

BookLife Reviews

BookLife Reviews are paid reviews of independently published books. Each review contains the honest opinion of a professional *Publishers Weekly* reviewer. A lightning bolt (⚡) indicates an Editor's Pick, a book of outstanding quality.

NONFICTION

⚡ **West Village Originals: An Oral History of New York City's Most Unique Neighborhood**

Michael D. Minichiello | Woodwright, Inc. Editions

220p, trade paper, \$21.99, ISBN [978-1-949-59612-0](#)

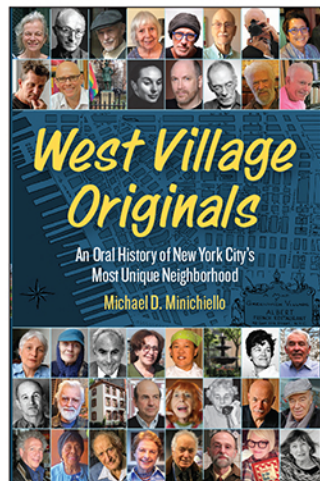
Minichiello compiles a celebratory collection of ninety short interviews, originally published in the neighborhood paper *WestView News* between 2008 and 2020, conducted with the lively personalities of New York City's bohemian West Village, which has "nurtured generations of artists and activists." People featured, many of whom have been part of the community for decades, range from internationally known figures like Calvin Trillin and Mimi Sheraton to more local influencers like Ralph Lee, founder of the storied Village Halloween Parade. These profiles evoke deep feeling—including nostalgia—for a connected and vibrant community equal parts cozy and wild.

Though the flow of Minichiello's interviews is somewhat formulaic—a bit about the interviewee's childhood, their arrival to the West Village, and their professional and personal experiences in the neighborhood—he lets each subject's spirit shine through. Crucial themes tie together multiple pieces, such as frustration with the gentrification that has led to some interviewees losing their homes, but the overall mood stays upbeat.

Lovers of New York history will find inspiration and insight in these profiles of West Village residents.

Great for fans of

John Strausbaugh's *The Village*, Jeff Kesseloff's *You Must Remember This*.



Including activists and business owners illuminates the heart of the community.

Each piece packs a strong punch in about 800 words, and Minichiello's consistent style facilitates a clean, compact layout, enhanced by photo portraits of each subject. This volume makes an attractive coffee table read, ready to be browsed or searched for a favorite's story.

POLITICAL & SOCIAL SCIENCES

⚡ **Journeys From There to Here: Stories of Immigrant Trials, Triumphs, and Contributions**

Susan J. Cohen and Steven T. Taylor | River Grove Books

208p, hardcover, \$15.95, ISBN [978-1-632-99487-5](#)

Cohen, one of the nation's top immigration lawyers, shares eleven extraordinary journeys of her pro bono clients in this stellar book of true stories. They include tales of fleeing unimaginable horrors before achieving success in the U.S. Chinese immigrants Peng and his wife, whom Cohen doesn't name, were forced to have a horrific abortion at eight months for defying China's one-child policy, while Sudanese Samuel Bol, after surviving brutal civil war, walked 1,000 miles to Kenya. But Cohen's focus is on the opportunities they found in this country.

Cohen ably puts a human face on these stories, emphasizing inspiring achievements. Honduran José Salgado, after earning a Ph.D from Harvard, became principal of an underprivileged Boston middle school and made it a national success story, and of Somali Jamal Ali Hussein single-handedly financed a school in his hometown after earning his Harvard MBA.

Inspiring and heart-breaking, these accounts of recent immigrant success stories cry for a more empathetic United States.

Great for fans of

Helen Zia's *Last Boat Out of Shanghai*, Vinh Chung and Tim Downs's *Where the Wind Leads*.



Cohen and her co-author Taylor make these remarkable stories leap into readers' hearts. Cohen's deep respect for her courageous clients is a beacon in dark days for U.S. immigration policy. Cohen lays bare how the Trump Administration has set back immigrants' causes, stirring distrust. This heart-breaking yet ultimately uplifting work calls for and demonstrates empathy for the atrocities many immigrants are fleeing, while highlighting their contributions to the U.S. and the world.

PRODUCTION GRADES: Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **A**
Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

PRODUCTION GRADES: Cover: **B** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **A**
Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**