

The American Republic Can Save American Democracy

Gary Hart

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Former senator Gary Hart elucidates the urgent challenges that face the US in his erudite essay *The American Republic Can Save American Democracy*.

Throughout, Hart holds multiple periods in US history in tension: its founding moments, when great thinkers sought to carve out a fair system of governance in which each citizen would have an interest and a say; the post-war period, in which a sense of common duty and responsibility still prevailed; and the period leading up to, and following from, the January 6, 2021 attack on the US Capitol. The book acknowledges the ambition of the American project, which was formed with intention and humility, and names extant threats to it, including its vulnerability to authoritarian takeovers. Hart imparts a sense that, more than anything else, the greatest threat to the US comes in the form of the apathy of its citizens, particularly in periods of creeping (and sometimes screaming) corruption.

Hart, who obtained a political theory PhD at Oxford once he retired from political life, illuminates these contemporary challenges with precision. He notes that politicians with authoritarian bents have always sought to manipulate the public's pessimism and intransigence, and that their methods are proving more effective now than ever before. The book stirs alarm over weak responses to the Capitol attack in particular, as well as to the disinformation campaigns that preceded it. But it also inspires hope and a sense of civic duty, reminding American readers that their country belongs to each of them in equal measure, and that taking pride in and fighting for their nation could be its salvation.

The American Republic Can Save American Democracy is a compelling clarion call to American citizens, encouraging them to act on behalf of their imperiled nation.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (September / October 2022)

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