

Thirteen Cracks: Repairing American Democracy after Trump

Allan Lichtman

Rowman & Littlefield (Nov 8, 2021)

Hardcover \$21.95 (208pp)

978-1-5381-5652-0

For the four years of its existence and in the months following it, Donald Trump's presidential administration provided myriad examples of breaking American law and general norms of government. As Allan Lichtman demonstrates in his valuable *Thirteen Cracks*, that administration's crimes highlighted places where the US system needs reform or enforcement so that such offenses never happen again.

Lichtman takes a welcome nonpartisan, straightforward approach to laying out Donald Trump's repeated violations. Along with diagnosing those problems, the book recommends reasonable cures, like specific actions that Congress or other entities could take. This work is organized into thirteen categories that focus on the types of violations that most harm democracy, like the politicization of the military, the widespread nepotism and cronyism, and the use of pardons for profit and to reward criminal action on the president's behalf. It avoids the distractions of Twitter debates or discussions of the former president's tone to instead tie together the serious ways in which he tried to dismantle American democracy.

Thirteen Cracks includes examples of actions by past presidents of all parties that fall into similar categories. In each case, it demonstrates that the problems go beyond the forty-fifth president and need to be addressed after him, while still highlighting how much his actions exceeded those of even his unsavory predecessors, and how no past administration broke such a range of laws. The book stresses how the founding fathers argued against, and took steps to prevent, many of those very actions. It's packed with important context, and the inclusion of practical cures along with the diagnosis of the disease makes it more than just a recitation of corruption.

Thirteen Cracks is a thorough roundup on the threats to democracy that America faced in the past few years—and a useful road map for moving forward.

JEFF FLEISCHER (November / December 2021)

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