



Albert Murray: Collected Essays & Memoirs: The Omni-Americans / South to a Very Old Place / The Hero and the Blues / Stomping the Blues / The Blue Devils of Nada (The Library of America)

By Albert Murray

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In his 1970 classic *The Omni-Americans*, Albert Murray (1916–2013) took aim at protest writers and social scientists who accentuated the “pathology” of race in American life. Against narratives of marginalization and victimhood, Murray argued that black art and culture, particularly jazz and blues, stand at the very headwaters of the American mainstream, and that much of what is best in American art embodies the “blues-hero tradition”—a heritage of grace, wit, and inspired improvisation in the face of adversity. Murray went on to refine these ideas in *The Blue Devils of Nada* and *From the Briarpatch File*, and all three landmark collections of essays are gathered here for the first time, together with Murray’s memoir *South to a Very Old Place*, his brilliant lecture series *The Hero and the Blues*, his masterpiece of jazz criticism *Stomping the Blues*, and eight previously uncollected pieces.

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"Albert Murray's best nonfiction has been gathered in a plump and welcome volume from the Library of America. . . . His writing about racism can prickle your skin. . . . To paraphrase Murray's praise of Ellison's *Invisible Man*, reading this book is like watching someone take a 12-bar blues song and score it for a full orchestra." — **Dwight Garner**, *The New York Times*

About the Author

Henry Louis Gates Jr., co-editor, is the Alphonse Fletcher University Professor and Director of the Hutchins Center for African and African American Research at Harvard University. Emmy Award-winning filmmaker, literary scholar, journalist, cultural critic, and institution builder, Gates has authored or coauthored twenty-one books and created fifteen documentary films. He is the editor of two other volumes in the Library of America series, *Frederick Douglass: Autobiographies* and, with William L. Andrews, *Slave Narratives*.

Paul Devlin, co-editor, teaches English at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy and has published essays and criticism in many periodicals. He is the editor of *Murray Talks Music: Albert Murray on Jazz and Blues* (2016) and *Riffride: The Life and Opinions of Papa Jo Jones, as told to Albert Murray* (2011), a finalist for the Jazz Journalists Association's book award.

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