

WHO IS DR. LUCAS?

An Introduction to I Am an Immigrant

Jeff Magloire · writing as Dr. Lucas

BEFORE DR. LUCAS

Before there was Dr. Lucas, there was Jeff: a boy from Haiti who learned early that a life can be beautiful and still become complicated. I did not grow up thinking of myself first as an immigrant, or as a category, or as a problem to be solved. I grew up in a world that already had texture. I knew family, education, expectation, pride, community, faith, music, food, discipline, and the feeling of belonging to a place before I had language for what belonging meant. Haiti was not an abstraction to me. It was life at full scale. It was where I learned that people could demand much from you because they believed much was possible from you.

Coming to the United States changed the grammar of that life. I arrived carrying one understanding of myself and entered a country that could read me through other words: Black, Haitian, immigrant, outsider, newcomer. None of those words were false, but none of them were complete. I began to learn what it meant to be seen before being known. I learned how quickly a person can become a story in somebody else's mind. I also learned how dangerous it can be to spend too many years trying to prove that story wrong.

Jeff became the person who pushed. He studied, built, worked, competed, created, helped, traveled, led, and kept asking more of himself. Achievement became both possibility and armor. It could open doors, but it could also become a way of trying to negotiate with pain: if I accomplish enough, perhaps the rejection will make sense; if I become useful enough, perhaps loss will hurt less; if I become undeniable, perhaps I will finally stop feeling like an outsider. That bargain can take a person far. It can also leave him exhausted.

Dr. Lucas began there - not as a costume, and not as a replacement for Jeff, but as a name for the part of me that needed to become more honest than achievement allowed. I needed a version of myself who could ask a different question. Not, How do I win? Not, How do I prove them wrong? Not even, How far can I go? The question became: What does it mean to remain human while carrying everything that has happened to me?

That question is one of the hidden origins of this book. I Am an Immigrant is about leaving, belonging, and becoming, but those words are not only about geography. We leave versions of ourselves. We spend years trying to belong to rooms, families, friendships, professions, countries, and futures. And sometimes, after enough leaving and enough searching, we discover that becoming is not the reward waiting at the end. Becoming is the work itself. Dr. Lucas is the name I gave that work.

THE FLOOR AND THE CEILING

There is a sentence I have carried for years: there is no ceiling for you, but there is always a floor. I do not mean that as a universal law. I mean it as the way ambition and vulnerability have often felt inside my own life. I have believed, fiercely, that there is no fixed limit to what I can build, learn, imagine, or become. At the same time, I have known the sensation that a fall is always possible - that rejection can arrive without warning, that friendship can fracture, that family can wound, that belonging can be withdrawn, that grief can remake the shape of a day.

I have lived through the loss of my mother. I have lived through family pain, broken trust, disappointment, loneliness, and the particular fatigue of being a Black immigrant man who is often expected to be strong before anyone asks what strength is costing him. There have been nights when the world felt louder after everyone else had gone to sleep, when conversations replayed, betrayals returned, and the mind kept searching for an explanation that the heart could accept. Pain does not always announce itself dramatically. Sometimes it becomes an operating system. You keep functioning. You keep producing. You keep showing up. And because you are still moving, people assume you are fine.

Jeff knew how to move.

Dr. Lucas had to learn how to stay.

He had to stay with grief long enough to understand that grief is not failure. Stay with rejection long enough to see that another person's refusal does not get to become your definition. Stay with the contradictions of family long enough to love without pretending that love erases harm. Stay with friendship long enough to understand that closeness does not guarantee permanence. Stay with ambition long enough to separate desire from fear. Stay with himself long enough to stop treating every wound as a problem that productivity could solve.

This is why Dr. Lucas became my hero. Not because he is invulnerable, but because he does not require invulnerability from me. He is the version of me who can look at the younger Jeff and say: you do not have to keep performing strength for the room. You are allowed to understand what happened. You are allowed to grieve what did not happen. You are allowed to become without humiliating the person who survived before you knew how.

For a long time, I thought becoming meant climbing. Now I think it also means integrating. It means refusing to divide the successful parts of a life from the wounded parts, as though only one deserves to be seen. The floor matters because it reminds me that I am human. The absence of a ceiling matters because it reminds me that being human is not the same as being finished.

THE WORK OF BECOMING

Dr. Lucas did not arrive in one moment. There was no ceremony, no clean before-and-after line. He formed slowly, through questions I could no longer avoid and conversations I did not know I needed. He emerged every time I chose curiosity over defensiveness, reflection over performance, and connection over the urge to protect myself by becoming harder.

That is why the conversations in this book matter so much to me. I began by asking other people about home, migration, family, love, ambition, identity, music, loss, and the choices that reorganize a life. But the interviews were never only research. They became mirrors. Other people gave language to tensions I had carried privately. A story about a mother could change the way I understood sacrifice. A story about returning home could expose the distance between memory and reality. A song could reveal that identity sometimes survives in sound before it survives in explanation. A conversation about work could become a conversation about fear. A conversation about migration could become a conversation about love.

The more I listened, the less interested I became in perfect answers. Human beings are not tidy. We can be generous and selfish, brave and afraid, loyal and wounded, grateful and angry, loving and still capable of hurting one another. Immigration does not remove those contradictions. Success does not remove them. Education does not remove them. Money does not remove them. Neither does pain.

Dr. Lucas became the part of me willing to live without demanding that humanity be perfect before I could participate in it.

That change mattered. Jeff often wanted resolution. Dr. Lucas learned to tolerate complexity. Jeff wanted to know why something happened. Dr. Lucas learned that sometimes the more important question is what I will do with what happened. Jeff could interpret rejection as a verdict. Dr. Lucas learned to interpret it as information. Jeff could measure progress by titles, rooms, achievements, and visible outcomes. Dr. Lucas began measuring it by whether I was becoming more capable of truth, compassion, discernment, and meaningful connection.

This does not mean I put the hurt aside and became untouched by it. The opposite is true. Dr. Lucas exists because the hurt is real. The transformation is not forgetting. It is processing. It is giving pain a place in the story without giving it authorship over the ending.

I have often processed life through building: education projects, businesses, research, community work, conversations, travel, music, writing. Achievement has helped me survive, but survival alone is not the same as healing. The deeper work has been learning what each achievement was trying to answer. Was I building because I loved the work? Because I wanted to serve? Because I was afraid to stop? Because I wanted someone to see me differently? Because I needed evidence that the difficult years had produced something? Those questions are uncomfortable. They are also freeing.

Becoming Dr. Lucas meant learning that a life does not become meaningful because pain is converted into trophies. It becomes meaningful when pain is converted into understanding, and understanding becomes a way of treating other people more fully.

THE HUMAN BEING BENEATH THE CATEGORY

The central conviction of *I Am an Immigrant* is contained in its title, but also in what the title refuses to say. I am an immigrant. That is true. I am Black. That is true. I am Haitian. That is true. I am a son, a husband, a father, a friend, a builder, a learner, a person who has failed, a person who has been hurt, and a person who has hurt others. All of those things can be true without any one of them becoming the whole sentence.

Dr. Lucas is my resistance to reduction.

He is the voice in me that asks what happens when we stop meeting categories and start meeting people. The immigrant is not only the person who crossed a border. He is the child who remembers a room, the adult who misses a voice, the worker who sends money home, the parent who wonders what a child will inherit, the person who can love two countries and feel fully claimed by neither. The Black man is not only the history projected onto him. He is also a particular human being with humor, fear, taste, tenderness, memory, ambition, contradiction, and private grief. The successful person is not only the resume. The grieving person is not only the loss.

This way of seeing changed how I understand belonging. I used to imagine belonging as a room that finally admitted you. Now I think belonging is partly the ability to remain yourself once you enter the room. A home that requires disappearance is not enough. A friendship that requires permanent performance is not enough. A version of success that demands emotional exile is not enough. The goal is not simply to be accepted. It is to become capable of giving and receiving a form of recognition that does not make people smaller.

That is what the conversations in this book taught me. I entered them thinking I might collect wisdom. Instead, they disrupted my categories. They reminded me that the most important parts of a person often appear after the obvious answer has ended. You ask where someone is from and discover a story about a mother. You ask about career and discover fear. You ask about home and discover a sister. You ask about a song and suddenly a country is in the room.

Dr. Lucas lives in that second question.

He is not the man with the answer. He is the man willing to keep listening after the easy answer has been given. That distinction matters to me because so much of modern life rewards speed, certainty, judgment, branding, and performance. We decide who people are before they finish explaining themselves. We often do the same thing to ourselves.

My own becoming required a slower form of attention. I had to stop seeing Jeff only as the person who should have handled more, achieved more, known better, moved faster, forgiven sooner, or hurt less. I had to see the human being beneath the expectations. Dr. Lucas is what happened when I began offering myself the same depth I was trying to offer everyone else.

THE NAME I CHOSE TO CARRY FORWARD

I do not think the future asks us to become different people. I think it asks us to become more integrated versions of the people we already are.

For me, that integration has a name: Dr. Lucas.

He is not a mask I wear when Jeff is not enough. He is not an escape from my past, my family, my country, my race, my grief, or my mistakes. He is not a fantasy of perfection. Dr. Lucas is the person Jeff had to imagine so Jeff could keep becoming. He is an inner witness, a teacher, a protector, and sometimes a challenge. He reminds me that intelligence without humanity can become distance; ambition without reflection can become hunger without an end; pain without processing can become inheritance.

Most of all, Dr. Lucas helps me return to myself with more compassion and more responsibility at the same time. Compassion without responsibility can become excuse. Responsibility without compassion can become punishment. I needed both. I needed a way to say: this hurt you, and you are still responsible for what you build from it. You were rejected, and you do not have to become rejection. You were betrayed, and you do not have to become betrayal. You lost people you loved, and you do not have to stop loving. You were made to feel outside, and you do not have to spend the rest of your life begging every room to let you in.

There is a phrase underneath this book that I understand more clearly now: it is us who end up helping us. I do not mean that community is unnecessary. The opposite is true. I have been shaped by people, places, conversations, teachers, family, friends, strangers, and the stories collected in these pages. None of us becomes alone. But there comes a point when another person cannot perform your becoming for you. Nobody can process your grief on your behalf. Nobody can choose your values for you. Nobody can enter your memories and decide what they will mean next. Support can meet you at the door. You still have to walk through it.

Dr. Lucas is the part of me that walked through.

He is still walking.

That matters because becoming is not a finish line. There is more hurt I will have to understand, more rejection I will have to survive, more loss I cannot predict, more mistakes I will make, more versions of myself I will have to release. The point is not that I have conquered pain. The point is that pain no longer gets to be the only intelligence in the room.

I Am an Immigrant is therefore not only a book I wrote as Dr. Lucas. In many ways, it is the record of how Dr. Lucas was created. Leaving taught me that identity can survive movement. Belonging taught me that acceptance without self-recognition is incomplete. Becoming taught me that the person I needed to rescue was not somewhere in the future waiting to be impressive enough. He was already inside the life I had lived, waiting to be met with honesty.

Jeff is the boy who carried the story this far. Dr. Lucas is the man who learned how to hold it.

I need both.

And if this book offers anything beyond my own story, I hope it offers permission for the reader to ask a similar question: not Who should I become so the world will finally approve of me? but What part of me has been trying, all this time, to bring me home?