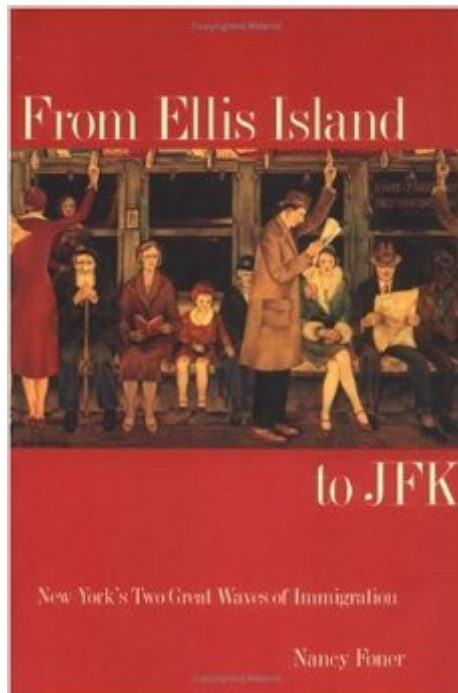


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From Ellis Island To JFK: New York's Two Great Waves Of Immigration



Synopsis

In the history of New York City, few events loom larger than the wave of immigration at the turn of the last century. Today there is a similar influx of immigrants. From Ellis Island to JFK, this study compares these two huge social changes.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book is useful, though not brilliant. It provides a comparison between the great wave of Jewish and Italian immigrants to New York at the turn of the last century, and the present wave of immigrants from Asia, Latin America and the former Soviet Union. Foner's account look at where immigrants live, how they work, immigrant women in particular, the sting of prejudice, the matter of ties to the old country and going to school. She seeks to refute the view which uses the success of the first wave and selected members of the second wave as a stick to beat everyone else. By and large she succeeds. She reminds us that one reason why many Asian-American have excellent education and social mobility records in the United States is because they were well educated members of the middle class back in Asia. She points out that it took a couple of generations before Jews experienced middle class status and high school graduation. She reminds us that despite fears of America becoming increasingly balkanized new immigrants are more "american" than previous waves because of the world of mass culture. There are nuanced discussions about the mixed blessings of wage labor and increased independence. There is an interesting chapter on how Jews and Italians were viewed in the past as non-white, and how Asians and Hispanics are

becoming increasingly "white." There is much in here that counters the widespread moralistic underclass discourses that have made The New Republic the fashionable magazine of our day's Vanity Fair. There is a nuanced discussion of the effect immigrants have on black employment. Some pundits, shedding crocodile tears for African-Americans suggest they would be better off if immigrants were not taking their jobs.

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