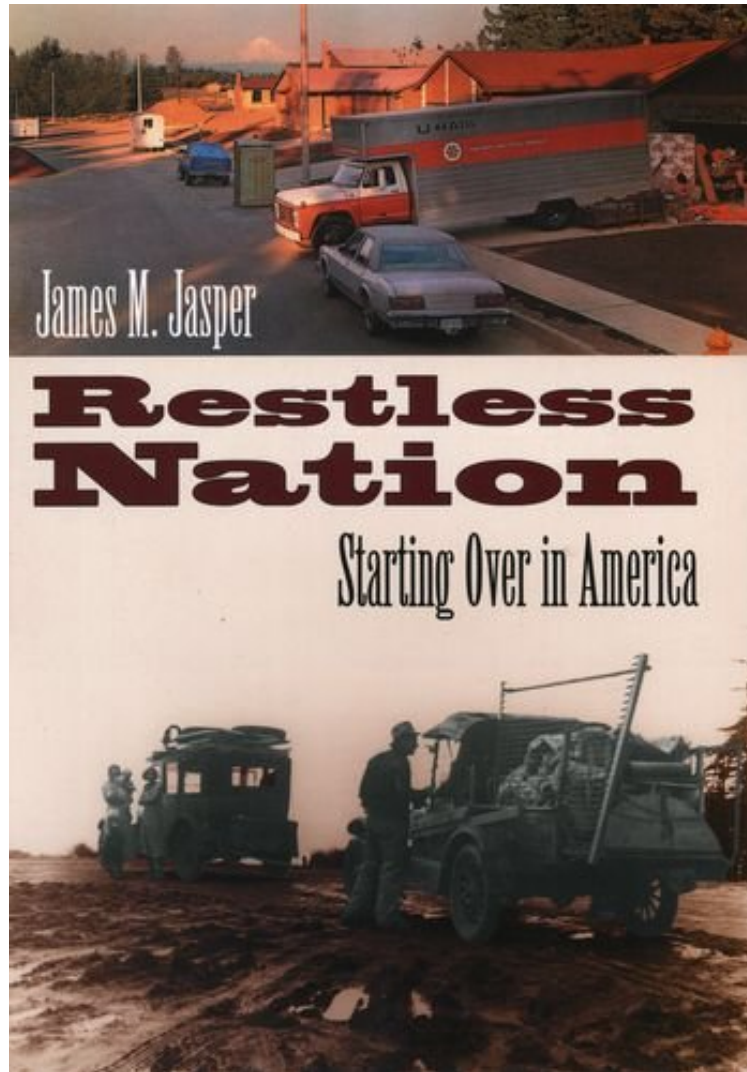


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Restless Nation: Starting Over in America

James M. Jasper

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James M. Jasper : Restless Nation: Starting Over in America before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Restless Nation: Starting Over in America:

4 of 13 people found the following review helpful. Every American Should Read This BookBy A CustomerJasper has convinced me that we move around too often, losing contact with nature and with people in the process. The U.S. would be a better place if we followed his advice.

In Restless Nation, James M. Jasper isolates a narrative that lies very close to the core of the American character. From colonial times to the present day, Americans have always had a deep-rooted belief in the "fresh start"a belief that

still has Americans moving from place to place faster than the citizens of any other nation.

"Jasper's thesis... is strong and tantalizing. He does not restrict himself to a single discipline or line of argument, but dazzles readers with a stunning combination of literary critique, cultural analysis and economic estimation." - Publishers Weekly "Jasper travels across the American psyche to explore our unique infatuation with movement and personal reinvention.... To the author, this undergirds the cult of individualism as well as conservative, antigovernment politics in America.... The fluidity contributes to the dynamism of U.S. society but ensures a weak sense of community.... Restless Nation is an engaging essay on why we move so much." - Library Journal

From the Inside Flap

What is it that makes Americans so American? It can't be money: although the United States is the most productive economy in the world, it also has the highest poverty rates. It can't really be faith, either: Americans are the most religious people in the advanced industrial world, but they have the oldest official separation of church and state. Skepticism? Americans are highly suspicious of government, but at the same time they have a naive belief in markets. Is there such a thing as an American character amidst these, and other, paradoxes? In *Restless Nation*, James M. Jasper argues that this elusive national character can be found in Americans' faith in the fresh start. Americans believe that by relocating or changing their names or finding new jobs, they can make themselves into new people, make more money, get in touch with their inner selves, find spiritual truth, recover their physical health. American culture recommends flight from what you dislike and makes it easy to believe a better life is just around the corner, literally. It is this faith that has brought sixty million immigrants to the shores of the United States. And it is this faith that has put their descendants on the road for hundreds of years. Even today, Americans continue to move far more often than anyone else. From seventeenth-century publicity agents who extolled the virtues of the New World, to the great Northern migration of the early twentieth century, to yesterday's car commercials, Jasper sees a master narrative of restlessness that winds through American history. He traces this theme through four centuries of American history, using the life stories of famous and not-so-famous people, popular literature and other arts, and archives and statistics. Henry James, Houdini, Frederick Douglass, Bruce Springsteen, the Greek owner of a chain of laundries, and Huck Finn all make appearances in these pages, and Jasper's breadth of knowledge, wry humor, and utterly pleasurable style bring these stories together in an invigorating look at a complicated country. In the tradition of *The Lonely Crowd* and *Habits of the Heart*, *Restless Nation* explores what Americans are really like and how they came to believe so firmly in the "fresh start."