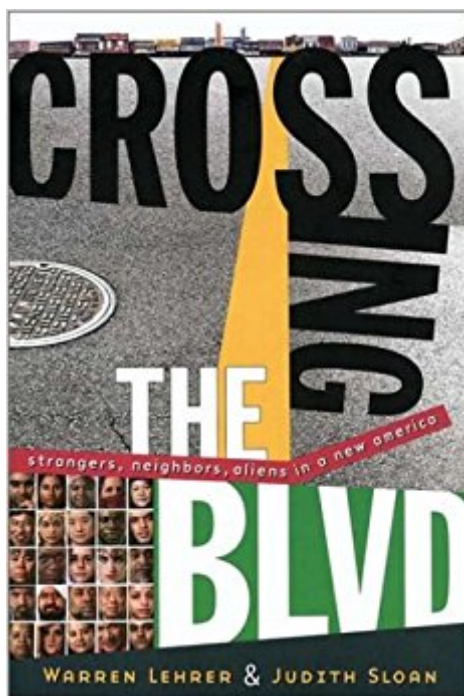


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# Crossing The BLVD: Strangers, Neighbors, Aliens In A New America



## Synopsis

A kaleidoscopic view of new immigrants and refugees living in Queens, New York the most ethnically diverse locality in the United States. For three years, Warren Lehrer and Judith Sloan traveled the world by trekking the streets of their home borough. This book documents the people they encountered along the way. First person narratives are illuminated by strikingly direct photographic portraits of the subjects alongside the objects of their worlds. Lehrer's postmodern, Talmudic design juxtaposes the multiple perspectives of these new Americans, now thrown together as neighbors, classmates, coworkers, enemies, and friends. They reflect on the good, the ugly and the unexpected in their stories of crossing oceans, borders, wars, economic hardship, and cultural divides. These soulful narratives are put in context by the authors' personal and historical observations. The voices, images and sounds collected here form a portrait of a paradoxical and ever-shifting America. 500 color illustrations

## Book Information

Paperback: 393 pages

Publisher: W. W. Norton & Company; 59253rd edition (August 17, 2003)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0393324664

ISBN-13: 978-0393324662

Product Dimensions: 6.6 x 1 x 9.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.9 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 29 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #62,653 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #29 in [Books > Arts &](#)

[Photography > Photography & Video > Photojournalism & Essays > Photo Essays](#) #105

[in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Emigration & Immigration](#) #147

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## Customer Reviews

New York's undersung borough of Queens, home to the new Ellis Island (the city's airports), may be the most diverse county in the country today, and documentarians Lehrer and Sloan have innovatively brought it to life. First-person narratives that sometimes intertwine several voices (some were broadcast on the public radio program *The Next Big Thing*) are matched by a bold and colorful layout: large portraits, long-view landscapes, multiple typefaces (sometimes within the same paragraph) and inset graphics or asides. The stories are grouped in five lower-case sections:

"contemporary pilgrims," "asylum seekers," "family ties," "neighborhood tales" and "unlikely coexistences" (Ping-Pong players, a high school, a punk-gypsy cabaret band). The language can be poetic; a Congolese asylum-seeker declares, "Wackenhut is a for-profit business they are making from the sorrow of detainees." Two Egyptian restaurateurs, brothers, lament gentrification: "You really killed yourself with the atmosphere you created." A Russian emigre expresses disbelief that a call to 911 would actually bring the cops. Some interviewees express melancholy about their move, but they generally agree-an old American story-that opportunities are better for their kids. An accompanying CD (sold separately if you buy the paperback) includes interview excerpts as well as music by the authors and some of their subjects. While some of the texture of Queens is sacrificed-you wouldn't know the library system is the busiest in the country-this book remains an arresting, vividly printed mosaic. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

“This stunningly innovative book goes beyond pathos, into the kaleidoscope of experience that defines real immigrant life.” - Debbie Nathan, City Limits  
“One of the best books ever! Thank you for telling these stories.” - Faith Middleton, Faith Middleton Show, Connecticut Public Radio  
“A fascinating book....Filled with vivid descriptions and very human, powerful, poignant stories.” - Michael Krasny, Forum, KQED  
“An incredible, moving story...Oral history with a twist.” - Marco Werman, The World, BBC  
“Explodes the paradigms of oral history and reinterpreti[s] them for our multimedia century...” - Archivist Roundtable of New York: Winner, Innovative Use of Archive Award  
“Brims over with the energy, heart and spirit that went into creating this important work.” - Dave Isay, documentary radio artist, Ghetto Life 101, The Sunshine Hotel, Witness to an Execution  
“Boldly carries the tradition of oral history into the 21st Century. An electrifying collage of voices, faces, and spirits.” - Eve Ensler, author of The Vagina Monologues  
“Brings alive the most polyglot place on the planet....An outstanding book on the new New York!” - John Kuo Wei Tchen, Historian, New York University, co-founder of the Museum of Chinese in the Americas  
“Fascinating.... this extraordinary volume...provides a glimpse of the new America which is emerging.” - Ron Daniels, Executive Director, Center for Constitutional Rights

Crossing the Boulevard is extremely relevant to national debates on immigration that are currently occurring as well as to our own locality. Even small details seemingly unrelated to the

“social issue” at hand create a point of human connection that newspaper articles or statistics often cannot. The first pages of the book include an introduction to the motivations of each author and a rationale for choosing the specific location represented in the book at this specific time. It also gives readers a sense of how the authors relate to the speakers, “[l]ooking out of the invisible bubble that separates me from the other.” While the authors recognize that they come from backgrounds that are very different from those they interview, they are able to form deep connections through hearing stories. Choosing to breach this invisible separation and explore those who we regard as “others” is a very challenging and significant decision that carries political implications. The title of the book brings our attention to the materiality of the world that has been constructed around us as well as the diversity it represents. The everyday activity of crossing the boulevard is transformed into a powerful symbol and metaphor that centers the book on a specific locality and brings us on a journey of relating to others. The book brings our attention to the methodology used in creating the book, that most of the people interviewed are not native English speakers and that the interesting word combinations and phrasing of the speech were retained, that their words are taken for face value, “not as the only truth, the absolute truth, but their truth as they lived back home, in America, and in between.” This speaks to the interesting perspectives that human accounts give, and their refusal to be circumscribed into a single absolute truth.

This book is a beautiful collection of stories that humanize the strangers in the street and communities so often dehumanized by the media and modern political discourse. The stories in this book are eye-opening and fascinating. Even though this was published over a decade ago, the stories continue to be unbelievably relevant and important to understand a lot of realities lived in and out of this country. Please read through it! You will not regret it!

...this book resonated with my lifestyle because I'm also a foreigner who settled in this country over fifteen years ago. I loved these stories and it's a good read for anyone to understand what is behind the person next door, the shop owner down the street, or the student sitting next to you. It reminds you that we all have stories and we need to be careful about judging those we don't know. There is a reason behind their ways and culture. Take the time to talk to people and learn about them as much as they learn about the culture of this country. Great book

If the New York City Borough of Queens were a separate city, it would be the most culturally diverse city in all of the US. More people from more different parts of the world live in Queens than anywhere else. And this lovely collection of art and stories and poems and songs celebrates them all.

I have an advanced ESL class which I have reading this book. These stories are eye-opening and sometimes difficult to read from an emotional standpoint - but we learn a-lot from each others experiences. Thank you for sharing!

If there was ever a time when we needed to be reminded that immigrants are the heart and soul of what makes this a textured, rich and interesting country, this is it. This book and its companion museum exhibit, which I was lucky enough to come upon serendipitously at Purchase College's Neuberger Museum, celebrates the gifts we have received as a nation from the diverse people who have struggled first to get here, and then to make a life for themselves here. Before we build walls on borders, before we villify those who are different from us, let's appreciate what we are gaining from the immigrants who choose the US as their home. Let's remember that very few of us are Native American. We have all benefitted from the open door to America.

Did you know that Queens, NY is THE most diverse area in the United States? This book interviews people from all over the world who have chosen Queens as their new home. We learn so much about oppression in other countries and how people have come here to start over--what they overcame, what they've accomplished and what's next for them. Great book.

thank you

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