



# Policing Women: Prostitution and Morality Clauses in Immigration Law

RESEARCH

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## ABSTRACT

In the history of immigration regulation, women have frequently become the targets of discriminatory legislation. In including prostitutes and “immoral” women in the excludable classes of immigrants, women became the center of discussions about protecting American morality. Although passed in the guise of protecting women from the plight of white slavery, prostitution and morality clauses in immigration law instead led to extra hurdles for women attempting to enter.

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## INTRODUCTION

Polly Adler was, quite simply, a madam. Though the terminology might have gone out of style, her name was on the lips of most of the country because she ran a remarkably successful brothel.<sup>1</sup> In the early twentieth century, when the press and the politicians pointed to immigrant women as the source of the “vile and immoral infestation” of prostitution wracking America—whether as unsuspecting victims or as knowing and worldly procuresses—Adler was feeding their fears. An immigrant from Russia, Adler found herself needing money, so she was more than willing to help connect women she knew with men who were willing to pay for sexual services.<sup>2</sup> After her arrest for operating a house of ill repute, though the court overturned her case, she found herself at a moral crossroads. She had a choice between moving back to a dumpy “hole” and finding a brutal factory job or making more money but giving up her good name. Adler chose prostitution, an occupation she saw as only a “temporary expedient.”<sup>3</sup> While the government and Progressives clutched their pearls over the poor white women forced into prostitution, people like Adler and other sex workers had some agency and choice over their bodies and livelihoods.<sup>4</sup>

Prostitution did and still does exist. During the “white slavery” scare of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—a time of widespread fear of white women being forced into prostitution—it was far less widespread than people of the time would have thought, though even getting firm numbers on those arrested is next to impossible.<sup>5</sup> Through the guise of protecting naïve women, the country policed American morality through immigration law. Although immigration regulations were posited as exclusively for their protection and well-being, these restrictions served more of a policing than a protecting function, essentially becoming immorality regulations for generations of women. Though abduction and trafficking were real dangers, these laws led to many more women being excluded from the country and an entirely distinct experience for women than for men attempting to immigrate. This article evaluates the governments’ treatment of immigrant women through the lens of immigration regulations. This reanalysis is crucial because, for a country that prides itself on being built of immigrants and its diversity, these laws instead sought to keep out “undesirables” or assimilate them to so-called American standards of morality. I argue that, even though prostitution and white slavery were problems, immigration laws meant to restrict them served more to gatekeep morality and exclude women on tenuous accusations than to protect and address a class of women who needed legitimate governmental protection.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The historiography of white slavery, prostitution, and immorality as reasons for immigration exclusion are new developments within immigration history. Although women and gender studies began developing in the latter half of the twentieth century, immigration and laws barring it were not primary foci. However, starting around the turn of the twenty-first century, more research emerged highlighting the intersection of gender and immigration. This development reveals a marked departure from earlier research absorbed by race or class. It is within this newer development of gender in immigration that I place my research. As such, I examine the use of immoral behavior and prostitution as motives for excluding women from the United States.

There are three significant categories of research on women and immigration. One subset of women’s immigration history can be found in legal history. This branch focuses on the legal changes and court cases that form the basis of legislation and judicial decisions concerning women and immigration. In this field, most research focuses on current laws and regulations regarding immigration and women and how they got to where they are today.

Within this group work’s—including Pooja Dadhanian’s “Deporting Undesirable Women” (2018), Kerry Abrams’ “Polygamy, Prostitution, and the Federalization of Immigration Law” (2005), and Martha Gardner’s *The Qualities of a Citizen* (2005)—their arguments focus on how the law was critical in creating the limitations faced by women and the intersection of law and court cases with racial and moral questions.

Dadhanian discusses “prostitution-related immigration laws” and the “concern about the threat of the sexuality of noncitizen women to American morality,” using this basis to discuss “the current legal landscape of prostitution-related immigration laws” and offers suggestions for future legislation.<sup>6</sup> In another article, Abrams discusses “the regulation of sexuality, morality, and marriage [as] a pervasive regulatory force in the development of immigration law,” specifically focusing on the Page Law and California’s attempts to limit the migration of Chinese women.<sup>7</sup> Through the lens of court cases and law, legal historians can evaluate the effects of these changes on the lives of the immigrant women affected, how the law shifted over time, and how the alterations and consequences impacted different groups accordingly. Within this grouping, there also exists a discussion of citizenship and the legal position of female immigrants within the country.<sup>8</sup> These arguments focus on deportation as a means to limit citizenship. Eliminating the safety of a woman’s position in

the country was fundamental for regulating morality and enforcing assimilation.

The second primary group of women's immigration historians focuses on the context of the Progressive Era. This group primarily argues that white slavery legislation, and the resulting racial bias and limitations on immigration, were a result of the Progressive Era. White slavery is especially touched on by many of the historians in this subset, with many focusing on the idea that the "white slavery scare [was] the irrational rantings of a paranoid social group."<sup>9</sup> Considering the connection between nativism and Progressive movements, historians such as Mara Keire and Grace Delgado refocus the narrative on the idea that, the concerns and legislation of the time arose from "middle-class fears about urbanization, immigration, and women's increased mobility."<sup>10</sup> Though these historians may focus on different groups or borders, the same theme rings true of many writings in the field.

Other historians like Eva Payne and Mary Ting Yi Lui emphasize women's organizations and the "enlarging of middle-class white women's opportunities" through their work with these so-called fallen women.<sup>11</sup> Among women activists and Progressives during this time and the expansion of their actions within the social sphere falls solidly under this subset, contextualizing immigration reform within the larger context of late nineteenth and early twentieth.<sup>12</sup>

The last area highlighted within this field of study is sexuality. One key work in this group is Eithne Luibhéid's book, *Entry Denied* (2002). This group of scholars argues that limiting and policing sexuality was the chief purpose of white slavery and morality legislation. They also contend that this is separate from studies of gender and immigration, though they acknowledge that women faced the consequences of such regulation more frequently than men. Though this is not critical to my research, sexuality—in terms of morality, marriage, relations, and children—is important within studies of gender and immigration is relevant since the actions of women and their relationships are impacted by regulations imposed by laws.<sup>13</sup> Because sexuality studies are separate from the others, they will be placed in their own subset. This specific topic within immigration history has not received substantial attention until recently.<sup>14</sup>

There is no clear pattern of development within this field. Each school of thought—legal history, sexuality studies, and Progressive historians—has been researched and argued throughout the twenty-first century. While more recent scholarship on the subject and the placement of it within women and sexuality studies emerged more in the later twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, discussions did occur earlier. Two historians debated the issue in the 1980s: Ruth Rosen and Mark Thomas Connelly discussed

whether white slavery had existed.<sup>15</sup> Historians do not doubt the veracity of white slavery but instead focus on various aspects of the practice, how and why it emerged, or its impacts on various ethnic groups.

While each approach to analyzing prostitution and morality clauses in immigration differ, there are areas of overlap between the three. Aspects of the policing sexuality argument can be found in analysis done by the other two groups of historians, usually when explaining the reasons for legislation or the changes of the Progressive Era.<sup>16</sup> Progressive Era policies and changes are discussed in legal history because many of the changes to emerge during this period occurred through legal means. Much of the research on this topic blends together the information discussed by all these historians to gain a more complete understanding of a complicated topic. Though each group differs, the differences emerge more in terms of focus than general arguments: all three discuss the several aspects in the context of policing American morality and women.

For my research, I will focus on the continuity over time of the policing of women and their morals by immigration legislation. I will synthesize the two prevalent arguments discussed previously by merging discussions of sexuality and morality with discussions of broader social changes, building on the idea that at the root of the legislation restricting white slavery and prostitution was a desire to assimilate immigrants into an American morality system. Because of the Progressive Era's push for increased morality and the social movements that emerged during this period, immigrant women became targets of this desire for conformity to, and limited dissent from, the desired American morals. Further, I will build off the work of previous historians to argue that this desire led to inaccurate assumptions and, ultimately, the deportation of women who did nothing wrong. This article departs from previous studies by tracking the issue across racial groups while tracing the significant developments of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Rather than focusing on one specific group or analyzing legislation in a racial context, I will analyze how legislation changed and was similar throughout, regardless of other factors.

Overall, the historiography of women and immigration—and more specifically, laws regarding white slavery, prostitution, and morality—developed relatively recently and has seen little drastic change. Historians have come far from arguing about its veracity, now focusing more on the use of law to regulate women's actions and the larger context of the period. Most scholarship focuses on different aspects of immigration regulation and its causes. I will build off these previous approaches as I look at how this legislation developed and the roots that led to the limitations and deportation for all groups of women.

## THE LAWS

To provide a better understanding of the effects of immigration regulations on women it is crucial to begin with a discussion of the laws themselves. The Page Act One was one of the first laws targeting morality and prostitution, which was passed on March 3, 1875.<sup>17</sup> Through the Page Act, the exclusion of immigration “for lewd and immoral purposes” was first enacted; the law later specifies the exclusion of “women for the purposes of prostitution.”<sup>18</sup> As part of the law, anyone creating such a contract or bringing a woman for immoral purposes would be fined and jailed for a time, and inspections were required to help prevent such aliens from landing.<sup>19</sup> While this law might have been justified, the congressional act is littered with racial slurs and targets Asian women specifically.<sup>20</sup> The Page Law, as it came to be known, resulted from fears that Chinese women were undesirable and that white families needed protection from their “perceived sexual deviance,” an opinion expressed by President Ulysses S. Grant before passing the law.<sup>21</sup> According to the ideas of the time, sex should only occur within the confines of marriage, and individuals viewed prostitution as an abhorrent practice. Regardless, the fact that all women were suspected and Asian women were targets is especially poignant. Grant said that very few Chinese women were in “honorable” labor, reflecting the idea that they were all assumed to be immoral, revealing anti-Asian biases. It also revealed that the law went beyond simple regard for fair treatment and freedom of women.<sup>22</sup>

On March 3, 1903, Congress passed the Anarchist Exclusion Act to help regulate immigration, strengthening the tenets of the Page Act.<sup>23</sup> This act excluded many classes of individuals, including persons “convicted of a felony or other crime or misdemeanor involving moral turpitude,” “polygamists,” and “prostitutes, and persons who procure or attempt to bring in prostitutes or women for the purpose of prostitution.”<sup>24</sup> This expanded the number of groups of targeted women. Interestingly, the act specifically states that being “convicted of an offense purely political” is not grounds for exclusion; only convictions “involving moral turpitude” were automatically grounds for exclusion.<sup>25</sup> Provisions regarding inspections and penalties were continuities from the previous act.<sup>26</sup> Although the law was uncontroversial, it continued to “reflect concern over the threat of prostitution by noncitizen women to American morality;” the law continued to target women, seeming “to single them out, implying only women could be sellers of sex.”<sup>27</sup> Even though there was little real change between the two laws, besides the lack of racially specific references, it reflected a continuing concern for the state of American morals in which immigrant women were potential desecrators.

Congress passed the Immigration Act of 1907 in February of that year to tighten immigration yet again with the same exclusion of “any alien woman or girl [immigrating] for the purpose of prostitution, or for any other immoral purpose.”<sup>28</sup> While the ideas were the same, lawmakers added a new clause that allowed for the deportation of any “woman or girl ... found an inmate of a house of prostitution or practicing prostitution” within three years of entering the country.<sup>29</sup> Importantly, if unsurprisingly, “a conviction for prostitution was not required before a noncitizen female could be deported.”<sup>30</sup> Women were easily accused of prostitution without having to be found guilty; consequently, women were in greater danger of expulsion than ever before. Interestingly, men attempting to buy sex were not penalized in this act.<sup>31</sup> Concerns for the morality of Americans continued, and immigrant women continued to be threatened and punished for jeopardizing it.

The amendments to the Immigration Act of 1907 occurring in 1910 further identified the groups of women excluded, including those mentioned before, as well as anyone “supported by or [receiving] in whole or in part the proceeds of prostitution.”<sup>32</sup> The act also allowed for the deportation of anyone that could be in any way tied to prostitution or places “frequented by prostitutes,” who aided or protected prostitutes from arrest, or was even employed in a place where prostitutes may gather.<sup>33</sup> The act also removed the time limits previously placed on deportation, making the penalty harsher than before; however, it also removed some of the gendered language from earlier.<sup>34</sup> This act was relatively consistent with previous legislation. Even though women were, theoretically, less targeted than before, policing morality still occurred, and women found in any situation that could even potentially be taken as prostitution or morally grey were at a greater risk.

Congress subsequently passed a few more laws with the same theme. For example, in February 1917, the Immigration Act was amended yet again.<sup>35</sup> Like the previous laws, this one attempted to exclude prostitutes; however, this law did not refer to women specifically, probably in an attempt to help with the perceived white slavery problem.<sup>36</sup> Through the provisions of this law, especially its penalties, Congress made it clear that prostitution was “one of the most serious crimes for immigrations purposes,” and prostitutes continued to be seen as “among the most undesirable immigrants.”<sup>37</sup>

Throughout the development of the most significant prostitution and morality-related immigration laws, a common theme was the idea that these individuals, and especially women, were undesirable and needed to be kept from polluting good American society. Conduct deemed immoral was demonized and vilified through Congressional acts, excluding women on tenuous grounds. While these

acts might have been applied to men and women in equal numbers, as will be seen later, women saw most consequences of these changes.

## THE PROCESS

As laws were set in place to limit the immigration of women on moral grounds, proceedings had to take place to address the necessary deportations and exclusions. When a person was up for deportation, the warrant proceedings were complex and usually not uniform<sup>38</sup> To attempt to address these inconsistencies, the Department of Commerce and Additionally, aliens did not get regular judicial rights—a jury of their peers, representation, innocent until proven guilty—rather procedures ... [were to] secure the prompt, vigorous action contemplated Congress.”<sup>39</sup> Immigrants were assumed to be guilty. The burden of proof was always on the immigrant to prove their innocence. They were not U.S. citizens. Immigration law is civil instead of criminal. This, of course, expedited their removal. Though technically fair, the proceedings and directions of how they should go show that court and immigrant officials sought reasons to exclude individuals.

These hearings were, for the most part, to the detriment of immigrant women as government officials tended to automatically accept the hearing results. Unless substantial proof existed “that the proceedings were manifestly unfair, that the action of the executive officers was such as to prevent a fair investigation or that there was a manifest abuse,” judicial proceedings were not even conducted.<sup>40</sup> In some cases, even though allegations existed of “infractions of constitutional [rights],” appeals were dismissed without further consequence.<sup>41</sup> Providing enough information about wrongdoing or mistreatment was nearly impossible, especially for impoverished women or women from racial minorities, so the courts dismissed most appeal cases and women’s attempts to claim unfair proceedings.<sup>42</sup> In cases of marriage between these women and American citizens, they still assumed the immigrants were lying, and “very convincing, if not absolutely conclusive proof” was required to stop their deportation.<sup>43</sup> Although there were almost certainly individuals who attempted to use these loopholes to get out of trouble or avoid deportation, the assumption of absolute immigrant guilt was blatant and discriminatory.

Government officials of the time assumed the guilt of immigrant women. One such individual was Oscar Solomon Straus, Secretary of Commerce and Labor, in 1907.<sup>44</sup> In his and other immigration officials’ opinions, “[raising] a presumption is to cast upon the alien the burden of showing” that a situation to the contrary existed.<sup>45</sup> Once again, rather than placing the burden

of proof on proving the immigrant woman’s guilt, they assumed that she was the guilty party unless enough evidence was available to “satisfactorily overcome this presumption.”<sup>46</sup> Overcoming this presumption of guilt was next to impossible for immigrant women. To this point, instructions to immigration officials reveal the difficulty of overcoming such lofty burdens of proof for the accused women. “Wherever there [was] ground for suspicion [,] convincing evidence of the bona fide character of the case should be required,” according to officials.<sup>47</sup>

The substantial burden of proof extended to immigrants wishing to marry U.S. citizens. Marriage was scrutinized, principally concerning immigrant women, and strict orders were given “that no such marriage [between an alien woman and citizen would] be permitted in any case” where “all substantial cause for suspicion” could not be removed.<sup>48</sup> Once again, women unfairly became targets, and both immigration and government officials chose to believe that all were guilty because of the paranoia of immorality.

## WOMEN’S EXPERIENCES

The process of immigration was clearly outlined by the government of the day, but the experiences of women attempting to immigrate during this time varied. Although detailed accounts of those women deported or not allowed to enter in the first place are critical holes in the documentary record, a few stories do remain. One woman who outlined her experience attempting to enter the US during this period was Margaret Seaton Menzies Rutherford Jack Kirk. Kirk explained that because of the regulation and the fear of immoral women, “no girl could come in [to the country] without somebody claiming her.”<sup>49</sup> However, not just anyone could claim a girl. Men were suspect when it came to claiming a woman: any man might be claiming a purchased bride or acquiring a prostitute’s services. Unless they could prove that he was a male relative, he would not count. Instead, a resident woman had to claim women attempting to immigrate to vouch for their character.<sup>50</sup> In Kirk’s case, because her family had not yet immigrated, she had to have a woman who lived in the house of one of her father’s apprentices claim her to enter.<sup>51</sup> Extra hardships were placed on women, and only women, to prevent their entry. Although, of course, not every woman who wanted to enter was a prostitute, the immigration laws punished all women for potential immorality and made it difficult to enter, especially if they had no connections to residents already present in the country.

Reports by immigration commissioners support stories like Kirk’s. According to one such commissioner in 1907, “no unmarried women are ever permitted to land [or



gain access to the country] on primary inspection.”<sup>52</sup> By his admission, if an examination “[reflected] the slightest doubt” of a woman’s character or potential occupation as a prostitute, they sent the woman to the detention area.<sup>53</sup> The most notable aspect of such reports is the lack of clarity in the words used by these officials. There was no clear outline of what counted as enough evidence, and this lack of coherence allowed for considerable discretion of the officer investigating. If a woman was “young and unmarried,” she faced even greater scrutiny, ensuring that whoever claimed her was also liable for prosecution if she was later found prostituting.<sup>54</sup> In essence, immigration legislation and the Bureau of Immigration made it so that single women had exceedingly difficult experiences trying to enter the country, and women were targets on discriminatory grounds. This difficulty in entering and increased security was not done to protect women. Officials sought to protect the perceived moral perfection of America.

## THE COURT OF PUBLIC OPINION

Immigration and government officials were not the only ones to doubt the innocence of immigrant women. In the court of public opinion, immigrant women, and those women accused of prostitution, were generally seen as guilty. However, there was one example reported in a 1914 edition of *The Irish Standard*, an immigrant newspaper, that highlights the fact that there were public officials who recognized the unfairness of immigrant treatment. In this specific case, Judge Hugo Pam, a judge in the Superior Court of Chicago, noted the fact that people like him—immigrants—were being discriminated against and kept out of the country.<sup>55</sup> He even observed that the way the congressional Immigration Commission discussed issues made it clear that “their attitude [was] prompted not by the best interests of the country at large, but by personal views.”<sup>56</sup> In his opinion, this was “especially poignant because they represented a section of the country that does not use immigrant labor.”<sup>57</sup>

This opinion is fascinating because Pam described a critical factor in immigration discussions: how commentators’ backgrounds heavily played into public discourse on immigrants. Those individuals whose families had more recently entered or who benefitted from immigrant labor were much more accepting and less quick to judge immigrant women. Pam discusses the significant numbers of immigrants from certain groups deported for prostitution and the claims that these groups were unable to assimilate, leading to “pretenses at preserving American ideals” that served to discriminate against groups deemed less desirable.<sup>58</sup> Although Pam discusses unfair practices that

went beyond prostitution and morality regulations, all this supports the larger idea that American ideals and morality needed to be kept safe from allegedly deviant immigrants.

While some people understood the complexity and noticed the unfair targeting of immigrant women, most others found the practice justifiable. Many, including many native-born women, blamed immigrant women for the entire white slavery issue. While they acknowledged the existence of the problem prior to mass immigration, many commentators saw these women as willing “to lead immoral lives.”<sup>59</sup> They explained that, though some may have been forced into it against their will, the use of the word slavery refers to the lack of choice, not the lack of willingness.<sup>60</sup> They viewed immigrant women as having “intensified immorality,” leading to the suffering of innocent women and children in America.<sup>61</sup> Many saw the entire process as “a disgrace to American civilization”—not prostitution in general, but the immoral and wicked immigrant women now coming into the mix. The blame, once again, was placed on the women, not on the men willing to buy into the practice.<sup>62</sup>

Other individuals used judgmental and bigoted language as well. Even when noting that current immigration law did not get to the root of the problem, the language that immigration officials used to refer to immigrant women they viewed as immoral demonstrated the officials’ lack of respect.<sup>63</sup> They saw the entry of unethical women as “evil,” and they believed that it was easy to find women “ready to accept [the procurers’] terms” without difficulty, and therefore, there was no need to “[seek] innocent women.”<sup>64</sup> This assumption that most immigrant women would willingly and with relish throw themselves into prostitution was an unfair prejudice that led to the deportation and assumed guilt of all immigrant women. Their removal from the country was made easy through the acts passed by Congress.

In some cases, even women forced into prostitution or immoral behavior received judgment for actions for which they had no choice. Their stories were cautionary tales used as a “warning for other girls.”<sup>65</sup> Immigrant women were advised to “withstand these temptations and guard themselves from going astray” in patronizing commentaries, implying that their fall from grace came through their own actions and poor decisions.<sup>66</sup> This type of response to the difficulties for immigrant women reveals that the makers of immigration laws claimed to be protecting women and limiting a vile practice. Despite this insinuation of protection, though, when the problem continued, blame was placed on the innocent victims because they were already viewed as disreputable creatures deserving of their fallen situation in the eyes of the public.

At this point, it is necessary to address the numbers of those debarred from entering the country as prostitutes

or for immoral purposes, for receiving support from the proceeds of prostitution, and for attempting to procure or bring in prostitutes from 1892 to 1927. By 1927, the number of those being denied entry had decreased substantially.<sup>67</sup> Significantly, debarments peaked during the years in which a new immigration law, or updates to a previous rolled.<sup>68</sup> At its peak in 1917, almost nine hundred individuals were kept from entering on the three counts: prostitution or immoral purposes, receiving support from the proceeds of prostitution, or attempting to procure a prostitute.<sup>69</sup> Although the Commissioner General of Immigration reported the number of individuals deported in each category, it did not clarify on which evidence they were removed.<sup>70</sup> This reason for debarment is significant when compared to the other causes listed, and even though only debarment, not deportation, was reported, it does reveal that many individuals were kept from entering.<sup>71</sup> These data reveal that overzealous enforcement was not an insignificant problem, and officials excluded hundreds of women from the nation on grounds requiring little to no proof of guilt.

## THE REALITIES OF WHITE SLAVERY

While immigration officials and U.S. legislatures portrayed white slavery, prostitution, and immorality among immigrants as black-and-white issues, stories like Polly Adler's, show that the realities of the problem were more nuanced. Through her experience running a brothel, Adler had the unique perspective of seeing the truths behind women's experiences. Adler had to convince women not to go on with prostitution.<sup>72</sup> Unlike officials focused on keeping out anyone they deemed immoral, she recognized that their situation was "a product of [their] so-called culture" with "choice of occupation... dictated by environmental and personality factors."<sup>73</sup> She discussed the nuances of prostitution, such as popular culture leading people to believe that innocence in matters of prostitution is black-and-white. It came in shades of grey.<sup>74</sup> She found that "the great majority of [women] came into the business with their eyes open, knowing the risks."<sup>75</sup> Rather than being something immigrant women looked forward to or wanted to become, she noted that "no girl... [set] out to be a prostitute." The way she saw it, prostitution was bred in poverty.<sup>76</sup> Adler's experiences disprove most of the ideas cited by those promoting the need for regulating immigrant mortality. There was no need to protect women from being forced into white slavery. The innate immorality of foreign women that was guaranteed to pollute and embed American society with depraved practices was a stereotypical fiction formed in the imagination of the masses.

One of the biggest hypocrisies of the supposed crisis was that the immigration officials knew the actual state of matters. Reports from the investigations of immigration officials revealed that, though brothels were primarily "peopled by women of foreign nativity, they show[ed] in only a small number of instances that young immigrant girls have been enticed or [lured] to such places."<sup>77</sup> After looking into these reports, some officials believed that "municipal authorities" could better address the issue than federal officials; however, the government continued to pour money and resources into fighting an almost nonexistent problem.<sup>78</sup> If anything, this revelation demonstrates that rather than being concerned with a potentially dangerous hazard to immigrant women, the government was more worried about keeping their morality regulated.

## CONCLUSIONS

Immigrant women needed government protection and aid, but rather than giving them the resources and support they required, the government, immigration officials, and the public at large chose, instead, to ostracize and place them under intense scrutiny based on tenuous claims. Rather than protecting women from the grasp of white slavery, immigration law served to police morality, safeguarding American society from the perceived threat of lax foreign values based on xenophobic and moralizing rhetoric. Despite these attempts to prevent prostitution and lewd behaviors, prostitution continued begging the question of these policies' effectiveness. Evaluating how laws parading as charitable limited opportunities for women allows historians to understand how American ideals and values contributed to attempts to enforce homogeneity under the guise of prostitution and morality-based immigration restriction. Since clauses like the Immigration Act of 1907 still exist in immigration law today, the topic is even more significant.<sup>79</sup> Though guilt for immigrant women may not still be assumed when they enter, understanding the experiences of these women reveals a startling lack of change but also provides a direction for reform in the future.

## NOTES

- 1 Polly Adler, *A House is Not a Home* (New York: Rinehart & Company Inc., 1953), 6–8.
- 2 Adler, *A House is Not a Home*, 43–45.
- 3 Adler, *A House is Not a Home*, 45–46.
- 4 Adler, *A House is Not a Home*, 116.
- 5 White slavery was the forcing of white women into prostitution. This term, however, was thrown around very loosely, often being used to incite fear of immigrants who might force women into this practice. This practice is in no way equivalent to chattel slavery or

- the lack of autonomy for Black women during Jim Crow when white men could rape Black women, almost always without punishment.
- 6 Pooja R. Dadhania, "Deporting Undesirable Women," *UC Irvine Law Review* 9, no. 53 (2018): 56, [https://www.law.uci.edu/lawreview/vol9/Online\\_Dadhania.pdf](https://www.law.uci.edu/lawreview/vol9/Online_Dadhania.pdf).
  - 7 Kerry Abrams, "Polygamy, Prostitution, and the Federalization of Immigration Law," *Columbia Law Review* 105, no. 3 (2005): 648, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4099477>.
  - 8 Martha Gardner, *The Qualities of a Citizen: Women, Immigration, and Citizenship, 1870–1965* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 8–9.
  - 9 Mara L. Keire, "The Vice Trust: A Reinterpretation of the White Slavery Scare in the United States, 1907–1917," *Journal of Social History* 35, no.1 (2001): 6, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/198920126?parentSessionId=2%2BQN%2BruzWH5%2FbSuc2lw4IbEJ4RjejRpbEE0E6kbR1pY%3D&pq-origsite=summon&accountid=7117>.
  - 10 Grace Peña Delgado, "Border Control and Sexual Policing: White Slavery and Prostitution Along the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands, 1903–1910," *Western Historical Quarterly* 43, no. 2 (2012): 159, <https://doi.org/10.2307/westhistquar.43.2.0157>; Keire, "The Vice Trust," 6.
  - 11 Eva Payne, "Deportation as Rescue: White Slaves, Women Reformers, and the US Bureau of Immigration," *Journal of Women's History* 33, no. 4 (2021): 41, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2615626987/fulltextPDF/5C3851C7B558487BPQ1?accountid=7117>.
  - 12 Mary Ting Yi Lui, "Saving Young Girls from Chinatown: White Slavery and [Women's] Suffrage, 1910–1920," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 18, no. 3 (2009): 396, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A206958652/ITBC?u=txshracd2597&sid=summon&xid=6dbdf01>.
  - 13 Eithne Luibhéid, *Entry Denied: Controlling Sexuality at the Border* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), xii–xv.
  - 14 Luibhéid, *Entry Denied*, xii.
  - 15 Keire, "The Vice Trust," 6.
  - 16 Dadhania, "Deporting Undesirable Women," 53; Grace Peña Delgado, "Border Control and Sexual Policing: White Slavery and Prostitution Along the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands, 1903–1910," *Western Historical Quarterly* 43, no. 2 (2012): 157–159.
  - 17 U.S. Congress, *U.S. Statues at Large, Volume 18-1875: 43<sup>rd</sup> Congress* (Washington, DC: Washington Government Printing Office, 1875), 477, <https://www.loc.gov/item/llsl-v18/>.
  - 18 U.S. Congress, *U.S. Statues at Large, Volume 18-1875: 43<sup>rd</sup> Congress*, 477.
  - 19 U.S. Congress, *U.S. Statues at Large, Volume 18-1875: 43<sup>rd</sup> Congress*, 477–478.
  - 20 U.S. Congress, *U.S. Statues at Large, Volume 18-1875: 43<sup>rd</sup> Congress*, 477.
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## COMPETING INTERESTS

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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