

of Jewish factory owner Leo Frank, who had been falsely accused of murdering a young girl, represented the most overt and violent expression of anti-Jewish hate. Henry Ford, through his newspaper the *Dearborn Independent*, routinely published conspiracy theories concerning supposed Jewish plots to control international finance and dominate world politics. In 1927, Ford issued an apology and a formal retraction of any articles in the *Independent* that had amplified “charges and insinuations” against the Jewish people and settled a libel case that had been brought against him for the antisemitic articles.<sup>225</sup> Harvard President Abbot Lawrence Lowell’s stealth campaign to impose strict limits on the number Jewish students admitted to the university in the 1920s, a policy that other Ivy League universities also adopted, showed a more insidious and genteel form of anti-Semitism.<sup>226</sup> Lowell, who had served as vice-president of the **Immigration Restriction League (IRL)**, embodied the link between private prejudice and public policy.

Opposition to immigration had long been a fixture of American politics, but it scored significant victories with the passage of the Immigration Act of 1917, which imposed literacy tests and banned all immigration from Asia, and the Emergency Quota Act of 1921. This law capped the number of immigrants permitted each year by establishing a maximum quota equal to three percent of the number of foreign-born residents of a particular nationality as recorded in the 1910 census, the most recent complete set of data available. Under this formula, which allocated forty-five percent of the total quotas to countries in Southern and Eastern Europe, more than 700,000 immigrants entered the United States in 1924.<sup>227</sup>

Dissatisfied with the quantity and the perceived quality of immigration permitted under the 1921 statute, restrictionists led by Senator David Reed of Pennsylvania and Congressman Albert Johnson of Washington state, proposed a new system that would derive new national immigration quotas based on two percent of the foreign-born population in 1890. The choice of 1890 was deliberate as that year’s census preceded the wave of mass immigration that followed for the next three decades. As a result, under the **Johnson-Reed Immigration Act of 1924**, Southern and Eastern European countries received only sixteen percent of the assigned quotas while the total number of immigrants admitted annually from any nation was reduced to 155,000.<sup>228</sup>

The law, also known as the National Origins Act or the Quota Act, effectively ended the era of open immigration to the United States and codified a hierarchy of “desirability” that placed Northern and Western European peoples above Southern and Eastern Europeans, while excluding Asians entirely. While immigration restriction’s legislative champions tapped into popular prejudice, they also incorporated a growing body of pseudo-scientific literature that claimed to “prove” white supremacy as an objective fact.

## Eugenics and Pseudoscientific Racism

In 1916, **Madison Grant**, Chair of the New York Zoological Society and prominent leader of the IRL, published his best-selling *The Passing of the Great Race*, which extolled the virtues of “Nordic” (Northern) peoples of Europe while cataloging the supposed vices of “Mediterranean” (Southern) peoples. Neither Grant’s tedious academic discussion of skull shape and size, nor his deployment of biological terminology could disguise the rank racism that undergirded his entire project. Grant insisted that the physical and character traits of “inferior races” were hereditary and immutable. In his view, nature, not nurture, determined the worth and destiny of an individual and, by extension, entire nations and races.

Grant forcefully rejected the popular metaphor of an American melting pot, in which “hyphenated” peoples from many different ethnic, racial, and religious backgrounds would fuse together to form a common national identity, as a dangerous mirage. Grant scoffed at assimilation as an impossible task and lamented the intermixing of so-called inferior peoples with so-called superior peoples as “race suicide.”<sup>229</sup> Inspired by Grant, T. L. Stoddard published *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World Supremacy* in 1920, which argued that the war had unsettled the historical dominance of European nations and paved the way for a future of Asian domination.

Other scholars supplied dubious statistical evidence to bolster Grant’s pseudoscientific racism. During World War I, the psychologist Robert M. Yerkes administered a series of intelligence tests to millions of recruits at U.S. Army induction centers in 1918. The results of the Army Mental Tests revealed shockingly low test scores that seemed to suggest the nation faced a dire crisis. Questions measured familiarity with American culture