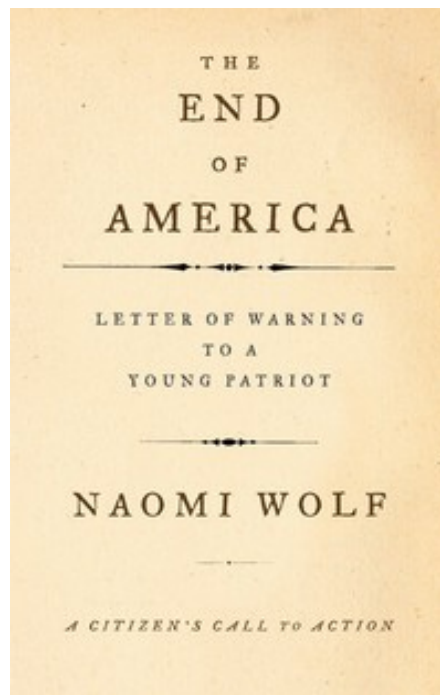




The End of America: Letter of Warning to a Young Patriot

Naomi Wolf

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In a stunning indictment of the Bush administration and Congress, best-selling author Naomi Wolf lays out her case for saving American democracy. In authoritative research and documentation Wolf explains how events of the last six years parallel steps taken in the early years of the 20th century's worst dictatorships such as Germany, Russia, China, and Chile.

The book cuts across political parties and ideologies and speaks directly to those among us who are concerned about the ever-tightening noose being placed around our liberties.

In this timely call to arms, Naomi Wolf compels us to face the way our free America is under assault. She warns us-with the straight-to-fellow-citizens urgency of one of Thomas Paine's revolutionary pamphlets-that we have little time to lose if our children are to live in real freedom.

-Recent history has profound lessons for us in the U.S. today about how fascist, totalitarian, and other repressive leaders seize and maintain power, especially in what were once democracies. The secret is that these leaders all tend to take very similar, parallel steps. The Founders of this nation were so deeply familiar with tyranny and the habits and practices of tyrants that they set up our checks and balances precisely out of fear of what is unfolding today. We are seeing these same kinds of tactics now closing down freedoms in America, turning our nation into something that in the near future could be quite other than the open society in which we grew up and learned to love liberty, - states Wolf.

Wolf is taking her message directly to the American people in the most accessible form and as part of a large national campaign to reach out to ordinary Americans about the dangers we face today. This includes a lecture and speaking tour, and being part of the nascent American Freedom Campaign, a grassroots effort to ensure that presidential candidates pledge to uphold the constitution and protect our liberties from further erosion.

The End of America will shock, enrage, and motivate-spurring us to act, as the Founders would have counted on us to do in a time such as this, as rebels and patriots-to save our liberty and defend our nation.

The End of America: Letter of Warning to a Young Patriot Details

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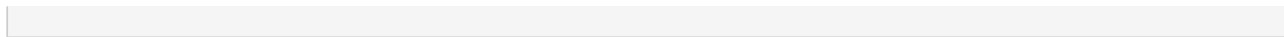
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Wolf**

From Reader Review The End of America: Letter of Warning to a Young Patriot for online ebook

Book Lover says

Enjoyable read. A lesson to us all.

Justin says

Although I agree with most of Wolfe's statements about our modern American dilemma, and was grateful that this book warns of a good portion of the grave dangers that our recent history has imparted upon the rights (or lack thereof) of the American people, this book was just flat-out not written well. The message was for the most part 3-4 stars, but I could have edited this book better in my sleep. Rife with grammatical errors and typos, this book was at times poorly enough edited to make it difficult to read. However, I do respect the fact that this is more than likely the result of Ms. Wolf's attempt to rush this book onto our shelves, knowing full well that her message of warning was time-sensitive and far too important for grammatical delays. That being said ... for me personally, the content of the book often lends itself to an overly-naive take on our "forefathers" and how seemingly noble their intentions were. Recognizing the failures of our most recent administrations is a good start toward a productive disillusionment, but we must then ask ourselves, "is our current situation, at least in part, a result of the shortcomings of our forefathers' plan and/or their limited foresight?" Good message; important subject to read on; written marginally and with a lack of eloquence; edited atrociously.

Josie says

Although, much like a textbook in presentation, and perhaps sounding a bit dated, now that we are all basking in the afterglow of a historic presidential election, I still think this is a very important book for all Americans to read. First off, it reminds us that the people who established our country lived under such tyrannical rule that they would lay down their life to fight for their liberty and rights. But, these same liberties and rights can be stripped away gradually and subtly if the people are not vigilant in their "civic life."

This book clearly outlines the ten steps towards a fascist government takeover with chilling examples in historical regimes that we have looked on with disgust and disbelief, and how it has happened, and still is happening in our own country.

I am hoping that the grass roots organizing that got many disenfranchised people out to vote, some for the first time in their lives, and showed that their involvement can make a difference, will also re-engage people into insisting that all branches of the government stick to the checks and balances to prevent our country from falling into fascist tendencies. Wolfe makes a very strong case that our current administration has spent a lot of time, in the name of security and the war on terrorism, to strip away these checks and balances to fulfill their objectives, which is profits for the many defense contractors that have made a lot of money in security and surveillance.

Freedom is not to be taken for granted. It is a full time job for each citizen. Read this short little book and

then insist on accountability from your government.

Amanda says

This is a book that really gets you thinking about the rights culture we live in. It examines the US administrations approach to the Iraq war at home and abroad (I was especially intrigued by the look at the Patriot Act). I found myself thinking, how far are we willing to go for freedom? When you take security to unbelievable extremes can you really call it freedom? Is our society so consumed with a 'rights rehtoric' that we get lost in what we think we deserve?

Once I started this book I couldn't put it down. It was a book that made you question what has become second nature in our society: a belief that we have an unlimited amount of rights and are entitled to these rights. But is it possible for some people to take the rights revolution to far? and will the price of freedom cost us our fundamental rights?

I love a good book that actually gets you thinking, whether you agree with all of Wolf's conclusion or not. She focuses in on what threatens our freedom. It made me think about the balance that exists between too many rights and not enough, between freedom and suppression.

David Lentz says

If you love democracy and want to see its ideals preserved, then this book offers a guide for its perpetuation. The founders of the American Constitution were so profound in their construction of democracy that they installed a series of checks and balances to power. Wolf examines history to offer a warning shot that portrays how past authoritarian and dictatorial regimes upset a democratic balance of power to enable ambitious regimes to come to oppress nations. If we are to preserve democracy, then it's essential to understand the ploys which could leave its power tragically unbalanced. Essentially, Wolf is advising that if we stay true to the expressed ideals articulated in the Constitution, then American democracy will work. However, insofar as the executive, congressional or judiciary branches stray, then shifts of power could occur. She follows the political journeys of history's great oppressors to show how they maneuvered and manipulated their government to gain absolute power. Wolf is deeply and rightly concerned that these same Orwellian tactics are now in play in America to threaten democracy here. Wolf cites ten specific measures which have been used to weaken democracies in the past: we must learn from the lessons of history in order not to repeat them. 1) Invoke an internal or external threat 2) establish secret prisons 3) develop a paramilitary force 4) surveil ordinary citizens 5) infiltrate citizens' groups 6) arbitrarily detain and release citizens 7) target key individuals 8) restrict the press 9) cast criticism as espionage and dissent as treason 10) subvert the rule of law. These warnings should be heeded by members both of the left and right in order to preserve democracy: for once there is a unifying motive. Wolf emphasizes that democracy is fragile and its perpetuity should not be taken for granted as other nations which have lost it sadly know from brutal experience. I highly recommend this cautionary tale by Yale grad and Rhodes Scholar, Naomi Wolf. This is an important book of warning by an American patriot designed to heighten the vigilance of other patriots toward the preservation of democratic ideals threatened by the hubris of adversaries externally and internally who thirst for power.

Marcus says

I used to read horror stories to get myself scared. Now all you have to read is recent history. If you are like

me, you have the feeling that America has changed in recent years. Feels like the government is marching to a slightly different tune than what the people desire. You also probably felt some of the things being done were wrong: aggressive interrogation, jailing reporters, use of signing statements to over Congressional rule, Guantanamo, etc.....

Naomi Wolf's book compares 2000's USA to Germany in the 1920's and the similarities are frightening and give cause for concern. Putting America in a perpetual state of emergency creates an opportunity for abuse. Government has systematically increased powers of the executive branch, while simultaneously removed/ignored citizens rights. 1920's Germany created a mythological enemy, funded creation of a paramilitary force, created a secret prison system, encouraged surveillance of citizens, practiced arbitrary detainment of citizens, harassed/infiltrated citizen's groups, targeted writers, entertainers and dissenters, recast dissent as treason and eventually ended the rule of law. Sound familiar?

GeekChick says

I learned of this book when I saw Wolf on Colbert Report. The premise is that there are 10 steps a government takes to move from an open society/democracy to fascism. Guess how many are underway in America right now?

The first couple of chapters scared the hell out of me. If this is true, and if we don't take our country back soon, people with reading lists like mine will be "disappeared." I am fearful of our future.

Now that I have read about halfway through, though, I must say that I wish Wolf would flesh out her arguments more. The book is designed to be like a colonial-era "pamphlet" and therefore thinner. I think it would be much more powerful and interesting, though, if it were more like 500 pages. For the most part, she states her point, then offers one-sentence examples from Stalin, Mussolini, etc., then a multi-paragraph example from Hitler. Frankly, the constant comparison to Nazis is losing me. If her premise is that this has happened time and again throughout the western world, then she would be better served to provide broader examples.

Still, I would recommend that people at least read the introductory chapters, setting the stage. After that, anyone educated on current affairs can just read the table of contents (to see the 10 steps listed) and fill in the blanks for him/herself.

There is, in the back, a page or two with websites for organizations fighting for our civil liberties right now. This is a good resource for anyone wanting to fight the good fight while we still have some semblance of free speech. (Did you know that right now, if Bush read my book list, he could declare me an enemy combatant, and you'd never hear from me again? Really. It's happened already -- to our own military, no less!)

***Add on comments, later: I finally decided to move this off my "currently reading list," because it's been so long since I picked it up. That's because I get so riled up when I read it, that I realized I needed to be careful about doing so -- otherwise I'd face insomnia! I will finish this book for sure, but I thought it best to move it off the "current" list.

Matt says

I definitely could have used half stars here. It's a good book but it is very depressing. 2.5 presidential terms after the book was released and nothing has changed. If anything it's worse.

Conor says

Sigh.

Books like this are almost unreadable these days. I wish I had read this earlier, because I think I was woefully ignorant of the abuses and unconstitutional postures taken by the Bush administration until at least the beginning of my law school days, but the scope creep of the executive from Bush to Obama to Trump is almost too baleful to contemplate under the current administration.

In highest dudgeon I've certainly lobbed my fair share of insults at the current president. I wonder if I'll be flagged as a subversive?

A few things in particular stand out as prescient--particularly regarding "fake news"--after a grueling first week of the Trump presidency:

"The great masses of the people will more easily fall victims of a big lie than a small one"
Hitler wrote in Mein Kampf.

Fascists rely on perception management: what the intelligence community calls "info ops" because their tactics won't stand scrutiny by a free press. So, in a fascist shift, as real reporters are being frozen out, smeared, or faced with unemployment, there is an increasing use of spectacle in conveying a message, and the spectacle is accompanied by the production of fake news and false documents. The messaging, combined with the spectacle, can be stunning in a fascist ascendancy. Fascist messaging has advantage that democratic communications and advocacy, even of the highest sophistication, just cannot demonstrate. You can use a monolithic, harmonized voice and vision, unimpeded by dissent, rather than trying to break through a clash of pluralistic arguments. This power of epic messaging--in combination with power of spectacle--is a well known aspect of the seduction of fascism.

Dictatorships specialize in faking news and falsifying documents. Hitler wrote that "All effective propaganda must be limited to a very few points, and must harp on these in slogans until the last member of the public understands what you want him to understand." He argued that good propaganda speaks to feelings and not reason, and that it should never admit a glimmer of doubt in its own claims or concede the tiniest element of right in the claims of the other side.

After a certain point in a fascist shift, it doesn't matter whether most people believe the faked

news or not. Eventually, they simply don't have access to enough good information to assess what is real and what is not.

Sending a current of lies into the information scene is part of classic psychological operations to generate a larger shift, a new reality in which the truth can no longer be ascertained and no longer counts. In this reality, citizens no longer feel empowered or able to establish the truth on either side, and therefore give up their agency. At this point, people can be manipulated into supporting almost any state action, for how can citizens know what is right? Truth itself has been cheapened, made subjective, and internal, not absolute and external.

And this profoundly sad final note from the last part of the book reminds me of a joke a friend told me recently. He said that in the 1980s a Republican went over to a Democrat's house to play a game of checkers. They agreed on the rules, made a few moves, and then at some point the Republican got up, threw a bomb at the house, and began spraying kerosene everywhere. Meanwhile, inside, the Democrat is looking out for double-jumps and opportunities to get kinged.

We in America are used to a democratic social contract in which there is agreement about the rules of the game. When Congress demands an answer, for instance, the President does not simply refuse to pick up the phone. So we keep being startled when the steps of the democratic interplay are ignored. "He can't do that!" It's time to notice that they are playing a different game altogether.

It's long past time to wake up.

Alex says

Naomi Wolf's short, straightforward book is a warning that the prospects for fascism emerging in America are real and growing. She lays out 10 steps that governments take in order to concentrate power and stifle dissent, on the road to fascism, all of which are underway in the good ol' US of A.

1. Invoke an External and Internal Threat
2. Establish Secret Prisons
3. Develop a Paramilitary Force
4. Surveil Ordinary Citizens
5. Infiltrate Citizens' Groups
6. Arbitrarily Detain and Release Citizens
7. Target Key Individuals
8. Restrict the Press
9. Cast Criticism as 'Espionage' and Dissent as 'Treason'
10. Subvert the Rule of Law

This issue is obviously incredibly relevant today, and I happen to agree that fascism is an imminent threat in the US. But I wasn't terribly impressed by this book. Although I believe the author is or maybe was a radical, the arguments here are very very much within the liberal framework, or even right-libertarian framework, and the pro-U.S., pro-Constitution rhetoric, while serving a function here, does actually cover up the fact that this nation was built on state terror and repressive violence. It's not a new thing.

I think this book also alienated me a bit because it's heavy on scare-tactic language, and even some implications bordering on conspiracy theory. These all served to make the book something more of interest to the (largely white, male) middle class as opposed to the truly dispossessed of this nation, who would actually be the ones likely to suffer most under a fascist system.

What this book DOESN'T do is probably the most important thing, inspire HOPE that regular people can actually PREVENT emergent-fascism, or undo it. Wolf tries, but ultimately I think the effect is to actually scare us and the impression one gets is a gloomy, we're-fucked, bleak future. Intellectually, that may be alright, but if the intent is to move people to action, this fails horribly and may actually be counterproductive.

Worth skimming, but there should be, and probably are, much better books on the subject of the U.S.' decline into fascism.

Ev says

This was a quick read, and I wavered on whether to rate it 2 or 3-stars. Ultimately 2, because although what she says is valid in drawing attention to our government quickly eroding "unalienable" rights in the name of security and national integrity, Wolf rushed to draw dramatic parallel to outrageously fascist regimes.

I believe the style and pacing of the book felt like someone blowing a steady stream of hot air onto your face - it was clear she wanted her words to mirror a revolutionary pamphlet and affect the American population thusly. In hilarious parallel to her namesake, Naomi seems to be crying wolf about the demise of America, and perhaps more concerned with demonizing a particular administration by unfairly squashing it into the historical context of fascist dictatorships only concerned with world dominion.

The sad truth of America's gradual erosion of liberty is that it was borne not of external imperialistic ambition, but of fear. The United States has whipped up fear as a political tool to exert control over an increasingly unpredictable world, not out of any ambition to conquer it.

Here's what I think: America is not dead. It cannot die, because it is an idea. We do desperately need to evolve our government to adhere to this idea and its influence in the world, but not whip American citizenry into a further frenzy of fear and complicit doom. We need to think differently; optimistically, constructively, as a revolutionary, which Naomi does not do. But in her own words:

"Here's what we're not taught: Those words ["...life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness..."] at the time they were written were blazingly, electrifyingly subversive. If you understand them truly now, they still are. These men and the women who supported their work were walking further out into the unknown - betting on ordinary people's capacities - than anyone had ever walked in the history of the human race. You are not taught - and it is a disgrace that you aren't - that these men and women were radicals for liberty; that they had a vision of equality that was a slap in the face of what the rest of the world understood to be the unchanging, God-given order of nations; and that they were willing to die to make that desperate vision into a reality for people like us, whom they would never live to see." (p.27)

Let's hearken back to that intrinsic American motivation and enthusiasm, predicated on building a better world, rather than withdrawing into a fearful, pessimistic one.

Lucius says

A Clarion Call for Patriots, January 20, 2008

What Naomi Wolf sees in the current state of affairs in America is a "fascist shift" - a subtle (and not so subtle) erosion of our Constitutional Democracy in the post 9/11 reality of perpetual global war. It is worth noting that according to Mussolini, fascism rejects pacifism. And, as he proclaimed in a 1932 Italian Encyclopedia article, "fascism believes neither in the possibility nor the utility of perpetual peace..." (What is Fascism)

Wolf has studied both historians and political scientists who have identified 10 salient characteristics of fascist states. Wolf examines how these have played out throughout the course of modern history and then draws striking parallels with what is happening right here at home under our very noses. And it ain't a pretty picture.

But this slender tome is not merely a delineation of the abuses of power endemic to the current administration; it is, indeed, as the subtitle has it, a "warning" to all Americans to resist this downward spiral into an American version of fascism that will come draped in the flag.

As the Executive Branch has progradatically consolidated power in this Age of Terror, it is worth noting, once again, Mussolini's belief that "Fascism denies that the majority, by the simple fact that it is a majority, can direct human society..." Thus, the abrogation of our participation in Federal government to the Executive Branch, corporate lobbyists and special interests is perfectly in line with his philosophy and does not bode well for We the People. Given the prerogative of presidential 'signing statements', the Congress, notes Wolf, has become little more than an advisory body with little real power.

We are, apparently, too much concerned with celebrities and feel-good pharmaceuticals to take an active role in preserving our liberties in the face of "the global war on terror". But as Benjamin Franklin warned, "They who can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety." (Contributions to the Conference on February 17 (III) Fri, Feb 17, 1775)

That the cover and chapter heads of this volume evoke Thomas Paine is no accident. Paine's voice echoes throughout this "Letter...To A Young Patriot". And as General Washington insisted that his rag-tag militamen read Paine, so each citizen who would resist the tide of creeping fascism ought to read Wolf and prepare to do battle with forces foreign and domestic that would strip us of our liberties.

The Founding Fathers knew what it was to live under a tyrannical government. Their wisdom and their vision insured that we, their posterity, would inherit a government responsive to the will of the People. It is that very legacy that is in danger of being co-opted by forces that assume they can shape our history.

Read this book. Resist the powers that be.

Lynn says

I heard Wolf speak at a local bookstore yesterday, as well as on Stephen Colbert a couple of weeks ago, and was thoroughly blown away. Then I bought the book (short, fast read) and spent most of the night reading it. Everyone should, as I did, put aside whatever they are doing, buy this book, read it, pass it on to a friend who promises to read it and pass it on. And then hit the streets.

One of the things that Wolf talked about (in person, not in the book) is that once you are familiar with the system and examples from history everything becomes predictive since you know what the next step will be. And I predict that in a month or two, you won't be able to buy this book, so get it now.

In "The End of America" Naomi Wolf tells the story about how American citizens are being set up to lose their freedom and liberty in "10 easy steps" that are common to all modern fascist shifts. She sheds light on a veritable business

plan or blueprint on how to hijack open democratic systems of government and turn them into closed systems through campaigns of disinformation, terror and brutality, based on examination of the Italy in the 20s, Russia and Germany in the 30s, and some examples from East Germany in the 50s-80s and Chile in the 70s. These 10 steps are:

1. Invoke a terrifying internal and external enemy
2. Create a gulag
3. Develop a thug caste
4. Set up an internal surveillance system
5. Harass citizens' groups
6. Engage in arbitrary detention and release
7. Target key individuals
8. Control the press
9. Dissent equals treason
10. Suspend the rule of law

Obviously this all sounds familiar if you pay even casual attention to the news.

She also talks discusses how the framers of the Constitution were real worried about how this could happen here, which is why they created the system of checks and balances and the Bill of Rights, all of which are going rapidly down the tubes. I know that civil liberties seem kind of abstract and not all that relevant to our daily lives, but that is because most of us have always had them. When you lose them, life really changes, even for people who aren't political and generally keep their mouths shut and out of trouble.

Most distressing are the new laws mean that any one of us can be named as an enemy combatant at the whim of the president with no evidence, detained indefinitely without trial and tortured. Also that the president can nationalize the state national guards (or use private militias such as Blackwater) as a domestic police force in response to a natural disaster, disease outbreak, terrorist attack or "other condition". These are recent laws, written by the Administration and passed by a Congress that is too cowed to stand up for our rights.

Wolf sees the next few months at being critical at finalizing the closure of our society before the 2008 elections. She is trying to do a Tom Paine kind of thing with this book and it works pretty well. Its purpose is not to depress us but to wake us up and motivate us not to let it happen. Read it! Now!

Jeanette "Astute Crabbist" says

I cannot give this book any less than five stars. I so greatly admire Naomi Wolf for having the courage and audacity to warn her fellow Americans about what is still happening right under their noses.

Other reviewers here have covered the details of the book, so I won't do so. It's only about 150 pages, so if you care about your rights as an American citizen, you can read for yourself. This is not an idiotic partisan rant in the manner of that Coulter cow. Wolf wants to motivate ALL Americans to speak up and demand a return to the rule of law. Her claims and references are documented.

In short, Wolf devotes one chapter each to ten steps would-be dictators take when they want to kill democracy and free speech. She covers how Hitler, Mussolini, Pinochet and others took these steps. Then she gives real examples of comparable things Bush and his cronies have done that parallel each of these same ten steps.

Wolf's purpose is to wake people up in America and show them, "Yes, it CAN happen here." The U.S. Constitution has been greatly undermined over the past few years, with most changes sheepishly sanctioned by Congress. Getting rid of Bush does not make the problem go away. The losses of rights and protections are now part of laws enforceable by all future presidents.

The title of the book comes across as a little extreme, but it's not really. She gives certain possible scenarios and asks, "If this happened, would that be the end of America?" So anyway, that's where the title comes from.

Atrebs says

I encourage you, regardless of political party affiliation, to pick up and read this book. It strikes a comparison between the rise to power of the dictators of the past (Hitler, Mussolini, Pinochet, etc.) and what she calls the "fascist shift" in American to an antidemocracy that has our founding fathers rolling in their graves. I was struck by the same stomach wrenching feelings I had while watching *John Adams* that our predecessors who gave their all for our freedom would be horrified by what is taking place in American society today.

In comparing the 'echoes' of fascism, as some claimed her comparison to Nazi Germany or Mussolini's Italy was not like the American situation, she says: "there is no guarantee that America is different if Americans fail to take up the Patriot's task".

Definitely a lot to think about. Her ten steps to dictatorship are compelling in light of the similarities between the government's tactics post 9/11 and the tactics of Hitler and the Nazi party. Yikes!
