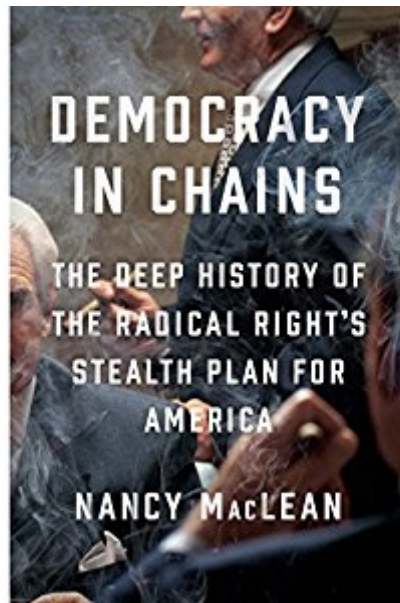




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# **Democracy In Chains: The Deep History Of The Radical Right's Stealth Plan For America**



## Synopsis

An explosive exposé of the right's relentless campaign to eliminate unions, suppress voting, privatize public education, and change the Constitution. Behind today's headlines of billionaires taking over our government is a secretive political establishment with long, deep, and troubling roots. The capitalist radical right has been working not simply to change who rules but to fundamentally alter the rules of democratic governance. But billionaires did not launch this movement; a white intellectual in the embattled Jim Crow South did. *Democracy in Chains* names its true architect - the Nobel Prize-winning political economist James McGill Buchanan - and dissects the operation he and his colleagues designed over six decades to alter every branch of government to disempower the majority. In a brilliant and engrossing narrative, Nancy MacLean shows how Buchanan forged his ideas about government in a last-gasp attempt to preserve the white elite's power in the wake of *Brown v. Board of Education*. In response to the widening of American democracy, he developed a brilliant, if diabolical, plan to undermine the ability of the majority to use its numbers to level the playing field between the rich and powerful and the rest of us. Corporate donors and their right-wing foundations were only too eager to support Buchanan's work in teaching others how to divide America into "makers" and "takers". And when a multibillionaire on a messianic mission to rewrite the social contract of the modern world, Charles Koch, discovered Buchanan, he created a vast, relentless, and multiarmed machine to carry out Buchanan's strategy. Without Buchanan's ideas and Koch's money, the libertarian right would not have succeeded in its stealth takeover of the Republican Party as a delivery mechanism. Now, with Mike Pence as vice president, the cause has a longtime loyalist in the White House, not to mention a phalanx of Republicans in the House, the Senate, a majority of state governments, and the courts, all carrying out the plan. That plan includes harsher laws to undermine unions, privatizing everything from schools to health care and Social Security, and keeping as many of us as possible from voting. Based on 10 years of unique research, *Democracy in Chains* tells a chilling story of right-wing academics and big money run amok. This revelatory work of scholarship is also a call to arms to protect the achievements of 20th-century American self-government.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

One of the most fascinating things about this book--for readers of almost any political stripe--is its careful and detailed exploration of the complex relationship between libertarianism and conservative causes. This is not at all a simple, single, or predictable relationship, and MacLean does a superb job of setting the evolving relationship between the two in its social and historical context. At the heart of this book is the story of a single figure, James Buchanan, and MacLean's unprecedented archival discoveries about his intellectual and political development are fascinating. I have to be amused at the libertarian critics of this book who explicitly lament that MacLean didn't talk to them in her attempt to understand the history of the movement. This is a work of scholarship which reconstructs the history of an intellectual and political movement using documented sources. Let me get down to the nub of what is already the most significant dispute between MacLean's critics and her defenders (bracketing the substantial portion of her critics whose one-line reviews betray that they clearly haven't read the book): MacLean's argument is based on a careful and detailed juxtaposition of the rationales adopted by libertarians in the 1950s and 1960s, and the concrete social and political context raging around them at the time (most crucially, the resistance to court-mandated de-segregation). Those who believe that MacLean must produce a smoking gun and ballistics analysis--say, an admission by Buchanan that he opposed integrated public schools because he didn't like African Americans--will I'm sure continue strenuously to deny that there was any connection between the libertarianism of the era and broader conservative agendas. Anyone committed to the belief that intentions and agendas have to be gaged by attention to concrete historical context (not least by a consideration of the audiences and venues for which statements were designed) will find MacLean's patient, detailed and comprehensive research indispensable. One of the most fascinating and enduring lessons of MacLean's book is that the

relationship between libertarianism and conservatism is vexed and far from inevitable--as are the relationships of either of these to Republicanism, states rights theory, or religious activism. Anyone interested in any of these topics should read this book. Which is easy advice, because it's engagingly and lucidly written, enabling readers to make their own decisions.

This is a brilliant book, a true history assembled from archival discovery and written with verve. It is important. Everyone who cares about how Americans got to our present political pass must read it.

This illuminating book is required reading to understand the infusion of radical libertarian thought and corporate wealth in our current politics. Specifically, it exposes the financial and intellectual links between rightwing academics like James Buchanan, DC lobbyists, and the Koch brothers. It's a sobering, frightening, and inspiring read.

Brilliant, important book, warning us of the danger the Koch brothers pose for the future. IGNORE all the Koch/Trump trolls trashing her very important book.

This book describes the philosophy of John C Calhoun back in the 1830s and 40s. It is that same philosophy of oligarchy that pervades the radical right of today from the Koch Brothers to Steve Bannon to Paul Ryan. It is a must read for anyone concerned about the future of our Republic.

Stop right where you are. Put down your pink pussy cap. Carefully lay aside all of your picket signs. Wait to sign more petitions. Whether you seek to change government actions on women's rights, civil rights, environment, Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, Voting rights, gerrymandering, federal courts ---- read Nancy MacLean's thorough explanation of how all these issues have been subject to a stealth campaign. We did not stumble into the chasm facing us now. We were engineered into this perilous time. Read *Democracy in Chains: The Deep History of the Radical Right's Stealth Plan for America*. Read it alone or with friends. Read it in book clubs. Put it prominently in public libraries. Assign it to every class you teach. Read and then let's strategize to take back our nation. MacLean begins at the beginning, with the southern slave colonies writing limits to majority rule and federal protection for their "property" into the U. S. Constitution. "One man (or woman) one vote" was never the Founding generation's project. No person of African heritage had any rights than a white man was obliged to honor. The current takeover of our country was organized in Virginia by white supremacists who opposed the U. S. Supreme Court's ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* that

racially separate schools cannot be equal. They began to tear down public tax support for education from kindergarten through university. Success today includes such cuts in tax funds that college students carry unbearable student loan debts, tax money goes more and more to private schools like the segregation academies of the fifties and sixties, and an avowed enemy of public education is now the U. S. Secretary of Education. The conspirators hid in economics enclaves at the University of Virginia, University of Chicago, other institutions and later Virginia Tech before, with Charles Koch millions, essentially buying George Mason University. Their goal is simple: leave wealth alone. Limited taxation only for internal policing and external military defense. Sell (or give to wealth people and corporations) public property. "Outsource" public services from garbage collection to prisons to profitable corporations. Leave the poor, the young, the elderly, the sick to fend for themselves. Jesus was mistaken, they published: The Good Samaritan was wrong because helping those who are down and out merely created "parasites" who would exploit those with wealth rather than earn their own way. Worship the Golden Calf, scorn the Golden Rule. Their methods are straightforward: to tear up the social contract. As articulated by David Stockman, President Reagan's budget director, they would have to fight "Social Security recipients, veterans, farmers, educators, state and local officials, [and] the housing industry" whose middle class buyers relied on mortgage tax deductions. Unable to finance their massive tax cuts and military spending, the president "forsook the fact-based universe." The Kemp-Roth bill slashed taxes on the wealthiest but tripled the national debt so that by 1989 it amounted to 53 percent of gross domestic product. And having departed the fact-based universe, they began denying the human role in climate change. Now, we have "alternative facts." No coincidence. This was the plan. Now, we do not know what to trust. Stealth methods included "counterintelligentsia" deployed in universities, "think tanks", newspaper and magazine and radio and television, and more recently, in social media to portray government as the enemy, social security and Medicare as "bankrupt", environmentalists as dangerous (See War on Coal!), and the super wealthy, the 1%, as the only possible rescuers of the country. The ultimate goal is to change the U. S. Constitution so that wealth can never be taxed without unanimous consent. Democracy in Chains concludes that we have at most two or three years to prevent the complete the stealth of our democracy. The "Kochtopus" tentacles are sunk deep in every nook of American democracy. Read. Discuss. We need know the enemy so that we may be able to make America safe for democracy.

This is a magnificent book by one of the most admired historians alive. It is essential reading for all interested in the modern U.S. and its political economy. Prof MacLean has done it again by

marshaling her path-breaking research to illuminate the theories of James Buchanan and how they have influenced the modern right-wing.

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