



Reaganism and the Death of Representative Democracy

Walter Williams

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This is a reasoned but passionate look at how Reaganism—the political philosophy of Ronald Reagan—has severely damaged representative democracy as created by the nation's founders. According to Williams, Reagan and his foremost disciple George W. Bush have created a plutocracy where the United States is no longer a government of the people, by the people, and for the people but is ruled by the wealthiest individuals and corporate America. Refreshingly unafraid to point out that Reaganism's anti-government fundamentalism stands on feet of clay, Walter Williams asks that Americans move from their political apathy to pay attention to the politicians and the corporations lurking behind the power curtain to see the dangers they represent to the true essential of the American way of life.

Williams' most important contribution is his extended analysis of the central role the key institutions—the presidency, Congress, the federal agencies—must play for the U.S. government to be capable in both sustaining representative democracy and protecting the safety and economic security of the American people. A clear result of the weakened institutions has been the grossly inadequate homeland security effort following September 11, and the massive corporate fraud revealed by Enron and other large firms that robbed the nation of hundreds of billions of dollars in stock values and depleted the pension savings of millions of people. The initial destructive blow that damaged the institutions of governance can be traced to Ronald Reagan and his simplistic antigovernment philosophy that fostered rapacious business practices and personal greed. The book also takes the media to task, criticizing the dismal record of failing to investigate the political and corporate chicanery that has brought us to this pass.

Keenly argued and scrupulously documented, Walter Williams has written a stinging wake-up call to the dangers of the demise of representative democracy and the rise of plutocracy that American citizens can ignore only at their peril.

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