

## Immigration and Law Enforcement

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**The Anti-Defamation League** recently **filed an amicus brief** supporting a federal lawsuit hoping to strike down Arizona's "ill-conceived and misguided" new immigration law:

[T]his bill drives a wedge between the Latino community - whose members are frequent targets of bias-motivated violence - and those local law enforcement agencies entrusted with protecting them. The bill is a manifestation of anger and frustration, fueled by exaggerated fears of violence and passed against a backdrop of increasing xenophobia.

Since the ADL was founded in the wake of the lynching of **Leo Frank**, an act of vigilante "law enforcement" which also took place "against a backdrop of increasing xenophobia", it is natural that the organization should take interest in issues such as this.

It is commonplace among American Jews on the liberal side of the political spectrum (a group which **encompasses most American Jews**) to declare that their support for liberal immigration policies is tied to their Jewish heritage, and to Jewish communal memory of the experiences of the many impoverished Jews who immigrated to the US in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in search of freedom and opportunity.

As often as this idea is used rhetorically, I wonder how often people actually consult the rich resources available in materials written about Jewish immigrants during this period. To do so might yield wonderful insights into present public debates about immigration.

You can dive quickly and easily into this treasure trove right now. Perform a keyword search in the search bar at the top right corner of this page. Or **browse by topic**, and select **"immigration"**. (A sidebar on the left will allow you to filter by date.)

You might find something like **"Immigration from the Immigrant's Point of View"** from 1915, which argues against discussing immigration issues from the perspective of a polarized, overly simplistic and binary debate. (Gee, does that sound relevant?) Or something like **"Jewish Delinquent Children"** from 1907, which struggles to understand the problems of poverty and crime among the children of Jewish immigrants in New York City:

The children are on the streets nearly all day long, finding nothing to attract them in their dingy homes, and in the streets many bad habits are formed. The temptations of the penny theatres are very alluring, and many of the attractions there poison their minds and characters... they are the dime novel of the stage, they consist of moving pictures which appeal to the vicious side of life...

Sure, blame the media.

It's very easy to *talk* about "learning from history" -- much easier than actually to *study history*. That's one of the BJPA's reasons for existing: to more easily allow voices from the past to be active participants in the debates of the present. So what can you find

in our archives, old or new, that illuminates this issue?