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POLITICAL SCIENCE

America in Focus: The Stunning View Through a Two-Way Mirror
Robert J. Burgess
Lulu
978-0-578-00162-3
Five Stars (out of Five)

"Greed…a desire to acquire or possess more than what we need or deserve…is driving the New American Dream" the author writes. "While becoming prosperous was most assuredly part of the Old American Dream the New Dream involves going well beyond prosperity to acquiring vast sums of wealth or becoming rich. Americans now have become obsessively money-hungry and materialistic."

In *America in Focus* Robert J. Burgess the author of *Silver Bullets: A Soldier's Story of How Coors Bombed in the Beer Wars* shares his twenty years of experience as a professional market researcher who conducted focus groups. Companies hired his firm to "find out what makes America tick." This is not a book of philosophy or theory but a look at hard reality. It is not a statement of all that America is but a focused summary of how America has changed and what our culture is becoming. He covers topics such as the changing American Dream issues that divide us the death of big media management by chaos busyness and speed of the American lifestyle how the government is viewed and the corruption of manners. General statements on these topics are backed up by quotes from focus groups. He is not guessing; he has seen the American culture in person.

"There are few seminal moments when time seems to stand still…and the immensity of what has been spoken in the focus group room hangs in the air amidst the utter silence" Burgess writes. "In the midst of one particularly heated discussion on illegal immigration one small woman jumped up…clearly agitated and screamed 'I think we're headed for another Civil War. This country is falling apart!' The room moments before engulfed in a spirited verbal melee suddenly fell silent. You could have heard a pin drop from a mile away…"

Balanced and insightful *America in Focus* includes commentary and predictions at the end of each chapter but ends with the reminder "If there are portions of our American lifestyle which we don't like then it's up to us to change things." This is a book of trends without judgment and without an agenda to push. If readers want an accurate view of today's reality here

it is. Marketers managers future planners politicians and anyone in authority will be out of touch without this kind of information but one would hope *America in Focus* will find its way into the hands of every American. This is one of the most significant books of our era.