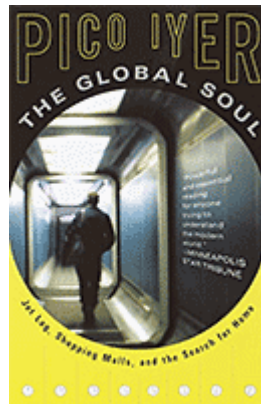


"The country where people look like me is the one where I can't speak the language, the country where people sound like me is a place where I look highly alien, and the country where people live like me is the most foreign space of all," sighs essayist Pico Iyer in the introduction to his book *The Global Soul*. How better to sum up the mixed feelings of more and more people on our planet who, for whatever reason, are 'out of place' where they live?

Iyer ought to know: British-born, of Indian descent, he spent a good part of his life in the United States and now lives in Japan.



His is no longer such an unusual biography, though. Historically, immigration either led people to a new home where they quickly settled, adapted, and 'went local,' or one where they settled while trying to preserve their native cultures in microcosms fondly labeled 'Chinatown' or 'Little Italy.' Either way, settle they did. Today, however, exists an altogether different cast of trans-cultural migrants and in-betweens, the ones Iyer calls the 'full-time citizens of nowhere.' Not the refugees living on memories, nor the migrant workers forced abroad by economic pressures, nor the expatriates following the trail of money and self-importance, Iyer's Global Souls are voluntary migrants who, walking through the doors opened by tourism and technology, are "best

characterized by the fact of falling between all categories."

However, with national and cultural boundaries becoming ever more blurred, globalization leaves many of those who don't 'clearly belong' aching for a sense of home. If we're not sure where we are from, Iyer asks, can we know who we are or where we are going?

The Global Soul offers no answers. Nor does it even tell a congruent story. Iyer loves to find microcosms, from which he often draws far-reaching, often too-far-reaching, conclusions for the entire world. The modern airport is his prime example of forced multiculturalism and hollow identity. Other such microcosms the author discusses are Hong Kong, Toronto, and the multicultural society of his native England. None of the essay-like chapters discussing them are fully compelling. At times, Iyer's train of thought seems simultaneously headed in a multitude of directions, his points frequently become repetitive, and in general he seems rather depressed about his subject.

Nonetheless, *The Global Soul* is worthy lecture. This is in part because the author's strongest talent is to provoke thoughts through words ("Permanent aliens," "Globalism made the world the playground of those with no one to play with"), and in part because the introduction and the ending chapters alone, descriptions of the unfortunate events that got him started reflecting on his subject and of the strange-but-fascinating life he now lives, are surely not to be missed.

Leadership Crossroads™ 10865-B Hazelhurst Dr. #11793, Houston, TX 77043
+1-469-522-3389

info@leadershipcrossroads.com www.leadershipcrossroads.com

This book review solely represents the opinions and conclusions of its author. It does not claim to be accurate, complete, or objective.

© Leadership Crossroads™, 2012



Lothar Katz is the founder of Leadership Crossroads. He has a wealth of experience in achieving productive cooperation across cultures and driving business success on a global scale.

A seasoned former executive of Fortune 500 company Texas Instruments, he regularly interacted with employees, customers, outsourcing partners, and third parties in numerous countries around the world, including many parts of Asia. Mr. Katz is the author of "Negotiating International Business – The Negotiator's Reference Guide to 50 Countries Around the World".

