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OPINION

Racist Past of Immigration Policy Retooled

What sort of country do we want?

BY JOSE-ANTONIO OROSCO

The condemnation of Trump's remarks on immigration has been swift and widespread. Most of the denunciations cast his ideas as seriously out of line with American ideals on immigration. The problem is that they aren't really. From the very beginning of our nation, there has been a white nationalist core driving our immigration priorities. Even as we struggled to be a "nation of immigrants," most of the people we allowed in were chosen on the basis of national origin from the "whitest" parts of Europe.

The first US naturalization law of 1790 required that anyone who wanted to become a citizen had to be a "free white person." At its start, the Framers envisioned the US as a political society for members of a specific racial caste. This requirement stayed in place until the mid-20th century.

In 1924, the US passed the Johnson Reed Act, one of the most significant

comprehensive immigration reform bills in our history. It limited the number of immigrants each year and those allowed were selected on the basis of their country of origin. Immigrants from North and Western Europe (such as Norway) had almost no restrictions on entering, while Southern and Eastern European immigrants were severely controlled. Immigration from Asia had been almost completely prohibited for several decades by this point.

The shocking issue with the act is its little known origin story. The law was the brainchild of a notorious white supremacist named Madison Grant. In 1916, Grant wrote a book, *The Passing of the Great Race*, which argued that the truly white people in the US, the Nordics, were at risk of going extinct because of the massive influx of Poles, Italians, Greeks, and Jews who Grant did not consider white.

Grant's book became a bestseller and reading groups were formed among members of Congress. Grant chaired the committee to advise Congress on immigration. The result was Johnson Reed. Grant went on to inspire the Racial Integrity Act for the state of Virginia that prohibited interracial marriage. It was

widely copied throughout the US. So for almost 40 years of the 20th century, US immigration policy and marriage law was specifically designed to create a white majority population.

Congress didn't remove this system until 1965, replacing it with one that shifted the demographic makeup of most immigrants. Since 1965, the large bulk of immigrants have been from Asia and Latin America. The new policies today favor creating a diverse pool of immigrants rather than one based on national origins, and they encourage immigrants, once here, to bring their family members in a process called "chain migration."

Trump's remarks, and the policy proposals on immigration that he has released in the past year, indicate that he wishes to return US immigration policy to the way it was under Grant. Clearly, his preference for individuals from Scandinavia versus Africa or Latin America would have pleased Grant immensely.

Trump's advisors have also proposed to reduce the total number of immigrants that can enter each year and those allowed would be selected by a merit system. Those immigrants demonstrating English proficiency and the right job

skills would have a preference. This obviously will favor immigrants from those countries with the educational systems that can give people experience with the American way of life. Such a system will drastically limit immigration from Latin America, Asia, and Africa by eliminating chain migration.

About a century ago, Americans struggled to find a language to describe what a multicultural, racially diverse, and democratic society would look like. One group of progressive thinkers, led by figures such as John Dewey, Alain Locke, and Jane Addams, urged us to imagine a nation where immigrants were not forced to assimilate to a single mold, but encouraged to keep their traditions and enlarge the possibilities of what it means to be an American. This theme is missing from public discussions on immigration today. But if we are looking to the past for hints today about what to do with our immigration policy that do not involve reinventing a white nationalist vision, then perhaps this is a conversation we need to remember.

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Empower Black Women Running for Office

Give them the consideration they deserve

BY JESSICAH PIERRE

Oprah Winfrey's remarkable Golden Globes speech rocked not only the event's A-list attendees, but almost all of America.

Winfrey cited the under-told story of Recy Taylor, a young black woman who was raped by six armed white men during the Jim Crow era. Despite threats to her life, Taylor reported her story to the NAACP — where Rosa Parks made it her mission to help her find justice.

That justice was never seen, but Oprah ended her speech on an optimistic note. "A new day is on the horizon," she said. "A lot of magnificent women" and "some pretty phenomenal men" are "fighting hard to make sure that ... nobody ever has to say 'Me too' again."

In typical modern fashion, #Oprah2020 began trending on Twitter.

I'm a huge fan of Oprah. But I disagree with the masses who want her to run for president.

Not because she's a political amateur,

but because America has a history of looking to black women to save Americans from themselves — while not providing the proper recognition for their labor or even respect.

John Dean, a White House counsel under Obama, tweeted an endorsement that sums this up: "She could end Trump's, and the GOP's, misogyny and racism like no one else!" he predicted, tagging his post #Oprah2020.

But why should the burden of cleaning up Trump's mess fall on a single black woman?

America has always trusted black women to do the work, but it's always come at the expense of their well-being. This notion goes all the way back to the days of slavery, when enslaved black women were forced to breast-feed their slave master's babies with their own breast milk. Known as wet-nursing, this exploited the motherhood of black women while forcing them to disregard their own children.

Since then, black women have been at the forefront of social movements in America — dating back at least to Harriet Tubman's leadership of the Underground Railroad, which helped 100,000 people escape from slavery.

Whether it was the women's suffrage or civil rights movement, African Amer-

ican women were "the critical mass, the grassroots leaders challenging America to embrace justice and equality for all," as an exhibit at the Women's National History Museum puts it.

And when America's earliest forms of feminism began to unravel, it was Sojourner Truth who inserted what's now known as intersectionality — recognizing not only gender discrimination but also its overlap with racial discrimination — in her famous poem "Ain't I A Woman?"

The list goes on. Black women like Ida B. Wells-Barnett and Mary Church Terrell fought passionately for women's voting rights without ever getting the recognition that better known white suffragettes enjoyed.

Even today, the cultural revolution around sexual assault and harassment owes a huge debt to the #MeToo movement founded by Tarana Burke, a black woman who started the movement a decade before it went viral.

And it plays out through our elections.

In the Alabama Senate race, 98 percent of black women voted for Doug Jones. They're the reason he beat Republican Roy Moore, who was widely known for making inappropriate sexual advances on teenage girls.

Many Americans did recognize the black women who kept Moore out of the Senate. That's good news. But it was still a white former prosecutor they were sending to Washington, who may now shy away from black women to please conservative whites in his deep-red state.

If we're serious about having black women lead, we can't stop at recognizing them. We need to empower them both economically and politically.

Over 100 black women are running for state and local offices this year. Giving them the consideration they deserve would say a lot more than simply counting on Oprah — or anyone else — to clean up Trump's mess alone.

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