



**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)**

Albert Murray

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"The United States is not a nation of black and white people. Any fool can see that white people are not really white, and that black people are not black." This broadside in Albert Murray's first book, *The Omni-Americans*, published in 1970, announced the arrival of a major new force in American letters, one that stood in defiant opposition to James Baldwin, Richard Wright, and other writers who he believed overstated and even perpetuated the racial divide in American life. Released to mark his centennial in 2016, this Library of America volume brings together *The Omni-Americans* with five other books in the most complete collection of Murray's groundbreaking nonfiction ever published. One part travelogue and one part memoir, *South to a Very Old Place* (1971) is a frank report on racial relations in the Deep South amid the turmoil of the Civil Rights movement. *The Hero and the Blues* (1973) develops Murray's belief that the essential bond shared by both dominant American culture and what he called Negro culture is the shared embrace of a "blues aesthetic" that emphasized creative improvisation. *Stomping the Blues* (1976) is a vivid history of American jazz and blues music that served as inspiration for the foundation of Jazz at Lincoln Center, established by Murray, Wynton Marsalis, Stanley Crouch, and other enthusiasts in 1987. The volume is rounded out by two later essay collections, *The Blue Devils of Nada* (1996) and *From the Briarpatch Files* (2001) which solidified Murray's reputation as a penetrating critic and an always engaging stylist--or, to use the epithet once bestowed on him by volume co-editor Henry Louis Gates Jr., "The King of Cats."

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