

The Reunited States of America: How We Can Bridge the Partisan Divide

Mark Gerzon

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Though voters seem to have lost their will to collaborate, hope is not lost, and this book proposes a way forward.

In this thought-provoking book that serves as a call to action, Mark Gerzon posits that most Americans today will never respect, let alone vote for, presidential candidates they vehemently disagree with.

What has been lost in American democracy, the book asserts, is a shared expectation that, despite party loyalty, an American president will always look out for the best interests of the nation. Such trust has been clouded by a divisive political culture, it claims, in which the system is driven by media and by partisan personalities, rather than unity. As evidence, Gerzon points to figures such as Rush Limbaugh, who symbolize a new zeitgeist in American political culture—a shift away from the common ground to fundamentalism, fueled by vitriol and “bordering on hatred.”

“We have lost our capacity to collaborate,” Gerzon says. This carefully organized book identifies and outlines the polarized viewpoints that define the dichotomous party system responsible for today’s bitter partisanship. He says that the majority of voting Americans “confirm what we already believe so unquestioningly.” We become, he further argues, prisoners of our points of view, incapable of bridging distances. As a corrective, *The Reunited States of America* encourages learning about issues from people with different perspectives. The hope is that doing so will result in expanded points of view and engender a return to a workable common ground.

Sometimes reading like a manual, the text of *The Reunited States* intersperses step-by-step instructions with more inspiring prose and unravels a “secret code” embedded in American democracy. A discussion of pluralism, references to the founding fathers, and a definition of *e pluribus unum* seem a little outdated, but they are appended with the inspiring suggestion that if a political viewpoint is not represented in a current organization, a person can start his or her own party: “You are now a Founding Father or Founding Mother.”

The Reunited States of America is both an indictment of current political failings and a hopeful look at ways in which voters might bridge a widening divide. This is a better option for all those who feel distressed by the current political climate.

KAI WHITE (Summer 2016)

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