what people physically really are; Nationality is what people politically think they are." Race and nation are not synonymous, Stoddard cautioned, but "blood-kinship ("Race")] is "one of the strongest factors which can go to make up a nation." Hence when the Senate Commission on Immigration reported in 1911 that Poles are "darker than the Lithuanians" and "lighter than the average Russian," for instance, this was a statement of what the Poles "physically really are." (Along with this immutable physical trait, it turns out, in temperament Poles are "more high strung than their neighbors").

Throughout the race-based, eugenically driven political debates that followed, Americans pressed long-standing racial idioms into the service of a familiar argument about what constitutes good material for citizenship. This was not a new departure "toward racism" but a continuation of republican tradition. At issue now was simply which "white persons" truly shared what an earlier generation had indiscriminately conceived of as—in James Fenimore Cooper's phrase—the "white man's gifts." The restrictive legislation of 1924 decisively segmented the community of "white persons" and ranked its disparate members—the arrival of desirable "Nordics" continued to be favored, whereas the numbers of problematic "Alpines" and "Mediterraneans" would be dramatically curtailed. But in the context of the late nineteenth century's scientific racialism, even earlier restrictions on "convicts, idiots, lunatics, and people likely to become public charges" (1882) and "people with physical or mental defects" (1907) rested upon racial distinctions, as the scientific probabilities for such conditions were themselves determined by a calculus of race.

Beginning with the arrival of the Irish in the 1840s and throughout the great waves of East Europeans in the 1880s and after, then, popular nativist logic shifted toward a racial conception of immigrant "difference" and its significance to the republic: from the American Party's concerns about dubious "Papist" allegiances or unfair labor competition, to that veritable cult of Anglo-Saxonism known as the Immigration Restriction League, to the frankly eugenic nativists of the 1910s and 1920s, who saw the immigrant "not as a source of cheap or competitive labor, nor as one seeking asylum from foreign oppression, nor as a migrant hunting a less strenuous life, but as a parent of future-born American citizens"—so much "hereditary stuff" that would have to be compatible with "American ideals."

The loudest voices in the organized nativism of the 1840s and 1850s harped upon matters of Catholicism and economics, not race. Most wor-
ried, for example, that Catholic immigrants would taint this polity of independent freemen, as one writer put it in an early nativist tract, because they would "obey their priests as demi-gods." But race was not altogether absent even from this anti-Papist brand of American nativism. One American Party address entitled "To the Native and Naturalized Citizens of the United States" (1844) described national greatness in these terms: "By superior energy, and through the influence of more enlightened institutions, the Anglo-Saxon race acquired pre-eminence, and placed almost the whole country under the tutelage of Great Britain." The tract went on, also in racial terms, to discuss the meager prospects for the assimilation of Scots, Italians, and Germans.

Concerning the "Papist," too, religion was sometimes seen as a function of race. As an article entitled "Romanism and the Irish Race" in the North American Review explained (1879), the gravest objection to Irish immigrants was their incapacity, as Catholics, to participate in a democracy: "A republican form of government implies freedom and self-reliance," traits that are "extinguished in Romanism, as flame goes out in carbonic acid." Familiar enough. But further, by this account the persistence of Irish Catholicism was inseparable from the issue of Celtic racial identity. "The Celtic nature requires something which is intense, real, and passionate," the piece explained; and this is why the Irish are so ill suited to Protestantism and so stubbornly unconvinced by its merits. The Catholicism of the Irish immigrants "has prevented a fusion [of blood]" with their Protestant hosts, and so race and belief have conspired to leave the Irish as an unmetabolized lump in the body politic—"separate in blood, separate in religion."

Daniel Ullman, a Know-Nothing leader in New York, proved an avid follower of then-current scientific thought on race. The "question of races," he pronounced in "The Constitution of the United States," a speech delivered throughout New York in 1868, "is perhaps as important as any which concerns humanity." Striking the familiar, anti-Papist chord of earlier Know-Nothing rhetoric, Ullman did argue that "there must be a common religious sentiment, pervading the whole mass of the people, or all else is vain." Yet he paid far more attention and energy to the question of race. Citing such racialist luminaries of the day as Gobineau, Morton, Augustin Thierry, and Louis Agassiz, he told audiences that "the origin of nations, the elements which constitute the strength of nations, and the sources of the American Republic and its Constitution, are among the most important subjects of human inquiry." "Origins," "elements,"
and "sources," as it turned out, were all racial terms in this explication of American political genius. A republic "situated as is the United States, must become one of vast strength, if it be chiefly peopled by one dominant, leading race." And that race was defined not merely as "white" but as "the Anglo-Saxon branch of the Teutonic race of the Caucasian group."72

Much of this tract detailed a racial myth of the origins of American political institutions. By this account God had hidden the continent of North America from Europe's "civilized races" until they were properly prepared to undertake the bold experiment of self-government. The American republic thus represents the "crown" of all European history. Ullman went on to trace the genius of American constitution to the four racial "elements" of Britain: "The chief element was undoubtedly Germanic. Hence springs the inherent love of freedom of the Anglo-Saxons in England and America, which has been the hereditary characteristic of the Teutonic or Germanic race from the earliest period." Teutons found Britain peopled by Romans, Danes, and Normans; and from this union "proceed the institutions of England, and, in the main, of America."73

But racial greatness itself does not eliminate political peril; on the contrary, if history demonstrates the racial potential for occasional political genius, so does it indicate the ever-present threat of decline. Just as the most powerful empires "have drawn their energy from the life vigor imparted by one single, dominant race," so a heterogeneous society, constituting a mere "mixture of discordant races," "contains, within itself, the elements of weakness and final ruin." Thus Ullman urged that racial distinctions were particularly important for Americans, whose porous political culture allowed for ever-increasing racial diversity: "Proximate species of the same type may assimilate," he warned, but "distinct types, never." By way of tragic example, he pointed to the Austrian Empire, a mere "congeries of peoples" populated by "four of the seven races of Europe." On the question of racial diversity, Ullman concluded, "Let not America . . . exalt herself so high, as to presume that she can disregard, with impunity, the laws, which God has established . . . for the moral and physical government of nations."74

This interpretation of human history was no academic exercise. Americans' handling of racial questions had profound implications for the political experiment for which God had set aside the continent in the first place. For Ullman, as, indeed, for many of his compatriots, the matter at hand was no less than the fate of "self-government" as a viable political
principle. Upon the broadening of the male franchise in the Jacksonian period, and in a rapidly industrializing United States, a constant tension existed between the necessity of huge numbers of immigrants as laborers on the one hand, and the menace posed by these same immigrants as ill-equipped citizens on the other. Antiradicalism (a kind of class vigilance) was one common response to these new conditions; nativism (a kind of race vigilance) was the other. The problematic white immigrant was central to both of these often intertwined discussions.

Thus Daniel Ullman was in good company (or at least a lot of it). "We speak of self-government as if it was . . . a grand triumph of political sagacity," cautioned the North American Review. "We all admit, that particular races, the Asiatics for instance, are not yet fit for it. We interpret their incapacity by assuming that they are not sufficiently advanced on the road to perfection. Quite possibly these peoples may never advance along that road, and have no need to advance." The democratic experiment may be forever closed, in other words, to certain peoples inherently unfit for the arduous demands of political self-possession.

But whereas this author and many others were quick to point to non-European peoples, there were those who wondered whether all Europeans themselves would prove to be "fit for self-government." In an essay entitled simply "Democracy" (1884), James Russell Lowell pointed to the brief history of urban bossism and machine politics as proof of immigrants' permanent state of unfitness: "If universal suffrage has worked ill in our larger cities, as it certainly has," he wrote, "this has been mainly because the hands that wielded it were untrained to its use." There government is controlled by "the most ignorant and vicious of a population which has come to us from abroad, wholly unpracticed in self-government and incapable of assimilation by American habits and methods." Or again, as Francis Walker wrote in the Atlantic Monthly (1896), the newer immigrants represented "beaten men from beaten races" who "have none of the ideas and aptitudes which fit men to take up readily and easily the problem of self-care and self-government, such as belong to those who are descended from the tribes that met under the oak trees of old Germany to make laws and choose chieftains."

The period between the first massive Irish migration of the 1840s and the triumph of racially engineered immigration restriction in the 1920s was thus marked by a profound ideological tension between established codes of whiteness as inclusive of all Europeans, and new, racialist revisions. The newly urgent question of European immigration prompted a
redefinition of whiteness: and yet, within a shifting context of slavery and Emancipation, continued continental (and later trans-Pacific) expansionism, and anti-Chinese agitation, that definition was fraught with contradictions.

Questions of citizenship, fitness for self-government, and race were re-opened at the legislative level in 1870, when Senator Charles Sumner introduced an amendment providing that “all acts of Congress relating to naturalization be . . . amended by striking the word ‘white’ wherever it occurs, so that in naturalization there still be no distinction of race or color.” A senator from Oregon, where anti-Chinese sentiment was mounting, quickly added, “But this act shall not be construed to authorize the naturalization of persons born in the Chinese empire.” Both the significance of Sumner’s proposal and the ramifications of Western dissent were acknowledged and summed up in an amendment proposed by a third senator in jest, “Provided, that the provisions of this act shall not apply to persons born in Asia, Africa, or any of the islands of the Pacific, nor to Indians born in the wilderness. [Laughter].”

Congressional jesting aside, the ensuing debate revealed the complex interplay between citizenship and race, and raised the issue of what, exactly, whiteness was taken to denote. Were certain peoples disqualified from the republic, for instance, by their color or by their alleged “heathendom”? Sumner himself announced that, in striking the word “white,” he merely wanted to “bring our system in harmony with the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States.” “The word ‘white,’ ” he offered, “cannot be found in either of these great title-deeds of this Republic.” To senators from the West, by contrast, the word “white” provided a critical bulwark against national decline. “Does the Declaration mean,” one wanted to know, “that the Chinese coolies, that the Bushmen of South Africa, that the Hottentots, the Digger Indians, heathen, pagan, and cannibal, shall have equal political rights under this Government with citizens of the United States?” The implicit logic of this list is telling in its very confusion. “White, by implication here, is a designation that indicates not only color but degree of freedom (as against ‘coolies’), level of ‘civilization’ (as against ‘cannibals’), and devotion to Christianity (as against ‘heathens’ and ‘pagans’). Indeed, throughout the debate the senators opposing Sumner’s amendment objected to Chinese immigration on the alternating grounds of “their pagan allegiances,” their position as “slave labor in competition with free labor,” and the frankly racialist view that “Mongolians . . . will never lose their identity
as a peculiar and separate people." According to one senator from Nevada, the Chinese had to be both "republicanized and Christianized" before they could safely become citizens—a possibility logically denied by the entangled threads of race, civilization, and religion.

As the impossibility of Asian citizenship was asserted and reasserted, this congressional debate itself demonstrated the alchemic effects of racial discourse. Rethinking the problem of naturalization through race, first of all, could only result in a highly limited, paradoxical, and ultimately mean-spirited brand of liberality at the very best. After the Senate hit upon the formula of extending the privileges of citizenship to "any person of the African race or of African descent," for instance, Senator Trumball spoke out on the Asians' behalf: "Is it proposed to deny the right of naturalization to the Chinaman, who is infinitely above the African in intelligence, in manhood, and in every respect?" As long as no one challenged the core republican principle that not all peoples were capable of self-government, then such deprecations were inextricably woven into racially accented political discourse—even where that discourse was employed in the service of antiracism. As long as the core principle of "fitness for self-government" was intact, the argument for inclusion could only generate other exclusions; this or that group's asserted "fitness" for self-government could only be measured by some group's unfitness.

At the same time, the presence of racially marked Others reified and further united the "white persons" of the 1790 naturalization law. Inasmuch as no one was suggesting that citizenship actually be revoked from those who had already entered under the terms of 1790, any discussion of the total exclusion of certain groups—whether Africans, Asians, or both—tended tacitly to endorse the unifying logic of a single European race whose credentials for self-government were above reproach. "The people coming here from Europe are of our own race," argued a senator from Nevada. "They are of us, and assimilate rapidly, and aid in the development and progress of our country. Let them come . . . But how is it with these Asiatics?" Sumner's hope of raising whiteness itself as a point of debate finally fell afoul of the very white supremacist that such a debate was meant to challenge.

From 1870, then, "free white persons" were joined by persons "of the African race or of African descent" in eligibility for citizenship. This deliberate exclusion of Asians paired with the legal difficulty of whiteness as a stable, meaningful category gave rise to a series of legal challenges, beginning with Ab Yip eight years after the debate over Sumner's pro-
postal (1878), and culminating with the famous Halladian, Ozawa, and
Third cases in the 1910s and 1920s (see Chapter 7). Throughout these
years, as the naturalization law was continually challenged in the courts
by those hoping to get in, and as immigration restriction was kept alive
in the nation’s editorial columns and in the halls of Congress by those
hoping to keep still others out, whiteness itself was subject to a curious,
competing set of assumptions and interpretations.

The main currents of this peculiar dynamic had already been discernible
in the congressional discussion of 1870. Whiteness was so freighted with
political meanings and moral judgments that common usage of the term
itself hinted at the problematic character of certain groups that, by cus-
tom, had already been included. Given the popular connotations of the
phrase “white man,” that is, one might question its applicability to certain
of the Europeans now washing ashore at Castle Garden. But as the tool
of exclusion barring Asian citizenship, the category “white” proved self-
sustaining: whiteness at once depended upon, and created political capital
out of, a series of contrasts whose very terms reinforced the original as-
sumptions undergirding whiteness in the first place. Thus, in this period
of volatile racial meanings, peoples such as Celts, Italians, Hebrews, and
Slavs were becoming less and less white in debates over who should be
allowed to disembark on American shores, and yet were becoming whiter
and whiter in debates over who should be granted the full rights of citi-
zenship. The discourse of immigration restriction favored a scheme of
hierarchically ordered white races, that is, and found some of these sorely
wanting in the characteristics required for self-government, whereas nat-
uralization discourse discovered fundamental and unforgiving differences
between the white races on the one hand, and the hordes of nonwhite
Syrian, Turkish, Hindu, and Japanese claimants who were petitioning the
courts for citizenship on the other.

An insightful, if vexed, exploration of these contradictions appeared in
the American Law Review in 1894, as John Wigmore, a Northwestern
University law professor, puzzled over both the basis and the implications
of legal whiteness. Wigmore wondered whether the word “white” in the
1790 statute had properly referred to literal “color-quality,” to “people
of the original race-stock known as the ‘Caucasian’ or ‘Aryan’ race,” or
to “the European peoples and their colonial progeny.” His particular in-
terest was in unlocking the bar to naturalized citizenship for Japanese
immigrants, and he found whiteness elastic enough to suit his needs.
Southern Europeans were so dark, he averred, that they “can be termed
‘white’ not in the ordinary sense, but only in contrast with the African negro.” This he felt true of “the Semites, the Balkan people, the Greeks, the Italians, and the Hispano-Portuguese in Europe and in Latin America”—all “white” by U.S. naturalization standards. If these and other “dark and swarthy Europeans” were “white” only in contrast with Africans, as was surely the case, he argued, then should not anyone else who contrasted with Africans—Japanese immigrants, for instance—qualify as “white”?31

Wigmore did concede that “Caucasian” or “Aryan” was probably the intended meaning of “white” in the law as it was conceived in 1790, but this, too, presented significant logical inconsistencies: “If [the Aryan race] includes as eligible the Slav, Celt, Scandinavian, Germanic, Pelasgic, and Italic stocks, whose claims to naturalization are undisputed . . . it also includes the Afghans, Persians, and pure Hindus, and other minor Asian stocks, whose claims . . . can hardly be said to be conceded.” One group in particular confounded the logic of standing naturalization law, being at once decided outsiders to the proper category “Caucasian,” and yet accepted—if begrudged—insiders to American citizenship: “The disposition of the Semitic peoples . . . especially the Hebrews, caps the climax; for [the category “Caucasian”] involves the exclusion of a whole race whose industrious workers are found in all states of the Union.” Jews are not Caucasians. Hence although the term “white” in the 1790 code does not seem to refer to “Caucasians,” neither the exclusion of Hindus nor the inclusion of Hebrews is supportable by that logic. The “systematic application of the term ‘white’ is attended with the greatest difficulty,” Wigmore concluded. But clearly Japanese immigrants “could pass as Bulgarians or Spaniards” where literal color is concerned, and are therefore “‘white’ enough to satisfy the statute” and hold “as good a claim to the color ‘white’ as the Southern European and Semitic peoples.”32

Wigmore’s device of casting “contrast with Africans” as the key to whiteness while dismantling the seeming fixities of the idea “Caucasian” conveys the central contradiction regarding the immigrating white races of the period: their own whiteness was questionable in regard to proper Americanism (whatever Wigmore’s good intentions on behalf of Japanese immigrants, his 1894 audience could not have missed the restrictionist implications of his revising away the difference between Eastern Europeans and Asians); and yet they were rendered indelibly white by the presence of populations even more problematic than themselves.

The ascendent view among native-born Americans in the 1890s, even
as John Wigmore was writing, was not that Japanese immigrants held "as good a claim to the color 'white' as the Southern European and Semitic peoples," and therefore ought to be granted citizenship, but rather, that Southern European, Semitic, and Slavic immigrants held as poor a claim to the color "white" as the Japanese, and therefore ought to be turned away at once. The racialism of this prevailing view of the newer European immigrants, its basis in republican logic, and its relationship to racialized assessments of Asians were all nicely embodied in another piece by Henry Cabot Lodge for the North American Review in 1891. After rehearsing the history of how the thirteen colonies had been founded by "people of the same stock" whose "community of race" contributed to the work of assimilation, Lodge went on to investigate the repercussions of the recent shift in the sending countries—particularly the "Slavic" countries of Eastern Europe. Quoting the U.S. consul at Budapest, Lodge announced that "these Slovaks are not a good acquisition for us to make, since they appear to have so many things in common with the Chinese." Not only would their presence in large numbers "interfere with a civilized laborer's earning a 'white' laborer's wage," but, indeed, representing "races most alien to the body of the American people," they would be "very difficult to assimilate" and hence "do not promise well for the standard of civilization of the United States."81

Lodge held this logic in common with other New England patricians, including Prescott F. Hall, Robert DeCourcy Ward, and John Fiske, who went on to found the Immigration Restriction League in 1893. The league crystallized around the issue of a literacy test for incoming aliens. Race was central to the league's conception of literacy from the beginning, and it became more prominent over time in its rhetoric of Americanism and civic requirements. From its founding in 1893 to World War I, the league moved steadily away from that vague set of prides and prejudices that Barbara Miller Solomon has called an "Anglo-Saxon Complex," and toward a fully eugenic program concerning questions of racial pedigree, national character, and the proper role of the state in tending the biological make-up of its population. Indeed, the historian Kenneth Lude- mer has traced the pedigree of the American eugenics movement to the Harvard class of 1889, a group that included some of the key figures of the Immigration Restriction League—Charles Warren in addition to Hall and Ward. By the 1910s league officials like Hall would not only embrace the term "eugenics" and the science it represented—that is, the biological engineering of the body politic—but would couch the entire discussion of
the immigration question in a language of “desirable” versus “useless” races, the important national work of “breeding,” and the statistical averages for this or that race’s possessing this or that trait. But the eugenic implications of mere Anglo-Saxon prejudice had been evident in embryo even in 1891, when Henry Cabot Lodge voiced his concern over “races most alien to the body of the American people” and his ideas about which peoples would and which would not represent “a good acquisition for us to make.”

If the ideology of the eugenic standpoint emerged more or less logically and gradually from the mid-nineteenth-century scientific and political arguments regarding racial stocks and their inherent qualities, the apparatus of eugenics as a presence on the American scene rose rather dramatically after the turn of the century. In 1904 the Carnegie Institution put up money to open a Station for the Study of Evolution at Cold Spring Harbor, Long Island, under the direction of Charles Davenport. Davenport himself was among the enthusiastic supporters within the scientific community who felt that, to paraphrase the historian Daniel Kevles, “nationality” was primarily a function of “race,” and “race” was the prime determinant of behavior. “The idea of a ‘melting-pot’ belongs to a pre-Mendelian age,” Davenport wrote to one colleague, showing his hand on the immigration question. “Now we recognize that characters are inherited as units and do not readily break up.” In the ensuing years, under Davenport’s direction, the station at Cold Spring Harbor provided critical institutional focus to the eugenics movement, serving both as a major intellectual and material resource and as a dispenser of information and data.

The influence of eugenics on legislation in the United States crested, of course, with the immigration act of 1924, whose provisions ensured that those new arrivals who were still allowed entry, in the self-congratulatory words of the immigration commissioner, once again “looked exactly like Americans.” But such views of race and immigration had become fixed in the lexicon of the state as early as 1911. Most significant in this respect is volume nine of the Dillingham Commission’s Report on Immigration, A Dictionary of Races or Peoples. In an attempted clarification of terms, the commission endorsed Blumenbach’s five-tier scheme (“Caucasian, Mongolian, Ethiopian, Malay, and American”), yet also noted that “the bureau [of immigration] recognizes 45 races or peoples among immigrants coming to the United States, and of these 36 are indigenous to Europe.”