



Right-Wing Populism in America: Too Close for Comfort

By Chip Berlet, Matthew N. Lyons

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Right-wing militias and other antigovernment organizations have received heightened public attention since the Oklahoma City bombing. While such groups are often portrayed as marginal extremists, the values they espouse have influenced mainstream politics and culture far more than most Americans realize. This important volume offers an in-depth look at the historical roots and current landscape of right-wing populism in the United States. Illuminated is the potent combination of anti-elitist rhetoric, conspiracy theories, and ethnic scapegoating that has fueled many political movements from the colonial period to the present day. The book examines the Jacksonians, the Ku Klux Klan, and a host of Cold War nationalist cliques, and relates them to the evolution of contemporary electoral campaigns of Patrick Buchanan, the militancy of the Posse Comitatus and the Christian Identity movement, and an array of millennial sects. Combining vivid description and incisive analysis, Berlet and Lyons show how large numbers of disaffected Americans have embraced right-wing populism in a misguided attempt to challenge power relationships in U.S. society. Highlighted are the dangers these groups pose for the future of our political system and the hope of progressive social change.

Winner--Outstanding Book Award, Gustavus Myers Center for the Study of Bigotry and Human Rights in North America

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Editorial Review

Review

"This book shines brilliant light on right-wing populist movements that have undermined democracy throughout U.S. history--and are still influencing politics and policies today. The book shows how populist rhetoric has been used by far-right and mainstream politicians alike to divide people with scapegoating and deflect them from achieving greater social and economic equity." --Holly Sklar, author of *Chaos or Community?: Seeking Solutions, Not Scapegoats for Bad Economics*

"This long-awaited history and critical analysis has arrived right on time. The increased presence of the Right in this country has confused many people with its varied shapes and forms. This book gives the context needed for students and monitors of the Right to understand why these antidemocratic forces continue to thrive in our society." --Suzanne Pharr, author of *In the Time of the Right: Reflections on Liberation*, and *Homophobia: A Weapon of Sexism*

"This book makes significant strides toward a greater understanding of right-wing social movements in the United States. Berlet and Lyons present a holistic sociopolitical history that avoids many common theoretical pitfalls and oversimplifications. Instead of separating right-wing organizations into 'mainstream' and 'extremist' groups, these authors examine shades of populist ideologies that lead to both convergence and contradiction on the American political landscape. Their timely and compelling arguments lead us to reevaluate our definitions of these social movements and call for a reexamination of ineffective social policies aimed at containing right-wing groups. This accessible and engaging book is appropriate for use in undergraduate and graduate classes and will also be useful for a more general readership." --Stephanie Shanks-Meile, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Indiana University Northwest

"Chip Berlet has been a valuable resource for many years to everyone concerned about the potentially dangerous right-wing ideological strains that operate in this country. His work with Political Research Associates has been a most important source of data and analysis. Now he and Matthew Lyons have made yet another major contribution. *Right Wing Populism in America* builds on their years of expertise to provide a sweeping historical account of the tradition of such tendencies in American politics....This is an important analysis for everyone--scholars and nonspecialists alike--who wishes to understand the complex, sometimes ugly forces that have participated in shaping the American political landscape." --Adolph Reed, Jr., author of *Class Notes*

About the Author

Chip Berlet has written about right-wing movements for over 20 years, with bylines in *The New York Times*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Progressive*, and scores of other publications. He is senior analyst at Political Research Associates in Somerville, MA, and editor of *Eyes Right! Challenging the Right Wing Backlash*. He has contributed articles and chapters to several scholarly books and journals and his media appearances and citations as an expert include *Newsweek*, National Public Radio, and *Nightline*.

Matthew N. Lyons is a historian, activist, and writer whose work has focused on systems of oppression and social movements. He is research associate for the Hansberry-Nemiroff Archival, Educational, and Cultural Fund, and author of *The Grassroots Network: Radical Nonviolence in the Federal Republic of Germany*,

1972-1985.

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