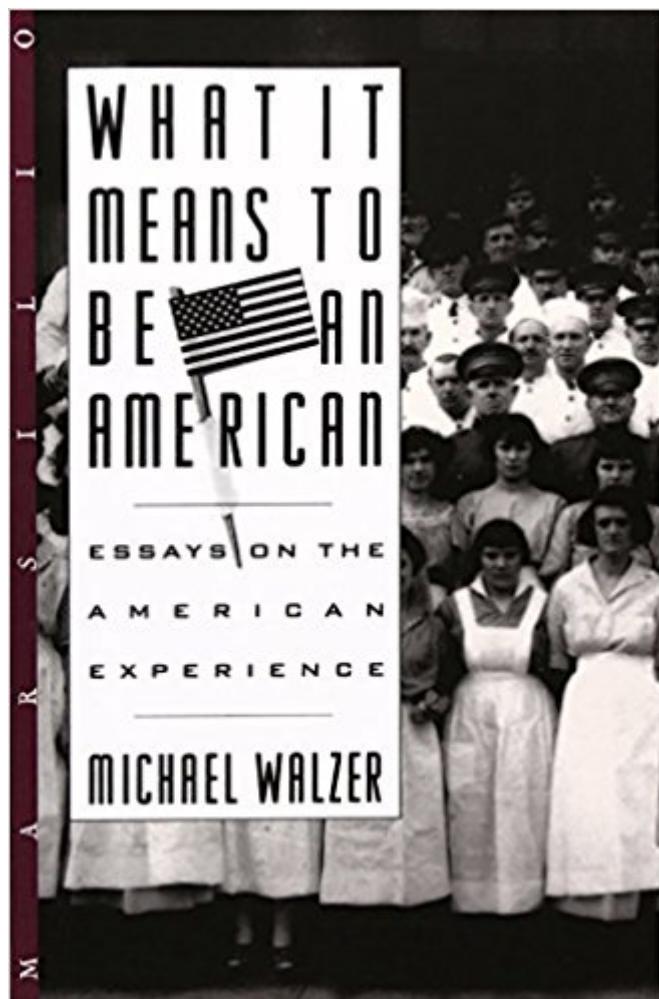


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What It Means To Be An American



Synopsis

"Condensed to bumper-sticker pith, "What It Means to Be an American" asks everyone to "Honk If You Hate Us-Against-Them Thinking". Offering a fine antidote to exclusionist tripe about 'Americanism, ' Walzer grabs Pat Buchanan by the hyphens and doesn't let go".--"The Philadelphia Inquirer". Lightning Print On Demand Title

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Customer Reviews

This book is pithy and clear. Walzer's America is dynamic. The fluidity of the national conscience is grounded in America's most prominent and politically salient feature: we are immigrants. Walzer writes, "the political culture of the country as a whole was English and Protestant, but this culture was never firmly established either in the symbols or the substance of law and policy" (pg. 9).

National unity is difficult to achieve and will "probably always be tumultuous" (pg. 12). Walzer provides a "brief checklist" on how to reassert the "twinned American values of a singular citizenship and a radically pluralist civil society" (pg. 17). This checklist is in six points: (1) remember we are a "society of immigrants" when we discuss our national conscience; (2) "Strengthen our public schools;" (3) Recognize the civic quality "parochial associations;" (4) "maintain the neutrality of the state" because (for example) "the United States cannot be a Christian republic in the way that Iran is an Islamic republic;" (5) "Create a more participatory politics;" (6) Although "silliness" and "nastiness" inevitably accompany democratic politics these features should be marginalized. (For

these 6 points see pgs. 17-19). After that introduction, Walzer presents four essays that I will summarize below: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE AN "AMERICAN"? "If the manyness of America is cultural, its oneness is political, and it may be the case that men and women who are free from non-American cultures will commit themselves more fully to the American political system. Maybe cultural anonymity is the best possible grounding for American politics" (pg. 29).

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