



# Gangs of America: The Rise of Corporate Power and the Disabling of Democracy

*Ted Nace*

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## **Gangs of America: The Rise of Corporate Power and the Disabling of Democracy** Ted Nace

The corporation has become the core institution of the modern world. Designed to seek profit and power, it has pursued both with endless tenacity, steadily bending the framework of law and even challenging the sovereign status of the state.

After selling his successful computer book publishing business to a large corporation, Ted Nace felt increasingly driven to find answers to questions about where the corporation came from, how it got so much power, and where it is going. In *Gangs of America* he details the rise of corporate power in America through a series of fascinating stories, each organized around a different facet of the central question: "How did corporations get more rights than people?" Nace traces the events and people that have shaped the modern corporation to give us a fascinating look into the rise of corporate power.

## **Gangs of America: The Rise of Corporate Power and the Disabling of Democracy** **Details**

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Author : Ted Nace

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## From Reader Review Gangs of America: The Rise of Corporate Power and the Disabling of Democracy for online ebook

### Prattle On, Boyo says

If you want to know how the corporatocracy obtained the absolute chokehold it has on the US, then look no further than Nace's highly informative book. Here you will read about how corporations became "people," and now have more rights than the carbon-based kind. Excellent read, highly recommended.

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### Drew Downs says

For those fascinated by #OccupyWallStreet, you have to read this. An outstanding book. I had to update my review in hopes that more people would see it! An excellent history of the corporation in the U.S. and the long-term danger of corporate power. A must read!

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### Heath Emerson says

This reveals how corporations came to be in this country.

What surprised me most was that corporate capitalism is extremely anti-American, fundamentally and philosophically.

I would recommend this book to anyone who wants to know the real history of this country.

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### Friscomama says

I'm writing one review of two books, from opposite sides of the political divide. I was finishing the paperback

"Gangs of America" and listening to an audio download of "Drain the Swamp" at about the same time. This isn't a see-both-sides-of-the-story recommendation. It's more put-the-pieces-together-and-see-how-they-fit.

Gangs of America is a history of American corporations, and their changing status and rights. I must admit I was ignorant of most of this, although aware of the corporate influence on lawmaking, and the recent supreme court ruling that corporations are now persons. It is packed with information, and therefore not given to a quick read, but it is all interesting and accessible. Ted Nace is an environmental activist, and is the director of Coalswarm, which issues a weekly digest at [endcoal.org](http://endcoal.org)

Drain the Swamp: How Washington Corruption is Worse than You Think shows in gritty detail how laws, regulations and budgets are written now, and punishments for transgression from the party line. The author, Ken Buck applauds President Trump for executive orders repealing regulations . . . "Among the repealed regulations is the costly Clean Power Plan that would drive up electricity costs and kill American jobs, as well as the moratorium on federal coal leasing"

## Martin says

A really great book.

First chapters I was a little bit confused about the level of detail (too detailed for me - american history and justice), but I have stuck with the book. The book is comprehensive description about the corporate rights, how they appear, where they appear and so why the corporates have now so much power over the globe. Many sources, many citations. History.

*Typically a baker would have to go to work sometime between 8:00 p.m. and midnight. He would work all night, returning home at around lunchtime and spending the afternoon sleeping. Then he would have a few hours free for supper and family life before returning to The weekly schedule was either six or seven days, and some bakers actually were required to work a 24-hour shift on Thursdays. Workweeks as long as 114 or even 126 hours were reported. Under those conditions, merely gaining a 12-hour day would represent a significant improvement, and as late as 1881 bakers in New York City went on strike to achieve that goal.*

Did you know, that it was not normal to have limited liability? That companies could not own other companies in past? Did you know, that in Hong Kong companies now have a voting right?

*The day that corporations gained the right to vote, July 1, 1997, was unpleasantly hot and sticky, at least for the human beings who marked the occasion. Of course, the corporations themselves didn't mind. As the Union Jack went down and the flag of the People's Republic of China flew for the first time over the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, a new "mini-constitution" went into effect, designed by shipping tycoon Tung Chee Hwa and supported by the Beijing government and the Communist Party. It divided the 60 seats in Hong Kong's new Legislature as follows: 20 elected by voters, 10 elected by a Selection Committee controlled by Beijing, and 30 elected by "functional constituencies," which included professionals such as lawyers and architects but also corporations based in Hong Kong.*

*Advocates of democracy such as Christine Loh of the Citizens Party cried foul, pointing out that businesses in Hong Kong already enjoyed sufficient influence in the governmental process and didn't need the actual right of voting in order to have their interests represented. By its very nature, she asserted, the system devalued the rights of Hong Kong's 2.7 million human voters. Professor Byron Weng of the Chinese University of Hong Kong gave precise measure to the injustice. According to Weng's calculations, one corporation, the Sino Group, now enjoyed a quantity of direct electoral power equivalent to 6,100 human this due to Sino Group's control of various subsidiaries, each of which enjoyed a separate vote. Corporations voting? To our American mentality, the notion sounds absurd. But it does raise the question: what is the ultimate limit on corporate empowerment? As the Hong Kong example makes clear, corporations aren't the ones who are going to suggest limits.*

At the end author proposes some changes, what to do with that sad situation. I'm missing a little bit the process of change (maybe not so detailed in comparison to the rest of the book), but anyway - I like it.

*Finally, and most importantly, it will require a deep change in attitude, an embedded skepticism. The corporation is a powerful tool, and that makes it a dangerous one. After we domesticate and democratize the corporation, assuming we manage to do that, we'll still have to warn our kids, "Watch out. Keep an eye on this thing. And don't ever forget: it can bite."*

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### **Alex says**

Very engaging, well-written history of the development of corporations, particularly in America. I got it from the library, but may try to pick up a used copy to own, as it's a great reference in the fight against the Frankenstein-like creation of corporate "personhood", which has steadily co-opted the power of the government to the great detriment of We the People. Reagan was wrong - government isn't the problem; the corporate takeover of the government is the problem.

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### **Jonathan says**

History of the corporation in America and its power. Engaging, and short, this is worth reading over a couple of days. The author has interesting statistics and side stories mixed in to keep the work flowing.

Among the most interesting tidbits, the written case law that gives corporations person status in 1863 was a footnote written by the court reporter.

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### **C. Scott says**

Tremendous... a must read for anyone interested in corporate personhood and how it came about. I really learned a lot of valuable history here.

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### **James Igoe says**

Amazing insights into the founding and growth of, as well as the history of public opinion regarding, corporations. I repeatedly found myself astonished at the book's insights, those related to the creation and atrocities committed by the first corporations, the founding of the US and the impetus for the tea party, as well as the implications for the future.

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### **Dina says**

I will make this to be re-read. Excellent book that traces historical roots of corporations behaving as citizens and claiming constitutional rights. What always amazes me about humans is how dumb we are. Most of our civilization is based on slavery, where it was legal or illegal, yet we still claim we want free markets where fittest survives, and when we get them, we complain there are so many poor, drunk, destroyed, depressed

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people. You can't have your cake and eat it too. Either you have few elites ruling over dirty masses or you control your childbirth...and limit your human population so it can't be exploited. There is no other way. I guess we will never learn, and will always stay stupid repeating exactly the same behavior. What a mess.

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### **Peter Kahn says**

Details the rise of corporations from the 1300s and how various governments have sought to harness their power while limiting their dominance. Nace takes us through US history where corporations free themselves from the bonds of regulation to emerge as eternal beings concentrating power at the expense of democracy. Towards the end of the book Nace describes techniques used to control these constantly evolving entities.

This is an important read because if we don't stand up and demand our democracy back it will all be stripped away.

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### **Jessie says**

Teaches a great deal about corporations and the power that they have in American. Enlightening. Could not put it down.

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### **Rebecca McNutt says**

*Gangs of America* is interesting in both the author himself, who was driven to learn more about the depth of large corporations after selling his own small publishing company to one, and also in the way the book merges profit with politics and looks at how the two affect each other. Still, the way it looks at corporations as a whole is a bit extreme. I don't really think they're the downfall of democracy; that's a cry that's been voiced for years and not much has come of it. I do however like that the book doesn't stoop to fearmongering or mud-slinging and political banter. Books that do that rarely have much of substance worth saying, and *Gangs of America* offers instead a good commentary on the rise of the corporate world and also why it's so influential.

Many good points are made not only about the topic itself, but also about how the corporate structure can sometimes limit choices for consumers. I still wouldn't consider this a threat to democracy but it's sobering to consider this, because we've all seen how larger companies eat up the little companies and slowly begin to take over as the only venues to buy items. Here Chapters/Indigo bought up all the indie bookshops and cranked up the prices on items. Cineplex bought out most of the smaller movie theaters. Ikea took over as a dominating furniture store, so good luck ever finding a desk or a lamp that all your friends and neighbours don't have. It's kind of depressing. This book tries to stay on a level that's both fair and optimistic, calling for perhaps not changes in the corporate structure itself but changes in how we adapt willingly to it. If there's one message that rings true, it's that we all have a voice.

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### **James Bridgewater says**

This book is a very thorough history of corporations from before the American Revolution to the present. As

someone who gave birth to a corporation himself, the author has an interesting perspective on how corporations take on a life of their own. The book covers key turning points in history where corporations obtained new rights, some of which seemed pretty innocuous at the time, which enabled them to become the dominant force in our society today. It also compares the difference between corporate rights in the US vs Europe and discusses ways in which corporations in the US might be reined in a bit to achieve a better balance between corporate rights and the rights of bonafide human beings.

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## **Henriette says**

Important research, frank and forthright interpretation of historical processes in regard to the rising power of corporations, which by now in several instances possess more economic, organisational and legal power than nation states. It is so clear and concise that one wonders how come there aren't political and consumer organisations in the streets all over the globe, to force corporations to take ethical responsibility for the upholding of the planet. I also wonder why there's so little critique of corporate behavior?

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