

# Americanism: new perspectives on the history of an ideal

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The 1920s was an era of economic growth and transition that heavily affected the country. Before the coming of the twenties, 20 millions immigrants arrived in America in search of new work and opportunities. This great wave of immigrants sparked an anti-immigrant backlash. In response to this anxiety of the threat towards “ traditional American values”, many Americans joined the Ku Klux Klan during the 1920s to restrict any immigration activities. However, while the KKK stands up for Americanism, their notion defeats the real principles of what Americanism actually means. As many newcomers came to America, the nation was also introduced to a surge of reforms from women. Through the constant struggle and injustice towards the rights of women, it was ultimately in the 1920s when females felt a need for their voices to be contributed in shaping the society.

Furthermore, while WWI came to an end, it led to an increase in demands for American goods. Consumer economy particularly impacted this era more than any other event due to work time being reduced which allowed people to have more free time for enjoyment, which created a rapid growth in the industry. Essentially, many factors were introduced in the 1920s that led it to be a progressive era in America, including immigration reforms, rights of women, and new economic trends. Throughout this time period, it brought out progressive aspects because, although there was a rise in anti-immigration particularly the Ku Klux Klan, many sought to advocate social reforms or liberal ideas; the practice of the Klan forcibly persuaded people into believing a false idea of American morals. After World War I, the swellings of religious bigotry and nativism grew because the mass arrival of foreigners led to new diversity in the nation; this is important to

demonstrating how the 1920s was a progressive period because the establishment of new racial groups shows how it drastically changed the society to the point that some people saw this as a threat.

According to *Is the Ku Klux Un-American?* by Maine written in 1925, it sheds light to the fact that “ Americanism.. is really an ideal and a faith in freedom, tolerance, humanity...it cannot endure hatred and prejudice as a means to sway public opinion and win political power.” Based on the textual evidence provided, it is clear that the Ku Klux Klan utilizes tactics that can manipulate people to think foreigners are menaces to America. Additionally, the practices of the Klan involves secret influences on the Government, this concludes that they pose a threat to society rather than immigrants because they restrict America to grow in exploring new concepts and greater developments. The opposition to the Ku Klux Klan is an example of how the 1920s was a progressive course because swaying the public opinion to be able to receive political power is against the ideals of Americanism; primarily in order to resist the community being easily controlled by the KKK, America was in desperate need of change and a well establishment effort from citizens to accept reforms. Especially amid the political reforms, millions of American women engaged in their rights to vote. Mintz and McNeil conveys in *The New Women* that “ after the 19th Amendment, reformers talked about female voters uniting to clean up politics, improve society, and end discrimination.” The textual evidence unveils that this was only the beginning for women, after the 19th Amendment was passed, besides the right to vote, women also received the right to serve on juries, hold public

office, and a newfound national system of women's and infants' health clinics was created. Women gaining new rights and privileges is an example how this time period was progressive because on August 26, 1920 the 19th amendment was approved, enfranchising all American women and proclaiming the first time that they experienced the rights and responsibilities of citizenship similar to men.

Finally, America was in a good position after the war ended, and a spur of industrial production doubled in this generation. In Ford Magazine outlines in Freedom for the woman who owns a Ford that " a Ford car is to be free to venture into new and united places". With the evidence presented, it proves that by the 1920s, the consumer economy boomed in the United States and a new market was in the making. U. S. citizens earned \$2, 000 or more a year and a six day work week has reduced to five. Due to this, people had more leisure time and could spend more money on advertised products. After women were granted new rights and freedom, many marketing advertisements appealed to women. Thus, advertisements attempted to bring light on technology advancement that can allow women to venture into new places freely without feeling hostile to strict laws. Still, women were continued to be portrayed as homemakers, since many marketing tactics believed that women were the ones to provide for the household. Henry Ford's leap to improve technology generally made the 1920s a decade of new inventions and machinery enhancement. In essence, political reforms, women's freedom as well as advanced technology all made the 1920s known to be the Roaring Twenties.