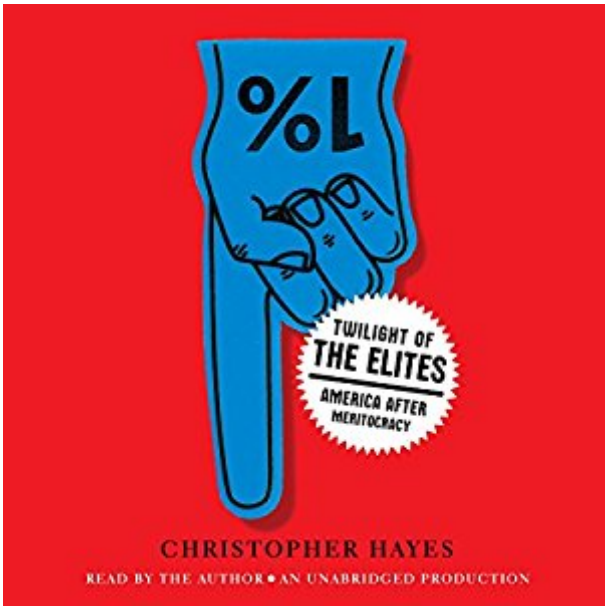
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Twilight Of The Elites: America After Meritocracy



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Synopsis

A powerful and original argument that traces the roots of our present crisis of authority to an unlikely source: the meritocracy. Over the past decade, Americans watched in bafflement and rage as one institution after another - from Wall Street to Congress, the Catholic Church to corporate America, even Major League Baseball - imploded under the weight of corruption and incompetence. In the wake of the Fail Decade, Americans have historically low levels of trust in their institutions; the social contract between ordinary citizens and elites lies in tatters. How did we get here? With Twilight of the Elites, Christopher Hayes offers a radically novel answer. Since the 1960s, as the meritocracy elevated a more diverse group of men and women into power, they learned to embrace the accelerating inequality that had placed them near the very top. Their ascension heightened social distance and spawned a new American elite - one more prone to failure and corruption than any that came before it. Mixing deft political analysis, timely social commentary, and deep historical understanding, Twilight of the Elites describes how the society we have come to inhabit - utterly forgiving at the top and relentlessly punitive at the bottom - produces leaders who are out of touch with the people they have been trusted to govern. Hayes argues that the public's failure to trust the federal government, corporate America, and the media has led to a crisis of authority that threatens to engulf not just our politics but our day-to-day lives. Upending well-worn ideological and partisan categories, Hayes entirely reorients our perspective on our times. Twilight of the Elites is the defining work of social criticism for the post-bailout age.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Twilight of the ElitesChristopher Hayes' book, Twilight of the Elites, documents the end of elites in America, from religious to sporting to political to news organizations as well as others. They are often considered the pillars upon which society has rested. But in many cases, they have squandered the mandates by which they lead, the credibility they assumed they could not loose. In several cases, such as that of the Catholic Church, they have been sexual transgressions compounded by an emphasis on maintenance of their own power. In the case of sports, a win-at-any-cost mentality exemplified by the use of and tolerance of drugs. Winning above all else has lead to a collapse of the credibility of institutions, therefore, the lose of their leadership. Politics is certainly not exempt.Regulators and legislators are guilty of the same sins. On page 173, Hays writes:And yet during our era of fractal inequality, the noncommercial sphere has shrunk, leaving noncommercial institutions increasingly dependent on commercial interests. What we're left with is a blurring of the boundaries between what Jane Jacobs described as the Guardian Syndrome on the one hand and Commercial Syndrome on the other. According to Jacobs, the Guardian Syndrome ('shun trading," "be loyal," "treasure honor") regulates the behavior of the soldier, the politician, and the policeman among others, while the Commercial Syndrome ("compete," "respect contracts," "promote comfort and convenience") guides the behavior of the banker, the baker, and the businessman. This basic division captures something essential about our expectations of many "authority" figures, particularly elite authority figures in positions of great social and financial esteem. We want them to be Guardians first; we don't thin they should be for sale.Yet our current system of fractal inequality creates the conditions in which everything is inexorably drawn into the realm of commerce.The enormous differential in reward and power of the Commercial verses the Guardian role means that the former inevitably corrupts the latter. And it destroys the civil society we have created as a revolving door rewards today's regulators and government officials who move to the commercial side. "We can never be sure just which other business cards are in the pocket of pundit, politician, or professor."The book is important to document and verify what many of us may believe about Trump: he is corrupt and corrupting. And dangerous to our republic. We need to heed a writer who observed that influence on outcomes, and fight for right rather than power alone.Plutarch: An imbalance between rich and poor is the oldest and most fatal ailment of all republics.

Despite the writer's fame as a liberal pundit - the discourse within this book outlines the history of the fail decade in remarkable detail and in a exquisitely written prose that made this quite a page-turner. As a recently naturalized citizen, I love these books that eloquently talk about political

and economic history and ties them to real-life issues of the American people. Furthermore, as a political pundit, I found his views not too pervasive as he presents a balanced account of affairs corroborated by other respectable figures whom I also enjoy reading about. If you want to learn more about politics and the main issues that affect everyday life, then read this book.

Chris has a very interesting read here. So many other reviewers have commented on his fine way with words ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â• he surely writes well. Very powerful diagnostic fragments from my point of view, and he amply describes the cultural descent weÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢re along as the we migrate from a world of compromise back to some sort of win-lose culture. I think he is onto something. Our organizations are laden with libertarian high performance competitive norms with little if any commitment to consensus or collaboration. Social science has done a job of helping us understand what leadership would require, and we seem constantly to go in another direction ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â• away from collaboration in a return always to rigged incentives of the sort which diminish intrinsic motivation. Reviewers are shorting the book for not solving the problem, and it would surely be nice to envision a way out of the hole we seem to insistent upon working our way into. But the bias toward high performance and rewards does seem out of balance with a focus on equity and fairness or even reason and judgement as we nickel and dime authority of any sort. A thought provoking read.

I've often watched Chris Hayes on MSNBC and have always been impressed by his clear comments on a wide variety of political and social issues. This book is a well-thought-out analysis of how elitism works in America. It's an easy read and I found myself nodding in agreement as he makes his points and brings out his unique view of how America is changing.Basically, the book is as fresh as today's headlines and he makes a clear case about the modern form of inequality in our culture with his unique form of insight. I found myself smiling at the truths he brought to light and his fresh analysis of America.However, when I finished the book and sat down to write this review, I just couldn't come up with the core of his conclusions. There was a lot of food for thought of course and I applaud him for sharing his views. But his conclusions were not strong enough to leave me with a memory of them. He tried hard and I think he has a good head on his shoulders and a long career ahead of him, but I would have appreciated a strong conclusion.

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