrace of immigrant rights or legitimacy, these calculations represented an acknowledgment of the state's reliance on immigrant labor and a belief that violence and vigilantism threatened social stability. Subsequently, however, the changing face of European inflows fueled increased nativist anxieties, inspired calls for more sweeping immigration restriction, and undercut the pragmatic capitalist and cosmopolitan goals of key Oregon political and civic leaders.[16]

THE TRIUMPH OF NATIVISM: RESTRICTION AND RACIAL ORDER (1910–1950)

At the dawn of the twentieth century, the composition of European immigration shifted markedly from traditional source countries of northern and western Europe to newer ones in the southern and eastern regions of the Old World. The Oregon State Immigration Commission detected an unmistakable difference among these newcomers. "No class of citizens is more valuable to Oregon than is the industrious, thrifty, foreign-born farmer, who emigrates from unfavorable European conditions to carve out a home for his family in a new country," the commission noted in its 1912 annual report. But the commission also observed that "there is a certain immigration from Europe which is undesirable, especially that which congregates in our cities and towns, creating slum districts, living below the standard of American workmen, and entering into ruinous competition with American labor."[17]

Eager to avoid the social ills that afflicted northeastern cities teeming with large immigrant populations, Oregon's business leaders and policy makers indicated a strong desire to maintain racial and ethnic homogeneity.

Nevertheless, the political radicalism and labor agitation feared by nativists also appeared among immigrants from places other than southern and eastern Europe. Astoria provides an apt illustration. There, many Finns became active trade unionists in the early twentieth century. Some Finns joined the revolutionary Industrial Workers of the World, while others embraced socialism, echoing working-class concerns about unrestrained corporate power. Finnish socialists opposed American entry into World War I and launched a shipyard strike in 1917 that led Oregon's governor to dispatch troops to maintain order. Later, authorities won convictions of several Finnish socialists in Astoria who had been charged with selling seditious pamphlets to soldiers. Finnish radicals also employed other strategies, encouraging their countrymen to learn English and become citizens so that they could influence political decisions more directly, a move that supported their Americanization and civic socialization.[18]

World War I, the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, and the postwar Red Scare sparked a decisive shift in national immigration policy, as eugenicist beliefs and security jitters led to the passage of new restrictive legislation beginning in 1917. During the Great War, many of Oregon's religious leaders, politicians, and newspapers mobilized public opinion to demand German-American loyalty, prohibit teaching of the German language, and prosecute dissenters under the Espionage Act. Concurrently, however, other Oregonians gave expression during the war to more inclusive, cosmopolitan beliefs. Some newspapers cautioned against hyper-patriotism, and the University of Oregon president, Prince Lucien Campbell, joined other campus allies in defending a German student facing questions about his loyalty. In June 1920, the *Oregonian* even endorsed accepting more immigrants, regardless of their origin. "Wisely handled," the newspaper asserted, "they can be made as good citizens as were those who came before them. It devolves on the people of Oregon to make them Americans." This sentiment proved ephemeral, however. Several years later, the *Oregonian* offered a far more pessimistic assessment prompted by fears of subversion and a recoiling from the internationalist thrust of Wilsonian democracy. Now, the newspaper contended, immigrants were migrating from "less fit nations" and from countries and races "that make them instinctive enemies of any government and that prevent their absorption."[19]

Other key institutions and leaders echoed this view, offering additional rationales for the need to restrict immigration. Eager to preserve the privileged status of Anglo workers, the state's labor union movement argued that without stringent limits on immigration, employers would be able "to secure a continuous stream of cheap laborers." The Ku Klux Klan, which exercised considerable political influence in Oregon during the 1920s, advo-

cated curbing southern and eastern European immigration as a means of minimizing Catholic influence in social and political affairs. In a 1923 letter to the *Oregonian*, Frederick V. Holman, a prominent lawyer and president of the Oregon Historical Society, invoked the need to defend the legacy of Oregon's founders: "In these days of political unrest, the Americanism and Anglo-Saxonism of those pioneers, their courage, their determination, and their high purposes are matters of Oregon pride." Repeating the powerful mantra of Oregon's mythic frontier past, Holman suggested that unrestricted immigration would shatter the racial and cultural homogeneity he regarded as fundamental to the state's social cohesion.[20]

In 1924, reflecting Holman's sentiments, Congress established a national-origin quota system that placed draconian limits on southern and eastern European immigration and created a so-called Asiatic Barred Zone. This restrictionist regime gained reauthorization and became permanent under a 1929 law. Although some dissent surfaced during the immigration restriction debate, especially from the Jewish community, most Oregonians appear to have supported the closing of the nation's doors.

One group of potential immigrants, however, gained special status under the 1924 law, and this designation contained unforeseen but far-reaching implications. Although Mexicans had long worked and lived in Oregon, their migration began to increase early in the twentieth century amid the increasing need for labor and the turmoil following the 1910 revolution in Mexico. The continuing need for a farm-labor force established a pattern in which Mexicans were alternately greeted as desirable immigrants especially by agricultural interests, and scorned by others as undesirable intruders.[21]

The Immigration Act of 1924, also known as the Johnson-Reed Act, dramatically influenced the course of Mexican migration into the United States. For the first time, illegal entry into the United States became a crime, albeit a civil violation. Those who entered the country illegally now became subject to deportation, and Congress firmly established border protection and national sovereignty as the basis of immigration policy. With the onset of the Great Depression in 1929, deportations of Mexicans increased, even affecting some who held U. S. citizenship. Mexicans did not re-enter the country until the late 1930s, when native-born workers began to find employment in defense-related industries during the military build-up prior to U.S. entry into World War II.[22]

In 1925, eager to incorporate other immigrants into the social and cultural mainstream, political, business, and civic leaders persuaded the Oregon Legislature to create the State Department of Americanization, which was directed to organize local councils to offer English instruction and prepare

aliens to become naturalized citizens. Over thirty communities across Oregon established such councils by 1930 in an effort to "Americanize" over 44,000 foreign-born residents (43 percent of the total number of Oregon's foreign-born) who had not achieved full citizenship. Beyond promoting citizenship, department director Fred W. Parks explained that his agency's ultimate goal was "to reach every alien in the state" and help them become "not only good Americans but the best possible Americans." Although some Americanization advocates supported the retention of cultural heritage and customs, others aggressively sought to expunge immigrant mores in an unabashed effort to counter alleged subversion and compel obedience to dominant cultural values.[23]

The Americanization impulse did not extend to Hood River, however, which became the epicenter for a harsh backlash against Japanese immigrants. Disturbed by growing Japanese landholding and agricultural success, some Hood River residents formed the Anti-Asiatic Association in 1919. Its members vowed not to sell land to the Japanese, an action that the organization claimed would protect "America for Americans." [24]

Using threats of violence during the early 1900s, bands of Anglo Oregonians drove Japanese from worksites in Toledo, La Grande, and Woodburn with threats of violence. Anti-Japanese sentiment reached a new level in 1923 when the Oregon Legislature, prodded by agricultural interests, the American Legion, and the Ku Klux Klan, passed an "Alien Land Law." The law, which barred non-citizens from land ownership, reflected resentment of Japanese success and the strong racial animus that marked the attitudes of many Oregonians toward nonwhites.[25]

In the years following passage of the 1923 Alien Land Law, Japanese farmers in Hood River found ways to circumvent the statute, maintain their holdings, and build on their earlier successes. The Japanese government's December 7, 1941, attack on Pearl Harbor and the subsequent incarceration of Japanese Americans in the United States, however, shattered the lives of these Oregon families. Some Hood River residents now sensed the opportunity to eliminate the Japanese as economic and social competitors. Local farmers and the Hood River American Legion led this movement, declaring that their "ultimate aim is to get every Jap out of Hood River." They received high-level political support from Walter Pierce, a U.S. Congressman and former governor. Fearing that Japanese returning to Hood River after the war would "acquire domination over this fruitful and beautiful land," Pierce invoked the powerful imagery of Oregon's frontier past: "They must leave this land to those who pioneered it."[26]

Significantly, the extremity of Pierce's views and the actions of the American Legion and its supporters in Hood River triggered a powerful backlash. Led

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JAPANESE AMERICANS are pictured here in about 1920 at a work camp near Hood River, Oregon. At that time, over half the Japanese population in Oregon was involved in agriculture, prompting anti-Japanese backlash in the Hood River community.

by the Rev. Sherman Burgoyne, the Hood River Citizen Committee vigorously protested the harsh treatment of the Japanese by area residents. In 1945, after the Hood River American Legion removed the names of Japanese soldiers from a public "honor roll" of local servicemen, sixty Oregon soldiers denounced the legion's action as "un-American and a perfect example of the very things we are fighting against." Articulating the need for Oregonians to discard their historic prejudices in favor of democratic values, Portland banker E.B. MacNaughton declared: "We are playing up to the Hitlers, the Tojos, and their like insofar as we permit our racial prejudices to dominate our governmental policy." These efforts illustrated the desire of at least some civic and political leaders to make amends by assuming a more inclusive approach toward immigrants whom many Oregonians viewed as undesirable.[27]

Labor needs associated with the advent of World War II influenced active efforts to recruit a new set of migrants to Oregon, with growers joining other employers across the West in asking the federal government to address what they saw as an unacceptable scarcity of cheap labor. During the 1941 harvest season, the Oregon State Horticultural Society, along with many organized agricultural interests, demanded a solution to the farm labor crisis. "The big problem for next year," the society noted, "is that of manpower." Growers and their allies heavily lobbied Oregon Senator Rufus Holman, a Republican and former businessman who served on a key Senate subcommittee with jurisdiction over farm labor. Under the resulting Mexican Farm Labor Program launched in 1942, Mexican migration to the United States and Oregon increased sharply.[28]

Popularly known as the "Bracero Program," the new law imported Mexican workers to address wartime agricultural labor shortages. The number of Mexicans in Oregon increased tenfold between 1940 and 1945, reaching a total of 15,000. Braceros won widespread praise for their job performance, but often faced substandard working and living conditions and discriminatory treatment that reflected racist attitudes in the communities where they labored. Tellingly, Willamette Valley growers regularly complained that too many Mexican farm laborers abandoned agriculture for higher-paying industrial jobs in Portland whenever the opportunity arose. Although the wartime Bracero Program ended in 1947, it continued until 1964 under an agreement between the United States and Mexican governments. Ironically, the desire of growers to establish a permanent pool of guest workers unexpectedly led to braceros joining other Mexicans in establishing themselves permanently in communities such as Woodburn, Independence, and Nyssa in the years following World War II.[29]

By midcentury, Oregon's immigration experience fully reflected the potent contradictions that had lain at the heart of official policies and popular sentiment since the First World War. Although most Oregonians approved the restriction and exclusion of European and Asian newcomers whom they deemed undesirable, the state's agricultural and industrial interests never lost their appetite for imported labor. While the gates were closed to most Europeans and nearly all Asian newcomers, Mexican immigrants, guest workers, and backdoor entrants supplied cheap, exploitable labor that supported Oregon's economic progress and prosperity. Still, the war against fascism had forced some Oregonians and their leaders to address the contradictions between fighting for democracy abroad while denying it at home, and the advent of the Cold War created new imperatives for a more welcoming approach toward immigrants and refugees.

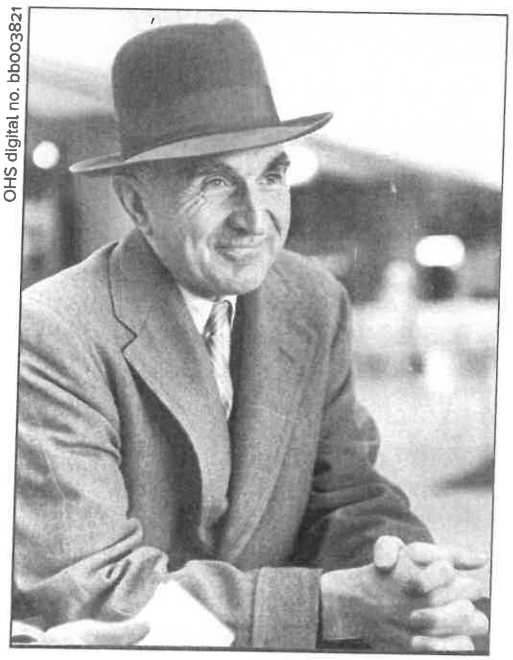
MODERN DILEMMAS: NEW IMMIGRATION AND NEW ANXIETIES (1951–PRESENT)

In the postwar years, some of Oregon's most prominent political leaders called for comprehensive immigration reform that would dismantle the discriminatory national-origins quota system. In particular, the state's two Democratic Senators, Wayne Morse and Richard Neuberger, championed refugee relief and more robust immigration during the 1950s and 1960s. Many of their constituents, however, remained reluctant to reopen the gates to immigration and expand Oregon's ethnic, racial, and religious diversity. Nevertheless, a sustained demand for cheap imported labor in Oregon spurred both new immigration and fresh conflicts.

During the post-World War II decades, Oregon farmers grew ever more dependent on Mexican and other foreign-born labor as native-born workers moved to less arduous and better-paying employment. A 1957 Bureau of Labor report estimated that there were nearly 12,000 Spanish-speaking farm workers in Oregon, 10 percent of whom were described as permanent residents. According to the report, many of these workers were subjected to "frequent abuse," and their relations with community residents were characterized as "extremely tense." Still, workers continued to journey north. They were only temporarily deterred by "Operation Wetback," an Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) effort in the mid 1950s that deported thousands of Mexicans, and by the numerical limits later placed on Mexican immigration in the 1960s.[30]

Like earlier generations of immigrants to Oregon, Mexicans were attracted by the availability of economic opportunity and increasingly found their way into occupations besides farm labor, including food processing, manufacturing, construction, and entrepreneurship. They also began to develop institutions to improve their living and working conditions. As community activist Cristina de la Cruz Vendrell recalled, Mexican immigrants in Nyssa formed an organization called Siempre Adelante (Always Forward) in 1953 to seek fair treatment after a White youth killed a Mexican, and the crime went unpunished. Subsequently, activists launched an aggressive and effective farm workers union, Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (PCUN or Farm Workers United of the Northwest), along with a host of community and church-sponsored organizations that provided social services, job training, and housing. During the postwar era, Mexicans and other Latinx immigrants firmly established themselves as a visible presence in Oregon.[31] The state's expanded dependence on imported Mexican labor — from legal immigrants and braceros to undocumented workers — had recast its demography.[32]

As Mexican labor migration was remaking Oregon, Morse and Neuberger joined other Congressional progressives in challenging draconian federal restrictions on immigration. For both, leadership on this issue was driven by moral, economic, and foreign-policy imperatives. When Oregon members of the American Legion lobbied Morse in 1956 to support immigration barriers in order "to protect our country against undesirable people," the senator responded that existing quotas undermined U.S. interests in its Cold War struggle against the Soviet Union. "I must say frankly that I have been greatly disturbed by the bad effect of [immigration restriction] upon our standing in many areas of the world," Morse explained.[33] "In the countries of southern and eastern Europe . . . where the Communist menace is always present and always seeking to capitalize on American mistakes and misfortunes, the racial and ethnic discriminations in [U.S. immigration law] have been very damaging."[34] Neuberger echoed these views, but also highlighted the moral and economic dimensions of the issue. "The United States has a tradition of offering sanctuary to the oppressed," he noted. "Each immigrant is not only a jobholder, but he and his family are also consumers who buy goods and services."[35]



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DEMOCRATIC SENATOR Wayne Morse, pictured here in Portland in 1960, along with other Congressional progressives challenged federal immigration restrictions during the 1950s and 1960s.

During these postwar years, the vast majority of letters that ordinary Oregonians wrote to lawmakers staunchly opposed any expansion in refugee and immigrant admissions. Many constituents expressed open racial hostility toward newcomers, calling for the United States to be "a nation [that] should be built on race" and "a land of Northwestern Europeans," warning that reform would lead the country to be swamped by "Asiatics and Negroes" who would "help the communists take over America" and predicting that the demise of national-origins quotas would open "our floodgates to hoards of the most undesirable peoples of the world." Fearing a political shift toward racial egalitarianism

and an influx of immigrants who might spark even greater social unrest, many Anglo Oregonians regarded liberalization of immigration laws as unmistakable evidence that their privileged status and the nation's security were under siege.[36]

Yet a growing commitment to greater immigration opportunities was not limited to Oregon's two independent-minded senators or a selection of its ethnic, religious, and business groups. A variety of grassroots Oregonians also embraced the causes of refugee relief and immigration reform. Among the most remarkable were Harry and Bertha Holt, farmers in rural Creswell who were deeply troubled when they saw a presentation in December 1954 about the plight of unwanted Korean orphans — so-called "GI Babies" — left behind by U.N. troops. With the backing of their six children, the Holts resolved to adopt eight babies from Korea. Existing immigration and refugee law prevented them from doing so, however, so Harry Holt asked his senators for help. Morse and Neuberger shepherded through Congress special legislation that enabled the Holts to bring home the eight Korean children. In October 1955, Harry Holt returned to Portland from Korea with twelve babies, eight of whom were legally adopted by the Holt family and four by other families. The Holt family became sixteen, and refugee relief had made its way to rural Oregon.[37]

Morse and Neuberger also helped spearhead broader immigration reform efforts in Washington. In the late 1950s, both senators joined eleven of their colleagues in pressing for major revision of the McCarran-Walter Act.[38] When the House Committee on Un-American Activities raised questions in 1957 about Neuberger's exchanges with the Clatsop County Committee for the Protection of the Foreign Born, he issued a blistering counterattack: "I hope it has not become un-American to suggest that the McCarran-Walter Act requires revision in the name of justice, fairness, humanity, and the long-standing heritage of our country."[39] During the same period, Morse urged legislation that would "abandon racial and religious restriction as the foundation of our quota system" and significantly expand immigrant and refugee admissions.[40]

In 1965, five years after Neuberger's death, Congress enacted sweeping immigration reform legislation as part of Lyndon Johnson's Great Society juggernaut. The new Immigration and Nationality Act reversed the discriminatory effects of the 1924 National Origins Act by lifting its quotas and allowing expanded immigration from southern and eastern Europe as well as Asia. The law established a new preference system for immigrant admissions that emphasized family reunification, with additional visas reserved for refugees and people with desirable job skills. Although many of his constituents opposed these reforms, Morse vigorously defended a more

open immigration policy. Responding to one irate constituent in October 1965, Morse noted that "one hundred years ago, many long-time citizens of the United States were saying the same things about Irish immigrants that you are saying about eastern Europeans and Cubans. I think our country and our economy are strong and healthy enough to welcome these people and be helped by them."[41] Indeed, in the years following passage of immigration reform in 1965, Oregon became a leading destination for refugees fleeing upheaval in their homelands, attracting refugees from Africa, Southeast Asia, and perhaps most significantly, the Soviet Union.

The total number of immigrants from the Soviet Union remained small in Oregon until the mid 1960s, when two religious groups — the Old Believers and the Molokans — splintered from the Russian Orthodox Church and began arriving as refugees.[42] Describing the appearance of Russian immigrants at Portland International Airport "like a scene straight out of Tolstoy," the *Oregonian* noted in December 1964 that "a Russian colony" was rapidly springing up in Woodburn.[43] After first journeying to Latin America in their quest for religious freedom, a cohort of Old Believer immigrants received visas because a private foundation had funded their trip from Brazil to the Willamette Valley, and local social service organizations and churches provided assurances that they would help the newcomers get settled.[44]

The migration of Russians and Ukrainians accelerated in the late 1980s, when Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev began permitting those seeking greater religious freedom to leave. In contrast to earlier immigrants to Oregon, post–Soviet era Russians and Ukrainians were almost all members of fundamentalist religious sects. Many who arrived in the 1990s gained refugee status under legislation passed a decade earlier, and this status granted them access to employment, housing, and educational services. Their transition has been further eased by public perception that they are legitimate, desirable immigrants whose presence affirms the nation's commitment to help oppressed people gain freedom.[45]

In addition to Russians and Ukrainians, refugees from Southeast Asia and Africa moved to Oregon starting in the late 1970s, mostly to the Portland metropolitan area. The social disorder following American withdrawal from Vietnam in 1975 led Vietnamese, Laotians, and Cambodians to seek refuge abroad, while civil strife in Ethiopia, Somalia, Liberia, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo prompted residents to flee these countries. Like the Russians and the Ukrainians, these groups of refugees received assistance from church-sponsored agencies and other private organizations. Vietnamese refugees drew on family and kinship networks to ease their adaptation, and Africans established ethnic associations to provide needed services and support.[46]

Southeast Asians and Africans also established their own businesses, often serving ethnic constituencies. While these groups have faced some hostility, their strong support networks enabled them to make important strides toward gaining social acceptance. Following the events of September 11, 2001, however, these immigrants and refugees experienced greater social scrutiny and in some cases have faced overt forms of harassment, intimidation, and physical violence. In response, they have developed new organizations and alliances to defend their rights and enable them to speak more effectively in the political arena.[47]

As refugees and immigrants from Asia, Europe, and Africa made new homes in Oregon, political attention focused after the 1970s on Central and South American immigration, especially from Mexico. Following enactment of the 1965 reform legislation, national policymakers began to pay greater attention to an influx of unauthorized immigrants from Central and South America. Whether recruited through community social networks or following existing migrant streams as individuals, increasing numbers of Mexicans came to Oregon, first as seasonal farm laborers and later as more settled residents. In response to this increased migration, federal lawmakers passed the Immigration and Reform Control Act (IRCA) in 1986. The new law established a legalization program that provided opportunities for special agricultural workers (SAW) and for most undocumented immigrants to gain legal status.[48]

In Oregon, IRCA initially inspired confusion and anxiety among Latin immigrants, many of them unauthorized. It also served as an impetus for organizing the state's farm workers. PCUN (Oregon's farm workers union), accompanied by Cesar Chavez, (the president of the United Farm Workers), organized meetings in Independence, Salem, and Woodburn soon after IRCA's passage and doubed its membership in just one month. An estimated 100,000 undocumented immigrants living in Oregon became eligible for amnesty under IRCA, prompting non-profit organizations to advise and assist these immigrants on how to obtain amnesty. Yet an *Oregonian* article reported that as of February 1988, applications fell short of the state's projections. Apparently many feared that their non-eligible family members might be deported if they came forward, and others found it difficult to obtain the necessary supporting documents. Nonetheless, both legal and unauthorized immigration across the U.S.-Mexico border continued unabated due to strong economic incentives and powerful family and community ties.[49]

Indigenous workers from the Mexican state of Oaxaca comprised some of the new migrants that swelled Oregon's immigrant population. Although their migration began several decades before the passage of the North Ameri-

can Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994, that agreement resulted in stiff economic competition from American farmers that drove Oaxacans off their land and into the United States. Efforts to curb immigration again emerged across the nation, including proposals in the 1995 Oregon Legislature to limit unauthorized immigrants' access to social and educational services. These proposals failed to win approval. After the attacks of September 11, 2001, however, the focus of American immigration policy began to follow a familiar pattern, with national security considerations becoming paramount. It is in this context that the current debate over immigration is being waged. With failure to enact comprehensive immigration reform at the federal level, states and localities across the nation are now engaged in difficult, often contentious discussions about how best to proceed.[50]

During the spring of 2006, a series of large Oregon immigrant-rights rallies occurred in coordination with similar actions nationwide to protest harsh legislation proposed in the U.S. House to punish undocumented immigrants. Significantly, many immigrant workers who participated in those rallies received support from their employers in the nursery, restaurant, dairy, and other industries. "The workers and employers have a good relationship," explained a spokesman for the Oregon Restaurant Association, which joined other employer groups and immigrant-rights advocates to press for earned-citizenship bills.[51] Yet, as an alliance formed among Oregon businesses, labor unions, ethnic associations, and religious groups in favor of expansive immigration reform, opponents mobilized to promote tough measures against undocumented immigrants. Oregonians for Immigration Reform (OFIR), a group favoring fewer legal immigrants and crackdowns on unauthorized immigration, claimed that its membership doubled in the wake of May Day immigrant rallies in 2006.[52] In the months that followed, advocates and opponents of undocumented immigrants clashed openly at day-labor pickup sites from Cornelius to Portland. These confrontations began when OFIR and the Oregon chapter of the Minuteman Civil Defense Corps sent boisterous, flag-waving protestors to intimidate contractors and homeowners attempting to hire day laborers. Immigrant rights groups soon joined the day laborers, and police attempted to maintain order as the two sides hurled insults and rocks at each other.[53]

With battle lines formed, a restive Oregon electorate tilted the political balance in favor of hard-line restrictionists during the 2006 election. In campaigns for the Oregon Legislature, Republicans and Democrats alike clamored to take a hard line on illegal immigration. Whereas Democratic candidates called for new state laws increasing fines on employers who knowingly hire undocumented workers, many Republicans endorsed blocking immigrant access to most public benefits and requiring Oregonians to

Courtesy of Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste

BETWEEN 1987 AND 1988, Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (PCUN) helped Oregon immigrants file applications for amnesty under the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA). Pictured here is group of applicants who successfully applied for citizenship in 1987.

prove citizenship in order to vote. Rivals in both parties also bashed each other with unsubstantiated charges of hiring unauthorized workers or supporting health care and Social Security for undocumented immigrants.[54]

During the 2007 session of the Oregon Legislature, new statewide polling indicated that Oregonians ranked illegal immigration as the second most important issue for state lawmakers to address.[55] Twenty anti-immigration bills emerged during the session, consuming hours of debate. When the dust settled, however, nearly all of the measures stalled in the Oregon Senate, which only agreed to restrict drivers' licenses to legal U.S. residents.[56]

While most of the state's elected officials sought to appease public demands for restrictive policies, other leaders pursued a decidedly different approach. After federal agents arrested 167 workers at the Fresh Del Monte plant in North Portland during the summer of 2007, Portland mayor Tom Potter angrily denounced the raid as excessive and reaffirmed that city police would not assist efforts to arrest undocumented immigrants.[57] By a

wide margin, Oregon voters rejected a 2008 ballot initiative that sought to limit bilingual education and instead promote what backers called "English immersion." A year later, as Republican legislators in Salem introduced a variety of restrictive bills, an unlikely coalition of business, religious, and labor organizations reemerged to lobby for a halt to state-level action on immigration and press Congress to enact comprehensive, pro-immigration reform.[58] Oregon's competing immigration traditions were alive and well.

As Oregonians debate anew over immigrant inclusion or exclusion, they do so in the context of a state foreign-born population that has doubled since 1990 to constitute 10 percent of total residents. An estimated 130,000 of these residents are unauthorized. Moreover, these debates have intensified as the Donald Trump administration has launched a frontal assault on both legal and unauthorized immigration. As federal, state, and local officials clash over immigration enforcement and immigrant rights, Oregon leaders and community members continue to wrestle over the social, economic, and political implications of distinct policy choices. Led by PCUN and Causa, which describes itself as "Oregon's Immigrant Rights Organization," groups supporting immigrants have gained greater political influence at both the state and local levels, convincing government entities and educational institutions to provide additional protections for immigrants who lack legal status. Meanwhile, forces who favor limits on immigration are mobilizing to counter these measures through a series of ballot initiatives likely to provoke fierce controversy in 2018.[59]

In recent decades, Oregon's approach has differed from that of many other states. States such as Arizona have advanced harsh crackdowns on undocumented immigrants and generally constricted immigrant social and civil rights. By contrast, states such as California have extended broad legal protections and social welfare benefits to immigrants of varied legal statuses. For its part, Oregon generally has steered a middle course over the past few years, extending in-state tuition to many undocumented college students and approving health care for undocumented children, while through a ballot measure vote in 2014, overwhelmingly rejecting driver cards for those who cannot prove legal status. In an interconnected global economy in which goods, services, and people are constantly in motion, immigration represents an extraordinarily complex challenge that defies easy resolution. Oregonians will have some difficult choices to make as they weigh the costs and benefits of immigration and, as the *Oregonian* posed the question in 1924, decide whether they are willing to accept immigrants "not only as workmen but as citizens and neighbors."[60]

In the pages that follow, contributors to this special issue elaborate on multiple aspects of the migration experience in Oregon. The essays and

commentaries here capture the subject from a powerful set of angles, including the experiences of specific immigrant groups, the moral claims of tribal peoples on the state and later settlers, public portrayals that document the struggles and contributions of immigrants and internal migrants, innovative research methods to help unveil the often untold stories of migrant workers, and reflections on political change and resurgent nativism after the 2016 election.

Reflecting on the limitations of official records for illuminating the voices of braceros and other ethnic Mexicans laboring in Oregon and across the country, Mario Sifuentez describes his use of groundbreaking oral histories and rich archival materials provided by hundreds of respondents to capture their experiences and agency over time. His findings show how the Bracero Program fostered an enduring reliance on cheap Mexican labor in the Northwest and prompted braceros and other Mexican laborers in the region to defy employer exploitation through strikes, slow-downs, or leaving their contracts for better wages and working conditions. Sifuentez also highlights the permanent settlement of many so-called "guest workers" who established vibrant family and communal lives and transformed multiple Oregon communities. As readers learn, at the heart of Sifuentez's research lies a compelling personal journey.

Underscoring how human migration shaped the peopling of Oregon for thousands of years, Rebecca Dobkins and her colleagues show how the region's tribal people forged lasting cultural, ecological, and legal relationships to ancestral lands upon which later waves of migration took place. When these Tribes were violently expelled from their lands by Anglo settlers, the U.S. federal government assumed control over both these Indigenous people and their ancestral lands. Through fresh research, the authors explore efforts by tribal members to harvest plants on National Forest lands for cultural and subsistence purposes. Dobkins and her colleagues explain why Oregon tribal gatherers are entitled not only to access their ancestral lands, but also to co-manage them with federal officials.

The conference offered special presentations on migration public history in Oregon by Suenn Ho on the Garden of Surging Waves in Astoria, Gwen Trice on the Maxville Heritage Interpretive Center, and Gabriela Martínez on the Latino Roots exhibit and ongoing projects.

Suenn Ho describes how she designed a new public urban park in Astoria to commemorate the contributions of Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans who once comprised one-third of the town's population. Through stories and symbols, the award-winning Garden of Surging Waves represents a community space that invites people to contemplate the experiences of Chinese American pioneers. Gwen Trice, the daughter

of an African American logger in northeast Oregon, illuminates the rich multicultural history of Maxville. As Trice explains, the Maxville Heritage Interpretive Center explores the influence of African American loggers and varied foreign nationals and ethnic groups on Oregon's early timber industry and acquaints visitors with the impact of discriminatory exclusion and Jim Crow laws on racial minorities. Martínez, professor of journalism and communications at the University of Oregon, outlines how she and another colleague collaborated with students and community activists in producing a special exhibit on Latino history in Lane County in 2009. This initial effort was followed by Martínez's documentary film on *Latino Roots in Lane County*, interdisciplinary coursework, and an ongoing Latino Roots in Oregon project.

Carol Silverman's article uncovers the "hidden history" of Roma in Oregon, describing an immigrant group that has often been neglected or understudied by scholars. Oregon and especially the metro Portland area are host to a sizable and longstanding Roma population. Silverman describes the Roma, whose migration was often forced rather than voluntary, as the "quintessential other," criminalized by some, romanticized by others, and rarely appreciated on their own terms. In contrast to mythic images of immigrant acculturation and acceptance over time, she characterizes the Roma story in Oregon as one of "selective integration" marked by concerted efforts to retain cultural traditions and distinctiveness within a largely hostile social environment.

Lynn Stephen traces the migration of the indigenous Mam people from Guatemala to Oregon since 1980. Prompted by decades of violence rooted in harsh economic and social inequalities, Guatemalans have experienced brutal treatment by official and unofficial security forces compounded by the rise of gangs and the drug trade. Women have faced particular problems, fleeing to escape rape and sexual violence at the hands of both domestic partners and outside perpetrators. Stephen underscores the strength of transborder connections between home communities and social networks in the United States and describes "tools of unity and healing" that have helped the Mam create new lives in Oregon. She also explains how federal policies have made asylum more difficult to obtain, even for migrants fleeing the most horrific forms of violence and repression.

The conference also featured reflections on the 2016 election from Kim Williams, a political scientist at Portland State University, Andrea Williams, the executive director of Causa, and Phil Carrasco, an organizer for the Oregon AFL-CIO.

Kim Williams noted that immigration had been a hot-button issue during the 2016 campaign and predicted that "life is going to get harder for immi-

grants" under the Trump administration. Andrea Williams echoed similar concerns and warned about potential statewide efforts to erode protections for immigrants through the initiative process. At the same time, she cited the election of the first Latina immigrant to the Oregon Legislature, the creation of a broad coalition to counter anti-immigrant political activity, and new initiatives, especially around extending health care to undocumented children, as examples of growing Latinx political power and ambition. Phil Carrasco described emerging political efforts aimed at reinforcing Oregon laws that prohibit local law enforcement from using resources for federal immigration enforcement. He advocated for broadly based local mobilizations to lobby for immigrant protection in educational institutions and at the municipal and county levels.

Over one hundred years ago, W.E.B. DuBois, the renowned scholar and intellectual, famously observed that "the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line." Updating DuBois, we suggest that one of the principal challenges for Oregonians in the twenty-first century lies in resolving differences between those who embrace or resist living in an unalterably multicultural world. Indeed, rival nativist, capitalist, and egalitarian traditions continue to profoundly shape the inclusion and exclusion of first- and second-generation migrants to the state. The contributors to this special *OHQ* issue enlarge our understanding of this challenge through their thoughtful explorations of the ways that successive generations of immigrant pioneers have changed the face of Oregon and asserted their claims to its bounty and beauty. As we will see, they pursue these claims in the context of a complex historical legacy that should leave little illusion about the important social, political, and economic negotiations that lie ahead.

NOTES

1. For a view of these rival traditions in American national identity and governance, see Rogers Smith, *Civic Ideals* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1997); Daniel Tichenor, *Dividing Lines* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002); and Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2014).

2. John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860–1925*, (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press) 1992 edition, p. 4; and Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*.

3. "Inaugural Address of Governor La-Fayette Grover to the Legislative Assembly," September 14, 1870, Salem, Oregon.

4. The term *Anglo*, rather than *White*, is