20,000 Fewer: The Wagner-Rogers Bill and the Jewish Refugee Crisis

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ACADEMIC ABSTRACT

In the fall of 1938, Marion Kenworthy, child psychologist, and Clarence Pickett, director of the American Friends Service Committee, began designing a bill that would challenge the United States's government's strict immigration laws and allow persecuted children to come to the United States and live in American homes. The Wagner-Rogers Bill, named for Senator Robert Wagner of New York and Representative Edith Rogers of Massachusetts and introduced in February 1939, sought to allow the entry of 20,000 refugee children from Germany. At the time, multiple domestic factors limited the willingness of American politicians to meet this problem head on: high unemployment rates after the stock market crash in 1929, an isolationist sentiment after the impact of World War I, and xenophobia. These factors discouraged the lawmakers from revising the quota limit set on obtainable visas established by the 1924 Immigration Act and allow outsiders into the United States. These few actors who supported the Wagner-Rogers Bill reflect a hidden minority of the American public and political body that fought to help Jewish refugees by standing up to the majority of citizens and politicians against higher immigration into the United States, and the story of the this Bill demonstrates what might have been possible and illuminates 20th century models of American humanitarianism and its role in creating international refugee protection.

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GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

In the fall of 1938, Marion Kenworthy, child psychologist, and Clarence Pickett, director of the American Friends Service Committee, began designing a bill that would challenge the United States's government's strict immigration laws and allow persecuted children to come to the United States and live in American homes. The Wagner-Rogers Bill, named for Senator Robert Wagner of New York and Representative Edith Rogers of Massachusetts and introduced in February 1939, would allow the entry of 20,000 refugee children from Germany. At the time, multiple domestic factors limited the willingness of American politicians to meet this problem head on: high unemployment rates after the stock market crash in 1929, an isolationist sentiment after the impact of World War I, and xenophobia. These factors discouraged the lawmakers from reforming pre-existing immigration policies to allow more outsiders into the United States. These few actors who supported the Wagner-Rogers Bill reflect a hidden minority of the American public and political body that fought to help Jewish refugees by standing up to the majority of citizens and politicians against higher immigration into the United States, and the story of the this Bill illuminates 20th century models of American humanitarianism and its role in creating international refugee protection.

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Introduction

"When this ghastly war ends there may not be one million but ten million or twenty million men, women, and children belonging to many races . . . who will enter into the wide picture - the problem of the human refugee."[1] President Franklin Roosevelt (FDR) spoke these words a month after World War II began in Europe in reference to the growing number of Europeans displaced by Hitler's territorial expansion.[2] Throughout the 1930s, the Nazi government's terrible Antisemitic actions and policies drew worldwide attention to Jewish oppression and their need for refuge. Marion Kenworthy, child psychologist, and Clarence Pickett, director of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), looked at the persecution of the Jewish community in Germany with horror. They were particularly worried about the threat the Nazi regime posed to many German youths' childhood, particularly to young Jews. Consequently they founded an organization that sought to bring children refugees from Germany to live in American homes. In December 1938, this organization, the Non-Sectarian Committee for German Refugee Children (NSCGRC), began to craft a proposal to place 20,000 oppressed children with host homes in the United States in order to give them an opportunity for a safer and more normal childhood. This plan faced a number of challenges, but the United States government's strict immigration laws were the most serious obstacle. At the time, the majority of American politicians practiced neutralist policies in order to keep the United States from getting

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[1] Gerald Daniel Cohen, *In War's Wake: Europe's Displaced Persons in the Postwar Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 1.
[2] Sir Herbert Emerson, "Postwar Problems of Refugees," *Foreign Affairs*, last modified October 11, 2011. https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/1943-01-01/postwar-problems-refugees.

bogged down in fractious international affairs. The humanitarian crisis unfolding in Germany did not change their minds: many dismissed the seriousness of Jewish refugee need and few made attempts to ameliorate it. When, in July 1938, thirty-two countries met in Evian, France to discuss the growing concern for Jewish Germans and the potential for raising immigration quotas, few national governments volunteered to meet the challenge. Countries such as the United States expressed sympathy for the plight of the Jews, but the majority claimed not to have the political or economic ability to raise immigration quotas.

Then, in November 1938, Nazi officials and their supporters carried out the largest demonstration of Antisemitic violence yet seen in Germany and German- controlled areas. Over two nights (November 8 and 9) Jewish homes, schools, business, and synagogues were destroyed, and thousands of Jewish men were interned in concentration camps or killed outright. On the heels of this event, now known as *Kristallnacht*, Kenworthy, Pickett, and the NSCGRC were able to find congressional support for their plan: Senator Robert Wagner (D-NY) and Representative Edith Rogers (R-MA) sponsored the plan and introduced it to Congress. They believed this was a necessary response to the increasingly intense and violent acts going on in Germany and thought that the American government had the ethical obligation to help those oppressed by a totalitarian state. The majority of the members of the NSCGRC had participated in refugee activism during previous humanitarian crises and with the backing of political support, the organization hoped to continue to advocate for persecuted groups. Although the United States government acknowledged the plight of the victims of Nazi oppression in the 1930s, Congress' reluctance to support refugee protections was the result of a complex mix of ideological positions across the political spectrum, including a commitment to isolationist policies, adherence to

pacifist principles or protectionist positions, and even antisemitism, and nativism. The end result was a de facto refusal to participate in international humanitarian activism.

The first part of this thesis examines the work done by the NSCGRC to create the plan that, in 1939 was presented to Congress as the Wagner-Rogers Bill. The second demonstrates how supporters of the Bill presented the efforts of the NSCGRC at congressional hearings and investigates the debates surrounding - and eventual death of - the Bill. Congressional bills begin in subcommittees where they must first be approved or amended before moving to the Senate floor. The Wagner-Rogers Bill died in subcommittee due to a "poison pill" amendment; this amendment and its impact on the debate on international refugee protections is evaluated in the second chapter.

This research considers previously under-studied groups to reveal a much more complex debate and disunity among the U.S. government in the mid to late 1930s. It reconstructs the experiences and arguments of the political actors who have been overlooked in analyses that focus primarily on FDR and other elite policy makers, who often represent only the isolationist and anti-refugee side of U.S. politics and foreign relations. In examining the history of child refugee relief groups that attempted to bring young members of the Jewish community in Germany to America throughout the 1930s this thesis demonstrates the complexities and struggles of underrepresented groups within the U.S. legal framework. To do so, it uses the meeting minutes of the NSCGRC, the records of the most notable figures behind the planning of the Bill, and Congressional Records of the Bill's committee hearings.

Correspondence between Kenworthy and dominant characters that supported the Wagner-Rogers Bill, most notably Clarence Pickett, who helped create the Non-Sectarian

Committee for German Refugee Children, and Robert F. Wagner, the senator who introduced the Bill to Congress, show how the group designed and planned the organization of the Wagner-Rogers Bill. They shed light on citizen activists' approaches to the international refugee problem, lobbying methods they hoped would advance their interests, and the kind of opposition they anticipated from the American government. The major battle they faced was opening up the American immigration system in an era when "isolationism" was stronger than openness to the international community of nations.

Senator Robert Reynolds (R-NC) was the main Congressional opponent of the Bill, and he is an example of some of the specific challenges the Bill faced including anti-interventionist, nativist, and xenophobic sentiments He is known as the most outspoken member of Congress against it, and his rhetoric is reflective of general Congressional attitudes towards raising immigration quotas. His material is used to analyze much of the Bill's opposition and decipher the circumstances that caused the retraction of the Bill.

Congressional testimony on the Wagner-Rogers Bill demonstrates why the members of the Non-Sectarian Committee for German Refugee Children and their witnesses brought in from various American organizations to defend the Bill: members of the American public and some government officials believed not only that America could help persecuted children, but that it was the American government's responsibility, even in the context of widespread anti-immigrant sentiments. His testimony reveals his personal understandings of what was going on in Nazi Germany, isolationism, and how Congress and other leading politicians discussed the moral and ethical responsibilities of the United States government during the rise of Antisemitism in Germany, especially to refugees, are revealed in his collection. I did not discover any

correspondence or newspaper articles that explained why Wagner was chosen to represent the Wagner-Rogers Bill. In her testimony on April 21, 1939, Representative Rogers stated that she had been approached by the NSCGRC, so it is possible they may have also reached out to him. It may have been that they picked Wagner because he himself was a German immigrant, although he did not appear to have worked on previous immigration policies. He did, however, reply to a letter he received days after Kristallnacht from a layer in New York who expressed that the United States could afford to take in victims of Nazi oppression. Wagner agreed with the lawyer's statement that accepting refugees could make up for previous years' unfilled German quotas and that he too wished to take some kind of political action of behalf of young persecuted Germans. Rogers was most likely approached to sponsor the Bill because of her previous social welfare volunteer experience. The Bill would require cooperation among multiple social welfare agencies, and she had a background in such work. Wagner and Roger's interest in humanitarianism made them appropriate candidates for the NSCGRC. Although the Wagner-Rogers Bill did not pass, the well thought out planning and support gathered by the Non-Sectarian Committee for German Refugee Children as revealed in these archives shows how some American activists tried to open a conversation that could lead to greater immigration particularly as a response to humanitarian crises in other countries. and demonstrates a potential humanitarian response to the onset of the Holocaust.

Historiography of the Wagner-Rogers Bill

Historians of the Wagner-Rogers Bill discuss its proposal in the context of strict American immigration legislation and xenophobic or Antisemitism throughout both the public and the government. *Paper Walls: America and the Refugee Crisis 1938-1941* (1968) by

historian David S. Wyman is one of the earliest works to analyze the Wagner-Rogers Bill. In this piece, Wyman describes the Non-Sectarian Committee for German Refugee Children's efforts to get sponsorship for the Bill including widely publicizing the Bill in order to gather support from the public and lobbying to convey the need of refuge to American politicians for persecuted groups in Germany. However, many patriotic groups came forward to express their disdain for the Bill. Collectively these patriotic societies had large memberships meaning they had tremendous political influence. They used this to oppose the Bill on the grounds that many American children were orphaned or impoverished who deserved aid more than foreign children. The patriot groups also argued that the Wagner-Rogers Bill would break up families and was therefore unethical. Wyman states that although no "overtly Antisemitic statement came out" the Wagner-Rogers Bill was clearly a Jewish bill and stood little chance in Congress due to lawmakers enforcement of strict immigration.[3]

Another early work on the Holocaust, *No Haven for the Oppressed* (1973) by Saul Friedman, focuses more on the impact of discrimination in the failure of the Bill. Friedman states that anti-alien and anti-Jewish influences pushed for the creation of the 1924 Immigration Act which restricted the number of immigrants allowed in by country of origin. When Nazis began persecuting Jews in Europe, those same forces worked against them by denying them entrance into America. Friedman discussed the same objections as mentioned in Wyman's work that prevented the Bill from going through Congress. The support for the Bill was not enough to overcome the "outright bigotry" from "self-proclaimed patriots."[4]Americans who were aware of

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[3] David S. Wyman, *Paper Walls: America and the Refugee Crisis 1938-1941* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1968), pg. 75-92. For quotation see page 85.

[4] Saul Friedman, *No Haven for the Oppressed* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1973), 91-100. In his work, historian Robery Rosen, like Freidman, points out that poverty, the number of orphans in America, the economic constraints of the Great Depression, and the idea of breaking up families were common arguments used by the Bill's

the Bill realized it would provide Jewish aid, but used reasoning such as their objections to separating families or preference to helping American children to overshadow underlying discriminatory motives against the Bill. This work also asserts that American Jewish leaders' inability to unite over how to approach the Jewish refugee crisis and the silence of higherup governmental officials, such as the president, the State Department, and the commissioner of Immigration and Naturalization, were critical set-backs to the Bill's success. According to Freidman, if Jewish leaders could have come together to take a stand and the leader of the country put his support behind the Bill, there may have been a different outcome.[5]

Historians also often recognize Senator Reynolds as the most prominent objector to the Wagner-Rogers Bill; historian Julian M. Pleasants calls him "the spokesperson of the restrictionists."[6] Pleasants also claims that behind Senator Reynolds, histories of the Wagner-Rogers Bill explain that patriotic groups had a major role in the failure of the Bill. Their influence and testimonies against the Bill represent a popular American desire to practice pre-existing immigration restriction policies.[7] Tara Zahara's work on displaced children focuses more specifically on the objections against taking in children for the Wagner-Rogers Bill. These children would face Antisemitic backlash in a new country which would have severe psychological impacts on them. According to Zahara, objectors of the Bill were concerned that

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opposition. See Robert Rosen, *Saving the Jews: Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Holocaust* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 2006), 85

[5] Friedman, *No Haven for the Oppressed*, 91-100.

[6] See Julian M. Pleasants, *Buncombe Bob: The Life and Times of Robert Rice Reynolds* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 186. ; Erbelding, *Rescue Board*, 13.

[7] Pleasants, *Buncombe Bob*, 186. Also see Wyman, *Paper Walls*, 85.

the children would grow up to be "future communists and anarchists who threatened American values," an objection Friedman and Rosen's works also refer to.[8]

Historical works on the American government and the Holocaust asses that the fear of passing the Wagner-Roger Bill would open the door to other forms of increased immigration.[9] Therefore FDR's inaction on behalf of Jewish refugees was representative of Congress and the American public feelings about increasing immigration.[10] His silence, like stated in Friedman's work, conclude that FDR's silence on the Wagner-Rogers Bill, combined with anti-immigration and Antisemitic attitudes played a role in America's anti-Jewish refugee attitudes in the 1930s.[11] These historiographies collectively emphasized the Wagner-Rogers Bill as a proposal to provide Jewish aid, and no matter how much work was done by its supporters to help persecuted peoples, American immigration policy was too strict, and at times, discriminatory and xenophobic, to respond to Nazi oppression by admitting more outsiders.

Historiography of Isolationism

This thesis also contributes to American historiographies of Isolationism and in the context of the Holocaust and World War II. Since the transition to social history in the 1970s, historians of the Holocaust have taken a variety of approaches to the study of the history and culpability for the mass extermination of Jews and others in European in the 1930s and 1940s.[12]

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[8] See Tara Zahara, *The Lost Children: Reconstructing Europe's Families after World War II* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 69-70. ; Friedman, *No Haven for the Oppressed*, 93. ; Rosen, *Saving the Jews*, 85.
[9] See Pleasants, *Buncombe Bob*, 186. ; Rosen, *Saving the Jews*, 85. ; Erbelding, *Rescue Board*, 14.
[10] See Richard Breitman and Alan Kraut, *American Refugee Policy and European Jewry, 1933–1945* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987), 232. ; Rosen, *Saving the Jews*, 85.
[11] See Breitman and Kraut, *American Refugee Policy*, 73. ; Young, *Why We Fight*, 50. ; Rosen, *Saving the Jews*, 85. ; Zahara, *Lost Children*, 70.
[12] Saul Friedman, *No Haven for the Oppressed*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1973. Richard Breitman and Alan Kraut, *American Refugee Policy and European Jewry, 1933–1945,* Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987.

Early historiographies often blamed Germans, described coercion of Europeans, and crafted narratives of Allied rescue. They delineated how the Nazis justified genocide and discussed the role the Allies had in countering the Holocaust, praising the countries that helped liberate camps. This picture of benevolent American rescuers, however, is not borne out in the debates in the United States before 1939, when lawmakers failed to meet the coming tragedy with legislation that would allow the rescue of those who were the targets of persecution. Debates over immigration laws and their impact on Jewish migration confirm that elites in the United States knew that Nazi Germany was persecuting its Jewish citizens, but took no humanitarian action to interfere on behalf of them.

Twentieth century works of isolationism have debated FDR's role in the Jewish refugee crisis. "Two decades of isolationism and restrictive immigration quotas may have blinded Americans to the magnitude of European displacement prior to 1939."[13] Historians such as Gerald Cohen, Robert Rosen and, and Bat-Ami Zucker accuse FDR of not taking a more active stance against Nazi aggression and portrayed him as an idle figure distanced from the plight of the Jewish refugees.[14] Others, like Gulie Ne'eman Arad, Shlomo Aronson, Lynne Olson, and W. D. Rubinstein have reevaluated FDR's for his isolationism, arguing that it resulted from a number of domestic factors that limited the willingness of American government to meet this problem head on: high unemployment rates after the stock market crash in 1929, an isolationist sentiment after the impact of World War I, and xenophobia discouraged the lawmakers from

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[13] Cohen, *In War's Wake*, 1.

[14] See Gerald Daniel Cohen, *In War's Wake: Europe's Displaced Persons in the Postwar Order*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011, Robert Rosen, *Saving the Jews: Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Holocaust*, New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 2006. Bat-Ami Zucker, *In Search of Refuge: Jews and US Consuls in Nazi Germany, 1933–1941*, London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2001.

revising the quota limit set on obtainable visas established by the 1924 Immigration Act and allow outsiders into the United States.[15] This recent reevaluation of the constraints of FDR faced, however, does not take into account courses of action that he could have supported: in fact, FDR never publicly took a stance on the Wagner-Rogers bill.

In contrast to the existing literature, this thesis does not focus on the role of FDR and his presidency in American rescue efforts. Instead of justifying America's isolationism by examining FDR's limitations, this work expands the field of investigation by examining the people who advocated for, lobbied, and proposed the Wagner-Rogers Bill and the complexity of American interventionism. This research uses the lens of the immigration crisis of the Holocaust period to signify the politicians who advocated for the Wagner-Rogers Bill, as they represent an active, diligent side to U.S. politicians who are usually silenced by the historical theme that U.S. legislators stood idly by or did not want to intervene on behalf of Jewish refugees in the context of an emerging genocide.

Congress and the Types of Interventionism

New Deal legislation and debates over interventionism prevailed over Congressional politics in the 1930s. Democrats made up the majority of Congress after FDR's election and the New Deal's enactment. New Deal policies focused on assisting the poor, regulating the economy, and raising employment meaning throughout the 1930s, Congress oversaw numerous

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[15] See Gulie Ne'eman Arad, *America, Its Jews, and the Rise of Nazism*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000. Shlomo Aronson, *Hitler, the Allies, and the Jews,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. Lynne Olson, *Those Angry Days: Roosevelt, Lindbergh, and America's Fight Over World War II, 1939-194*1, New York: Random House, 2013. W. D. Rubinstein, *The Myth of Rescue: Why the Democracies Could Not Have Saved More Jews from the Nazis*, London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2005.

domestic proposals and enactments relating to farming and agriculture production, labor laws and conditions, industry, housing, and unemployment. Various debates over interventionism including trade, tariffs, embargos, armament, neutraily, and European, especial German, relations took place as well. The passage of the Social Security Act, the Wagner Act and the 1935 Neutrality Act and the creation of programs like the Works Progress Administration and the Tennessee Valley Authority demonstrate how the federal government worked to boost employment, improve labor conditions, and provide welfare while also practicing limited foreign interventionism. The Neutrality Acts were designed to prevent the United States from participating in foreign conflicts. They were amended multiple times between 1935 and 1939 to ensure "a mandatory embargo on arms shipments to all participants in future wars." This meant that in order for the United States to remain politically impartial the government could not provide "industrial supplies" to France or England.[16] The United States government believed that in order to best promote peace and prevent international conflict they could not appear to take sides by interfering with the armament or governing policies of other nations, which hopefully would defer Hitler from starting a war. To American anti-interventionists, assisting German Jews could be perceived as a threat to Hitler's sovereignty and a provocation to war. As tensions grew in Europe, so did Congressional contentions over foreign policy relating to trade, armaments, and immigration.[17]

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[16] Olson, *Those Angry Days*, 54.

[17] For works on the New Deal and 1930s Congressional debates see "Browse Reports by Date: CQR," CQ Presss Library, accessed May 25, 2019, https://library.cqpress.com/cqresearcher/toc.php?mo,de=cqres-date ; "Ideology and Related Data," Voteview, accessed May 25, 2019, https://voteview.com/data ; Wayne S. Cole, *Roosevelt and the Isolationists, 1932-1945* (London: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), pg. 39-50 ; Alonzo L. Hamby, *For the survival of democracy : Franklin Roosevelt and the world crisis of the 1930s* (New York: Free Press, 2004), 76-137.

Although the federal government worked to keep the United States from entering future wars, in 1938 and 1939 Congress discussed neutraily, German domestic and foreign affairs, rearmarments, fascism in Europe, growing number of refugees, and trade more often than it had in previous years. In *Those Angry Days: Roosevelt, Lindbergh, and America's fight over World War II* author Lynne Olson explains the United State's initial hesitation to assist England and France against Germany and evaluates the debates between non-interventionists and interventionists. For non-interventionists "we had been tricked into coming to the aid of Britain and France in 1917, thereby losing more than fifty thousand of our young men and providing our allied with loans that were never repaid. We were supposedly making the world safe for democracy, but in fact democracy had cravenly given way to Adolf Hitler." For these Isolationists, it was not America's responsibility to assist those countries who could not "settle their own disputes." America's duty was to its own national security which would be risked if they tried to "bail out" the rest of Western Europe again. [18] For interventionists, America had the duty and moral obligation to prevent the "Nazi evil" from spreading throughout Europe and taking over the Western World.[19] The foundation of these debates were based on the contention of whether the American government was solely responsible for the best interests of the country or also the safety of the international community. According to Justus Doenecke and Bruno Leone, other historians of isolationism, public opinion and congressional majorities agreed that refraining from global entragnelments was the smartest path for the country (at least until the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor). Even with the acknowledgement that the German government

[18] Olson, *Those Angry Days*, xvii.
[19] Olson, *Those Angry Days*, xvii.

was a serious threat to Democratic countries and proof that the Jews of Europe were being persecuted, the majority of Americans remained anti-interventionist.[20]

According to Congressional polls from 1938 and 1939, lawmakers opposed higher immigration.[21] To 20th century American historian Nancy Young, Congress saw immigration reform as a response to increasing Jewish emigration and "race and racial prejudice dominated." [22] The critical focus of the government were mainiting American autonomy, balancing internationalism, and regulating the economy, and immigration admittance and refugee aid were not priorities for the government in the 1930s.[23] Instead of focusing on this kind of humanitarian assistance, the passage of the 1939 Neutrality Act and the 1941 Lend Lease Act, which allowed the United States to trade and give military resources to European governments, demonstrate the government's changing position on isolationism. Over time, the threat of war and caused the United States to become increasingly less and less anti-interventionist.

The debate over American intervention is best demonstrated in Christopher Nichols' *Promise and Peril: America at the Dawn of a Global Age*. He argues that isolationism and interventionism were not mutually exclusive as typically assumed when we think about the debate over whether or not the U.S. should enter World War II, for example. Isolationism was not a completely neutralist policy, it was a question of American priorities. To Isolationists,

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[20] See Justus D. Doenecke, *Storm on the Horizon: The Challenge to American Intervention, 1939-1941*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003 and Bruno Leone *Isolationism: Opposing Viewpoints*, Farmington Hills: Greenhaven Press, 1995.
[21] See Richard Breitman and Alan Kraut, *American Refugee Policy and European Jewry, 1933–1945* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press), 1987 ; David S. Wyman, *Paper Walls: America and the Refugee Crisis 1938-1941* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press), 1968
[22] Nancy B. Young, *Why We Fight: Congress and the Politics of World War II* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2013), 136.
[23] Christopher McKnight Nichols, *Promise and Peril : America at the Dawn of a Global Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 18-19, 30, 57-58.

foreign policy was dictated by what they believed would be in America's best interest; that did not mean America needed to avoid *all* foreign interactions (whether that be trade, alliances, foreign aid, etc.). For example, with immigration, one of the examples Nichols uses is the 1924 Immigration Act. He calls it an "Isolationist achievement" because it created a "racial and national hierarchy." It is an example of how isolationists can be pro-internationalism: immigrants can be let in if they benefit American society. Similarity, isolationism typically implies that it supporters are against all forms of interventionism which Nichols explains is not always the case. Supporters could in fact advocate for certain Isolationists policies while opposing others. For example, Isolationists could support some forms of aid to foreign countries, such as military assistance, but not refugee support. Therefore Nichols idea can be used to consider that being anti-immigration did not necessarily make its opposers anti-interventions. Instead, being isolationists meant one preferred certain types of intervention. [24]

For Nichols, anti-interventionists is a more flexible and applicable term because anti-interventionists could support some characteristics of isolationism, but not all. So during World War II for example we may be quick to call those who did not support refugee Isolationists, when in reality they may have just preferred alternative forms of interventionism. Nichols work breaks away from stereotypes about isolationism. Americans struggled over whether or not to interfere with foreign affairs, and if so, how best to act to keep America from being detrimentally weakened. This fight over what kind of aid to give, if any, shows how the American public and politicians balanced internationalism in the prewar period and also makes historians of isolationism rethink what it mean to be anti-interventionist.

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[24] Nichols, *Promise and Peril*, 18-19, 30, 57-58, 245-247.

In addition to taking away such a strict definition, it also shows readers not to apply typical characteristics of isolationism to all those who may have been anti-interventionists. This includes the label of nativist or Antisemitic to those who opposed higher immigration or refugee aid during the World War II era. Many of the opponents of the Wagner-Rogers Bill's hearing demonstrate what we would think of as the desire to remain strictly against interventionism, like Senator Robert Reynolds from North Carolina and many of the patriotic groups that testified. They were also often representative of these negative features like Antisemitism, and nativism, and xenophobia that can be associated with traditional isolationism. Nichols makes a valid argument that it should not always be assumed that isolationists were consistently Antisemitic, nativists, or xenophobic. He does this by exploring variations of interventionism such as political isolationism, protectionist isolationism, and progressive internationalism.

Political isolationism is a method in which the government limits its participation in global affairs, but differentiates between economics and politics. Political isolationists see engagement with the international market as a beneficial form of internationalism as it allows the United States to be more economically competitive. Free trade as the dominant form of foreign policy was "permissible and even essential to national progress" to these isolationists, while problematic to others such as protectionists isolationists.[25] To this group, participating in the foreign economies had negative effect on the United States such as risking its "autonomy and self-sufficiency."[26] The United States need to protect itself from international market competition to ensure the maintenance of its own domestic budget. For example, in the 1930s proposals about boosting industry and agricultural production often went through Congress as a result of the New

[25]Nichols, *Promise and Peril*, 18.
[26] Nichols, *Promise and Peril*, 19.

Deal Recovery program to help the economy after the Great Depression.[27] Additional, they saw the 1935 Neutrality Act as a means to keep the United States out of foreign entanglements and and preserve American business. Protectionists supported practices against free trade, like higher tariffs, in order to boost the American market from within the nation. Both political and protectionists isolationist aim to "minimize war" by carefully practicing neutrality, non entanglement, and self-sufficiency while limiting "commercial and military alliances," but international conflict, such as World War II, challenge the ability to stay free from foreign intervention.[28]

Political debates over immigration legislation in the American congress in the years leading up to World War II show this contention over intervention. The Progressive Era pushed for immigration reform as shown by the 1924 Immigration Act. It was passed to maintain American homogeneity, but gained so much political praise because of the medical justifications used to support it, in particular, Eugenics. In the United States, the rise of immigration rates in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, germ theory, and bacteriology inforced ideas about biological and racial inferiority. Eventually links between race, public health, and immigration made threats of disease a highly legitimate political cause for ethnic exclusion. For example, Eugenicist Harry Laughlin corresponded with Congressman Albert Johnson. Johnson was the main supporter of the 1924 Immigration Act, and Eugenics was so highly popularized in America in the 20th century that many members of the public and politicians took very seriously

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[27] For this I compared legislative proposals through the CQ Researcher website "Browse Reports by Date: CQR," CQ Presss Library, https://library.cqpress.com/cqresearcher/toc.php?mo,de=cqres-date.
Also see Nancy B. Young, *Why We Fight: Congress and the Politics of World War II* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2013), 28-38.

[28] Nichols, *Promise and Peril*, 18-19, 30, 57-58, 245-247. See also Andrew Johnstone, *Against Immediate Evil: American Internationalists and the Four Freedoms on the Eve of World War II* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), 6-7, 37-39, 47-50, 57-61.

ideas about biological and racial superiority, as promoted in Eugenics. Certain groups of immigrants were believed to bring diseases into the United States and also assumed to be less mentally competent. Perceptions of immigrants and health directly influenced immigration policy before World War II, so not only did the Immigration Act provide medical against higher immigration during the Jewish Refugee Crisis, but it also set a pre-existing political justification, and a default argument often used in the late 1930s, against tampering with quotas.[29]

Progressive internationalism, similar to political and protectionist isolations, favored limited intervention in foreign affairs and admittance of only the most desirable immigrants.[30] In particular, both protectionist and progressives worked to limit the number of immigrants allowed into the U.S., it also debated over what types of immigrants could be admitted. Health of course played a factor, for example the Wagner-Rogers Bill would not admit children who did not meet the medical requirement of pre-existing immigration legislation, but more broadly the U.S. wanted to be sure that newcomers would benefit American society and conform to cultural values. In the 1930s, for example, Communism was seen as a great threat to the country. Jewish immigrants were likely to be accused of supporting Communism after accusations of their role in the Russian Revolution in 1917. Immigrants who opposed the American political system, or had suspicious or criminal pasts, were among the government's concerns when it came to immigration admittance. Foreigners could potentially take advantage of America's immigration

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[29] For works on American Eugenics and Immigration throughout the early to mid 20th century see Stephan Kühl, *The Nazi Connection: Eugenics, American Racism, and German National Socialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), Thomas C. Leonard, "Eugenics and Economics in the Progressive Era" *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 19, no. 4 (Fall 2005): 207-224, https://www.princeton.edu/~tleonard/papers/retrospectives.pdf and James Q. Whitman, *Hitler's American Model: The United States and the Making of Nazi Race Law.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2017), and Edwin Black, *War against the Weak : Eugenics and America's Campaign to Create a Master Race* (New York: Dialogue Press, 2003).

[30] Nichols, *Promise and Peril*, 105.

policies and disguise themselves as pro-democratic to get access into the country. The idea of immigrants being lazy or coming to America to take jobs is a popular anti-immigration today, but it was also a common notion in the 1930s. The Great Depression affected the global market, so those who were able to emigrate from their own country and come to the U.S., according to anti-immigrationist, would take American jobs or abuse welfare. Although these factors, or stereotypes, may have been true in some cases, they were frequently exaggerated characteristics used to maintain the quota system. [31]

Progressive internationalists believed in limiting American intervention and instead focus on domestic social reforms "this is not to say that progressives cast aside international reform or engagement, but, rather, sought to prioritize . . . by emphasizing certain domestic policies as paramount and specific foreign policies . . . not just as contradictory to American ideals but also as countering domestic reform by wasting much-needed resources and energies abroad."[32] Montana Senator Burton Wheeler, a Progressive Democratic, reflected these aims of progressive internationalists. He was initially supportive of FDR's New Deal programs to boot domestic social policies, but also believed that American foreign policy had to be carefully calculated to keep out of European conflicts. He opposed much of the late 1930s international legislation including the 1939 Neutrality Act and Lend Lease Act. He was a prominent anti-interventionist in the 1940s and a supporter of the America First Committee.[33] Although political isolationists,

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[31] See Christopher McKnight Nichols, *Promise and Peril : America at the Dawn of a Global Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011) and Richard Breitman and Alan Kraut, *American Refugee Policy and European Jewry, 1933–1945* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press), 1987.

[32] Nichols, *Promise and Peril*, 104.

[33] For this I compared Record Votes of the 74-77 Congress through the CQ Researcher website "Outstanding Roll Calls in the Senate," CQ Press Library, accessed May 25, 2019, https://library.cqpress.com/cqresearcher/ and data from "Ideology and Related Data," Voteview, accessed May 25, 2019, https://voteview.com/data. See also Gordon Skene, "May 4, 1941 – Burton K. Wheeler: Making The Case Against Intervention," *Past Daily*, May 4, 2017, http://pastdaily.com/2017/05/04/may-4-1941-burton-k-wheeler/.

protectionist isolation, and progressive internationalists believed in differing foreign policy practices to retain American autonomy, all supported varying forms of limited internationalism, including expansion of immigration and refugee policy.

As it relates to the Wagner-Rogers Bill, Nichols idea of "new isolationism" shows us that those who opposed higher immigration in the prewar era were not all necessarily traditional isolationists, xenophobic, or Antisemitic. As long as long as refugees benefit American society, it may not be fair to call anti-immigration Isolationists nativists. Insead, anti-interventionism is very complex. Those who were against the bill weren't necessarily isolationists, they may have simply believed higher immigration was not the right kind of intervention.

For example, the voting patterns of the Senate Committee on Immigration, the group at ultimately prevented the Wagner-Rogers Bill from passing, show the complexity of interventionism in the years leading up to the United States entering the second World War. Although some members of the Committee supported immigration reform, the Wagner-Rogers Bill was not successful refugee aid was not conducive to foreign policy aims. The Committee was made up of 11 Democrats and 4 Republicans. Reflective of each respective party's tenancies in general at that time, most of the Democrats on the Committee supported the 1939 Neutrality Act, and the Lend Lease Act, both forms of interventionism, while the majority of its Republicans did not. At first glance, the Committee's desire to maintain previous immigration laws may appear as anti-interventionists, but in fact their approval of military intervention, and eventually their support of the United States declaration of war on Japan, demonstrate the overall government's strategic foreign policy planning.[34]

[34] For this I compared Record Votes of the 74-77 Congress through the CQ Researcher website "Outstanding Roll Calls in the Senate," CQ Press Library, accessed May 25, 2019, https://library.cqpress.com/cqresearcher/ and data from "Ideology and Related Data," Voteview, accessed May 25, 2019, https://voteview.com/data.

Historiography of American Humanitarianism

This thesis draws on recent perspectives from refugee studies and American political history. Before the creation of international refugee law in 1951, Western states approached the protection of vulnerable, displaced peoples on an ad hoc basis defined by a basic adherence to Judeo-Christian values. According to political scientist and professor of international relations, Phil Orchard, states abided by "tacit laws," or widespread cooperation and understanding that "refugees [were] distinct from ordinary migrants and that they needed to be protected." He argues that this protection consisted of the "right of exit," or a "norm-governed understanding," that persecuted refugees had the right to leave one state and be accommodated by another. Similarly, German historian Susanne Lachenicht argues that the need for asylum for religiously persecuted peoples motivated many states to take responsibility for migrants forced from the own countries. She also notes, however, that after Christian charity ran out, states were much more discriminating, often only accepting refugees that made their state more economically or militarily competitive. These scholars consider such unofficial consensus to be considered the earliest form of Western international humanitarianism that set guidelines for protecting refugees or oppressed peoples.

American intervention in international humanitarianism on behalf of persecuted peoples began in Armenia almost a half century before the Holocaust. Only after private organizations took steps to help religiously persecuted groups abroad did the American government intervene to give protection to the affected peoples. American religious, philanthropic, and charity organizations called for medical and economic relief in Armenia after Sultan Abdul Hamid II

commanded the massacres of two hundred thousand Christian Armenians in the 1890s. The National Armenian Relief Committee held fundraisers to provide goods and services, and the Red Cross was the first American organization to give medical relief to the Armenian victims. Finally, the American government took political action against the Sultan in 1896 and "passed the Cullom resolution - the first international human rights resolution in American history - which condemned Sultan Abdul Hamid II for the Armenian massacres."[35]

Then, In 1915, the Ottoman empire carried out a genocide against the Armenian people, but this time the United States was much more reticent to condemn the attack. When it became known that the Ottoman government was in the midst of systematically killing 1.5 million Armenians, the American humanitarian groups adamantly called for the reintroduction of similar relief actions for the Armenians, but ultimately "the American dive for oil in the Middle East led to the abandonment of Armenia." It appears in this case that humanitarianism would have cost the United States its competitive edge if the government had focused its foreign affairs on oppression rather than resources. Later, when some Americans felt responsible for expanding refugee protection, the American government was slow to come to the aid of Jewish refugees in the early years of the Holocaust. However, groups like the American Friends Service Committee, German Jewish Children's Aid, and Non-Sectarian Committee for German Refugee Children engaged in acts of humanitarianism throughout the beginning of the 20th century, Congress did not. Instead, private organizations took the lead in initiating and expanding greater international humanitarian cooperation exemplified by such efforts as the Wagner-Rogers Bill. Thus, this thesis examines the creation, hearing, and fate of the Wagner-Rogers Bill to delineate the

[35] Peter Balakian, *The Burning Tigris: A History of the Armenian Genocide* (New York: Random House, 2004), xv.

contours of the interwar debate among private citizens and social welfare organizations and Congress about refugee protections in an age of non-intervention.

1924 Immigration Act

The formation of the Bill was a response to the United States' strict immigration policy that set a limit on the number of immigrants that could enter the country each year according to their country of origin. This limit, a quota system, prefered immigrants from certain parts of the world over others. It favored western European immigrants over southern or eastern ones. The Middle East and parts of Africa or Asia were restricted to only 100 (or prohibited from immigration entirely).[36] Additionally, the outcome of World War I initiated international human rights legislation, but no international body could enforce these principles. Therefore, America had no real political obligation to help Nazi victims. The NSCGRC wanted to take the opportunity to implement legal protection for persecuted refugees.

The Wagner-Rogers Bill was introduced as a resolution to admit 10,000 children from Germany in 1939 and 1940 in addition to the German quota for each year. For example, the German-Austrian immigration quota in 1939 allowed for 27,370 people to enter the United States. The Wagner-Rogers bill was not meant to legally raise the quota for those years, but rather to work outside the quota system as an exception to the pre-existing law to demonstrate that persecuted children were deserving of refuge, without altering or jeopardizing the number of other immigrants who could still to come to America. The children accepted by the Bill would match the health and economic obligations of pre-existing immigration laws.

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[36] Rebecca Erbelding, "Obstacles to Immigration, 1924-1941," (Unpublished Report, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, shared with author, August 23, 2018).

The humanitarian motives for the plan were entwined with anticipated political responses against relaxing immigration legislation. The potential for migrants to become public charges was one of the most common justification the American government and public used to argue against higher immigration, but the Committee urged the number of immigrants applying to leave Nazi Germany signified a demanding humanitarian issue. The NSCGRC hoped the humanitarian and democratic foundations of the Bill, along with the calculated economic solutions, would appeal to the sympathetic nature of the congressional members and encourage the Bill to become a reality.

What was going on in Germany

News had reached America by the mid-to-late 1930s from Government officials and American journalists that Nazis were persecuting minorities groups, and American magazines and newspapers regularly printed reports on rising tensions in Germany. Americans who followed the news were made aware of Nazi persecution of the Jews, which ranged from slandering propaganda, boycotts, book burning, destruction of Jewish businesses, Anti-Jewish legislation, and internment in concentration camps. The Nazi government endorsed and encouraged Jewish segregation from German society throughout the 1930s. Holocaust scholar Marion Kaplan argues that after Hitler became chancellor in 1933, the Jews of Germany were striped of their political and economic "livelihood" and experienced what she calls "social death" or the deliberate acts of Antisemitism that progressively isolated Jews more and more from German society.[37] In the years leading up to World War II, the tensions between Jewish Germans and non-Jewish Germans intensified due to Nazi propaganda and policies. In fact, between 1933

[37] Marion Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 3.

and 1939, “400 decrees and regulations [were created] that restricted all aspects of [Jewish] public and private life.”[38] The Nazis enacted laws that affected Jewish employment, access to education, where they could buy goods, where they could live, and who they could marry, a process that robbed Jews of their rights as citizens. Jews were harassed, attacked, interned, and deported more and more frequently. The Nazis Antisemitic scheme ultimately ostracized Jews from their communities and country and increasingly struck more and more fear into their everyday lives. Consequently, it became imperative for German Jews and others oppressed by the Nazis to find refuge.

Jewish men, women, and children experienced Antisemitic oppression differently. Kaplan argues that “children not only were aware of the political and social situation of their families, but also experienced rejection directly from other children.”[39] Jewish children were harassed and singled out by their classmates until many of them were forced to leave school. In the early 1930s the Law Against the Overcrowding of German Schools passed which restricted the number of Jewish children allowed in public schools, another practice that isolated Jews from the rest of society. Chapter 1 provides specific examples of the social exclusion and psychological impact Jewish children experienced in schools and among non-Jewish German children.

Why Children

[38] "Anti-Jewish Legislation in Prewar Germany,” Holocaust Encyclopedia | United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed April 15, 2019,https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/anti-jewish-legislation-in-prewar-germany.
[39] Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 94.

The interwar period saw the rise of a particular interest in children and childhood in the United States, too. The Wagner-Rogers Bill also sheds light on the development of governmental accountability for the welfare of children. In *A Right to Childhood: The United States Children's Bureau and Child Welfare, 1912-46* Kriste Lindenmeyer asserts that children had no voice within the federal government, so the Bureau was formed in order to give them formal representation.[40] The creators of the organization addressed issues such as infant mortality, child health care, and child labor. Although many political opponents claimed that it was not the government's duty to interfere with families, those who supported the creation of such an organization believed the government should protect the "right to childhood" or the assurance to a safe and "normal homelife" because "childhood must be recognized as a period of life demanding special attention and protection."[41] It was a moral obligation, according to Lindenmeyer, of the American government to protect the next generation of citizens.

The concern for youth could also be seen in emerging social welfare policies. President Franklin Roosevelt created a national welfare system in 1935, and Director Katherine Lenroot of the Children's Bureau (1934-1951) argued that this program must be extended to America's youth. An official welfare system was the most effective method to manage "the basic needs of children throughout the country."[42] Lindenmeyer shows that during Lenroot's first few years as director "general child welfare programs rose 73 percent" because the "new wartime crisis" highlighted the vulnerability of children. The Bureau also recognized the needs of children abroad. In 1939, representatives of the Bureau went to Great Britain, France, and Holland,

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[40] Kriste Lindenmeyer, *A Right to Childhood: The United States Children's Bureau and Child Welfare, 1912-46* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 1.
[41] Lindenmeyer, *A Right to Childhood*, 2-3.
[42] Lindenmeyer, *A Right to Childhood*, 183.

countries that had taken in child refugees from Germany, and determined that "without exception workers in all countries visited stressed the need of the United States offering some form of help, either financially or actual hospitality to these children."[43] For example, Director Lenroot believed in extending federal protection of Jewish children in need as the Nazi government had taken their "right to childhood." Lenroot testified on behalf of the Wagner-Rogers Bill in order to show that the government had an ethical duty to protect this right.

After the war began, concern for youths intensified. Historian Tara Zahra argues that World War II created the need not only for refugee protection, but also the protection of childhood, similarly to Lindenmeyer's argument for the "right to childhood."[44]

> World War II was not only a moment of unprecedented violence against children. It also spawned ambitious new humanitarian movements to save and protect children from wartime upheaval and persecution. Through their work with displaced children, these child-savers generated new psychological theories, child rearing methods, and social welfare programs. Many of our fundamental ideas about the nature of childhood trauma first developed in the context of World War II.[45]

America learned about these needs of child refugees from its activists groups who participated in international humanitarian organizations for the first time on behalf of victimized displaced children, initially during in response to Armenian genocide, then during the Spanish Civil War, two events in which oppressed children were forced out of their homes and away from the families. For Zahra, the interwar period demonstrated the need for more than just material

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[43] Lindenmeyer, *A Right to Childhood*, 210.
[44] Tara Zahra, *The Lost Children: Reconstructing Europe's Families after World War II* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 13.
[45] Zahra, *The Lost Children*, ix-x.

support; "psychological rehabilitation" also became a recognized need for displaced groups and especially refugees whose lives had been seriously exacerbated by war or persecution.[46]

The AFSC carried out humanitarian work during World War I, and also during the Spanish Civil War in the early 1930s. They showed particular interest in assisting youth and "shifted their resources, infrastructure, and experience seamlessly from the children of Spain to the children displaced by the Nazi occupation of Europe."[47] Around the same time the AFSC was helping Spanish Children, the German Jewish Children's Aid was founded in American to plan rescue schemes for Nazi victims. The GJCA was an activist group that sponsored almost 3,000 Jewish refugees between 1934 and 1946. These two groups, the American Friends Service Committee and the German Jewish Children's Aid, formed much of the NSCGRC's membership because of their experience with young foreign refugees.

The American Friends Service Committee's members of the NSCGRC and child welfare associates accepted responsibilities suited to their respective backgrounds in order to best carry out the duties of the Wagner-Rogers Bill. For example, the AFSC already had offices in Germany to assist with choosing children to come to the United States. They had conducted humanitarian work in Germany since World War I and hoped to work in concert with the German government. They would oversee much of the work necessary for the Bill abroad, while the child welfare workers would handle the needs of the children once in America.

The Committee met several times December 1938 and July 1939 to devise a rescue plan. They were sure enough of potential success of their mission that they strategized for the prospective children's selection abroad, transportation to the United States, placement in homes,

[46] Zahra, *The Lost Children*, 26-27.
[47] Zahra, *The Lost Children*, 56-57.

and health care. Their efforts also reshaped conventional approaches to foster care. Marion Kenworthy was so concerned about the psychological impact of exclusion, racism, and the lack of medical attention that she created new standards of foster care to ensure better living conditions for potential children if they were to come live with American families. These standards were utilized throughout the planning of the Wagner-Rogers bill to guarantee that, if placed in America, the children would not be trading cruel experiences in their home country, for mistreatment in the United States. For the members of the NSCGRC, persecuted children in Germany had lost their "right to childhood." Discrimination and persecution caused Jewish children in particular to face isolationism in schools, threatened the stability of their home life, and took away access to medical care.

Congressional Hearings

The Non-Sectarian Committee for German Refugee Children worked rigorously for months to prepare for the Wagner-Rogers Bill's Congressional proposal and hearings. The plan created by the NSCGRC became the foundation for the testimonies in support of the Bill. The preparation done by the Committee was intended to allow its supporters, dominantly members of the NSCGRC, to succinctly explain to government officials why the Bill was both humane and practical, even in the face of deep-seated opposition..

In late April and May of 1939, subcommittees of the Senate's Committee on Immigration and the House of Representatives' Committee on Immigration and Naturalization held joint hearings on the on the Bill. The debate revolved less around logistics, focusing instead on the principles involved: supporters of the bill believed the Wagner-Rogers Bill was a necessary humanitarian response to antisemitic violence in Germany. Opponents of the Bill, on the other

hand, called upon economic and political arguments - in particular economic protectionism and welfare of American children to fight for non-intervention.

Opposition to the Wagner-Rogers Bill

Robert Reynolds, Senator from North Carolina, was the most outspoken member of Congress against the bill. Despite the looming crisis in Europe, America was conflicted between staying neutral or assisting Nazi victims, but Reynolds made his protectionist isolationist attitude clear when he introduced five anti-immigration bills in 1939 alone, including a proposal to stop immigration into the United States for 5 years. Reynolds fear of admitting refugees was not swayed by the proposal of the Wagner-Rogers Bill. Supporters of the bill stressed the humanitarian basis of it, but Reynolds claimed this was a false idea used to create sympathy to relax existing immigration policies and later change the quota system to let in more immigrants. He remained staunchly against any alteration of American immigration policy, even in the case of victimized children.

Reynolds is the most notorious figure in this story. He was both pro-Nazi and extremely isolationist. He cultivated connections with American Nazis and notorious Antisemitic figures. He believed that America needed to be protected from “alien enemies” and exaggerated the idea of foreigners commonly being criminals or people who wanted to dismantle the American political system or ways of life. He spoke out against people who supported increased immigration who and stated that immigrants positively contributed to American culture. His opposition was representative of a particular group of opponents to the Bill and demonstrates the role of racism in the political culture of the interwar period.

Retraction of the Bill

After a month of testimony, the Senate Committee on Immigration submitted an amendment to the Wagner-Rogers Bill on July 9. The Amendment mandated a compromise position that would allow the admission of 20,000 children, but only by prohibiting all other immigration into the United States for five years. This was essentially a compromise between the Wagner-Rogers Bill and Senator Reynolds' bill to stop immigration into the United States for 5 years. Wagner perceived this to be an unjust ultimatum and pulled the Bill. For Wagner, counting the children in the larger annual quota defeated the bill's purpose and his goal was by no means to stop immigration. Because Wagner refused this amendment and pulled the Bill, it never got to the Senate floor.

The Bill died in committee, but it was not a complete failure. The story of the Wagner-Rogers Bill demonstrates that members of congress were willing to find a middle ground between isolationism and humanitarianism. In some capacity, Congress recognized that many parts of the Bill had the potential to be carried out successfully or else the Bill would have been overturned, not amended. Additionally, their approval meant Congress recognized the emergence of a refugee crisis. Refugee activists and childcare specialists used their experience and knowledge to demonstrate how to best provide care for displaced persons without disturbing American stability, but their arguments were practically thwarted. The Bill was ultimately defeated because it was designed to take an active stance on behalf of the growing number of refugees, but by denying asylum to the remaining Nazi victims as the amendment called for, the

story of the Wagner-Rogers Bill shows that the movement for non-intervention still held the upper hand. It would take five years of global conflict resulting in mass genocide and displacement of millions to demonstrate the significance of international humanitarian aid.

Chapter 1: The Non-Sectarian Committee for German Refugee Children

Between July 1, 1933 and June 30, 1942, 161,051 Jews immigrated to the United States, a number that represented 35.5 percent of *all* immigrants who arrived during that period. Jews comprised more than half of all immigration to the United States between 1938 and 1940 . . . The number increased dramatically after *Kristallnacht* when it became clear that Jews in Germany were in real physical danger. [48]

In the Fall of 1938, Dr. Marion Kenworthy began corresponding with humanitarian activists and organizations to discuss possible ways to meet the humanitarian challenge after the shock of the events in Germany in November. Existing efforts by American social welfare agencies who assisted persecuted German children, she believed, would not be enough to meet the needs of a troubled refugee population: they might be able to help small numbers adjust to a new life in America, but national collaboration among numberius agencies, as well as organizations that had carried out foreign refugee work, was necessary to confront the immense number of maltreated German children. She sought to bring together a "group of interested people" who "ought to pool their thoughts in working out a more effective program for handling [refugees] their placement, education, and emotional needs after they arrive in this country." [49] Kenworthy founded just such a group. She collaborated with multiple child care specialists and welfare advocates, director of placements for the German Jewish Children's Aid, foster care

[48] Robert N Rosen, *Saving the Jews: Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Holocaust* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 2006), 27.
[49] "Standards of Care," Meeting Minutes of Non-Sectarian Committee for German Refugee Children, 4 January 1939, Marion E. Kenworthy (1891-1980) Papers; P-511; box 2; folder 9; American Jewish Historical Society, New York, NY.

organizations, psychologists, refugee workers, and social workers who wanted to provide refuge as a response to the ruinous effects Nazi aggression had on, most often, Jewish children's social and academic experiences. Over the course of several weeks in the beginning of 1939, representatives of these organizations devised a plan to guarantee that, if placed in America, the children would not be trading cruel experiences in their home country, for more mistreatment in the United States. This plan, the foundation of the Wagner-Rogers Bill, proposed to let 20,000 German, mostly Jewish, persecuted refugee children into the United States to live in American homes. Under the leadership of Kenworthy, and Clarence Pickett, director of the American Friends Service Committee, these individuals formed the Non-Sectarian Committee for German Refugee Children.

The American Friends Service Committee, a Quaker relief group founded during World War I, had already played an important role in international humanitarian work in both the First World War and the Spanish Civil War. Indeed, Kenworthy wanted their cooperation because of the organization's experience, knowledge, and interest in helping refugees. During World War I, the AFSC had served in war zones by providing food, shelter, and "moral" support to French and German citizens. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the A.F.S.C. continued to perform relief work in Germany, primarily though donating food for children.[50] They saw first hand the oppression many people of Germany were facing under Hitler's regime, and brought a sense of urgency to the effort. Director Clarence Pickett decided to expand their record of providing in-country aid to private citizens by taking on the the responsibility of identifying and part in the plan to assisting refugee children in their travel to a new home in the United States. Kenworthy

[50] Rebecca Erbelding, *Rescue Board: The Untold Story of America's Efforts to Save the Jews* (New York: Doubleday, 2018), 7-18.

and Pickett's combined knowledge of child psychology and refugee work provided them with valuable qualifications to oversee the plan to rescue German Jewish children.

Planning of the Wagner-Rogers Bill

Throughout December 1938 and January 1939, the Non-Sectarian Committee met eight times to develop the plan that became the basis of the Wagner-Rogers Bill. Minutes from these meetings show that the Committee was particularly focused on the problems of how to get the children to America, find foster homes for the children, ensure each child's physical and mental health, raise awareness about the issue, gather allies, secure funds, and circumvent political and public opposition. The members of the NSCGRC came from differing occupational backgrounds, and their diverse skills came in handy in in crafting a viable plan for immigration to delegate the many responsibilities called for by the plan for the Wagner-Rogers Bill. This chapter evaluates how the NSCGRC created the plan and how they found sponsors for the Wagner-Rogers Bill.

By 1939, their plan was ready. With the support of Senator Wagner's, the Bill was introduced to the Senate in February of 1939 as a "non-partisan bill authorizing the admittance of refugee children."[51] As seen through the work of the Non-Sectarian Committee for German Refugee Children, this chapter argues that American child welfare and displaced persons activists took the lead in responding to humanitarian crisis of the interwar period, confronting and ultimately reshaping the non-interventionist political terrain that had held sway since the destruction of the First World War.

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[51] Admission of German Refugee Children 1939. HR76A-H14.1. 76th Cong., U.S. Congressional Record 1278. U.S. House of Representatives. Committee on Labor.

Rising Tensions in Germany & The Necessity of a Plan

The rise of Nazism led to a number of inhumane circumstances in Germany that contributed to the NSCGRC's desire to help victims of Nazism. In 1933, the Law Against Overcrowding of German Schools restricted the number of Jewish children allowed in German public schools. Teachers then began teaching Nazi ideology and racism in the classroom including obedience and admiration for Hitler. In response, many Jewish families turned to private schools, but the remaining minority faced isolation and increased Antisemitism. American social workers believed that of all the persecution peoples in Germany, Jewish children suffered the most. They were frequently excluded and bullied, unable to create relationships with others their own age. Jewish children told their parents that when walking to and from school, other children yelled at them, took their clothing, spat on them, and threw food at them. In many cases, the social workers reported that teachers seemed passive to the mistreatment and discriminated against Jewish children as well. Such treatment also disproportionately affected the most vulnerable children: Jewish private schools were often too far away for young children to attend, so young Jews had to endure this kind of treatment in order to stay in school.[52]

Rising Antisemitism reshaped not just the education system, but also the provisioning of healthcare. It was increasingly difficult for Jewish doctors to hold a practice in Germany or for Jews to go to medical school after 1933, due to Antisemitic legislation which gradually restricted Jewish participation in the public health field. Non-Jewish local doctors often denied health care

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[52] "The Situation Which Justifies the Wagner-Rogers Bill," Meeting Minutes of Non-Sectarian Committee for German Refugee Children, 1939, Marion E. Kenworthy (1891-1980) Papers; P-511; box 2; folder 8; American Jewish Historical Society, New York, NY.

to, children in need based on the identity of the child. Overall, social workers were convinced that Jewish children in particular were distinct victims of Nazi persecution.[53] The lack of fair access to education and health care violated the children's entitlement to safety and security, rights that the members of the NSCGRC believed could be restored to at least some of the oppressed children if they emigrated to the United States.

The Politics of Humanitarianism

The humanitarian motives for the plan were instrumental in countering arguments against relaxing immigration legislation. Most commonly, American politicians, typically protectionist isolationists, rejected pleas for more immigration due to the possibility that immigrants might become wards of or otherwise tax the resources of the state. The Committee countered that concern, arguing that an undeniable percent of refugees and immigrants applying to leave Nazi Germany signified a demanding humanitarian issue. The Committee hoped to appeal to the government's empathy by focusing on the fact that these were not legal adults admitted under the Bill, but young children who would have the option to return to Germany after the defeat of the Nazi party. The children would not become economic or labor competition for many years, a popular concern during the Great Depression era after the 1929 stock market crash, if they did choose to stay in America. Additionally, the Committee believed that it was America's democratic responsibility to take an active stance against Hitler's regime by assisting refugees. After all, the President and many politicians and political groups had publicly spoke out on Nazi

[53] "The Situation Which Justifies the Wagner-Rogers Bill," Meeting Minutes of Non-Sectarian Committee for German Refugee Children, 1939, Marion E. Kenworthy (1891-1980) Papers; P-511; box 2; folder 8; American Jewish Historical Society, New York, NY.

aggression out of concern for victimized groups in Germany. The Committee hoped to use these sympathetic attitudes as a catalyst for political action.

Getting the Children Out of Germany

The plan for the Wagner-Rogers Bill had several components that took weeks to finalize. The NSCGRC first needed to prove that the situation in Germany was dire. Clarence Pickett reports sent by Friends offices abroad that confirmed the German government's intention to remove Europe's Jews. One of these reports referred to the burning of synagogues, the ghastly appearance of men returned from concentration camps, and rising "scapegoating" of German Jews as the reason for a perceived persecution of Germany by the allied nations of the First World War.

Kenworthy acknowledged that if any children were to be saved from this German persecution, those interested in organizing such a task had to devise methods to get children out of Germany, through Europe, and transported to the United States. Although no statements were made at their meetings regarding Nazi cooperation, minutes suggest that the American Friends Service Committee had a Berlin office where its workers who conducted refugee work would mobilize the chosen children to be brought out of the country and to the Dutch border. The Dutch and British governments had previously agreed to take approximately 1,000 children every month on the agreement that they would be transferred to the United States quickly. The Committee also thought is was best to get the children out of Germany in smaller groups so social workers could evaluate their "intelligence, emotional adjustment, and personal

background" adequately.[54] Smaller groups would mean less children moving out of Germany quickly, but might allow for better analysis of their mental and physical well being. The Committee decided that the most manageable goal would be to move 500 children a month to match the capability of Friends workers in Germany. It was also debated whether or not it would be easier for the children's transition if they left Germany in groups of Jews, Protestants, or Catholics and how long the children could stay in England or Holland before coming to America. The advantages of them staying in Europe longer with social workers were that they would have longer to learn English and being in groups provided for a better learning environment. It could also cause them more emotional stress to adjust to England or Holland just to then be moved to another foreign place.[55] The condition that these other democratic governments were involved with helping young refugees was be a humanitarian example of how international governments could combat Nazi aggression, and therefore used as a rationale by the NSCGRC to push the United States to work together with other allies who supported persecuted victims.

The children needed visas, which was a challenge in itself. Typically, those emigrating from Germany had to register for a waiting list, present their birth certificate and a certificate of good conduct from German authorities, find at least one American financial supporter who would take responsibility of them, buy passage to America, collect transit visas, and then be evaluated by the United State's consulate. All of this was necessary to prove that one would not be a financial burden or a health or national security risk to the United States. This process was

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[54] "Standards of Care," Meeting Minutes of Non-Sectarian Committee for German Refugee Children, box 2; folder 9. Also, through various other Meeting Minutes of Non-Sectarian Committee for German Refugee Children, Marion E. Kenworthy (1891-1980) Papers; American Jewish Historical Society.

[55] Meeting Minutes of Non-Sectarian Committee for German Refugee Children, 15 January 1939, Marion E. Kenworthy (1891-1980) Papers; P-511; box 1; folder 10; American Jewish Historical Society, New York, NY.

expensive and took months to compete. The necessary emigration documents one had received prior approval for could expire before the process was completed, which meant that many applicants often had to start the process over at least once.[56] The Wagner-Rogers Bill sought to admit children outside of the German quota set by American immigration policy to circumvent this long and difficult process, without risking adding more adult refugees on the waiting list. Similarities overlapped between requirements of the 1924 Immigration Act and prerequisites to qualify under the Wagner-Rogers Bill: children would still need an American sponsor, the foster family, proper documentation, and be medically fit, but avoiding the waiting line guaranteed children got out of Germany and to safety sooner. The Committee agreed that the potential children must be between the ages of five and fourteen and that the visas should allow the children to stay in America for at least four years. Later they may be encouraged to stay in America after the persecution ended in Germany or apply for American citizenship once of age.

Providing Care in America

The NSCGRC struggled to counter contemporary non-interventionist arguments and convince the American government that loosening immigration policy for predominantly Jewish children would not be harmful to American society, i.e. by creating competition for future jobs or foster homes for American orphans. Although they hoped their confidence in their ability to find homes and funding would be a compelling argument to support the bill, they were concerned the high number of non-christians admitted by the Bill would have negative consequences. The refugee crisis of the 1930s consisted mostly of Jews attempting to flee areas under German

[56] "What did Refugees Need to Obtain a US Visa in the 1930s?," The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed January 28, 2019, https://exhibitions.ushmm.org/americans-and-the-holocaust/what-did-refugees-need-to-obtain-a-us-visa-in-the-1930s

dictatorship, a fact well known in America. Still, the word "Jewish" was not specifically used in the official title of the organization or to describe the kinds of children it aimed to help because of the apprehension it may have caused. Additionally, for the NSCGRC the objective was to help persecuted youths of all religions, and Jewish heritage should not have prevented humanitarian aid. According to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum "in 1938, the State Department issued the maximum number of visas available to Germans for the first time. Yet nearly ten times that number remained on the waiting list." Since 1933, an average of 18,904 German visas went unissued due to financial restrictions, meanwhile, the waiting list steadily grew each year.[57] Social workers described that most of the children in Germany that were in need of refuge were Jewish but also children who befriended or associated with Jews. Extending protection to children of all faiths provided protection for those who were harassed for their religious heritage and/or association with Jews, and was also a tactic to prevent alternative discriminatory motives against the bill.

The NSCGRC wanted to ensure each child's safety by finding suitable homes for the placement in America. Homes needed to be located in areas with easily hospitals and health facilities, places of worship, schools, and "recreational facilities." American families who offered to take in these children were asked to treat them as if they were their own, so ensure a "homelike atmosphere" and provide children with their own clothes, rooms, toiletries, and school supplies. Homes would be inspected to make sure the children would be living in safe, sanitary,

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[57] "What did Refugees Need to Obtain a US Visa in the 1930s?," The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and"Immigration by the Numbers" The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed January 28, 2019, https://exhibitions.ushmm.org/americans-and-the-holocaust/how-many-refugees-came-to-the-united-states-from-1933-1945.

and welcoming environments. Selection of foster homes would be determined by shared cultural and religious backgrounds of both the refugee child and the foster family who would work with counselors to keep reports of the children's care. It was also preferred that children be placed with married couples in good physical and mental health and income adequate to "provide comfortable living." The Committee also hoped to place siblings in the same home, and no more than two unrelated children in one home. Additionally, it would also be prefered if the child could try temporary placement in observation home to evaluate child-home compatibility before officially being placed. The children and foster families were expected to treat each other with mutual respect, and the children would need constant supervision. The foster parents would also be required to take the children for regular doctor and dentists visits. The young arrivals would need to be taught the English language and American customs, and it was also important to the group to ensure the children would be medically treated and psychologically evaluated while adjusting to America.[58]

The Committee had to strategize for the various financial obligations of the Bill. Initially, they believed enough organizations had pledged financial support, such as social agencies, the National Youth Service, and Child Welfare Groups, to bring the children to America, but they had also depended on the foster agencies to find enough free homes, meaning families who would take children without compensation, for 20,000 children. This was overly optimistic of the Committee, and they realized they could not expect the families to cover the cost of proving all of the children's needs. The Committee would have to provide money for the cost of board and medical care, but they believed they had enough support to at least get the children to America.

[58] "Standards of Care," Non-Sectarian Committee for German Refugee Children, box 2; folder 9.

Additionally, the Committee never confirmed how many families had agreed to take children in. Many individuals had reached out to the committee and collaborating foster agencies to host children, but more homes needed to secured.

Once the children had reached America, the Committee agreed that collaborating foster agencies would take complete responsibility for the children's care. The American agencies would also have to become familiar with German customs in order to understand the children's emotional state once separated from their families. The children would also have to be placed quickly in homes as to only have to learn to adjust to one place. The Committee also agreed it should be made clear to the children that they would have the choice to return to their families eventually.

The Committee also addressed what to do in the case of children who did not adjust well to American homes over time or what to do if children resented the new placement. This problem was never discuss in detail, nor did they address how to help children who did not practice religion. It did seem, however, that shortly before the February Congressional announcement of the bill, the Quakers had found more free homes for potential children, proving that American citizens supported helping refugee children and taking them in. . In all, the NSCGRC hoped the introduction of the Bill to Conggress would attract more support and secure more foster homes and funding.

Completing the Plan & Preparing the Bill for Congress

Before the Bill was proposed to the Senate, the Committee lobbied for additional political support by presenting their work to the President's Advisory Committee. In her statement, Marion Kenworthy made clear that American Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish churches and

religious leaders had endorsed the Non-Sectarian Committee for German Refugee Children by, and its plans to select, examine, receive, and place 20,000 children. The group believed they had secured methods to ensure there would be sufficient homes and funds to justify admitting children beyond the quota. Despite their appeal for a Presidential approval, Roosevelt never publicly spoke about the Bill. Even after reports from American diplomats in Germany confirmed Nazi Antisemitic aggression and Kristallnacht, he stood firm with the political notion that the quota system must be followed. He and other American politicians claimed that German sovereignty dictated that Hitler had the right to administer domestic policy without foreign intervention.

In the last meetings before Wagner presented the Bill before congress, the Non-Sectarian Committee for German Refugee Children finalized a detailed plan for how each phase of the Bill would be executed and determined the necessary documentation for each child.The plan broke down into six categories. The first, a Program for Children of all Faiths which stated that the welfare of persecuted children was more important than their racial or religious background. As previously mentioned, the heritage of the children was not as important as their safety and security. The NSCGRC's non-religious association represented their belief in equality before the law in the face of humanitarian crises.[59]

The children would arrive by boat, most likely at the ports of New York City, Chicago, or Philadelphia because of the high standards of care at these cities foster and child welfare organizations. The agencies would then asses emotional and psychiatric adjustment for each child. They discussed transferring social workers to these regional, pre-existing facilities to

[59] Meeting Minutes of Non-Sectarian Committee for German Refugee Children, 24 January 1939, Marion E. Kenworthy (1891-1980) Papers; P-511; box 1; folder 11; American Jewish Historical Society, New York, NY.

update methods of child care management and to allow more regions to have centers where children could be evaluated. If these improvements were not possible in the smaller facilities, the children would have to be evaluated elsewhere.

To select the children to come under the Bill the American Friends Service Committee workers abroad would "gather the children of oppressed minorities in Germany." They would make arrangements to send social workers who specialized in psychological trauma, preferably those who already spoke German, to the Friend's offices abroad. This section of the plan also addressed a common ethical argument that the bill would rip families apart. The committee relied on the testimony of an American social worker who had worked in Germany in the mid-to-late 1930s, who disputed the perceived immorality of the bill:

> American parents have often said to me that they cannot understand how German parents can give up their children so easily and send them into the uncertainty of a foreign country at such a tender age. I have discussed this question with many parents in Germany, and the most far-sighted of them, who really desire their child's greatest good, have often said to me that they could see no way out for themselves, that they themselves had to stay in Germany no matter how desperate the situation, but that they could do that and endure it, if they could know that there was a future for their child. I think of the mother of a boy who is now in this country, with tears in her eyes and said, "It is unspeakably hard to send my boy away, and yet I am so thankful that he has the opportunity to go and build up a new life over there.These children are not taken to concentration camps or prison; but they are deprived of the natural roots of growth, association with playmates, the natural artlessness and joyousness of childhood. As seen later in Congressional debates, the morality of separating children and parents in order to rescue the child was a critical humanitarian point of contention. This passage, however, demonstrates the seriousness of the persecuted young and why the supporters of the Bill argued for rescue. [60]

Her statement takes into account the difficulty for parents and children to be apart, but when the child's safety or life is endangered, like it was for so many young Jews in Germany, Jewish

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[60] "Inside German Reports," Non-Sectarian Committee for German Refugee Children, 1939, Marion E. Kenworthy Papers(1891-1980); P-511; box 1; folder 5; American Jewish Historical Society, New York, NY.

parents chose to send their child away. Better to live in America as orphans than to die with one's parents according to the bill's supporters.

The Reception of Children component of the plan stated that the children would receive visas for permanent residence on the condition they passed government regulations on mental and physical health. They would also gather necessary paperwork to record each child's personal information including where their families lived in Germany, social and economics status and background of parents, number of siblings, education, standards of living at home, and documentation of child's sociability and physical progress. Once in America, they would be accepted by correlating religious organizations who would "guide them through their first contact with America." Foster families would be evaluated to ensure they met standards of foster care before taking in any German children. The following sections of the plan then guaranteed to disperse children so that they would not be concentrated in the same cities or regions and asserted that the children would need to be frequently evaluated by "qualified responsible agencies" to ensure foster home compatibility, the child's education, and his or her medical and psychological health.[61]

In the sixth and final section, Financial Responsibility, the Non-Sectarian Committee for German Refugee Children accepted full liability. They estimated it would cost $400 a year for "maintenance and supervision throughout the child's whole Minority" and insisted that local and national resources, such as the Child Welfare League, would provide the necessary funds. However, funds for children who did not practice religion needed more planning. Congress would want financial assurance, but the Committee's affiliates often donated money for the

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[61] "Draft - Standards of Foster Care," Non-Sectarian Committee for German Refugee Children, 1939, Marion E. Kenworthy Papers(1891-1980); P-511; box 2; folder 9; American Jewish Historical Society, New York, NY.

cause. For example, former President Calvin Coolidge supported the bill, and his wife, Grace, gave the Committee enough money for 25 children. Child welfare and social service groups in Chicago raised $1,100,000 while New York had raised almost $10,000,000 although it was not clearly expressed how the money was originally solicited. Since the children would come in gradually, there would be time to do more public outreach and guarantee more homes over the bill's two year course.[62]

In sum, the logistical groundwork done by the NSCGRC resulted in a thoughtful and plausible strategy to assist oppressed groups in Nazi Germany. The humanitarian mission was backed by financial support, public interest, and various organizations that had already determined methods to provide the best care for the children. The NSCGRC had done all they could do to make enacting Bill as straightforward as possible.

The Bill's Congressional Proposal

On February 9, 1939, Senator Robert Wagner introduced the Bill as a joint resolution before Congress titled "Admission of German Refugee Children." In an impassioned speech he made references to the growing number of German emigrants in recent years. Wagner repeatedly called on his audience to acknowledge the children in need of refuge from Germany instead of placing emphasis on the Jewish heritage of these individuals. Not only did he hope to appeal to Senate's sympathetic nature of the age of these "helpless sufferers," but also to Congress's sense of civic responsibility to ensure "human freedom." Wagner chose his words carefully, aware of the hesitation of some members of Congress against letting non-Christians enter, as well as the

[62] "Draft - Standards of Foster Care," Non-Sectarian Committee for German Refugee Children, box 2; folder 9.

prevalence of non-interventionist attitudes based on economic fears such as welfare and labor competition, isolationist sentiment, and xenophobia. Something else here on the diversity of the coalition against intervention. [63]

After Senator Robert Wagner introduced the bill and the Non-Sectarian Committee for German Refugee Children's plan to implement it to Congress, the bill became highly publicized by the American media. It received support and praise from many American politicians, citizens, and welfare and religious organizations. Lotte Marcus, director of placements for the German Jewish Children's Aid and member of the Non-Sectarian Committee, corresponded with families in over forty-one states who supported the Bill and offered their homes to the children, as well as multiple Jewish organizations throughout America who volunteer to help. For example, the Albany Jewish Social Service offered to help circulate petitions, the Central Jewish Aid Society in Denver offered to help find foster families, and the Jewish Welfare Society in Seattle offered to reach out to its non-Jewish associate organizations. The Wagner-Rogers bill also received support from former president Hoover, the American Federation of Labor, the Committee for Industrial Organization, a labor society which ensured the Bill would not be harmful to the market, and Eleanor Roosevelt who publicly endorsed the bill because of its humanitarian qualities. These individuals and organizations' support were important for the government and public's perception of American accountability to refugees, especially since the president remained silent on the Wagner-Rogers Bill. The initial response to the Bill, including outspoken support from some organizations that were generally against higher immigration quotas, suggested that the humanitarian need might indeed overcome arguments against intervention.

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[63] Admission of German Refugee Children 1939. HR76A-H14.1. 76th Cong., U.S. Congressional Record 1278. U.S. House of Representatives. Committee on Labor.

Not all of the response to the Bill was supportive, however. It faced major opposition from critics who scrutinized its economic feasibility, anti-interventionists who favored political neutrality and the quota system, and citizens who held xenophobic beliefs about immigrants. Members of the Committee received multiple anti-immigration letters and petitions throughout 1939 that demonstrated the depth of these criticisms. The American Immigration Conference Board and the American Coalition for Patriotic Society, for example, proclaimed that 20,000 foreign children would steal charity that should belong to American children, that American taxpayers should not have to pay to educate them, and questioned the morality of letting foreign "anarchists" into the United States. They desired increased national defense and stricter immigration and deportation laws because, to them, immigrants caused an increase in crime, created job competition, and stole government welfare funded by citizens.[64] Even the officers of the NSCGRC received letters from critics. In one example among many, Clarence Pickett received a letter after the Bill's introduction stating "Pickett - I should think you could find something better to do than to place Jew children who sure as the Devil will be the cause of trouble in this country. Stop being a Jew Dupe. (signed) A white man."[65] Of the issues that caused the bill to eventually fail, including Depression-era unemployment rates, fear of Communism, and an isolationist sentiment after the impact of World War I, Antisemitism was seen too often.

The following chapter will examine how isolationists and anti-immigrationist used pre-existing immigration laws, economic reasoning, xenophobia, and resistance to foreign intervention to oppose the humanitarian position of the Non-Sectarian Committee for German

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[64] "Wagner Rogers Bill Opposition," NSCGRC, Box 3, Folder 13.
[65] "Wagner Rogers Bill Opposition," NSCGRC, Box 3, Folder 13.

Refugee Children. It will demonstrate how the diligent logistical and rhetorical preparation of the NSCGRC created the foundation for testimonies and arguments in support of the Wagner-Rogers Bill during its Spring and Summer Congressional debates. Finally, it will analyze how the failure of the Wagner-Rogers Bill reflected American foreign policy practices of the early twentieth century.

Chapter 2: Congressional Debates & the Wagner-Rogers Bill

The Non-Sectarian Committee for German Refugee Children worked rigorously for months to prepare for the Wagner-Rogers Bill's Congressional hearings. The NSCGRC's plans to secure homes and continual care for the young refugees, discussed in Chapter 1, became the foundation for the testimonies in support of the Bill. The preparation done by the Committee was intended to allow its supporters, predominantly members of the NSCGRC, to concisely explain why the Bill was both possible and sensible in the face of economic and xenophobic opposition. Ultimately, the critics were opposed to the Bill on principle, not it's logistical implications. The humanitarian reasoning for the Wagner-Rogers Bill was overcome by Isolationists attitudes, fear of economic constraints, racial discrimination, and xenophobia.

Congress had monitored German aggression and emigration throughout the 1930s, and in 1939, perhaps in response to fear that Kristallnacht would encourage more immigrants to attempt to flee Europe, lawmakers saw an increase in immigration restriction and deportation bills. For example, Representative John Dempsey (D-NMO) proposed a bill to exclude and deport "aliens who supported or were affiliated with an organization that advocated the making of any changes in the American form of government." [66] Additionally, Senator Robert Reynolds introduced five related bills to stop immigration to America and increase deportation of criminal immigrants.

By contrast, only two refugee bills were proposed in 1939. In addition to the Wagner-Rogers Bill, Representatieve Emmanuel Cellar (D-NY) promoted an act which stated that "no alien shall be denied admission or deported if such alien is a refugee for political, racial

[66] "Immigration and Deportation," CQ Presss Library, accessed May 25, 2019, https://library.cqpress.com/cqresearcher/document.php?id=cqresrre1939041800.

or religious reasons from the country of his origin." [67] Immigration and refugee reform supporters, like the NSCGRC had to work diligently to show the government that Americans wanted to give humanitarian aid.

This chapter analyzes the testimonies of both supporters and opponents of the Wagner-Rogers Bill and explains why the Bill never became law. In late April and May of 1939, subcommittees of the Senate's Committee on Immigration and the House of Representatives' Committee on Immigration and Naturalization held joint hearings on the Resolution to Authorize the Admission of German Refugee Children, or the Wagner-Rogers Bill. Supporters of the Bill, including not just the members of the NSCGRC, but also individuals from organizations that believed refugee aid was necessary and possible, described why their organizations believed the Wagner-Rogers Bill both feasible and a necessary humanitarian response to antisemitic tragedies in Germany. Arguments in favor focused on the benevolence of the Bill's purpose, the thorough planning put into it by the NSCGRC to make it logistically viable, and evidence showing that if enacted, the bill would not negatively affect the United State's economy. Opponents of the bill leaned on arguments about the morality of breaking up families, the threat of Communism from arriving immigrants, the possibility of economic conflict created by the Bill, its potential to raise unemployment rates in the United States, and the considerable number of American-born orphans who could use the homes the NSCGRC had found. Opponents founded campaigns that sought to shift public opinion against the Bill, including "Charity Begins at Home," in reference to American poverty, and "Keep America for Americans," the idea that America must remain neutral for its best interest, were also very popular defensive themes made by the Bill's

[67] Putney, Bryant. "Immigration and Deportation." In *Editorial Research Reports 1939*, vol. I, 265-84. Washington, DC: CQ Press, April 18, 1939. http://library.cqpress.com/cqresearcher/cqresrre1939041800.

opposition. Although many opponents to the Bill said that it would be unethical to separate children from their families, Wagner stated that in the midst of so many Germans attempting to flee, "thousands pleaded only that their children be spared the fate they themselves [were] unable to avoid." [68]

Senator Robert Reynolds was the most well known opponent of the Wagner-Rogers bill. He did not give testimony at any of the Bill's joint hearings, but he repeatedly spoke out against it at other Senate hearings throughout the Spring and Summer of 1939. He also introduced multiple anti-immigration bills in the same year, including one to stop immigration for five years, which played a central role in the failure of the Wagner-Rogers Bill. In July, the Senate proposed an amendment to the Bill in July that sought to effect a compromise between the Wagner-Rogers Bill and Reynolds position. The amendment allowed for the entrance of these 20,000 young refugees while cutting off all other immigration to the United States for five years. The congressional representative at the Wagner-Rogers Bill joint hearings maintained an objective attitude throughout May and June, and even seemed to believe the Bill was possible. Ultimately, though the NSCGRC found this compromise incompatible with their objectives. In early July 1939, Wagner retracted the Bill.

Testimonies in Support of the Wagner-Rogers Bill

The Bill's moral intention to help persecuted minorities and protect victimized children's "right to childhood" was its most critical aim.[69] Senator Wagner began the hearings with an

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[68] U.S. Congress, *Admission of German Refugee Children*, April, 5.
[69] Kriste Lindenmeyer, *A Right to Childhood: The United States Children's Bureau and Child Welfare, 1912-46* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1997).

opening statement on April 20. His remarks laid out of the case in support of German Jewish children's immigration. Support for the Bill centered on his belief in America's duty to respond to the "call of humanity."[70] Of the many people in Germany being denied the right to "live in peace," he characterized the children as the "most pitiful and helpless suffers." He used findings of the NSCGRC in his testimony that demonstrated the exclusion and physical harassment victimized German young experienced and argued that this robbed them of their "right to childhood." He hoped to convey to his peers that the government should take responsibility for the safety of children at home and abroad, especially children who were subjugated in Germany to unfair and often cruel living conditions. He noted that, since November 10, 1938 (or *Kristallnacht*) some of the victims of Nazi persecution had been able to leave Germany, but most had remained, and now it was illegal for German Jews to emigrate. Backed by widespread public support and endorsements from newspapers in 20 states and Washington D.C. throughout February and March of 1939, Wagner worked to ensure that the persecuted people of Germany, especially the children, would not experience something like *Kristallnacht* again. America, he argued, must follow on the actions of France, Great Britain, Belgium, and the Netherlands: democratic countries that had already begun to take in German refugee children in the spirit of the "ideals of human brotherhood."[71] He anticipated arguments against the Bill: Twenty thousand children would not overwhelm the United States, with a population of 130.9 million and indeed

[70] U.S. Congress, Joint hearings before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Immigration, United States Senate, and a Subcommittee of the Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, House of Representatives, *Admission of German Refugee Children*, S.J. Res. 64 and H.J. Res.168, joint resolutions to authorize the admission into the United States of a limited number of German refugee children, 76th Cong., 1st session, Congress, first session, on April 20, 21, 22, and 24, 1939. Government Print, 5.
[71] U.S. Congress, *Admission of German Refugee Children*, April, 6.

could reverse the impact of declining birth and emigration rates, he argued.[72] For Wagner, humanitarianism was beyond petty domestic agendas. Nations that had the potential to aid refugees had to "join together without regard to race, religion, or creed, in offering refuge to children as a token of our sympathy."[73]

Wagner argued that the Bill was humane in that it offered protection to children whose lives were endangered, but it was also practical thanks to the efforts made by the NSCGRC. Wagner expressed that the NSCGRC believed they had found the necessary number of agencies and workers to get the children to the United States, evaluate their physical and mental health over the course of their stay, and find homes. In just five months, approximately 2,000 volunteers had offered to take in the young refugees, and he anticipated the number to exponentially rise if the Bill was passed. It meant that the children would not become public charges, one of the most common stances taken by the opposition, because the number of children would not exceed the number of individuals who had offered to care for them. It was also workable because children were already being prepared to be sent to other countries, and America would only contribute to the growing number of families hoping to have their children escape.

Evidence that the Bill had legitimate backing from child care institutions proved the children would be satisfactorily supervised was an important aspect of supporting testimonies. Katherine Leenroot, chief of the Children's Bureau and correspondent of Marion Kenworthy, was questioned on whether or not the movement to take in thousands of refugee children was a nationwide effort and if the agencies who were a part of the movent adequate. She testified that

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[72] "1939 Population Estimates," Census Bureau, United States Department of Commerce, accessed April 16, 2019. https://www.census.gov/glossary/#term_Populationestimates.
[73] U.S. Congress, *Admission of German Refugee Children*, April, 8.

many foster care and child welfare organizations over the country supported the Bill and endorsed the efforts made by the NSCGRC to care for the refugee children provided for. Like so many of the Bill's other supporters, Lenroot stated that the Bill was not breaking apart families when so many parents of persecuted families consented to their children getting out of Germany. Additionally, she told the audience that by taking in 10,000 children a year, work for child welfare institutions would only increase by four percent based on the average of 250,000 children these organizations managed annually. Better still, the expenses of over half the children were already supported by private funds found by the NSCGRC. According to Leenroot, child welfare agencies in America had already proven that they were capable of assisting thousands of children with obtaining homes and after placement care:

> The problem in this country with reference to children is not so much the capacity of institutions or the matter of child placement; it is in relation to the service that is needed to be put into the children's own homes to enable their foster parents to keep them and give them adequate care. We are committed to the policy of not breaking homes, if possible, and to care for the children in their homes. I am sure that foster care care could be expanded for these children with additional private funds without placing a single child in jeopardy. [74]

She did not anticipate, therefore, that the agencies would run into monetary of labor force conflicts if the Bill passed.

From the perspective of the Child Welfare Bureau, then, the plan was solid. Leenroot's testimony also expanded on how child welfare agencies operated and how the Bill would

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[74] U.S. Congress, Joint hearings before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Immigration, United States Senate, and a Subcommittee of the Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, House of Representatives, *Admission of German Refugee Children*, S.J. Res. 64 and H.J. Res.168, joint resolutions to authorize the admission into the United States of a limited number of German refugee children, 76th Cong., 1st session, Congress, first session, on May 24, 25, 31, and June 1 1939. Government Print, 130. https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uiug.30112004208150;view=1up;seq=7

cooperate with these practices. Children who came as refugees under the bill would be cared for at arrival with plans having been previously made to have them sent to child care facilities throughout America. The corresponding agencies already operated within federal regulations, and there were 600 child welfare workers throughout the states cooperating with the NSCGRC. The necessary services for care of the children had been planned out; the child welfare agencies agreed to take full responsibility for the children prior to placement in homes and to continue to look after the children while they adjusted to living in the United States. The hope of the NSCGRC was be to have children return back to their families in Germany eventually which they hoped would sway opponents who called the children workforce competition. She also believed that if the bill passed, public support for the bill would grow, meaning more people would ask to take the refugee children in and more private funds could be raised for costs. She was also asked how agencies planned to care for children who had difficulty adjusting to their new foster homes. This was a problem she too had foreseen. She answered that this would be given special attention on a case-by-case basis by state agencies coopering with their welfare. The theme of Lenroot's testimony revolved around whether or not child care agencies were prepared for an increase in their responsibilities, and Lenroot, the director of the leading federal child welfare organization, believed the Wagner-Rogers Bill was plausible.

Similar to Senator Wagner's appeal to humanity, Clarence Pickett began his testimony by explaining to the Committee and other witnesses the dangerous and shameful living conditions for Nazi victims in Germany. His contacts at the American Friends service Committee working in the German consular offices were reporting that Jewish persecution had intensified since November: 35,000 men had been interned in concentration camps since *Kristallnacht*, and

people were being taken out of their homes in the middle of the night. Jews could not practice their religion. “They have burned down all the synagogues and they have no religious worship available,” Pickett testified. “That is important to the lives of the children, because they had not only preaching services, but they had religious and educational services which were rendered. Anybody at all closely in touch with the situation is made deeply concerned.” [75] Picket explained that this injustice adversely impacted children's family life, sense of safety, religious practice, and social experiences.

He iterated many of the same economic solutions that other witnesses before himself had explained. The children would not become economic burdens because they would have to meet the same expectations immigrants who came in under the quota would. In the case of the bill, children’s passage and destruction to and throughout American would be paid for by private funds raised by associating welfare agencies, and then cared for by volunteering families who would have to provide proof of sustaining income. In other words, the supporters of the bill were not asking for money.

Pickett was questioned most about why, if the NSCGRC believed they had the finances to enact the Bill, they came to the conclusion they should only help 20,000 German children. since 1933 the German quota into the United States had been underfilled. Pickett explained that although the NSCGRC knew that Nazi expansion was affecting children outside of Germany as well, the condition for children, especially Jewish children, was worst in Germany. According to the data collected by the American Friends Service Committee, Jewish children experienced 60% of the mistreatment executed by Nazis, but for Picket, no child, matter their racial or

[75] U.S. Congress, *Admission of German Refugee Children*, May, 20.

religious background, deserved to be persecuted or living in a situation where their life was endangered everyday.

> Over and around the child and ever present to him is the shattering anxiety of his parents, upon whom he has been accustomed to rely and whose present insecurity invades his life at every point and threatens to destroy the essential security which must be his. And beyond all this terror and insult, his parents have lost their means of livelihood, his family has been put out of their home and crowded into a small unheeded room, wondering how they will eat when the last bit of furniture is sold. This is the daily life of those children in Germany in the present regime has elected to disinherit. The need is almost beyond description. If you would measure that need I would request you only to visualize your own children in the situation which I have described and to ask yourself whether you two would not be willing, even eager, to have your children go elsewhere for a haven. [76]

He also believed that 20,000 children was a good compromise between the number of German visas that had gone unissued in recent years and the abilities of associated welfare and religious organizations to adequately provide care.

The Bill's supporters believed that to ensure the welfare of individual children the United States had to take up a role in international humanitarianism. A growing number of European countries had been taking in children every week since *Kristallnacht* in response to Germany's aggressions and the United States had the ability to help as well. Pickett argued:

> The purpose underlying the proposal had a fundamental and universal appeal. At a time when age-old standards have been called into question, it is the children who still represent the essential human hope. That hope, a universal expression of the human spirit, transcends national and group lines. In the deepest sense we affirm and reaffirm our faith in the future so long as we are willing to assume responsibilities for, and to give of ourselves for the benefit of, the children of our time . . . It is fitting and proper that the great democracy should evince particular interest in extending hospitality to the children who have been cast out and have been made wanderers on the face of the earth. I say, then, that the purpose of the bill is first to symbolize our hopes by aiding these children and second, to permit us to live out, in kindness and generosity, the principles which we have always regarded as basic to our society.[77]

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[76] U.S. Congress, *Admission of German Refugee Children*, June, 26.
[77] U.S. Congress, Admission of German Refugee Children, April, 27.

Pickett and the Bill's supporters believed the United States had a universal duty to protect the next generation. He confirmed that the NSCGRC's extensive plan organized methods to choose the children who needed protection and had been most affected by Nazi intolerance, transport and disperse the children in America, and follow up examinations of children's transition into American homes. His testimony went beyond the logistical arguments to appeal to the basic human decency of American democracy.

Like Pickett, Representative Edith Rogers vouched for the efforts made by the NSCGRC to collect and take in the refugees with the utmost consideration. As one of the namesakes for the Bill, she spoke highly of the work of the AFSC, especially on behalf of refugees and stated that the welfare of both American and German children were accounted for during the planning of the bill. "I wanted to be fair to the children in this country, to see if it would affect their welfare in any way, and I also wanted to be fair to the children coming over here. I did not want the children to come from a country where they are persecuted to homes in this country which would not give them welcome." [78]

Rogers passionately refuted the notion that America would become a 'dumping ground' for refugees, a notion made by opponents of the Bill who feared persecuted immigrants threatened the stability of the nation. She believed that the dispersion of the children was very important to the bill's success and that this idea undermined the work of the NSCGRC

> I understand that if the Bill is passed the children to come to America will be selected by professionally trained children's workers. I think that our psychological tests and examinations made by professionally trained persons in the field of psychology and social psychiatry are so scientifically sound that we can count on the fact that a goodly proportion of these children so selected will make distinguished contribution to the advancement of health, learning, and

[78] U.S. Congress, *Admission of German Refugee Children*, April, 290.

> culture in the United States and that all will be sound material for American citizenship. [79]

Her testimony shows that the Committee would carefully choose children to come under the Bill, and monitor how they adjusted to America. When asked what would happen to the children once they became adults if they were to live in America, Rogers, like many of the supporters, testified that many of the children would mostly likely return to Germany because she did not believe Hitler would stay in power for long, although she did not explain this belief. She thought that the children should have the right to become citizens, a guarantee that must be explained if further revisions were to made to the bill, if they desired to live in America permanently. It was acceptable to allow a number of children to stay because the endorsement of the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations, both national labor union associations. Multiple representatives of both these groups testified that the children could grow into adults and not become burdens to the economy, accepting this comparatively small number of children would not be detrimental to American children, and that the labor market would be protected and could support young immigrant and native job seekers. As they represented nation wide labor unions, their support meant the Bill would not create increased occupation consequences for the American workforce.

Representatives of the Subcommittees asked Rogers about amending the bill to include children from other countries occupied by Germany. She responded that children in Germany were in "greatest need, and we must recognize them first. The children are persecuted there as they are not in any other country." She asserted that Jews were being targeted for their race and

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[79] "Non-Sectarian Committee for German Refugee Children - Newsletters," Correspondence of Non-Sectarian Committee for German Refugee Children, 1939, Marion E. Kenworthy Papers(1891-1980); P-511; box 2; folder 30; American Jewish Historical Society, New York, NY.

religion, and that more and more families were being torn apart by loss of jobs and homes and internment. For Rogers, children were suffering in America and Europe, but especially in Germany. The bill was not meant to undermine the hardships faced by American children, but to bring recognition to the needs of children everywhere. Her ambition was that the attention the bill drew would encourage Americans to recognize the children without homes in their own country"I am hoping that after they take in these other children they will want to take children of our own country." She insightfully pointed out that Americans were not asked to become host families; thousands had written the NSCGRC asked to help. This generosity could be extended to more American children, and the passage of the Wagner-Rogers bill could publicize their plight.

She did not believe that the children should count against the quotas in 1938 and 1939, but she did have strict ideas about how to keep the bill in regulation with the 1924 Immigration Act. She agreed that children who did not meet the mental or physical health stands of immigration law should not be permitted under the law, but she also believed children who were troublesome should not be allowed to remain in American homes either. "Personally, I feel they should be deported if they are unruly and do not appreciate this country. There is no reason why they should be kept here to cause trouble in this country." Children can be capricious, especially children who would of traded their homes for safety in a different land, so Rogers condition may have been a bit harsh. However it speaks to her contemplation of the American public's expectations of the bill. Those who were already skeptical about letting in additional immigrants would surely not react well to those who they did not believe would appreciate a second chance in America.

Committee members sought to find compromises that would allow the Bill to fit more comfortably with contemporary immigration law. For example, Rogers considered the proposal of Representative Poage (D-TX), who suggested that when the refugees turned 21 they could then count in the quota for the respective year. Rogers thought that "if you allow them to come within the present quota that it is hard on the people who have been waiting on the [waiting list] for a good many years, but if you allow them to be counted against the quota when they turn 21 years of age it would mean each year that only a few would be debarred from coming in." This would hopefully quiet some of those who argued against the unfairness of immigrants being excluded from the quota law. However, for many of those who worked diligently to create the bill, this undermined a crucial foundation of the bill: excluding the children from counting in the quota was an intentional characteristic of its importance. The NCS did not wish to raise the immigration law quota; it sought to allow the maximum number of both persecuted youth and adults to leave Germany and find a haven in America. In other words, counting the children in the quota at any point would take away 20,000 spots for other Nazi victims.

Political Opposition to the Wagner-Rogers Bill

Robert Reynolds, Senator from North Carolina, was the most outspoken member of Congress against the bill.[80] Reynolds political legacy illustrated him as both pro-Nazi and extremely isolationist. This was mostly due to his connections with American Nazis and notorious AntiSemitic figures like Gerald L. K. Smith, Gerald Winrod, George Deatherage and Father Charles E. Coughlin.[81] Additionally, his publication, the *American Vindicator*, an

[80] Julian M. Pleasants, *Buncombe Bob: The Life and Times of Robert Rice Reynolds* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 186.
[81] Pleasants, *Buncombe Bob*, 166.

"ultra-nationalist, isolationist, nativist, anti-Semitic, and anti-communist" newspaper, and the many anti-Immigration bills he tried to have passed in the 1930s during the Jewish Refugee Crisis contributed to the many people's negative view of him.

Reynolds praised Hitler's economic accomplishments in Germany in the 1930s, and many American newspapers portrayed Reynold's anti-immigration attitude as Nazi endorsement. [82] "Reynolds flaunted his anti-Semitism in his newspaper, and his public speeches often contained praise for fascist dictators coupled with a plea for America to leave them alone." [83] Rumors grew that the Senator supported Hitler's regime, and some of his political colleagues even called him the "Tar Heel Führer." [84] Although Reynolds is controversially remembered, he undoubtedly was impressed by Germany's raised unemployment since Hitler had come to power. He firmly believed that in order for American employment rates to also increase, immigration into the United States had to be kept at a minimum in order to create less job competition.

In January 1939, Reynolds founded the Vindicator Association, Inc. The association was a patriotic organization with the motto "Our Citizens, Our Country First." The first issue of the Association's newspaper, the previously mentioned *American Vindicator*, publicized the societies five objectives:

1. Keep American out of the war.
2. Register and Fingerprint all aliens.
3. Stop all immigration for the next ten years.
4. Banish all foreign isms.
5. Deport all alien criminals and undesirables.[85]

[82] Pleasants, *Buncombe Bob*, 137.
[83] Pleasants, *Buncombe Bob*, 166.
[84] Pleasants, *Buncombe Bob*, 167.
[85] Pleasants, *Buncombe Bob*, 158.

One-hundred and eighteen thousand Americans subscribed to the newspaper within six months of its debut; none were Jews or African Americans, who were barred from membership. Reynolds and the Association's supporters believed that America needed to be protected from "alien enemies" and that the "organization would defend America from both within and without." This caused suspicion as to whether or not the Association believed in parallels between the immigrants they so adamantly wanted to keep out of the United States and the racial groups they prohibited from joining the group.[86] The Vindicator Association is an extreme example of those who opposed the Wagner-Rogers Bill. It emphasized the threat foreigners posed to America, disseminating the idea that foreigners were commonly criminals or people who wanted to dismantle the American political system or way of life. Reynolds spoke out against people who publicly stated that immigrants positively contributed to American culture and other who supported increased immigration.

Clearly Reynolds thought immigrants, specifically Jews, had infiltrated America, and that letting more into the country would only have negative consequences. Reynolds stated that his anti-immigration stance was misrepresented as a pro-fascist attitude. America was conflicted between staying neutral or helping Germany's oppressed victims, but Reynolds made his opinion clear when he introduced five anti-immigration bills in 1939. Reynolds fear of admitting refugees was not swayed by the proposal of the Wagner-Rogers Bill. Supporters of the bill stressed the humanitarian basis of it, but Reynolds claimed this was a false idea used to "create sympathy" to relax existing immigration policies and change the quota system to let in more immigrants. He remained staunchly against any alteration of American immigration policy, even

[86] Pleasants, *Buncombe Bob*, 159.

in the case of victimized children. *The New York Times* surmised that Reynolds wanted to erase the idea of the United States as a refuge for persecuted people. [87]

Although there were many detestable objections to the Wagner-Rogers Bill, opponents of the Bill also made logical and compassionate arguments against it. At the Joint Hearings for the Bill, a representative of the Allied Patriot Society made references to the most common justifications in opposition to the Bill: there was already existing in America a considerable number of people who were malnutritioned, homeless, and unemployed (17.2%). The representative, like many of the other witnesses that spoke against the Bill, believed that American orphans should be found homes first. Young immigrants and homeless American children were both in need of homes. Additionally, when the representatives of the subcommittees asked if the Allied Patriot Society would still be opposed to the Bill if all of it financial demands could be met, their representative answered yes. He even acknowledged that Hitler and the Nazis were a legitimate threat, but argued that America already had immigration policies that it must follow.[88]

Historians of the United States and the Holocaust have debated the role of discrimination in America's hesitancy to assist displaced Europeans. Richard Breitman and Alan Krau, authors of *American Refugee Policy and European Jewry, 1933–1945* (1987), claim that America's decision to avoid interceding in the Jewish refugee crisis was not decided out of racist

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[87] Indeed, Reynolds railed against contemporary studies that suggested took that "that American immigrants had enriched the nation's cultural, economic, and social laws." One such study, authored by a Dr. Cohen (who Reynolds likely identified as a Jew), drew particular ire: Reynolds wrote that "America already had "enough merchants, motion producers, crooners like Eddie Cantor (American comedian and son of Jewish immigrants) and entirely too may Cohens who are at the head of government departments." All quotes this paragraph from Pleasants, *Buncombe Bob*, 199.

[88] Senator Reynolds, speaking on S. 390511, 76th Congress, 1st Session, *Congressional Record* (March 11,1939): 5416-5420.

motivations, but instead was supported by public opinion, predated laws, and the desire to stay politically neutral. That may be the case, but many testimonies against the Wagner-Rogers Bill displayed harsh xenophobia attitudes. For example, anti-immigration advocate Agnes Waters stated three times that if this Bill were to pass American would "become the dumping ground for the persecuted minorities of Europe" and Americans "would become slaves." In addition, these refugees were "the children of undesirable families" who would be a "menace" to the country with "hatred in their hearts," and "tear down the institutions of our great country."

> If these so-called innocent, helpless children are admitted as refugees into America, I am sure they will become the leaders of revolt and deprive my children of their right to worship God, of free speech, and of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. These Communists and proponents of this bill talk about freedom of worship, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and yet they want to bring into this country potential enemies of every one of those, who would deprive our children of [these rights]. [89]

She took fair-minded fears and beliefs such as keeping American neutral and the desire to protect the democratic political system and turned them into discriminatory misconceptions about foreigners. Similarly to Senator Reynolds, Waters questioned the dangers these children's faced in Germany and unjustly accused them of wanting to destroy American ways of life just for being from another country.

Similarly, John Trevor, representative of the American Coalition of Patriotic Societies, upheld the idea of "Keeping America for Americans."[90] The group was against immigrants, anti-foreigner, is and considered one of the organizations which that took part in the rise of 20th

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[89] U.S. Congress, *Admission of German Refugee Children*, April, 198-199.

[90] "Wagner-Rogers Bill Opposition," Correspondence of Non-Sectarian Committee for German Refugee Children, 1939, Marion E. Kenworthy Papers(1891-1980); P-511; box 3; folder 13; American Jewish Historical Society, New York, NY.

century American political Antisemitism.[91] He read the group's convention proposal from three months prior that called for the "temporary suspension of immigration for ten years, the reduction of permanent immigration quotas by 90%, and the absolute prohibition of the admission of refugees entering the United States in the guise of visitors" among other desires for stricter deportation.

Trevor claimed that over the past year American citizen's opposition to refugee admission had risen to 83% from the previous 67% according to *Fortune* magazine. To the American Coalition, barring refugees, regardless of their circumstances, upheld popular American sentiment about high immigration. Although the Joint Hearing representatives debated the veracity of Trevor's statistic, a 1939 Gallup Poll confirm that the same percentage of Americans were against even taking in child refugees.[92] In response, one of the representatives pointed out that the Wagner-Rogers Bill was a unique case that did not require a change in the pre-existing immigration quota law, but would exist outside the quota. Another representative said that public opinion was actually quite high, and that he had received 260 letters in support of the bill, and none in opposition, since the first hearing just a few days earlier. Trevor stated that the only lawful way to approach this situation with young refugees would be to let 10,000 children come first as a priority, but still counted in each years quota; other immigrants could follow behind until the quota was filled if is was so necessary.

Trevor stood firm that under no condition, needy child or not, did the American Coalition believe that any exception to the immigration policy would be lawful. He feared that

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[91] Philip Jenkins, *Hoods and Shirts: The Extreme Right in Pennsylvania, 1925-1950* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 127.
[92] U.S. Congress, *Admission of German Refugee Children*, April, 215 and Daniel Greene and Frank Newport, "American Public Opinion and the Holocaust," Gallup, accessed April 16, 2019, https://news.gallup.com/opinion/polling-matters/232949/american-public-opinion-holocaust.aspx.

by letting children in, Congress would later feel morally obligated to introduce higher quotas to allow the children's parents to come to the United States and reunite families. If families needed to come to America as refugees they would have to do so within later German quota. The representatives stated that many of the children were already orphans or came from families that had been separated by concentration camps. Trevor agreed that such circumstances did create "an entirely different situation," but still did not waver from his previous statements about refugees counting in the quotas. Perhaps Trevor did not anticipate a logistical counter argument. He then defensively argued that if the United States government made exceptions for German refugees, it would try to open its doors for all oppressed minorities in Europe. He closed by saying that American interest needed to come first and that the American public did not want to undertake the task of becoming an asylum for Europe's children.

Such testimonies indicated that a significant percentage of Americans believed that 20,000 foreign children would steal charity that should belong to American children, that American taxpayers should not have to pay to educate them, and questioned the morality of letting foreign "anarchists" into the United States. Witnesses' petitions and publications told audiences that refugees stole jobs that belonged to Christians, that Jews were communist supporters, and that those children were Europe's problem because Americans must "keep America for Americans" and should not be "the dumping-ground for undesired minorities." In 1938, the American Coalition expressed to Congress that there were too many Americans struggling financially or unemployed who had to be the government's priority, not outsiders. They desired a raised national defense and stricter immigration and deportation laws because, to them, immigrants caused an increase in crime, created job competition, and stole government

welfare funded by citizens.[93] Perhaps if American government had participated in humanitarian refugee aid in the 1930s, people who were typically anti-immigrant would have taken more seriously German persecution. If the Wagner-Rogers Bill had been given greater political support, it would have shown the American public that refugee aid was feasible without detrimental effects to American culture and xenophobic sentiments would have dissipated.

The Role of Racism in the Failure of the Wagner-Rogers Bill

After the Bill's final joint hearing on June 1 1939, Senator Reynolds spoke out against it at multiple Senate hearings. He presented letters from various patriotic groups and anti-immigration organizations that expressed economic threats foreigners possed on the American economy, especially in reference to unemployment, and either underplayed the seriousness of the Nazi persecutions or denied Jews were even being victimized. Reynold's carefully presented much of the racist evidence against the bill under the guise of patriotism.

Reynold endorsed a letter from the Immigration Restrictionist League claimed that the people the bill proposed to help had not been victimised for their race or religion and that the 20,000 children are more likely to be young Nazis rather than refugees. Another letter from the American Immigration Board suggests that young German adults wanted to come to America for work because they could not find employment in Germany, not that they were refugees looking to flee from Germany. This argument did not make sense one, because the bill was meant to let in children who were not old enough to work yet, and two, Reynolds had commended Germany's rising employment rates.

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[93] "Wagner-Rogers Bill Opposition," Correspondence of Non-Sectarian Committee for German Refugee Children, 1939, Marion E. Kenworthy Papers(1891-1980); P-511; box 3; folder 13; American Jewish Historical Society, New York, NY.

Reynolds even went on to say that the children were not really orphans, and their parents were perfectly capable of providing them with foods, clothes, and education - all points proven false by reports from the German Consular or AFSC.

Reynolds did not acknowledge the threat against Jewish life. He acted as if any legitimate persecution should be sympathized with, although it was not America's responsibility to assist racially or religiously oppressed German minorities.[94] This argument did not make sense one, because the bill was meant to let in children who were not old enough to work yet, and two, Reynolds had commended Germany's rising employment rates. He often contradicted himself: he endorsed the denial of children being persecuted in one letter, but would go on to say he pitied any victimised child later. Reynolds publications with the Vindicator Association displayed his Antisemitism and disregard for Jewish culture while his speeches to his Congressional Colleges challenged the existence of Jewish oppression. His contradictory statements about refugees to his political colleagues and legacy as a Nazi apologist demonstrate that Reynolds misconstrued his racism for patriotism.

The Failure of the Wagner-Rogers Bill

The NSCGRC continued meeting through June of 1939 to discuss the progress of the Bill, but they relied too heavily on sympathy to get it passed. AFSC workers in Germany had identified a prospective 5,200 children for the bill. Four thousand and five hundred of them were Jewish, 600 orphans, and 105 with one deceased parent.[95] They believed they had enough

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[94] Senator Reynolds, speaking on S. 390511, 76th Congress, 1st Session, *Congressional Record* (March 11,1939): 5416-5420.

[95] "Non-Sectarian Committee for German Refugee Children - Newsletters," Correspondence of Non-Sectarian Committee for German Refugee Children, 1939, Marion E. Kenworthy Papers(1891-1980); P-511; box 2; folder 30; American Jewish Historical Society, New York, NY.

growing support from the Child Welfare Society, the Children's Bureau, the Child Welfare League, and more church leaders to raise enough funds to get children to America, and social workers to look after children, but they did not carefully consider the complications of the bill. The hearings certainly publicized the Bill exponentially, but it attracted good and bad attention. Its official written proposal was vague or did not specifically mention many of its most important aspects. Witnesses stated that there was copious financial support, but it was not explained exactly how much money was provided or the costs of transporting and taking children to American homes. It it justifiable then that the Sub Committee desired amendments to describe the Bill's income and budget.

The witnesses also told the Committee that the children would be spread out as to not condense them to only a few cities, but no official proof was presented to show how the children would be dispersed. They bill's planner anticipated that most of the children would return to Germany, but they did not say whether or not coopering adoption agencies were prepared to handle a high number of adoptions if that became the case, especially since adoption laws differed from state to state. Nor was it made straightforward if children would have the right to apply for citizenship if they did not return to Germany. Some of these points were discussed during NSCGRC meetings but not clearly expressed at the bill's hearings.

The reliance of the bill's supporters on the idea that most of the children would not stay in American was central to why they believed the children would not become economic burdens. However, they had no way to guarantee this. If the children did wish to stay America the coopering welfare agencies work loads would increase, more government agencies would proces an anticipated amount of citizenship applications, and more adults would enter the job market.

The Committee's representatives main concern was that more children would stay and become United States citizens than the bill's supporters claimed. For them, a high number of children stayed and German immigration quotas were filled over the following years, the United States might accept more migrants than could be sustainably supported.

On July 9 the Committee on Immigration submitted an amendment to the bill that in order for the 20,000 children to be admitted, immigration into the United States would be prohibited for five years. If they did not accept the quota they could argue to have the 10,000 children a year be the first immigrants admitted as priority for each quota year.

The amendment would stop all immigration for five years, not just Germany. The demand to prevent hundred of thousands, or perhaps even millions, of immigrants into the United States just to allow 20,000 predominantly Jewish refugees into the country is indoubly xenophobic and racist. The idea evolved from the testimony of certain organizations against the bill and from Senator Reynold's many political speeches after the bill's last joint hearing. Throughout June, he repeatedly endorsed the American Coalition of Patriotic Society's proposal to suspend immigration for ten years, including the exclusion of refugees regardless of their condition.

Reynold's organization, the Vindicator Association, also called for the prohibition of immigration because immigrants threatened employment, national security, and American culture. Reynolds cried crocodile tears for the victimized children of Europe, but then denied the existence of persecution in Germany. He relentlessly lectured to his political colleagues the proposition that immigrants were criminals who wanted to destroy the American government and society while simultaneously making Antisemitic accusations in the *American Vindicator*

newspaper. Reynold's never-ending charges against the dangers of higher immigration motivated the five year prohibition under the guise of acting in America's best interest. It was clearly a hateful man's determination to keep out those he deemed less desirable.

Wagner pulled the bill because he and many of the members of the NCS immediately recognized the injustice of the ultimatum. Wagner responded that counting the children in the quota defeated the bill's purpose, and his goal was by no means to stop immigration. Because Wagner refused this amendment, the bill never got to the Senate floor. The failure of the Wagner-Rogers Bill demonstrates the limits of the humanitarian argument in an era of non-intervention. Private citizens sought to protect a vulnerable population. They were able to find some Congressional support, as well as the support of thousands of American families. This could not overcome economic concerns, social attitudes, and, not least, the legal environment. In the coming years, the persecution of the interwar period would pale in comparison to the destruction of war, genocide and mass displacement of Europeans. With that, the conversation begun in the hearings on the Wagner-Rogers Bill would reshape American foreign policy.

Conclusion

In the early 20th century, the fall of long-standing Empires reshaped the political map and led to rising persecution of minority populations. As the number of such incidents increased, they attracted new attention to the problem of humanitarian aid. In the United States, religious, philanthropic, and charity organizations took proactive measures to assist foreign oppressed groups, while the American government focused on more conventional foreign intervention, such as military support. After the First World War, the U.S. government struggled over whether or not to engage with European affairs, despite rising humanitarian crisis.

Debate over America's role in the world came to a head with the rise of Nazism in Germany in the 1930s. In particular, attacks on German Jews lit a fire under arguments for and against helping refugees. On the one hand, the government felt responsible to protect its own national security and maintain neutral foreign policies. On the other, American interventionists believed American had the ethical obligation to stop the spread of Nazi violence.

The foundation of these debates were based on the contention of whether the American government was solely responsible for the best interests of the country or also the safety of the international community. The 1939 and 1940 German immigration quotas were filled, but it became almost impossible for Jews to escape by 1941. The Nazi government forcibly closed the United States consulates in Germany and their occupied countries which prevented Jewish emigration. Additionally, the United State's State Department issued less and less visas as an act of national security. Jews trapped in Nazi controlled Europe were murdered, put into ghettos, and sent to concentration camps.[96] It is impossible to assess exactly how many people died in the

[96] "German Jewish Refugees, 1933-1938," Holocaust Encyclopedia | United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed April 10, 2019, https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/german-jewish-refugees-1933-1939.

Holocaust, but of the approximate 19 million victims, 6 million were Jews, and 1.5 million were children.

This research on the Wagner-Rogers Bill captures the debate over immigration and refugee protection at a critical moment in the history of the Holocaust. In 1939, it may still have been able to rescue German Jews. But the humanitarian argument could not overcome the fractures of the domestic political landscape. The United States was still grappling with the memory of intervention in WWI, the economic fallout from the Depression, as well as a Antisemitic and xenophobic minority that rejected immigration. On its own, the Wagner-Rogers Bill was not a catalyst for American political response to Jewish persecution. It took a combination of related events such as the failure of the Evian Conference, the Wagner-Rogers Bill and the St. Louis Refugee ship, and the aftermath of World War II including the recognition of mass genocide, forced displacement of millions of people, and the Nuremberg Trials for the American government to recognize the seriousness of refugee need and collaborate with foreign governments to create international human rights protection. The debates over the Wagner-Rogers Bill slowly opened the door to acceptance of refugee protection.

In response to the emerging genocide, the United Kingdom took in 10,000 Jewish children in the Kindertransport program to assist with refugees in 1938 and 1939. Some Jews were hidden by friends and neighbors throughout the war and were able to survive the Holocaust. In 1944, United States President Franklin Roosevelt created the War Refugee Board, an organization created in 1944 to assist Jewish refugees which “saved tens of thousands of lives, and aided hundreds of thousands more and was the first and only official American response to

the crimes we now call the Holocaust."[97] Before World War II international human rights legislation did not create a legal obligation to take in refugees, but the United Nations was formed after the war in part to respond to Nazi atrocities. This organization was founded in 1945 "to take action on the issues confronting humanity in the 21st century, such as peace and security, climate change, sustainable development, human rights, disarmament, terrorism, humanitarian and health emergencies, gender equality, governance, food production, and more." [98]After World War II, about 6.5 million surviving people were displaced by the conflict. In fact, the political, economic, and humanitarian international policies of the beginning of the Cold War were dominated by the fact that there were so many displaced people as a result of WWII.[99] In 1951 the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees created a legal definition of refugees and "outlines the rights of the displaced, as well as the legal obligations of States to protect them."[100]

As a member of the United Nation, the United States is bound to uphold refugee protocol and shelter displaced persons. The Refugee Act of 1980 was created to help refugees settle and become self-sufficient in America. Under this legislation, the President of the United States determines the number of people who will be allowed in under the act. President Donald Trump set this number to 30,000 refugees for 2019 - the lowest it has been since the act began. In

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[97] "War Refugee Board: Background and Establishment," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed September 29, 2018, https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/war-refugee-board-background-and-establishment.
[98] "Overview," United Nations, last modified October 25, 2018, https://www.un.org/en/sections/about-un/overview/.
[99] Gerald Cohen, *In War's Wake: Europe's Displaced Persons in the Postwar Order*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. For methods in which refugee children influenced national and international policies, see Tara Zahra, "A Human Treasure": Europe's Displaced Children Between Nationalism and Internationalism," *Past and Present*, Supplement 6 (2011), 332.
[100] "The 1951 Refugee Convention," Unite33d Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, accessed April 25, 2019, https://www.unhcr.org/1951-refugee-convention.html.

addition to cutting the number of refugees allowed into the United States, the Trump administration has simultaneously pushed for limiting immigration policies.[101] Similar to much of the Wagner-Rogers Bill's opposition, the Trump administration has expressed that foreigners pose a threat to the country's safety, want to steal American jobs, and take advantage of state resources; ideas also reflected in nationalistic mottos such as "Charity Begins at Home" and "Keep America for Americans" from the 1930s.

President Trump's campaign for office began with the promise to build a wall between the United States and Mexico to prevent illegal immigration, a project that has been racially controversial since its inception. Racist exclusion legitimized in the form of political support is not uncommon in the history of American immigration policy. In 1921, eugenicist Charles Davenport advocated for increased immigration policy and asked "can we build a wall high enough around this country so as to keep out these cheaper races, or it will be a feeble dam . . . leaving it to our descendants to abandon the country to the blacks, browns, and yellows."[102] Davenport was one of the many supporters of the 1924 immigration act, and like Trump, believed that many ethnic foreigners must be boarded out. Similar to the testimony of Agnes Waters, opponent of the Wagner-Rogers bill who said America would become "a dumping ground for the persecuted minorities of Europe" if it enacted the Wagner-Rogers Bill, Trump said "the U.S. has become a dumping ground for everyone else's problems" in a campaign

[101] Julie Hirschfeld Davis, "Trump to Cap Refugees Allowed Into U.S. at 30,000, a Record Low," New York Times, September 17, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/17/us/politics/trump-refugees-historic-cuts.html.
[102] Edwin Black, *War Against the Weak: Eugenics and America's Campaign to Create a Master Race* (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 2003), 47.

speech speaking out against Mexican immigrants he accused of "bringing drugs, they're bringing crime, they're rapists."[103]

Trump's highly publicized rhetoric and negative perspective of immigrants normalizes xenophobia by giving it political legitimacy. As the leader of the country, his actions have a proud impact on the experience of migrants and the manner in which society receives immigrants. As long as Trump continues to slanderously speak about foreigners and create exclusionary immigration policies, he and his supporters will continue to make the immigrant experience in America more and more challenging. For example, Trump's Executive Order 13780: Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States, known as the "Muslim Ban," was intended to stop immigration from six predominantly Muslim countries created an increased sense of Islamophobia in American. It made many people believe their mistrust in immigrants founded because the government acted as if exclusion was a necessary safety measure. What people did not realize was that the Muslim Ban also prevented Syrian refugees from coming to the United States for 120 days; people who have been facing oppression for several years and have lost their homes, families, friends, and general sense of security,.[104] In 2018, Trump declared a national emergency when a caravan of migrants, many of which were escaping violence, from central America began moving towards the United States border with the excuse that "criminals and unknown Middle Easterners [were] mixed in."[105] Even eighty

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[103] U.S. Congress, *Admission of German Refugee Children*, 197. Gregory Korte and Alan Gomez, "Trump ramps up rhetoric on undocumented immigrants: 'These aren't people. These are animals.'," *USA Today*, May 16, 2018, https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2018/05/16/trump-immigrants-animals-mexico-democrats-sanctuary-cities/617252002/.

[104] Sarah Pierce and Doris Meissner, "Trump Executive Order on Refugees and Travel Ban: A Brief Review," Migration Policy Institute, April 15, 2019, https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/trump-executive-order-refugees-and-travel-ban-brief-review.

[105] John Wagner and Felicia Sonmez, "Trump says there's 'no proof' that Middle Easterners have joined migrant caravan, although there 'could very well be'," *Washington Post*, October 23, 2018,

years since the Wagner-Rogers Bill anti-immigration rhetoric still appears to be motivated by nationalistic discrimination.

Trump has been called racist, anti-immigrant, anti-muslim, and Antisemitic. His presidency has been controversial from the start, but his supporters still believe he has done what is necessary to protect America by keeping it for Americans. Although the Trump administration justifies its anti-immigration actions as security measures, they have undoubtedly attempted to prevent thousand of refugees and asylum seekers - who are typically non-white and non-christians - from passing through American gates. Just like opponents of higher immigration and refugee protection in the 1930s, the Trump administration used racism in the guise of patriotism to avoid the humanitarianism of today's refugee crisis and the 11 million Syrian refugees who are in need, forcibly displaced, and facing violence.[106]

Trump's derogatory accusations of foreigners and inaction against displays of white nationalism have contributed to many Americans belief that he is biased leader. In reference to immigrants from Haiti and African countries, Trump asked "why do we want all these people from shithole countries?," again, demonstrating intolerance for non-white migrants and their cultures.[107] He undermined the dangers of white supremacy in 2017 when white nationalists, including members of the Ku Klux Klan and Nazis, held a rally in Charlottesville, Virginia.

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https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/pence-seeks-to-bolster-trumps-unsubstantiated-claim-of-middle-easterners-in-a-migrant-caravan/2018/10/23/048ce726-d6d2-11e8-83a2-d1c3da28d6b6_story.html?utm_term=.b325ebbbc9b8.

[106]"Quick Facts: What You Need to Know About the Syria Crisis," Mercy Corps, last modified April 18, 2019, https://www.mercycorps.org/articles/iraq-jordan-lebanon-syria-turkey/quick-facts-what-you-need-know-about-syria-crisis.

[107] Josh Dawsey, "Trump derides protections for immigrants from 'shithole' countries," *The Washington Post*, January 12, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-attacks-protections-for-immigrants-from-shithole-countries-in-oval-office-meeting/2018/01/11/bfc0725c-f711-11e7-91af-31ac729add94_story.html?utm_term=.a5cb5471bee0.

Many citizens came to protest the racist demonstration, but violence ensued, and one of the protesters was killed. Instead of speaking out against the immorality of white nationalism, Trump stated that "there were fine people on both sides" and that "both sides" were accountable for the brutality in Charlottesville.[108] Trump may not be directly encouraging racist behavior like the Nazi government, but his tolerance for discriminatory actions certainly appear to condone bigotry.

The German government legally persecuted the people of Europe for their ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, and medical disabilities. Let this be used as a reminder that legality is not equal to morality, and that discrimination of any kind does not belong in immigration policy. Let the Holocaust be a lesson to urge us to not only listen, but respond to the cry for help of refugees. Although the Wagner-Rogers Bill never passed, it is significant because it delves into the political climate of the 1930s and illustrates the range of possible responses to one of the biggest humanitarian crises of the modern world. Indeed, the "crisis" is ongoing: millions of migrants today still look to the United States for refuge, but much of the modern political rhetoric about refugees has not changed since the time of the Jewish refugee crisis, and foreign policy is still founded on an "America First" platform. History is not just about what happened, but about the path not taken as well. This moment, where the Wagner-Rogers Bill died, reveals how the American government operated and made finalizing and life changing decisions on behalf of others. It also shows that the American government and public were dominantly apathetic to foreign human rights violations, but their reluctance towards refugee protections

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[108] Jackie Calmes, " Trump responds to Charlottesville violence with vague statements blaming 'many sides'," August 12, 2017, https://www.latimes.com/politics/la-pol-updates-trump-tweets-charlottesville-violence-htmlstory.html.

demonstrates a commitment to isolationist policies and a deliberate refusal to participate in international humanitarian activism.

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