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AUDIENCE: So first of all, thank you for being here. We've talked about immigration in the past. And with regard to the Haitian refugees, I think it also applies. And one of the themes we studied, I believe with Professor Tormund was, what's the actual reason that people do not want immigrants in the country versus the reasons that they state?

So for example, one of the reasons that people would state would be that immigrants are ruining the economy. But if you look at--

NOAM CHOMSKY: One of the reasons why people stay?

AUDIENCE: Oh, sorry. One of the reasons that people state that they don't want immigrants in the country.

NOAM CHOMSKY: Oh, state that they--

AUDIENCE: Yeah. Is because they say that immigrants will ruin the economy. But then, Professor Tormund pointed out the fact that Mayor Bloomberg of New York, or the former Mayor Bloomberg of New York, said that New York could not run without immigrants. So what do you think are the actual reasons that people do not want immigrants in the country?

NOAM CHOMSKY: Well, first of all, it's not a new phenomenon. And it's not the United States.

So for example, in Europe, a majority of the population of Europe, majority, thinks that Europe should not permit any Muslim immigrants. Europe has a certain history. It's called crematoria, for example. That's part of the background. And that's part of the immigration background here, too.

I can talk about it from a very personal point of view. My father happened to be able to come to the United States before fleeing from Czarist Russia. Horrible conditions, especially for Jews.

He made it before the Immigration Act of 1924. In 1924, Immigration Act for the first time barred Europeans. Prior to that, there were racist immigration acts, like it kept out Orientals.

But Europeans were admitted. And there was a very simple reason for that. We were exterminating the indigenous population. So there was a lot of open space. That's what you see glorified in stories about covered wagons going to the West-- the pioneers. Of course, they were displacing some people who happened to live there, but it's another story.

Anyway, there was an open-- the continent was open after you've exterminated the population. And you want the right kind of people to come in. And if you go back, the question of the right kind of people was quite delicate.

So for example, Benjamin Franklin, who was the leading figure of the Enlightenment in the United States, he thought we should have discriminatory immigration rules to keep out the wrong kind of people. People who were too dark. And the people who were too dark were Swedes and Germans. That's Benjamin Franklin. So we got to watch out. Keep out Germans and Swedes. They're too siwrly. But that was finally relaxed.

Anyway, they needed Europeans to come in. By the beginning of the 20th century, they didn't need immigrants any longer to fill the country. And the constant racism emerged.

So the 1924 Act was-- in reality, it was based against Jews and Italians. What they said is East and Southern Europeans. But that meant Jews and Italians. Well, OK. What happened to the Jews who were unable to come until the 1960s? They ended up in concentration camps and crematoria. So it's a serious issue. That's most of my family, incidentally. The ones who didn't make it.

So the story goes way back. It's not something new. And it's not just the United States. Western society generally is infected by very deep racism. And it's even more extreme in many ways in Europe than in the United States. In fact, in Europe, it's even more frightening than the United States.

So take this morning's newspaper, if you happened to look at it. The government of Austria-- there was a coalition government, but it wasn't able to have an agreement, so they have to have an election. And the concern is that the most popular figure in Austria might win the election. He happens to be a neo-Nazi. That's Austria. There's a little bit of history in Austria. Well, that's scary. And it's happening all over.

Here, it has a special character because of white supremacy. White supremacy is very deeply rooted in the United States. There are comparative studies of white supremacy. The major

ones by George Fredrickson, a good sociologist who did a comparative study of white supremacy in many countries. It's more extreme in the United States than any country that he studied, including South Africa under apartheid. And you see it all over the place.

I mean, when the Nazis in the early '30s were trying to find models for the Nuremberg laws, the racist laws, they looked around the world. And the only country where they could find good models was the United States. They took US models. The US had miscegenation rules-- rules against interracial marriage-- which lasted, in fact, until they were finally struck down in the 1960s. The Nazis didn't entirely take the US laws because they regarded the US laws as too harsh.

So the US laws were based on the concept of one drop of blood. None of this means anything from a biological point of view. It's all totally meaningless. But these are socially constructed categories. And one drop of blood meant if you-- by whatever category was concocted, you had one drop of Negro blood, you're black. And then, you can't marry a white. Those were laws that were not struck down, I think, until 1967. And you see it all over the place right now.

I mean, it's right in front of us all over. In fact, if you look at Afro American history in the United States, it's pretty remarkable. In fact, that's something that really should be studied. The two topics that should be studied are, what happened to the native population and what happened to the black population? Anything else is secondary for the United States.

Without going through the details-- I presume you know them. But the first slaves were brought here in Massachusetts 400 years ago. That's 400 years. You look over those 400 years, there have been literally a few decades. Maybe 30 years scattered in which African Americans had kind of a small opportunity to enter the general society. That's quite a record.

And, of course, it has a residue. The residue shows in things like mortality, wealth. The wealth of African American families is virtually zero. What there was, was pretty much destroyed by the crash. It shows up in, why are there murders in ghettos in Chicago and Baltimore? It's not the genes. Everywhere you look, you see it. And it shows up.

Going back to your question, it shows up in the racist immigration laws, which are bad enough now. But the ones that were enacted in 1924 and maintained right through the Holocaust, those were pretty serious. In fact, you probably know the stories. But ships were turned away bringing refugees who thought they could make it. There's some strange stories if you look at it. They're kind of suppressed.

But one quite interesting story-- it's worth looking at if you're interested-- has to do with Japan. The Japanese fascists were kind of-- only had limited understanding of the Western world. Japan had been pretty isolated. So the fascist leaders, the generals in Japan in the 1930s, were pretty much influenced by Germany. And they read German propaganda, Nazi propaganda, about how Jews are running the world. And they were very eager to get the Americans off their back. They didn't want a conflict with the United States. So they concluded that the way to get the Americans off their back is by doing something nice for the Jews.

And this, in fact, fit with Japanese history. Because in the early part of the 20th century, there was a Russo-Japanese war. And wealthy Jews who were very anti-Russian-- because Russia was very anti-Semitic-- were funding and supporting the Japanese. Jacob Schiff and others. Japan considered that that was part of the reason why they were able to win the war. So they had their own connections with the international Jewish conspiracy that runs the world that they were picking up from Nazi propaganda. So they concluded that the way to mollify the United States was to bring Jews from Eastern Europe to Japan.

And there was a period of the Nazi Russian pact where people could move. And in fact, there was a considerable number of Polish Jews, very orthodox Polish Jews. The kind you see with black hats and white shirts and you know, all of this. They were brought from Poland to Japan, which was a feudal society. The cultural contact was incredible. There's all sorts of interesting stories about it.

But the point here is that the Japanese assumed that if they brought Polish Jews to Japan, the American Jewish community would welcome them here. They didn't want them to stay in Japan, of course. They thought they'd go on to the United States. They stayed in Japan. Nobody wanted them here, including the Jewish community. And there's plenty of stories like that. As soon as you start to lift the veil very slightly, you find it everywhere.