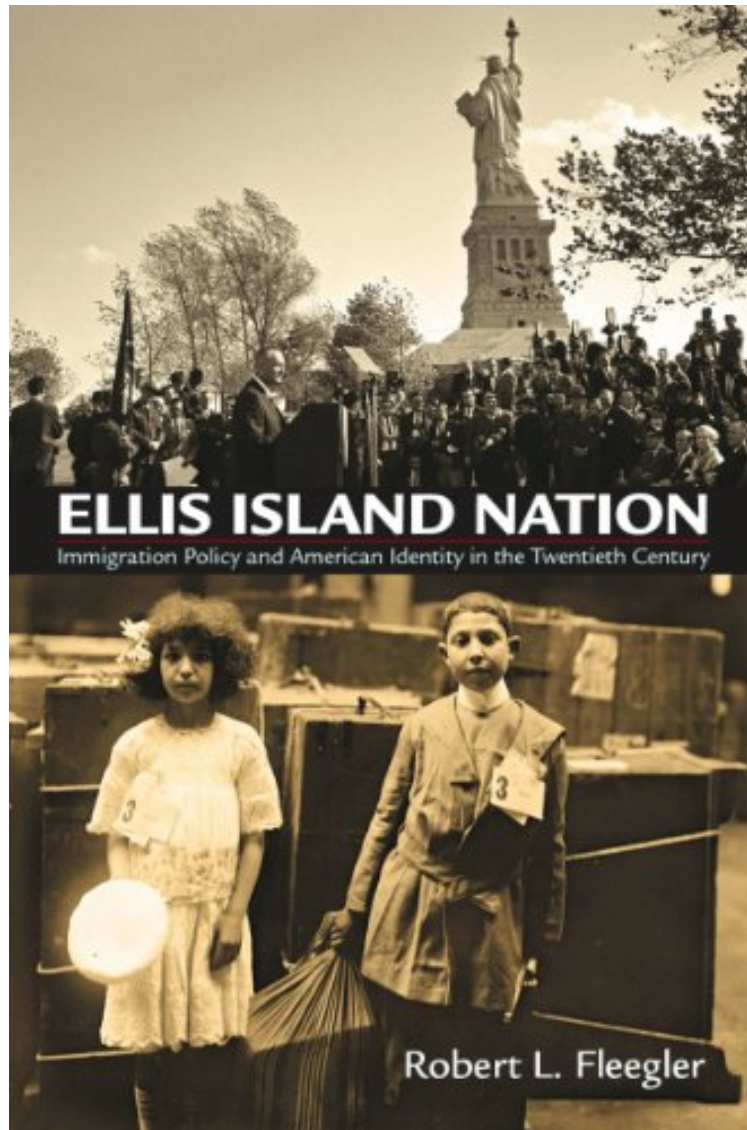


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## Ellis Island Nation: Immigration Policy and American Identity in the Twentieth Century (Haney Foundation Series)

*Robert L. Fleegler*

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Series):

Though debates over immigration have waxed and waned in the course of American history, the importance of immigrants to the nation's identity is imparted in civics classes, political discourse, and television and film. We are told that the United States is a "nation of immigrants," built by people who came from many lands to make an even better nation. But this belief was relatively new in the twentieth century, a period that saw the establishment of immigrant quotas that endured until the Immigrant and Nationality Act of 1965. What changed over the course of the century, according to historian Robert L. Fleegler, is the rise of "contributionism," the belief that the newcomers from eastern and southern Europe contributed important cultural and economic benefits to American society. Early twentieth-century immigrants from southern and eastern Europe often found themselves criticized for language and customs at odds with their new culture, but initially found greater acceptance through an emphasis on their similarities to "native stock" Americans. Drawing on sources as diverse as World War II films, records of Senate subcommittee hearings, and anti-Communist propaganda, *Ellis Island Nation* describes how contributionism eventually shifted the focus of the immigration debate from assimilation to a Cold War celebration of ethnic diversity and its benefits helping to ease the passage of 1960s immigration laws that expanded the pool of legal immigrants and setting the stage for the identity politics of the 1970s and 1980s. *Ellis Island Nation* provides a historical perspective on recent discussions of multiculturalism and the exclusion of groups that have arrived since the liberalization of immigrant laws.

"A persuasive narrative, drawing on a wide range of sources to trace the emergence, fall, and revival of the contributionist idea. *Ellis Island Nation* is a valuable addition to the literature on immigration debates, ethnic diversity, and national identity in twentieth-century America." *American Historical* "Mining a vast array of cultural and political sources, Robert Fleegler has given us a sophisticated and well-researched look at how Americans in the mid-twentieth century came to recognize the contributions of Ellis Island immigrants. In doing so, they expanded the ideal of American democracy and paved the way for a modern, multicultural America. With this book, Fleegler has made his own important contribution to the academic literature of ethnic and immigration studies." Vincent J. Cannato, author of *American Passage: The History of Ellis Island* Selected by *Choice* magazine as an Outstanding Academic Title for 2014 "In clear, accessible language, [Fleegler] offers well-researched accounts of such topics as World War II rhetoric promoting cross-ethnic tolerance and Cold War era efforts to promote the commonalities of Judaism, Catholicism, and Protestantism." *Journal of American Culture* About the Author Robert L. Fleegler teaches history at the University of Mississippi.