



Who Shall Be American?

Make a timeline using selected facts from the list below. Not all the facts below may fit the categories you choose for your timeline.

1. In 1882 the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed, which outlawed Chinese immigrants and denied naturalization to those Chinese already in the United States.

2. In the 1790 census, there were four million people in the U.S., excluding the Native Americans. No records counting immigrants were kept until 1820.

3. The McCarran-Walter Act of 1952 eased restrictions on Asians, ending the blanket exclusion of immigrants based on race. Even so, the quotas allowed for only a token number of immigrants from certain Asian countries and added ideological requirements such as refusing immigrants who belonged to certain organizations.

4. The largest single year of immigration was 1907, when 1,285,349 persons were admitted.

5. The Immigration Act of 1924 set permanent quotas based on national origin with preference given to northern Europeans. No quotas were set on immigration from the western hemisphere; the United States did not want to alienate its neighbors, and it needed workers, especially those from Mexico.

6. More than one million legal residents (immigrants) were naturalized in 1996.

7. The Naturalization Law of 1870 provided for the first time that persons of African descent could be naturalized and become citizens of this country.

8. About 400,000 refugees from Southeast Asia came to this country as a result of the Refugee Act of 1980.

9. The Displaced Persons Act of 1948 allowed more than 400,000 refugees who had left their homes as a result of World War II to enter this country.

10. In 1959, 700,000 Cubans came to the U.S. to escape persecution by Fidel Castro. In 1980 another 125,000 Cuban refugees arrived.



11. It is estimated that 6,000 Japanese women, who were called “picture brides,” came to the U.S. as a result of a Gentlemen’s Agreement of 1907-1908. The Immigration Act of 1924 stopped all Japanese immigration.

12. Congress passed the first immigration law, which excluded criminals and prostitutes, in 1875.

13. In October 2001, soon after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Congress adopted the U.S.A. Patriot Act, which allowed immigrants to be excluded, deported, or detained without counsel and without being charged with a crime (habeus corpus) if they appeared to support particular terrorist organizations. This law was most strongly directed toward immigrants from the Middle East.

14. In 2003 more than 250,000 females became U.S. citizens.

15. Following the election of Lyndon Johnson, Congress passed the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which phased out the national-origins system and listed more preferences. This law opened up immigration to the world and allowed greater immigration from Asia and countries other than northern Europe. The law admitted professionals and reunited families.

16. The large number of illegal immigrants resulted in Congress passing the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibilities Act of 1996. This law imposed more restrictions, making it more difficult for immigrants to become citizens.

17. A law requiring a literacy test, which was a U.S. history and government test in English, to obtain citizenship passed in 1917.

18. In 1790 Congress established a rule that any free white person who had resided for two years in the United States and at least one year in the state in which they sought admission could become a citizen simply by proving good character and taking an oath to support the Constitution.

19. Between 1850 and 1882, 322,000 Cantonese-speaking men arrived in the United States.

20. The Indian Citizenship Act of 1924 made citizens of all Native Americans born within the territorial limits of the U.S.

