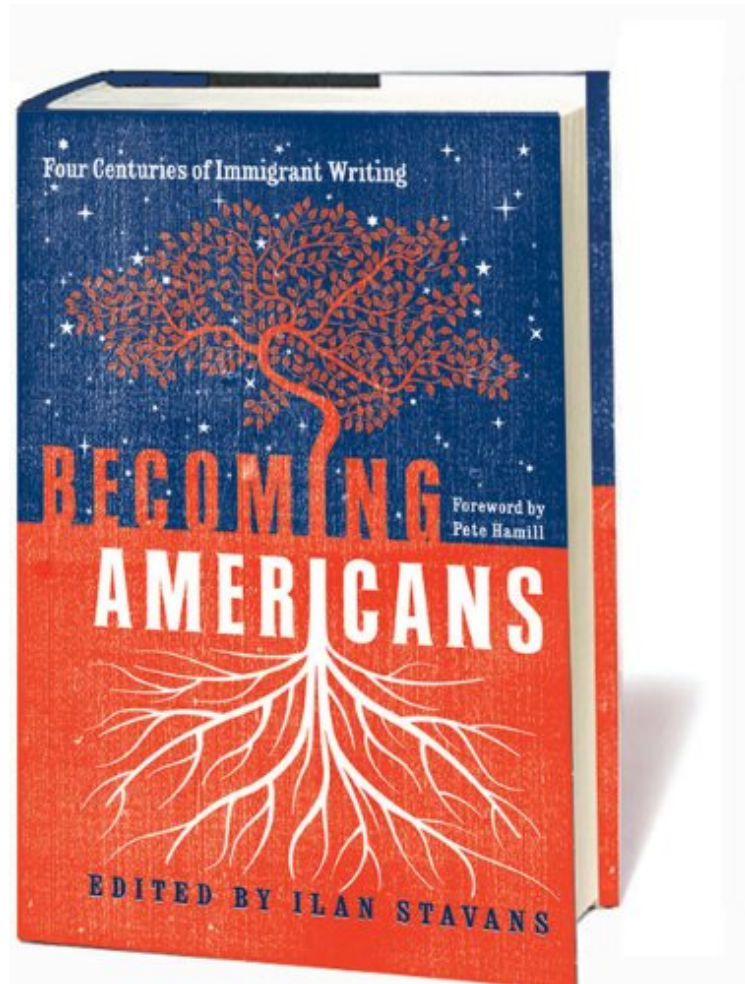


[Read now] *Becoming Americans: Four Centuries of Immigrant Writing*

Becoming Americans: Four Centuries of Immigrant Writing

From Stavans, Ilan (EDT)

*ePub | *DOC | audiobook | ebooks | Download PDF*



[Download](#)

[Read Online](#)

#680180 in Books Stavans, Ilan (EDT) 2009-10-15 2009-10-15 Original language: English PDF # 1 8.38 x 1.69 x 5.82l, 1.97 #File Name: 1598530518850 pages | File size: 49.Mb

From Stavans, Ilan (EDT) : *Becoming Americans: Four Centuries of Immigrant Writing* before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised *Becoming Americans: Four Centuries of Immigrant Writing*:

6 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Ubi panis ibi patria. Where are your roots? In my suitcase
By H. Schneider
An anthology of writing about immigration, including the involuntary kind, slavery and deportation. A phenomenology of immigration. Texts from memoirs, letters, journals, fiction, or poems. In many cases, the texts are frustratingly short, but briefness is the price of a broad scope. Many immigrants had to overcome hardships...some didn't. Many came for 'bread', others for politics or survival. The focus is much more on arriving than on leaving. That does lead to some uniformity. A few texts stand out for their writing, are funny or otherwise interesting. The collection starts with a letter home to England, 400 years ago, written by an indentured servant in Virginia, to his parents. Then a poem by a Puritan. A poem by or about a deported thief (Australia became the destination of deportation only after

American independence). The story of a young West African aristocrat who was enslaved 'by mistake' in 1730 and managed to get set free out of Maryland via England within 2 years. This is told by the man's lawyer. (As a plebeian, I find it rather unsettling that we see this kind of class privilege even in slavery.) A poem by the slave girl who became a poet. A series of Europeans, some quite miserable, most on the search for better prospects. Some didn't stay, went back because their hopes were not realized or their reason to come had gone. Mostly unknown people, and some fictional characters, but also some outstanding ones. The French birder who comes to the US after the revolution in Haiti. The librettist of Don Giovanni, Columbia U's first professor of Italian. The English actress who marries a slave holder and becomes an abolitionist (journal excerpts from her early acting years in New York; might have been more interesting during her slaveholding abolitionist years). The German democrat who becomes a Union General, the first US Senator of German origin, and Secretary of the Interior. The Danish jack of all trades who makes a name as a reporter and photographer of slum conditions in NY. Hollywood immigrants. Asian immigrants. Hispanic immigrants. Jewish immigrants, mostly refugees from pogroms and Hitlerism. Other refugees from Hitlerism. Iron curtain refugees. Post iron curtain immigrants. A broad canvas, but: some groups are left out entirely, like Armenians (except a poet born 1949), Cambodians, Rwandans. Given their tragic story and its size, that is relevant omission. Hard to see why they are not here. Another question of weight distribution: slavery is decidedly underrepresented, as is later African and also Middle Eastern immigration. A subject that is totally absent: illegal immigration. Unless I overlooked something. Also missing: the immigration of organized crime. Among my favorite texts in this book is Isherwood's diary, which happens to be rather not concerned with emigration, but with Isherwood's identity problems. And Thomas Mann's letter of 1945, explaining to a German why he wouldn't return 'to help' Germany. My point: as an anthology on 'becoming Americans', this works only half ways. Can such an anthology ever be fully 'balanced'? As a collection of interesting texts, it is quite good. 7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Interesting read By Hazel L Jenkins I'm still reading this book so cannot give a deep review but what I've read so far is very interesting. One thing I don't like is just when I'm getting into someone's story the excerpt ends and I am left wishing I could read more The book is a good illustration of what some of our forebears had to deal with when they came to America, the land of Golden Streets and their frustrations when they arrived without much money, not speaking the language and needing to get a job to support themselves. Will continue to read. 0 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Interesting By I Am Her Required book for my Immigrant Lit class. The collection of short stories are very engaging and entertaining. You really get a glimpse into the many lives of different immigrants.

Immigration is the essential American story. From London or Lvov, Bombay or Beijing, Dublin or Dusseldorf, people have come to America to remake themselves, their lives, and their identities. Despite political obstacles, popular indifference, or hostility, they put down roots here, and their social, cultural, and entrepreneurial energies helped forge the open and diverse society we live in. The history of American immigration has often been told by those already here. *Becoming Americans* tells this epic story from the inside, gathering for the first time over 400 years of writing from seventeenth-century Jamestown to contemporary Brooklyn and Los Angeles by first-generation immigrants about the immigrant experience. In sum, over eighty writers create a vivid, passionate, and revealing firsthand account of the challenges and aspirations that define our dynamic multicultural society. In nearly 100 selections—poems, stories, novel excerpts, travel pieces, diary entries, memoirs, and letters—*Becoming Americans* presents the full range of the experience of coming to America: the reasons for departure, the journey itself, the shock and spectacle of first arrival, the passionate ambivalence toward the old country and the old life, and above all the struggle with the complexities of America. Arranged in chronological order by date of arrival, this unprecedented collection presents a history of the United States that is both familiar and surprisingly new, as seen through the fresh eyes and words of newcomers from more than forty different countries.

"The writers in *Becoming Americans* have the miraculous gift of fresh eyes, able to see America for the first time, and to describe the new world they see. Their stories are our treasured legacy." - Maxine Hong Kingston
About the Author
Illan Stavans is Lewis-Sebring Professor in Latin American and Latino Culture at Amherst College and the author or editor of numerous books.