

2018-2019 LWVCC BOOK GROUP

HOW DEMOCRACIES DIE by Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt

ON TYRANNY: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century by Timothy D. Snyder

- Tuesday, September 25, 7-8:30pm, Trustees Room, Concord Main Library
- Friday, September 28th, 9-10am, Trustees Room, Concord Main Library

How Democracies Die describes how elected leaders can gradually subvert the democratic process to increase their power. It is a bracing, revelatory look at the demise of liberal democracies around the world – and a road map for rescuing our own. The authors believe that our democracy is in danger but that there are still some ways that we can divert our country away from authoritarianism.

“The Founding Fathers tried to protect us from the threat they knew, the tyranny that overcame ancient democracy. Today, our political order faces new threats, not unlike the totalitarianism of the twentieth century. We are no wiser than the Europeans who saw democracy yield to fascism, Nazism, or communism. Our one advantage is that we might learn from their experience.” Timothy Snyder quote.

THE KOREAN WAR: A History by Bruce Cumings

THE ORPHAN MASTER’S SON by Adam Johnson

- Tuesday, November 27th, 10-11:30am, Trustees Room, Concord Main Library
- Thursday, November 29th, 7-8:30pm, Lower Meeting Room, Concord Main Library

In *The Korean War* Cumings reveals the war as it was actually fought. With access to new evidence and secret materials, he describes the war’s origin as a civil war, the neglected history of America’s post-World War II occupation of Korea, and the devastation that was committed on both sides. Elegantly written and blisteringly honest, *The Korean War* is, like the war it illuminates, brief, devastating, and essential.

The Washington Post review: A great novel can take implausible fact and turn it into entirely believable fiction. That is the genius of *The Orphan Master’s Son*..... The secret is research. . . It’s this process of reimagination that makes the fictional locale so real and gives the novel an impact you could never achieve with a thousand newspaper stories.....Johnson has painted in indelible colors the nightmare of Kim’s North Korea. When English readers want to understand what it was about – how people lived and died inside a cult of personality that committed unspeakable crimes against its citizens – I hope they will turn to this carefully documented story. The happy surprise is that they will find it such a page-turner.

THEY TAKE OUR JOBS! And 20 other myths about immigration by Aviva Chomsky

GO, WENT, GONE by Jenny Erpenbeck and Susan Bernofsky

- Monday, January 28th, 10-11:30am, Trustees Room, Concord Main Library
- Thursday, January 31st, 7-8:30pm, Trustees Room, Concord Main Library

In *They Take Our Jobs!*, Aviva Chomsky dismantles twenty-one of the most widespread myths and beliefs about immigrants and immigration. The book challenges the underlying assumptions that fuel these misinformed claims about immigrants, radically altering our notions of citizenship, discrimination, and U.S. History.

Go, Went, Gone is a masterful novel by acclaimed German writer Jenny Erpenbeck. It tells the tale of a retired classics professor who lives a routine existence until he spies some African immigrants staging a hunger strike. Curiosity turns to compassion and an inner transformation as he visits their shelter, interviews them, and becomes embroiled in their harrowing fates. It is a scathing indictment of Western

policy toward the European refugee crisis, but also a touching portrait of a man who finds he has more in common with the Africans than he thought. *Go, Went, Gone* addresses one of the most pivotal issues of our time, facing it head-on in a voice that is at once both nostalgic and frightening.

THE MOTH SNOWSTORM: Nature and Joy by Michael McCarthy

- Meeting dates TBD

The Moth Snowstorm is unlike any other book on climate change today. It is a manifesto rooted in experience, a poignant memoir of the author's first love: nature. McCarthy traces his adoration of the natural world to when he was seven, when the discovery of butterflies and birds brought sudden joy to a boy whose mother had just been hospitalized and whose family life was deteriorating. He goes on to record in painful detail the rapid dissolution of nature's abundance in the intervening decades, and he proposes a radical solution to our current problem: that we each recognize in ourselves the capacity to love the natural world.

THE SOUL OF AMERICA: The Battle for our Better Angels by Jon Meacham

THE COMMON GOOD by Robert Reich

- Meeting dates TBD

"This is a brilliant, fascinating, timely, and above all profoundly important book. Jon Meacham explores the extremism and racism that have infected our politics, and he draws enlightening lessons from the knowledge that we've faced such trials before. We have come through times of fear. We have triumphed over our dark impulses. With compelling narratives of past eras of strife and disenchantment, Meacham offers wisdom for our own time and helps us appreciate the American soul: the heart, the core, and the essence of what it means to have faith in our nation." Walter Isaacson

In *The Common Good* Reich writes about the changing nature of work brought about by globalization and the growing inequality it has generated. He diagnoses the decline of the common good in American life and suggests ways of restoring it. Reich defines the common good as consisting in "our shared values about what we owe one another as citizens who are bound together in the same society." What binds us is not birth or ethnicity but a commitment to fundamental ideals and principles: respect of the rule of law and democratic institutions, toleration of our differences, and belief in equal political rights and equal opportunity. He attributes the erosion of the common good in recent decades to the breakdown of moral restraint of power and money; partisanship and the unbridled pursuit of power and profit. But is a belief in the common good enough?

A BICYCLING LIFE: A MEMOIR OF ERICA MORRISON by Nancy Shohet West

- Meeting date TBD

Born into a family of Dutch aristocrats in 1925, Erica Morrison thrived in her early years only to encounter the severe challenges of World War II, the German occupation and the Dutch Hunger Winter. But an inner core of resilience carried her through as she grew up to be a world traveler, outdoor adventurer, mother of five and a beloved community member of her adopted hometown of Concord, Massachusetts – and a longtime active member of the League of Women Voters Concord-Carlisle.

Erica worked with Carlisle writer Nancy Shohet West to create this memoir which is available on Amazon.com. In the spring, Erica and Nancy will conduct an author's talk with us. The program will include an opportunity to learn more about Erica's childhood in Holland and her experiences living through World War II and a discussion with Nancy about the various ways that one can write a memoir.