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William B. Helmreich

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AGAINST ALL ODDS


**Holocaust Survivors
and the Successful Lives
They Made in America**

William B. Helmreich

With a new introduction by the author

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William B. Helmreich : Against All Odds: Holocaust Survivors and the Successful Lives They Made in America (Library of Conservative Thought) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Against All Odds: Holocaust Survivors and the Successful Lives They Made in America (Library of Conservative Thought):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. excellentBy Felicia Grabervery well researched, easy to read and understand

Against All Odds is the first comprehensive look at the 140,000 Jewish Holocaust survivors who came to America and the lives they have made here. William Helmreich writes of their experiences beginning with their first arrival in the United States: the mixed reactions they encountered from American Jews who were not always eager to receive them; their choices about where to live in America; and their efforts in finding marriage partners with whom they felt most comfortable most often other survivors. In preparation, Helmreich spent more than six years traveling the United States, listening to the personal stories of hundreds of survivors, and examining more than 15,000 pages of data as well as new material from archives that have never before been available to create this remarkable, groundbreaking work. What emerges is a picture that is sharply different from the stereotypical image of survivors as people who are chronically depressed, anxious, and fearful. This intimate, enlightening work explores questions about prevailing over hardship and adversity: how people who have gone through such experiences pick up the threads of their lives; where they obtain the strength and spirit to go on; and, finally, what lessons the rest of us can learn about overcoming tragedy.

From Publishers Weekly The special refugee community of 140,000 Holocaust survivors who by 1953 had immigrated to the U.S. is the subject of this admirably comprehensive study by Helmreich, chairman of the sociology department of City College of New York and a child of survivors who himself shares their acute concern that the Holocaust not be forgotten. The author reviews the national origins of survivors, and where and under what conditions they settled, worked and adapted to their new homes. While he notes that some never recovered from their ordeals, the moving, psychologically revealing first-person accounts Helmreich cites contribute to this impressive analysis of the surprising number who did. In addition to good health, luck and help from relatives or agencies, he identifies traits which they shared to a varying extent--flexibility, assertiveness, tenacity, intelligence, optimism and a pride that spurred them to engage in purposeful lives. Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal In this well-researched work, Helmreich (The World of the Yeshiva, LJ 9/15/82) presents the first comprehensive study of Holocaust survivors who emigrated to the United States after World War II. Through interviews and surveys, he details their shared experiences, emotions, and perceptions. While discovering common traits, he emphasizes the individuality of the survivors rather than stereotyping them. The result is fascinating. The reader learns about the survivors' struggle to leave European Displaced Persons camps to come to the United States, their difficulties in being accepted by American Jews as well as gentiles, the almost obsessive role work plays in their lives, their need to be connected to other survivors, and the ways they cope with memories of the horrors they experienced. This book would be an excellent addition to any public or academic library and a necessary one for those building Judaica or immigrant studies collections. --Rose Cichy, Osterhout Free Lib., Wilkes-Barre, Pa. Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Kirkus s The first book-length study to document and analyze the ordeals and successes of immigrant Holocaust survivors. After an animated dose of terminally neurotic survivors in Art Spiegelman's Maus, it's refreshing to encounter survivors like Congressman Tom Lantos of California. Helmreich (Sociology and Judaic Studies/CCNY; The Things They Say Behind Your Back, 1982, etc.) interviews scores of businessmen, housewives, civic leaders, and even a brigadier general to dash the stereotypical notion of broken people haunted by their nightmarish past. The survivors who emerge in this wide-ranging social, economic, political, and psychological study are far from a "normal" group, however. They are clannish and insular, feeling close only to other former denizens of "Planet Auschwitz." They like to see large Jewish gatherings because only then do they "know that Hitler did not win." The research points to variety, with some extremism, in their political and economic expressions. Many survivors also share an obsessive interest in their children's education and in Israel's well-being. While a minority have turned their backs on a God that had "forsaken them," a surprisingly large percentage of those interviewed can "see the hand of God" in the events of the Forties. Helmreich is at his best with journalistic quotes and anecdotes from survivors struggling to make it in America, while his extensive sociological notes will be a boon to further research. A highly readable study that probes the unprecedented scarring and healing of some of this century's most remarkable victims. -- Copyright 1992, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.