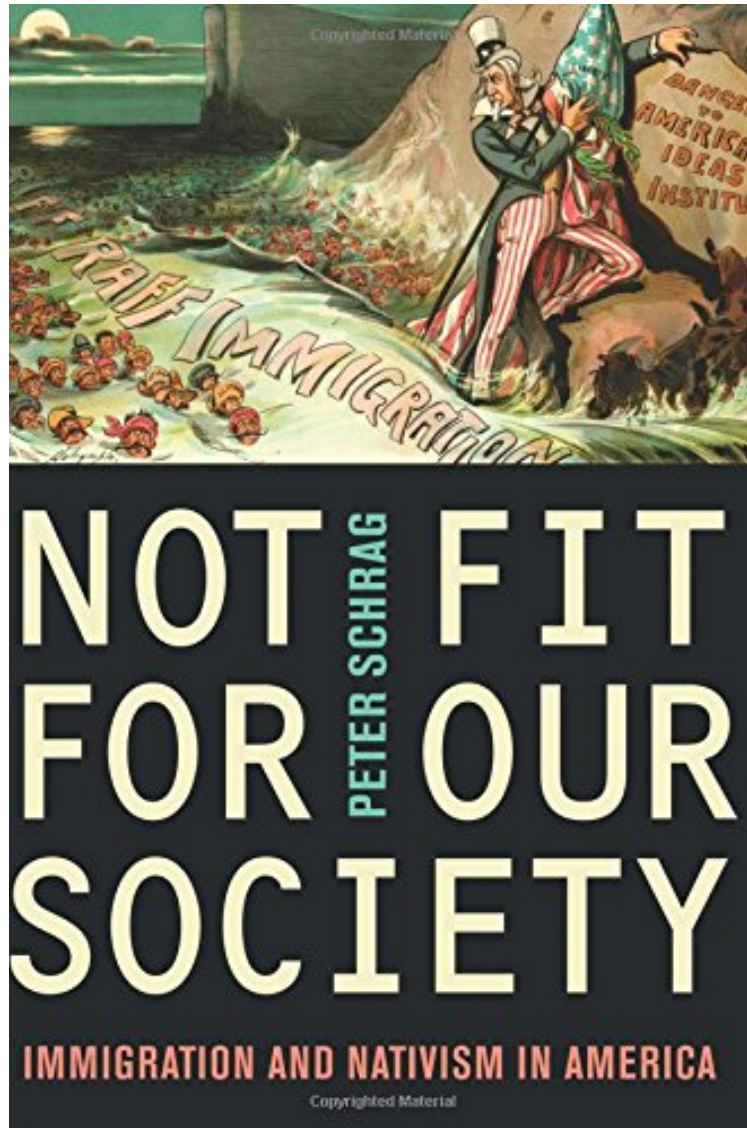


(Read free) Not Fit for Our Society: Immigration and Nativism in America

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Peter Schrag

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#206063 in Books Peter Schrag 2010-05-01 2011-06-21 Original language: English PDF # 1 8.60 x .79 x 5.70l, .90 #File Name: 0520269918320 pages Not Fit for Our Society Immigration and Nativism in America | File size: 61.Mb

Peter Schrag : Not Fit for Our Society: Immigration and Nativism in America before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Not Fit for Our Society: Immigration and Nativism in America:

8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Great Overview of Immigration Throughout U.S. History By J. Garcia Peter Schrag has produced an outstanding book, written for the general public (absent of technical jargon), on

the history of immigration and immigration policy throughout American history - from the colonial era to the 21st century. Schrag is a former editor of the Sacramento Bee, and he has a history of covering immigration issues within California and the nation as a whole. The central basis of Schrag's book is that although the United States boasts an ethos as a "nation of immigrants," the basic reality is that the American public has never really liked immigrants - be they the Germans in Pennsylvania, the Irish in Massachusetts, the Jews and Italians in New York, the Chinese in California, or the Mexicans in Texas. Schrag notes that the arguments raised against immigrants have remained the same throughout the entire history of the U.S., regardless of the particular immigrant group in questions. Immigrants have always been accused of 1) not wanting to learn English or acculturate, 2) stealing jobs from U.S.-born workers, 3) preferring handouts and laziness to hard work (ironic, given the nature of the previous point), 4) changing the racial/ethnic composition of the country. Also, it is not until a few generations later, after an ethnic group has been firmly established in the U.S., that that group is viewed nostalgically as a "good" immigrant group [for example, the Irish Catholics were despised upon their initial arrival on U.S. shores in the days just before the Civil War...but today, the Irish are often praised and contrasted with Mexican or Cuban newcomers]. Schrag is indeed a progressive/liberal, but this book is not a mere invoking of clichés and emotional appeals. The previous reviewer who made such a claim clearly did NOT read the book. Schrag claims that the country cannot allow uncontrolled immigration, and he criticizes liberals for turning the public further against legal and illegal immigrants by advocating welfare, affirmative action, and other entitlement programs. I had the privilege of meeting Peter Schrag at an immigration conference in San Jose, California in October 2010 shortly after this book was published. He is extremely knowledgeable on the subject and is a very engaging and kind man. This book is definitely a good read, and I would recommend it for teachers/professors of U.S. History or Ethnic/Immigration studies. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Thorough and sharp history of the prejudice and political forces facing immigration in America. By ryan caldwell Thorough history on the repeated rhetoric of "the other" in America. Sharp insights into the "whitening" of previously "less than human" immigrants and the political forces that pushed and shaped the country. Information about the movements, social cohesion, and what it has meant to be a "real" American. 15 of 17 people found the following review helpful. Places immigration debate in its historical context By BT River Peter Schrag brings a great deal of well researched historical context to the current immigration debate in "Not Fit for Our Society." America has always been schizophrenic about immigrants; on the one hand welcoming them when land is plentiful and labor is scarce and on the other hand, there is an undercurrent of xenophobia and discrimination based on religion or skin color - in the past Catholics, Jews, Muslims, Irish, German, Italian, Polish, Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, and now Mexican. The basic arguments we make now against immigration, illegal or otherwise, were made at least century ago when our grandparents or their grandparents came to America in search of a better life. For example - "Immigrants have strange habits, are dirty, and keep to themselves. They do not know and do not care to know how to speak English. They will not assimilate into American culture. They want to subvert American culture. They only want to make money and return to their home country without adding to America." You could substitute the name of just about any immigrant group here. Schrag points out that the great equalizer in the past century was America's participation in World War II. Contributions to the war effort were made by all racial groups. Italians, Poles, etc. became "white" as are result of their participation and sacrifice. It was also a time of low immigration and higher labor participation rates due to the War. As other authors have done, Schrag points out that the very laws designed to discourage permanent immigration have a perverse impact. By making temporary travel into America more difficult, such laws have had the effect of making "illegals" permanent residents. Returning to this country after a trip home in the off-season would not be easy. Sojourners (using Ronald Takaki's terminology) become residents because they have little choice. In that way, the laws perpetuate the behavior that they seek to eliminate. Schrag clearly has an "axe to grind", but tries to be evenhanded. He notes that even "liberals" and Democrats are ambivalent about immigration even though they may eventually be beneficiaries at the ballot box. I don't think that Schrag will change anyone's entrenched position. However, if you're still willing to listen, you may come to understand how counterproductive current immigration policy is and that the origins of the current debate on immigration go back to the founding of this country.

In a book of deep and telling ironies, Peter Schrag provides essential background for understanding the fractious debate over immigration. Covering the earliest days of the Republic to current events, Schrag sets the modern immigration controversy within the context of three centuries of debate over the same questions about who exactly is fit for citizenship. He finds that nativism has long colored our national history, and that the fear and loathing of newcomers has provided one of the faultlines of American cultural and political life. Schrag describes the eerie similarities between the race-based arguments for restricting Irish, German, Slav, Italian, Jewish, and Chinese immigrants in the past and the arguments for restricting Latinos and others today. He links the terrible history of eugenic "science" to ideas, individuals, and groups now at the forefront of the fight against rational immigration policies. *Not Fit for Our Society* makes a powerful case for understanding the complex, often paradoxical history of immigration restriction as we work through the issues that inform, and often distort, the debate over who can become a citizen, who decides, and on what basis.

From Publishers Weekly Schrag (*Paradise Lost*) offers a scholarly history of the political movements that have sought to restrict immigration to the U.S. since its founding from the 19th-century Know-Nothing Party through the years of American eugenics research that vastly influenced the Nazis in the years leading up to WWII. He points out how the same anti-immigration and anti-immigrant arguments have been recycled across generations: most notably the idea that certain groups be they the Irish, Jews, Chinese, or Mexicans were inassimilable. Though he doesn't provide any especially new insights, Schrag has assembled a fine history of nativist movements and the reasons why their rhetoric has been so seductive at particular points in history. The book would have been well-served had Schrag devoted more time to untangling the provocative idea he concludes with: that rather than becoming white and thus acceptable the path trod by previous generations of European and Jewish immigrants today's Latino and Asian immigrants may be shifting the paradigm and derailing the very mechanism that keeps the U.S. on a locked pattern of exclusion and race-based fearmongering against new immigrants. (May) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. A fine history of nativist movements and the reasons why their rhetoric has been so seductive at particular points in history.