

## Editors' Note – JGAPE 19.1

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It is our distinct pleasure this issue to publish Erika Lee's 2018 Society for Historians of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era's Distinguished Historian's Address, entitled "America First, Immigrants Last." Readers of the journal may note an extended lag between the delivery and publication of her address, which was simply the result of a decision to run it after the release of her masterful new book, *America for Americans: A History of Xenophobia in the United States* (Basic, 2019).

In her address, Lee argues for a new and more expansive definition of xenophobia, and furthermore, that rather than ebbing and flowing, xenophobia has been a constant in United States history. It has flourished "during times of peace *and* war, economic prosperity *and* depression, low *and* high immigration, and racial struggle *and* racial progress," she notes. Xenophobia, like racism, evolves and adapts. And, arguing against a prevailing notion that it reached a high point in the GAPE, only to be dialed back by the 1965 Immigration Act, Lee asserts that "over the decades, generations of anti-immigrant leaders, politicians, and citizens have molded xenophobia to fit new contexts, identify new threats, and enact new solutions to the 'problem' of immigration." Indeed, when presidential candidate Donald Trump ran his "America First" campaign in 2015, many Americans were surprised at its brazen xenophobic foundations, but as Lee's address illuminates, they should not have been.

While we don't want to dwell upon the present-day analogies, James Todd Uhlman's assertions regarding "universal whiteness" as a racial fiction that drove "Farmers, urban laborers, and many Americans of Irish, German, and Dutch descent" to support the Boers in the Second Boer War in his article, "Dispatching Anglo-Saxonism," certainly rings true to observations about white nationalist ideologies in the Trump Era. And while Alex Bryne argues against existing imperialist narratives of U.S. aviation in the Western Hemisphere during the GAPE, he also notes that World War I set in motion forces that advanced U.S. domination of its southern neighbors, a fact that certainly continues into the present.

It seems the analogies continue. Suzanna Krivulskaya, in "The Itinerant Passions of Protestant Pastors," argues that journalists were initially hesitant to cover ministerial elopement and scandals in the period between 1870 and 1914, but as scandal became a "legitimate journalistic genre," they used church sex scandals as an avenue into broader cultural debates. It's almost too easy to make the present-day connection here. In "Roosevelt's Populism," Kyle Williams shows how Kansas oil reformers used Populist ideas to lead a bottom-up revolt against Standard Oil, ultimately contributing to its breakup by the Supreme Court in 1911. Interestingly though, he also concludes that in their fight against the oil monopoly, they "contributed to the project of corporate liberalism and assisted in laying a foundation for the legitimacy of big business in America" and that they were not espousing "anti-corporate politics," a fact that rings true when considering many left-leaning reformers today. And finally, Víctor Manuel Cázares Lira argues, in "Charles A. Beard's Vision of Government," that the oft-studied subject's philosophy on governing has been misdirected and that his legacy "was more

connected with rethinking the place of political parties and interest groups in American politics, featuring them as the constant driving force of American democracy, than with attacking the moral grounds of the Constitution.” Toward his conclusion, Lira notes that Beard believed the course of government “rested on ‘*particular situations* and of the character or the *quality of men* who control the government.”” A scary thought in today’s politics, and it doesn’t take a lot of creative imagination to anticipate what Beard’s observations might be were he alive today.

As much as we have resisted making precariously presentist analogies, our editorial notes often spiral around them. Perhaps we can take heart then, in the conclusion of her address, Erika Lee reassures readers that in the GAPE, “immigrants and their allies, along with advocates and everyday Americans, challenged the most pernicious expressions and acts of xenophobia and appealed for justice. Sometimes they were successful. May their examples serve as inspiration to us all who seek to challenge xenophobia in our own time.” So, there is hope.

For those readers who similarly struggle with the compulsion to make presentist analogies, stay tuned for *JGAPE* volume 19, number 2 in April. It will feature a roundtable on “The Second Gilded Age.”