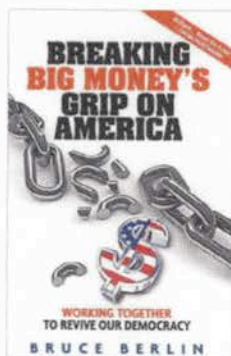


BOOK OF THE WEEK REVIEW



BRUCE BERLIN



"Breaking Big Money's Grip on America — Working Together to Revive Our Democracy" by Bruce Berlin
Our Time Books, \$14.95, 140 pp.

BY DAVID STEINBERG
FOR THE JOURNAL

In his 2009 book "The Empire of Illusion," author Chris Hedges argues that the United States "has been hijacked by oligarchs, corporations, and a narrow, selfish, political and economic elite ...that governs, and often steals, on behalf of moneyed interests."

In his 2012 book "Billionaires & Ballot Bandits," Greg Palast declares that the country is looking more like an economy that is "titled toward enriching the wealthy 1 percent and serving the mercantile needs of multinational corporations with little allegiance to our country."

A small, new book lays out an ambitious blueprint to accomplish what is summarized in its title — "Breaking Big Money's Grip on America."

The author is Bruce Berlin of Santa Fe.

Berlin proposes that Americans of all walks of life band together under a banner that he would call the Democracy Movement. He envisions it as a massive movement crossing political party lines, involving conservatives and liberals, and bringing in millions who have given up on the political process.

"...an important strategy of the Democracy Movement must be to persuade a good number of these (disenchanted) Americans that their participation in the political process will make a transformative difference."

How to fundamentally change a political system he sees as broken?

The movement must explain that big money's grip on government has denied Americans their fair share of the nation's wealth.

Two core issues remain — to show Americans of all political views as equals and the elimination of government corruption.

The author contends that our deepening income inequality leads to greater political inequality.

Berlin also exposes specific political inequalities — part of the grip of the wealthy — that he says exist in campaign financing and in lobbying.

There is an urgency to his call for the creation of the Democracy Movement. Berlin thinks the movement can help shape the 2016 elections.

Voter turnout must increase.

He thinks the movement can also make a significant impact this year by setting the stage "for a bigger, more effective campaign to break Big Money's grip in the 2018 election cycle."

A retired attorney, Berlin has focused on social justice issues. He has worked on bipartisan approaches to U.S.-Soviet relations and the diversification of Los Alamos National Laboratory.

GAME CHANGER

Santa Fe author sees a way to create a more equitable political and economic system for America

