

He added that he himself, as an Irish Catholic, was also a transient guest. I did not exactly appreciate this, because I felt as much a part of the house of America as anyone else. The question of whether we are American, as I say, does not depend on when we came here. As another American immigrant has put it, "Who can know America who has known only America?" One needs a standard of comparison, and with it one can understand the differences--the greater freedom, the tolerance, the acceptance, life-chances. When I say then that there are no Americans, I am really saying that the concept of "Americanism" is ethnically a shaky, puzzling and questionable concept. It applies only if you are talking of genuine commitment to America.

(4) The immigration quotas that we began to adopt in the 1920's, and that are still on the statute books, are irrelevant to any meaningful American experience, because they apply to country of origin. They were set in such a way that they would discriminate against immigrants from East Europe and others, and would favor immigrants from West Europe. I agree with the necessity for immigration restrictions in purely numerical terms. There is a little book by the late President Kennedy called "A Nation of Immigrants," which takes a very strong position in the terms that I am describing. We can decide to take so many immigrants each year, but the test of who should be admitted in that number should not be a test of what country they came from, or what their religion is, or what their color is. It should be, first, a test of their educational achievements and capacity; second, of their skills as against the skills we need; third, in terms of their character and commitment.

(5) A new American stock is emerging, slowly, but emerging. When I say this I mean that differential physical characteristics among the various ethnic groups are narrowing. More and more we find ourselves moving toward what may eventually become a more homogenous stock in physical terms, than what we have at the present time. This is a result partly of intermarriage and interbreeding, partly of climate and diet and living standards. Franz Boas, the great anthropologist, did a famous study on the sons and daughters of immigrants after the families had been here for some time. He found that even in physical terms they had markedly changed. Add the impact of the spread of intermarriage, and the result is that we are moving toward what we may ultimately someday call an American stock.