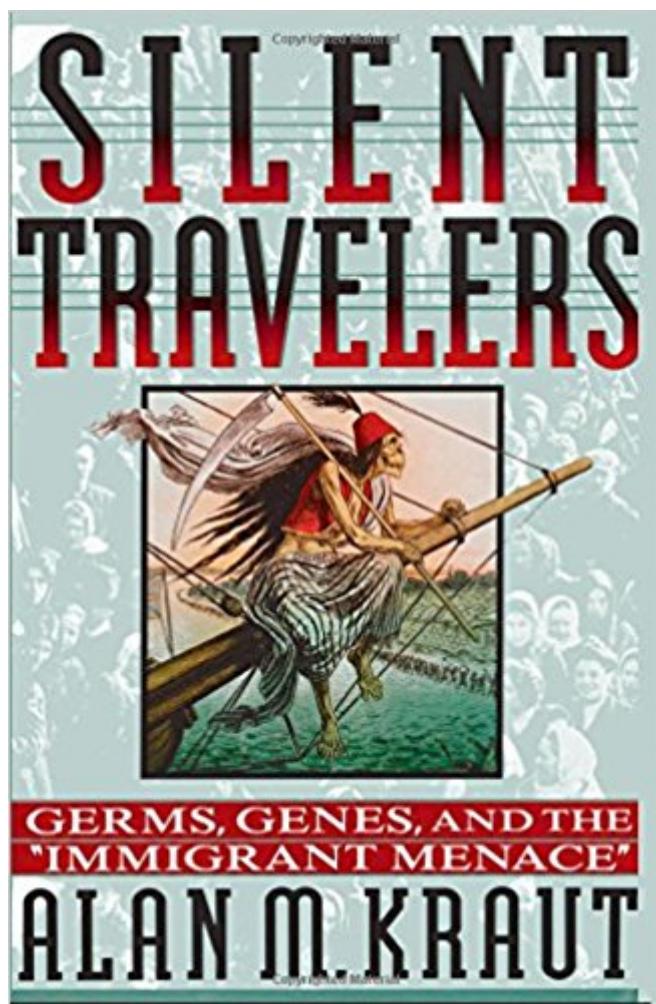


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Silent Travelers: Germs, Genes, And The Immigrant Menace



Synopsis

Epidemics and immigrants have suffered a lethal association in the public mind, from the Irish in New York wrongly blamed for the cholera epidemic of 1832 and Chinese in San Francisco vilified for causing the bubonic plague in 1900, to Haitians in Miami stigmatized as AIDS carriers in the 1980s. Silent Travelers vividly describes these and many other episodes of medicalized prejudice and analyzes their impact on public health policy and beyond. The book shows clearly how the equation of disease with outsiders and illness with genetic inferiority broadly affected not only immigration policy and health care but even the workplace and schools. The first synthesis of immigration history and the history of medicine, Silent Travelers is also a deeply human story, enriched by the voices of immigrants themselves. Irish, Italian, Jewish, Latino, Chinese, and Cambodian newcomers among others grapple in these pages with the mysteries of modern medicine and American prejudice. Anecdotes about famous and little-known figures in the annals of public health abound, from immigrant physicians such as Maurice Fishberg and Antonio Stella who struggled to mediate between the cherished Old World beliefs and practices of their patients and their own state-of-the-art medical science, to "Typhoid Mary" and the inspiring example of Mother Cabrini. Alan M. Kraut tells of the newcomers founding of hospitals to care for their own the "Halls of Great Peace" (actually little more than hovels where lepers could go to die) set up by Chinese immigrants; the establishment of St. Vincent's Hospital in New York as an institution sensitive to the needs of Catholic patients; and the creation of a tuberculosis sanitarium in Denver by Eastern European Jewish tradespeople who managed to scrape together \$1.20 in contributions at their first meeting. Tapping into a rich array of sources - from turn-of-the-century government records to an advice book aimed at Italians financed by the DAR, from the photog

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Customer Reviews

In this broadly researched study of the relation of immigration to medical care, Kraut (*Huddled Masses*) argues that immigrants were not themselves primarily responsible for spreading epidemic diseases. Rather, he cites the need for cheap labor, often subject to abysmal living and hazardous working conditions, as the main factor and argues that immigrants were the victims of this demand. However, Kraut notes, immigrants' health needs gradually led to the growth of independent, ethnically and religiously supported medical resources and schools to provide nurses, free lunches and playgrounds. As in the past, he concludes, the "double helix" of American concern for health coupled with the fear of new arrivals as carriers of diseases, ranging from cholera to TB, continues to limit immigration, as in the case of Haitians unjustly accused, he maintains, of being major AIDS propagators. Illustrations not seen by PW. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Fear of the "other" has long been part of life in America. Historian Kraut chronicles that fear as it manifests itself as fear of contamination by new immigrants. He describes how health policy was and is used to segregate communities and to exclude classes of people from entry into the United States. In particular, he looks closely at tuberculosis, cholera, and bubonic plague and at the institutional and governmental response to health crises. Kraut also emphasizes the importance of culturally relevant medicine and how it has come into conflict with the desire to Americanize the immigrants. These are important issues today, when tuberculosis and AIDS are often viewed as outsider's diseases, as when Haitians were singled out as a nation of AIDS carriers. No other current volume covers immigration and health from a historical perspective. The material is well presented and engrossing. Recommended for all history and health collections.- Eric D. Albright, Galter Health Sciences Lib., Northwestern Univ., ChicagoCopyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

A necessary book I needed for a medicine class in college. It was perfect and helped me pass the class!

I confess I only read one chapter. This is alas one of those books that doesn't want to show you anything or explain something to you. It wants to preach to you. I want to make you feel guilty for what others have done. I refuse to get my underwear in a tangle over quarantines. If pressed I would probably favor more and stronger quarantines - not open door policies. This book is only for those who want to feel guilty about public health policies. Public health officials have long striven to protect millions by inconveniencing a handful. Sensible people thank them for that service.

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