

Marblehead LWV Book Club 2/8/19

1. **"American Dialogue: The Founders and Us"** by Joseph J. Ellis. This is a book written by a preeminent scholar of history. The author compares what 4 historical greats thought on major topics in their time and the situation now: Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, James Madison, George Washington. Highly recommended.
2. **"Not for the Faint of Heart"** by Wendy Sherman. Ms. Sherman was lead negotiator on the Iran deal. It is of particular interest in seeing how a powerful woman navigated a male-dominated field.
3. **"The Perfect Weapon: War, Sabotage, and Fear in the Cyber Age"**. by David Sanger. The book tells the emerging story of cyber-weapons, and how we are at risk in this country. Tom highly recommends it!
4. **"The Color of Law"** by Richard Rothstein. This book walks through US history detailing how the institutions of the US, including the Supreme Court, reflecting the tone of the times, were complicit in discrimination and segregation.
5. **"When They Call You a Terrorist: A Black Lives Matter Memoir"** by Patrisse Khan-Cullors and asha bandele. This is a story of a young woman growing up in the ghetto in California. Highly recommended.
6. **"The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration"** by Isabel Wilkerson. The book "chronicles one of the great untold stories of American history: the decades-long migration of black citizens who fled the South for northern and western cities, in search of a better life". The group also recommended **"The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness"** by Michelle Alexander.
7. **"Tribe"** by Sebastian Junger. This is a fascinating story of the ability of people to survive under stressful conditions, due to the bonding that occurs among groups. The author traveled the world to learn how people cope and survive.
8. **"The Fifth Risk"** by Michael Lewis. The author offers a critique of the situation in this administration where people appointed to high positions are uneducated as to the role of government in general and ignorant or antithetical to the purpose of the department to which they are appointed. The author contends that it may have long term effect on our government.
9. **"These Truths"** by Jill Lepore. A beautifully written, 800-page book by a talented professor.
10. **"Becoming"** by Michelle Obama. This book was listened to on audio, and was greatly enjoyed. It covers Michelle Obama's life, background in Chicago, Princeton, Harvard, her life in the White House. Fascinating!
11. **"Fascism: A Warning"** by Madeleine Albright. As the inside cover blurb says, "Written with wisdom by someone who has not only studied history but helped to shape it, this call to arms teaches us the lessons we must understand and the questions we must answer if we are to save ourselves from repeating the tragic errors of the past."

12. **"A Higher Loyalty: Truth, Lies, and Leadership"** by James Comey. As inside cover blurb says: "Comey takes readers through the cases and personal events that helped shape his view of justice, fairness, and ethical leadership." His background is amazing.
13. **"One Person, No Vote"** By Carole Anderson. This is a concise, well written history of voter disenfranchisement and current vote suppression. Shelby vs Holder, a 5-4 decision by the Supreme Court, opened the floodgates for more Jim Crow style voter suppression laws as well as allowed old ones to flourish. Some states have moved in the other direction and increased voter participation by expanding voter registration and access to the polls. Anderson concludes that the Russians piggy backed onto the years of efforts to disenfranchise and suppress the vote of African Americans and others. Rev. William Barber said "Voter suppression hacked our democracy long before any Russian agents meddled in our elections." She quotes Lincoln, "I believe this government cannot endure, permanently half slave, half free. (See end of book list for complete review)
14. **"How to Change Your Mind: What the New Science of Psychedelics Teaches Us About Consciousness, Dying, Addiction, Depression, and Transcendence "** by Michael Pollan. Pollan explores his own journey to understand how psychedelics may be helpful in treating a variety of medical situations including those facing death, then seeks out his own experiences with psychedelics.
15. **"The Women in the Castle"** by Jessica Shattuck. This is the story of three women living in Nazi Germany and their intertwined lives, based on the experience of the author's Grandmother, so this is historical fiction.
16. **"Can It Happen Here? Authoritarianism in America"** by Cass R. Sunstein. This is a compendium of chapters by a variety of experts that examines our democracy and authoritarianism- can we survive an authoritarian chief executive, what institutions can protect us? is America immune? what can psychology teach us about those who embrace authoritarianism? A fabulous work that explores a variety of fascinating topics relating to populism and democracies.

In Depth Book Review on Voter Suppression by Linda Freedman

"One person, No Vote" By Carole Anderson Review by Linda Freedman

This is a concise, well written history of voter disenfranchisement and current vote suppression. Shelby vs Holder, a 5-4 decision by the Supreme Court, opened the floodgates for more Jim Crow style voter suppression laws as well as allowed old ones to flourish. Some states have moved in the other direction and increased voter participation by expanding voter registration and access to the polls.

Racial and political gerrymandering, voter ID, rigging the rules and purging of ex-felons and others are costly to voter participation and our democracy. The Roberts court has been harmful to fair elections. Chief Justice John Roberts was against pre-clearance well before he was on the court.

Voter ID was a poison pill that was inserted in the HAVA legislation; it was supposed to apply only to registration by mail and permitted a wide range of documents as proof of residence. The new strict voter ID laws significantly disenfranchised voters in WI, MO, TX, NC, AL, GA and IN. The courts mostly sided with voter ID proponents despite a lack of evidence of in-person voter fraud.

Voter purging may have disenfranchised 6 million or more in Florida, GA and AL. Its effect in VA is less as Democratic governors restored the rights of many ex- felons, one by one. Recently, 65% of voters in Florida approved removal of felon disenfranchisement except for rape and murder. In Florida, as many as 1.7 million were purged, including many non-felons who had similar names. Florida's harsh felon laws were adopted after reconstruction; some felon crimes would have been a misdemeanor in most states. The War on Drugs lead to substantially more incarceration with harsh sentences for crack cocaine and other offenses that disproportionately affect minorities. Kris Korbach and others used Operation Crossmatch to purge black, Latino and other minority voters under the guise of protecting the integrity of elections.

The chapter on Rigging the Rules describes racial and political gerrymandering which has become more extreme. This corrodes democracy, especially when politicians move further to the right to win in party primaries. Former speaker of the house, Eric Cantor, lost to tea party favorite, David Brat.

Shortchanging election resources and removing polling places in minority areas increases wait time. In 2016, there were 868 fewer polling places in areas previously covered by preclearance under the VRA. Confusion about poll locations and long waiting lines discourage voting and future voting behavior.

There were also stories of resistance such as the success of Doug Jones, a Democrat, in the election for senate. He was greatly aided by grass roots campaigns and efforts in largely black counties to obtain voter ID and get people to the polls. Alabama had closed DMV offices and other locations in black counties where they could get the required ID. It also helped that Roy Moore was a terrible candidate chosen in a party primary.

Anderson concludes that the Russians piggy backed onto the years of efforts to disenfranchise and suppress the vote of African Americans and others. Rev. William Barber said "Voter suppression hacked our democracy long before any Russian agents meddled in our elections." She quotes Lincoln," I believe this government cannot endure, permanently half slave, half free.

I was disappointed by the omission of electronic voting machines that can be hacked.

At the polls, optical scanners with paper ballots have much shorter wait times and are more secure, more reliable and less expensive than touch screen machines.