

opinion. Writing in 1909, the author of a textbook on municipal government made this assessment:

The privilege seeker has pervaded our political life. For his own profit he has willfully befouled the sources of political power. Politics, which should offer a career inspiring to the noblest thoughts and calling for the most patriotic efforts of which man is capable, he has . . . transformed into a series of sordid transactions between those who buy and those who sell governmental action.²

The concern about political corruption was intimately connected to a rising fear of foreign immigrants. The reaction against the "Great Unwashed" had been building for a long time. As early as 1851, an article in the *Massachusetts Teacher* asked,

The constantly increasing influx of foreigners . . . continues to be a cause of serious alarm to the most intelligent of our people. What will be the ultimate effect of this vast and unexampled immigration . . . ? Will it, like the muddy Missouri, as it pours its waters into the clear Mississippi and contaminates the whole united mass, spread ignorance and vice, crime and disease, through our native population?⁴

The earlier generations of immigrants from Protestant countries were scandalized by lurid newspaper accounts of prostitution, gambling, and public drunkenness in the immigrant wards. Religious moralists secured state and local laws abolishing prostitution, gambling, and Sunday liquor sales. To teach immigrant children middle-class versions of dress, speech, manners, and discipline, reformers passed laws requiring school attendance and raised the upper age limit for mandatory schooling. Truant officers were hired to search for wayward youth.

The vicious reaction against immigrants aggravated the class, racial, and religious tensions that had divided America for almost a century. Immigrants were compared to the Goths and Vandals who invaded the Roman Empire in the second century A.D. In his book *Our Country*, the Reverend Josiah Strong accused them of defiling the Sabbath, spreading illiteracy and crime, and corrupting American culture and morals. Gathered into the cities, he said, immigrants provided "a very paradise for demagogues" who ruled by manipulating the "appetites and prejudices" of the rabble.⁵

The spatial segregation that separated neighborhoods provided fuel for the middle- and upper-class fears and prejudices. By the turn of the century, all large cities contained sprawling, overcrowded immigrant ghettos near the waterfronts and factories, with middle- and upper-class neighborhoods located farther from the urban center. Jobs were still concentrated in downtown districts, so affluent city residents could hardly escape seeing, on their way to work and to shop, the drab tenements, dirty streets, and littered alleys where the immigrants lived.