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**“I am an American!”
The Thrill of American Citizenship**

Abstract: The allure of American citizenship and the function of patriotism among naturalized foreigners bring into focus questions of American national identity and the contested belief in the “whole of America.” European immigrant perspectives on the promise of the Declaration of Independence, naturalization, and political activism in the cultural arena created unforeseen conflicts in the process of acculturation. Patriotic declarations of Americanness resemble a means of distinguishing oneself from other Americans who appear to be less enthusiastic about the moral responsibility of American citizenship or take it for granted. The difference has often been described in terms of a “thrill.” This emotional excitement results from the creation of a fantasy space. Instead of being American by birthright, immigrants repeatedly emphasized the challenge of having to earn citizenship and democratic rights. How does the immigrant definition of Americanness differ from that of American born citizens? In how far does the State Department shape, channel, and control the cultural imaginary connected with the moment of becoming an American? The following article analyzes the complex interplay between the cultural imaginary of intellectual immigrants and the processes of the naturalization ceremony. I will focus on the series of 69 radio broadcasts entitled “I am an American,” which were produced between 1940 and 1943 by the Department of Justice of the United States in cooperation with the National Broadcasting Company.