

Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

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The Ghosts of Ellis Island (1)

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(Jan P. Christensen)

D

Oh my name is Juan and I came to this country

A

on the Boatlift from Mariel Bay,

A

As I walked around the streets of the city,

D

I heard some people say:

D

"Oh they all look funny and they don't speak English,

D

G

they're taking our jobs away,"

G

D

Then from out of the past I heard people who came

A

D

to an island in New York Bay

(Ch.) Ellis Island!

D

Come down the gangplank, go through the door,

A

stand on the long, long line,

A

Do you have TB or a social disease,

D

do your hands and your legs work fine?

D

Do you have some relative there on the shore

G

who can vouch for your sanity?

G

And if you make it through the day

D

they will stamp your card and say:

A

D

"Welcome to the Land of the Free!"

Oh my name is Pat and I come from Killarney, where I worked with both my hands,
Then the crops they failed and the agent came, he threw me off of the land,
So I crossed the ocean with my pack on my back, and I hope they will let me
stay,

Now the Old World is gone, I can see a new home from this island in New York Bay

Oh my name is Rivka and I come from Russia where I never knew luxury,
Then the Cossacks came with their swords and their guns, they killed all my
family,

So I came here where people don't live in fear, and I'll sweat in your dress
shops all day,

Though I'm tattered and torn, I see dreams being born on this island in New York
Bay

Oh my name is Guido and I come from Palermo, where I laid the bricks all day,
But I had a dream that was bigger than Palermo, and that's why I sailed away,
Now I'll build your subways and I'll climb your buildings, and I'll save up all
my pay,

So that next year my wife and my children can come to this island in New York
Bay

We are the ghosts of old Ellis Island, we have our tales to tell,
Some left a good life to come over here, some left a living hell,
But we crossed the sea and we built this land, as you will in your very own way,
And to you who have come, we all say, "Welcome home!" from this island in New York Bay

(1) Roughly two-thirds of the people now living in the United States can trace their roots in this country to the small island in the Upper Bay of New York Harbor that from 1892 to 1952 welcomed immigrants from every corner of the world.

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