



Screwed: The Undeclared War Against the Middle Class - And What We Can Do about It

Thom Hartmann , Greg Palast (Afterword) , Mark Crispin Miller (Foreword by)

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Nationally syndicated radio host and bestselling author Thom Hartmann exposes the covert war conservatives, and corporations are waging against America's middle class, a war that's reducing the rest of us to a politically impotent working poor. This book asks: How did this happen? Who's benefiting? And how can we stop it?

Screwed: The Undeclared War Against the Middle Class - And What We Can Do about It Details

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From Reader Review Screwed: The Undeclared War Against the Middle Class - And What We Can Do about It for online ebook

Dan Smith says

Let's create a big government that has all the money and power and they will altruistically make sure that everyone has everything equally the same amount regardless of what value they provide, risk they take, or what they create? This is what Thom suggests. This scary platform of entitlement and "right to have" is similar to the platform that has created many corrupt historical governments who oppress (with the money and power they are given) the people who gave it to them to create a magical utopian society where no one works, and everyone gets. Oh and even worse if you don't agree with Thom then you are dumb and don't understand economics.

This is a horrible book that is damaging to our people and society. Read this if you want to become more ignorant and be insulted by having the crazy thought that people with money don't actually store it in huge Scrooge McDuck buildings and swim around in it but actually reinvest it back into the economy through lending and equity investments. Oh wait that part of economics is outside Thom's Keynesian understanding, so anyone who doesn't agree with him doesn't understand "basic economics" and the global banking system doesn't exist to provide businesses and economies with liquidity to build and create it actually hurts the economy because those rich people aren't blowing all their money to create artificial short-term demand through over consumption. Money is not stagnate or scarce and even the person who respects funds so much that they become rich because they do not blow every last dollar they have plus everything they can borrow actually creates more multiplying value (relative value per person) effect in the hands of those few than every redistributed dollar blown by the "entitled" many.

Thom actually proposes that businesses, who by the way can actually only earn money and stay in existence if they innovate and become good stewards of the funds that are entrusted to them, are "evil". He proposes that a giant government that has never in the history of ever been able to centralize planning and massively heap regulation on its people to the point that their people have a thriving middle class long term are "good". Thom never actually provides any real examples of his magical giant government that has been able to effectively take from those who create to give to those who "deserve" or are entitled to more because no government has ever done that and sustained over the long-haul. Nor does he show real evidence that any government huge regulatory power has the ability to provide any real value to the people it serves past basic enforcement of rights, freedom for its people to make their own choices (smart or dumb), safety to express those choices without violent recourse (smart or dumb), and enforcement that when people make dumb choices they need to take responsibility for it. He only gives bits and slices of self interpretive time periods of good times and compares against bad times alluding to causation that the good times came from bureaucratic liberalism policies and the bad times came from evil rich people who over guided conservatives for their own self interests. Btw Thom that's not evidence of anything just fairy tale selling and sadly too many people will grab on to fairy tales then figure out how to create more for themselves.

When I was in high school the kid who ran against me for student government had many people vote for him because he promised soda from every fountain, but even though that kid got a lot of votes (similar to the many positive reviews of this book) something for nothing does not exist in the real world (yep fairy tales). No matter how hard you think you work it doesn't matter its the long term value you provide and the magnitude of that value you provide that determines what you make and earn.

Free lunches (wealth redistribution) and entitlement societies have not been shown to work long-term from many societies before us. Even randomness can be correlated to anything so picking a "happy" time in the U.S. economy (which has so many variables) and then comparing that upward movement and saying that is a

causal effect is the slight of hand that many have used to prey on others in the past. We should say no thank you to Mr. Hartmann's snake oil pitch and critically think through how it would be possible that some liberal policy or short sighted "new deal" law of the past, that has proven to be unsustainable long term in the future will somehow be magically better for everyone if we just put more money and power (regulation) in the governments hands. This book is insulting to our founding fathers and especially the connotation that the foundation they built was to create an entitled middle class that deserved guarantees and some of something someone else has because that "fair". America became a great nation and the founding fathers built this great nation on the foundation of people making their own choices and being responsible for those choices. Our history is based on free enterprise, entrepreneurs, and risk taking. Each great leap in our nation's history happened by the courage of the few who believed they were owed nothing and would create in spite of everyone who said they could not. Those few (in comparison to the numbers of everyone else) risked it all knowing that if they could create significant enough value to everyone they would be rewarded well.

Our founding fathers did not build this nation with the intention that people are entitled to a "middle class", to be good enough, a job, or some guaranteed benefit structure. If you provide the value that a company wants to give those things to you because they believe you are worth it then great but saying all are entitled to it and that an inefficient slow moving government should ensure all should have it was never their intention. Opportunity for all to have life and liberty so they could pursue happiness was what they intended. They did not intend life, liberty, and the entitlement of happiness for all.

I say to you Thom, your Dad had the middle class he did because companies at the time believed that was how to attract and retain good people. Like any good company, that would like to sustain long term, they realized that what they offered before was not sustainable, and they had to change to meet the current times. You can demand that the government force the buggy whip company to stay in business by having a bloated over taxing government regulate and give special interests offerings to keep those company's open in the short run. But you can't force people into buying a buggy whip they don't need when they have a car (that will soon drive itself) at an outrageous price to make sure that you or your grandkids have a buggy whip company pensions.

If this country wants to create a great middle class, everyone start reaching for the moon knowing that you may not reach it, but if you don't reach the moon someday (and become rich) what you will end up with is still much better than the rest of the world. People stop demanding entitlements from government and start looking for how you can provide more value or create greater innovation. Like any statistical curve, if you have a high-end "rich" and a low-end "poor" you will have a mean "middle class". If we all work to create more thinking about what I can do and not what am I entitled to, the middle class average will increase and we will see a better middle class then ever in the history of time. Heaven help us if we as nation believe that we deserve more then we have but are unwilling to do more to get it. If we believe that the good life is our right and the only way to get it is from government forced mandates on free enterprise, we like so many people before us will struggle and likely fail.

Sorry founding fathers for this book's insulting corruption on where we started as a great nation. You provided us the framework of greatness for all of us but required each of us to make it happen with promises of nothing more then we could have what we each created for ourselves.

Jason says

Left me wanting to do more, and be more involved in my local government , not for just me and my family , but for my children and there children's children , I strongly feel that the middle class works harder today just to stay in the middle class . Why is that ? So many questions, I see its not just me there are others who feel the same way !

Joy says

Even though Thom Hartmann wrote “Screwed, The Undeclared War Against the Middle Class” 2006-07, the book remains sadly relevant today, perhaps even more so with the middle class fighting for its’ life in the 2012 election.

I’ve followed Thom Hartmann for years now, downloading his radio broadcast to get my daily history and economics lessons, and current political news and commentary.

“Screwed” provides a “To-Do” list for the middle class to fight back against the conservatives and Neo-Cons of the late 2000’s:

“First, we must recognized and reclaim the government programs that create a middle class:

- Return to the American people our ownership of the military, the prison system, and the ballot box.

- Fight for free and public education that encourages critical thinking, historical knowledge, and a love of learning in each child. Combat the No Child Left Behind Act and the belief that education is a commodity that can be tested.

- Fight for a national single-payer health-care system based on Medicare.

- Fight for Social-Security-do not let it be privatized or co-opted.

- Fight for progressive taxation: reinstate a rate of 35 percent on corporations and a rate of 70 percent on the wealthiest 5 percent of Americans-and use the money to pay back the Scoial Security system and to fund an economic investment program.

- Fight for a living wage and for the right of labor to organize.

- Fight for a national energy program that puts people and the planet-not Big oil-first.”

Hartmann concludes “Screwed” with a quote from Winton Churchill: “Never, never, never, never, in nothing great or small, large or petty, never give in except to convictions of honor and good sense. Never yield to force; never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy.”

Hartmann reminds us “We are fighting a war in America for the very heart and soul of our country. But it’s a war we can do something about. Don’t let yourself be screwed. Speak up, fight back, and never, never yield.”

Bravo, Thom!!!

Patyn says

I host a radio show called Hypocrisy and this was a selection for our book review. If this political issues interest you, check out our pages:

www.goodreads.com/group/show/131811

www.facebook.com/hypocrisy

Awesome read. Very informative and but also it makes a great case for where legislation should go from here. I found myself questioning a few of the minor details; some seemed like things in which I will need to investigate further. However, the underlying message - that when money accumulates in the hands of a small group of people, not only is our democracy compromised, but our middle class gets screwed. I would definitely recommend this book to anyone just breaking into economics/politics because it covers a large array of topics (social security, health care, education, etc.) and it is written and explained in a way that the average person can comprehend.

MsBrie says

Acclaimed radio host and renowned author, Thom Hartmann, does it again, providing a provocative look at one of America's most ignored social and political issues- the immanent demise of the middle class.

Hartmann offers an historical perspective to back up his positions, often referring to the original intent of the founding fathers, pointing out how many of the original signers of the Constitution had the intent of assisting the poor and preventing the rich from ruling/becoming the government.

Hartmann demonstrates how it is a combination of Reagan Economics and the ascendance of corporatehood into personhood that has gradually, and more recently, hastily, led to a concentration of wealth among the few, jobs which are being shipped overseas, and incomes that are faltering steadily. In short- the rise of corporate dominance is destroying the middle class.

Engaging and well supported, Hartmann once again has produced a provocative 5 star book.

Chazzle says

Most of this book is probably a "Michael Moore-ish" version of Lou Dobbs' latest book. In other words, it deals mostly with how the middle class is being squeezed more and more, and that it's mostly the Republicans' fault. However, the author is not beholden to the "D" (as in Democrat) label. He lumps in Bill Clinton with Reagan and Bushes I and II, primarily due to his support of NAFTA and GATT. His good guys are FDR and Dwight Eisenhower.

The most interesting, and chilling, passages occur in chapters 7 and 8. Really, really interesting parallels are drawn between the rise of fascism in Italy, and the rise of the "corporatocracy" in the U.S.

Largely, I agree with the book's themes. However, the book tends to jump around too much. The editing could have been more professional, too.

Alejandro says

Amazing, it solidified my opinions on how the elite wealthy corporation's war on the working class has been successful for 100 years.

Book says

Screwed: The Undeclared War Against the Middle Class by Thom Hartmann

"Screwed..." is a fantastic book about how the corporate right has threatened democracy by systematically squeezing the middle class. This 249-page book is composed of fifteen chapters that are broken out by the following three parts: Part I: A Middle Class Requires Democracy, Part II. Democracy Requires a Middle Class and Part III. Governing for We the People.

Positives:

1. Thom Hartman has a way with words. His elegant prose is matched by cogent thoughts.
2. It's a pleasure to read a book from a knowledgeable author who knows how to engage the reader.
3. What a wonderful way to learn history. Interesting and accessible.
4. An inspiring book with substance. There is conviction and passion behind his words.
5. Knowledge is a powerful tool. This book is empowering.
6. Our beliefs should be as strong as the evidence for them. Mr. Hartmann provides well-referenced compelling arguments.
7. The middle class defined and a wonderful historical account on the vision of our founding fathers.
8. The close relationship between the middle class and democracy.
9. Democrats versus the Cons, and why the shoe fits.
10. The realization backed by a long list of examples that business will not always do what's best for society.
11. The legacy of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal.
12. Fascinating look at the failed political philosophy of Ronald Reagan.
13. One of the great strengths of this book is that not only does it point out the negative factors that have threatened our democracy but how to reclaim it. Excellent!
14. Great thought-provoking quotes throughout.
15. Despite a clear progressive agenda, one that for the record I ascribe to, the author's criticism is even-handed. Mr. Hartmann is very critical of NAFTA and GATT which were signed by Bill Clinton.
16. The myth that a smaller government means fewer taxes for you and me. A "reverse Robin Hood".
17. The real roles of a democratic government.
18. Thomas Jefferson and the concept of "free" market in perspective.
19. Why the middle class is shrinking...so many great arguments.
20. The rise of the "corporateocracy" at the expense of us all.
21. Bad big pharma!
22. A fascinating look at the founders' vision. The great Thomas Paine.
23. The true historical significance of the Boston Tea Party. I'll drink to that!
24. Where the concept of corporations as persons came from and the implications. That tidbit alone is worth the price of the book.
25. What causes the loss of democracy? Find out.

26. American fascism illustrated.
27. How the Iraqi war screwed American taxpayers...upsetting to say the least.
28. The eye-opening account of prisons for profits and the implications.
29. Health care as it should be.
30. The evolution of health care in America.
31. What is threatening Medicare? Find out.
32. Social-Security as an anti-poverty insurance program, not an investment program.
33. What the government needs to do help increase the middle class.
34. The illegal employer problem.
35. The living wage as a step toward the middle class.
36. The need for progressive taxes and how it works.
37. Links worked great on the Kindle, thank you.
38. A treat to read from cover to cover and a future reference book.

Negatives:

1. Clearly Thom Hartmann has a progressive agenda, and at time gives you the illusion that FDR can do no wrong while Reagan was evil.
2. It never hurts to add charts or illustrations to complement the elegant prose.
3. Setting aside more time to read more books from Thom Hartmann.

In summary, A fabulous book that met all my expectations. Educational, fun, inspiring and so well researched it was a treat to read. Mr. Hartmann is one of the reasons I love reading books so much. Highly recommended.

Further suggestions: "Perfectly Legal..." by David Cay Johnston, "American Fascists..." by Chris Hedges, "The Conservative Assault on the Constitution" by Erwin Chemerinsky, and "Common Sense" by Thomas Paine

Ira Livingston says

Now seven years old, it still is important to today's readers. Very much recommend to those that are politically distraught with the country's current situation.

Amy says

This book really helped me put a lot of what happened to our country over the past 8 years in a historical perspective. This is a well-researched book that is broken up into topics that are easy for a lot of people to understand. It also contains a call-to-action checklist in the last chapter that can empower you to make some changes in your own local government.

James (JD) Dittes says

When did it become wrong for factory workers to earn enough money to send their kids to college? When did America turn its future, its voting, its national security, and its prisons over to corporations? And when did corporations earn the same rights (or better) than American citizens deserve?

Thom Hartmann tries to answer these questions by focusing squarely on the fortunes of America's middle class, which he sees in decline everywhere. Written at the nadir of the George W. Bush administration, it traces American history for the past 100 years through middle-class-colored glasses.

I really appreciated Hartmann's perspective, but there were a few things that seemed anachronistic, reading his book five years after the writing. For one, I had to chuckle at the way he exhorted the Boston Tea Party and Tom Paine's "Common Sense" three years before the Right would find itself in opposition and appropriate these symbols for themselves.

This is a good read, whether you are a Liberal or you're looking for a good liberal perspective to argue against.

Jon Norimann says

Hartmann has here written a good book about the troubles the middle class of USA is in. It's mostly a roundup book. There is nothing dramatic or new or novel in the book for those having followed the subject and problem.

For someone not used to US political debate the book may seem strange. Hartmann uses no general economic arguments and only refers to data on rare occasions. Instead the book is full of references to statements and intentions by US founding fathers, especially Thomas Jefferson and other US dignitaries over the years. A warped way of arguing to many but common in USA and Hartmann does a good job of it. If nothing else it guarantees the book becomes a light read.

4 stars seems appropriate for a good inside look at the troubles the US middle class is in. A must read for those interested in the subject of economic policy and also a book for those liking to keep up with what goes on in today's society.

Wm says

Not a whole lot new here if one is already familiar with the progressive agenda -- lots of talk about healthcare, the military industrial complex, the prison industrial complex, the evils of corporations. The remedies are all unions, singlepayer healthcare, etc.

However, this book is useful for three reasons:

1. The basic point that democracy is only sustainable where there is a middle class and that the middle class is under attack from a variety of forces.
2. As a reminder of how screwed up healthcare is in this country.
3. As a reminder that how conservatives frame the founding and history of this country isn't the only way to frame it.

I would imagine that most conservatives would dismiss this book as liberal drivel (and indeed it lacks the thoughtfulness and solid philosophical base of, to cite a recent author I've been interested in, Richard Sennett) even if there are some decent gotcha facts and stats. And there isn't enough discussion here to really

analyze if the remedies would really work.

But as a polemic it isn't all that bad, and one does wonder why the middle class isn't a bit more angry about how it's been treated by the right and by moderate Democrats. Of course, there was this recent election...

Chris says

Clear cut progressive/liberal bias, but hey HE USES FACTS. I thought it was well written, easy to follow, and Hartmann is one of the few truly intelligent voices in the talk radio business. This means of course he has a tiny amount of listeners compared to the right-Wingers.

Dawn Lucavs says

An amazing, eye-opening book for anybody wondering how we got into this mess we find ourselves in. Thom Hartmann really will show you the catastrophic decisions made by others in the past (and now) that have such a devastating effect on our middle class culture. Well worth checking out.
