



## The Cosmopolites: The Coming of the Global Citizen (Columbia Global Reports)

By Atossa Araxia Abrahamian

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The cosmopolites are literally "citizens of the world," from the Greek word *kosmos*, meaning "world," and *polites*, or "citizen." Garry Davis, aka World Citizen No. 1, and creator of the World Passport, was a former Broadway actor and World War II bomber pilot who renounced his American citizenship in 1948 as a form of protest against nationalism, sovereign borders, and war. Today there are cosmopolites of all stripes, rich or poor, intentional or unwitting, from 1-percenters who own five passports thanks to tax-havens to the *Bidoon*, the stateless people of countries like the United Arab Emirates. Journalist Atossa Abrahamian, herself a cosmopolite, travels around the globe to meet the people who have come to embody an increasingly fluid, borderless world.

Along the way you are introduced to a colorful cast of characters, including passport-burning atheist hackers, the new Knights of Malta, California libertarian "seastealers," who are residents of floating city-states, *Bidoons*, who have been forced to be citizens of the island nation Comoros, entrepreneurs in the business of buying and selling passports, cosmopolites who live on a luxury cruise ship called *The World*, and shady businessmen with ties to Syrian dictator Bashar al Assad.

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## **Editorial Review**

Review

### ***A New York Times Book Review* Editor's Choice**

"Writing with pace and passion, Abrahamian, an opinion editor at Al Jazeera America, weaves together her narratives with considerable journalistic flair. She intertwines [her narratives with] the ancient idea of cosmopolitan citizenship and its idealistic modern advocates. She sees the growing market in citizenship as the corruption and commercialization of this idea by a global business elite."

—Richard Bellamy, *The New York Times Book Review*

"A perceptive, brilliantly reported investigation into the ways in which the forces of globalization are fundamentally changing the conceptualization and practice of nationality. This is that rare thing: a book filled with news."

-- Joseph O'Neill, author of *Netherland* and *The Dog*

"Atossa Araxia Abrahamian is a 21st-century Diogenes of Canadian, Iranian, and Swiss citizenship who has written a sharp, compelling, and often humorous book about the evolution of citizenship and the rise of a new form of statelessness. As she contends in *The Cosmopolites*, if in the 21st century 'the nation is being called into question as a result of globalizing technology, trade and crisis, it makes perfect sense for our connection and allegiance to the nation to be challenged too.' A cosmopolite is a global citizen who manages to be 'of the world without belonging anywhere within it,' she writes, all the while exploring and challenging the parameters that determine who among us gets to be global." -- *The Nation*

"Can cosmopolitanism advance human rights and claim high-minded ideals, when muddled, exploitative politics often follow in its wake? Abrahamian's reporting is not a call to dispense altogether with the contradictions of the modern nation-state. Rather, it is a clearer demand for a better set of contradictions, which support the identities and participation of people who are now stateless living in societies that seek to expel them."

-- *The New Republic*

"It's an intriguing, thoroughly reported look at the evolution of nationality and citizenship, and how the latter is quickly becoming a marketable commodity to the world's well-heeled jet set, while remaining heartbreakingly out of reach for those who need it most."

-- *Quartz*

"Abrahamian's meticulous and intricate examination excels, and not just in its focus on the capitalist middlemen...Instead, her story, like most modern tales of the global economy in the age of income inequality, vacillates between the haves and the have-nots, the 'one percent' and everyone else."

-- *Pacific Standard*

"A fiercely reported case study of the 'financialization' of citizenship and the burgeoning global business of buying and selling passports."

-- *Politico Europe*

"This fascinating and lucid bit of reportage investigates the birth of the citizenship industry, in which tax havens and micro-nations sell passports to Middle Eastern millionaires, stateless populations, and the new 'international' class which occupies a new world without boundaries or state-imposed limits."

--*Believer*

"A sharp, insightful expose of the world of the stateless....a fascinating, eminently readable exploration of contemporary citizenship and concepts of statehood. Readers will be deeply intrigued by the connections she draws and the implications of the modern movement away from statehood and nationalism, and eager to learn more when this quick read is over."

-- *Publishers Weekly*

"Abrahamian's fluently told, fast-paced story takes her around the world, into dark corners such as the passport industry ('You can never be too rich, too thin, or have too many passports') and refugee processing centers, and it ends on a dark note suggesting that anyone seeking a new country who doesn't arrive with a thick wallet is likely to be turned away--or worse. A slim but powerful book of great interest."

--*Kirkus Reviews*

About the Author

**Atossa Araxia Abrahamian** is an opinion editor at Al Jazeera America and a contributing editor at *The New Inquiry* and *Dissent*. Her writing has appeared in *The New York Times*, *New York Magazine*, the *London Review of Books*, and other publications. A former reporter for Reuters, she is a citizen of Canada, Switzerland, and Iran, and lives in Brooklyn, NY.

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