
Antisemitism And Anti-catholicism In The Progressive Era/gilded Age

Religious discrimination was a part in the early America. Many of the first colonist were Protestant so there was no discrimination. Once many countries began immigrating to America looking for the “American Dream” sadly many were left with a sour taste as America was not as amazing as it seemed. Whether it be from the extreme slavery or even the less know prejudice against another religions, America has always been a bigot towards anything that was different. This of course was not a fault by the founding fathers who stated that they wanted religious freedom and freedom of expression. The government could not control its people to be open towards everyone. Even now many people still face bigotry because of what they believe. David Mitchell said that “... America’s nativist past...” which argues the point that many Americans believed in people who were in America and were hesitant towards immigrants and settlers (Mitchell). Early America was not as pleasant and open minded as it is now. Major leaps have been made towards the tolerance and acceptance of everyone no matter. This has been a key part in keeping the United States of America as a major world power and strong democracy. History can never be hidden which further proves the topic about many discussions about how far humanity has come. Anti-Catholicism and Anti-Semitism has not truly been revealed in the history books, but in early America religious discrimination was sadly another dark part of American history.

Long before the Progressive era was of the course the colonial times in America. Colonial laws had specifics against any Roman Catholics having political power. The first official act against Catholics was in 1642, the Colony of Virgin creating a law which did not allow Catholic settlers in. Protestants already had a strong dislike of Catholics because of old turmoil. On August 24, 1527 Roman Catholics in France murdered 70,000 in two months, simply because they refused to acknowledge the “authority” of the Papal Church. Many of the Protestants simply hated Roman Catholics because of what they did to their ancestors. This was revenge because of the past, but even still it of course was not right. Once again in 1649 the Act of Toleration was passed to somewhat appease the Catholic settlers. The act was repealed in 1654 making Catholics outlawed again. Civil restrictions against Catholics were created in 1719 Rhode Island such as denial of suffrage. Many of these harsh acts against Catholics were to be changed once the revolutionary war hit. Virginia, Pennsylvania and Maryland created acts of religious tolerance. Abraham Lincoln strictly enforced the idea of having religious tolerance as a base for democracy. As Elizabeth Fenton stated “... Catholic served as a site throughout the nineteenth century for testing the limits of democracy’s capacity to accommodate difference” which leads us towards anti-Catholicism in the Gilded Age (Fenton 4). In the nineteenth century anti-Catholicism reached a peak when Protestant leaders saw many Catholic immigrants entering the country. Many Catholics of the time argued that it made no sense that they would be against democracy. This was because since the beginning of America they have been battling for religious freedom. As America citizens they deserved every right to their religious freedom and the ability to send their children to Catholic schools. This all leads back to Americans being nativist believing they were real Americans and fought against immigrants.

Anti-Semitism has been an issue since the first documents were ever even written. Dating back to when Jesus Christ was born Jews have been blamed for the death of the son of God. This is

a grudge people have been holding since the first century. In the 5th-15th century Jews were seen as greedy usurers. What this means is that many people had the idea that the Jewish people cared more about money than anything else. Which is also a stereo type to this day. In the 6th to 7th century since Jewish people are a monotheistic religion, they denied the truth of Muhammad's Prophethood. Which in turn caused even more turmoil among the Islamic nations. In 1881 the Jews were then blamed for the assassination of Tsar Alexander II and were faced with extreme anti-Semitism all over Russia and in this time, Poland was also under Russia rule so many were forced to migrate into interior Russia. Then at the end of the Progressive Era and moving towards the end of the Great Depression was World War II and the holocaust. Since Christ the Jewish population have been scapegoats for anything that went wrong. This is because Jews were a relatively small population which had different rituals and practices that many people did not understand. Many Jews are capitalist and bankers which when the economy goes wrong the Jews are easy to blame. Which is why there was anti-Semitic practices in America during the Progressive era. Even through all the struggles and hardships the Jewish community still managed to flourish in whichever place they were to call home. Since the Jewish community has never necessarily had their own place to call home many people are skeptical that the Jewish people are loyal to Israel. This is the promise land that was given to the Jews by God himself in the old testament many people simply people the Jews do not have patriotism to their home. Which in turn causes even more turmoil for the Jewish community. During the progressive era just like the past the Jews were once again blamed for hardships any American went through.

Catholic and Jewish people have been targeted for their religion because of the past. Nativist had the same dilemma when it came to both Jews and Catholics that they were not born in America. People do not like what they do not understand which why Jewish people were targeted so fiercely. The Jewish people may be the scapegoat for every problem ever risen in history, but there was one terrorist attack that happened that was not blamed on the Jewish population. September 9, 2011 is a day that anyone in the world knows and that many people even lived through. It was the largest scale terrorist attack to ever happen on American soil. America ironically is now a mainly Christian democracy that is led under God. The Muslim community was targeted by Christians back in the crusades that wiped out many Muslims simply said that it was the will of God. Many current day Muslims do not want revenge for what happened and want to forget and forgive just like the Jewish community with the holocaust. These are two large scale eradication of life that simply should never have happened. In many 3rd world countries they envy the freedom and capitalistic democracy that is the United States of America. Many of these poor individuals migrate to America to find a better life and live in peace. Extremist groups simply despise anyone who is an America and many Americans are killed because of their country. This terrorist attack mainly known as 9/11 these Muslim extremists hijacked two passenger airlines and crashed them into the twin towers in New York City. As you would expect every American was furious and wanted to demolish these groups, which inevitably did happen when their leader Osama Bin Laden was said to be killed by American Navy SEAL during the rain on the compound Abbottabad. Before Bin Laden was killed many American needed to find a scapegoat to blame for the attacks. Naturally the entirety of the Muslim community was under fire for the terrorist attack, "Immediately after 9-11 tension towards Arabs was slightly higher..." stated John Pionke (Pionke). Many debates happened as soon as 9-11 attack happened, even going as far as to consider the idea if suspend or violate the constitution during times of crisis (Alsultany 47). Just like the Jewish community the Muslim population was used as a scapegoat to begin affirmative action and other discriminative uses of force.

Many of the reason for religious discrimination was solely based on past grudges. The Protestant early Americans simply despised the Catholics because of the past and what had happened to their ancestries back in England. The same with discrimination for the Jewish population many people used the Jews as a scapegoat for any of their problems dating even to the first century. Both can also tie back to the Nativist mentality of the Americans during the Gilded Age when immigrants started to move to America. This can then in theory also tie back to post 9-11 Americans using the entire Muslim community as a scapegoat. Even though it was only the select extremist who wished to hurt or kill innocent civilians. All these factors have been brought up and debated and revealed the truth about America and even the world, no matter how dark history can be, it is not something that can be hidden.