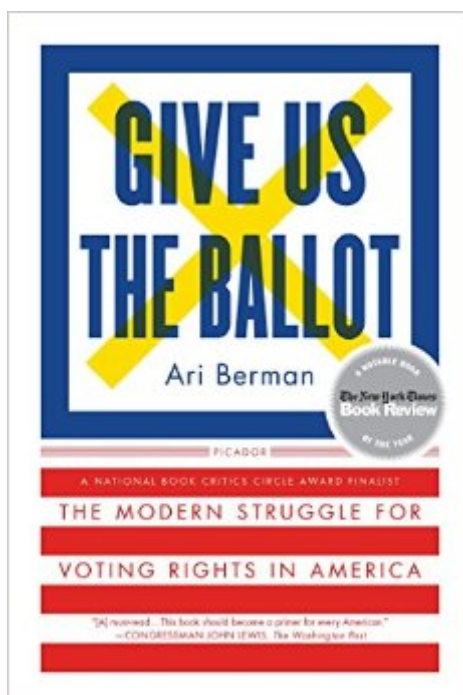


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# Give Us The Ballot: The Modern Struggle For Voting Rights In America



## Synopsis

A National Book Critics Circle Award Finalist, Nonfiction Named a Notable Book of the Year by The New York Times Book Review and The Washington Post Named a Best Book of the Year by NPR, The Boston Globe, and Kirkus Reviews (Best Nonfiction) Countless books have been written about the civil rights movement, but far less attention has been paid to what happened after the dramatic passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965 and the turbulent forces it unleashed. In this groundbreaking narrative history, Ari Berman charts both the transformation of American democracy under the VRA and the counterrevolution that has sought to limit it from the moment the act was signed into law. The VRA is widely regarded as the crowning achievement of the civil rights movement, and yet more than fifty years later the battles over race, representation, and political power continue, as lawmakers devise new strategies to keep minorities out of the voting booth, while the Supreme Court has declared a key part of the Voting Rights Act unconstitutional. Through meticulous research, in-depth interviews, and incisive on-the-ground reporting, Give Us the Ballot offers the first comprehensive history of its kind, and provides new insight into one of the most vital political and civil rights issues of our time.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Give Us the Ballot is the history of how the Voting Rights Act came into being, took hold and changed America. It's also the story of the conservative undertow that contested the law from its

beginning, recognized its value in shifting the polarities of our two major parties via "The Southern Strategy" and then launched a counterrevolution during the Reagan Administration set on undermining the law before the nation's changing demographics could pose a serious threat to the right's southern and rural hegemony. You'll recognize many of the stars of the conservative effort to limit voting rights -- from William Rehnquist to John Roberts to Ted Cruz. But it's the life of John Lewis who provides the through line of Berman's spirited narrative. From Selma to Shelby, Lewis is a participant and a witness to the massive changes he helped force and the backlash those changes sparked. No testimony is more stirring or crucial to understanding the stakes -- both moral and political -- involved in providing America's most vulnerable citizens access to the ballot. How many of you are going to leave here and remember the blood of the martyrs? • William J. Barber, the architect of North Carolina's Moral Mondays movement that rose up in part to oppose the right's attack on voting rights, asked a crowd in 2014. Berman's book is asking us that same question.

This book provides a superb history of the events leading to the Voting Rights Act, and the history of the impact of the Voting Rights Act, including countless efforts to limit the voting or impact of minority voters. The book also makes clear that the impetus behind voter fraud concerns and restrictions on early voting and registration is really an attempt to limit the voting of the poor and minority voters. Royal Masset, the former executive director of the Texas Republican party said that "anyone who says that a lack of voter ID won't discriminate against otherwise legal minority voters is lying" and said voter ID laws were "sheer racism" designed to suppress Democratic voters (at 259-260). Cutbacks in early voting hours were defended by the Republican party chair in Ohio who said we "shouldn't contort the voting process to accommodate the urban-read African-American-voter-turnout machine" (at 264).

I don't believe that this reviewer read the book. If he did, he was given an advanced copy for being a book blogger or one of the other perks for getting a review copy. Whether or not, the book is not about showing/proving social security numbers in order to vote in the United States, which actually reinforces my belief that the reviewer did not read the book, since that is the only complaint he has, and it's weak. In addition, a reviewer who received an advanced copy would know how weak the review is. I am currently reading the book, and I listened to the NPR Fresh Air interview with the author. Read before you decide. And, if you are interested in historical background that reflects current events, the book enlightens. I am in process of discovering how phony the US

looks, espousing its values while finding ways to thwart those values in order for a political view to prevail over another. My discovery is not limited to the subject of this book. Although I am far from finished, I will give the book 5 stars, since I can't put it down, and I have to go to work .

This is a powerful and important history of the crowning achievement of the Civil Rights Movement, the passage of the Voting Rights Act, the revolution that ensued upon its passage as well as the counter-revolution to strip that advancement of its meaning. Most civil rights histories end at 1968. This book takes us into the 21st century up to the fateful decision of the Supreme Court, decided without regarding mountains of evidence documenting persistent discrimination. Berman shares these facts implacably, coolly and with restraint, simply recounting the events that shaped both sides of the equation. That is what makes it a tour de force. His extensive research and sure grasp of the subject matter speaks for itself without any need on his part to editorialize or draw conclusions. If you ever wondered what happened to the civil rights movement during the Bush and Reagan years, this book will answer that question. A must read for anyone concerned about creating true democracy in America. Awaiting Berman's next effort to distill this topic.

Ari Berman's recent book, "Give Us the Ballot", is a tour de force when it comes to describing how the Voting Rights Act of 1965 became law and the desperate and vicious attacks since then on that law. It's no surprise that southern states, long in their own history of violence and voter suppression, figure heavily here. It's a shameful record. While events leading up to the passage of the Voting Rights Act are well documented and narrated by the author, the real interest for me as a reader is what has happened since. The book really begins to crackle when Berman describes the 2000 presidential election and the mischief that occurred in Florida. Leave it to misfits like Katherine Harris to disregard the votes of so many Floridians. Yet unbelievably, it is Chief Justice John Roberts who leads the charge as protagonist to new voting restrictions. Through purges in voter rolls and new restrictions on voter ID and early voting, reading this book makes one think that all or most of the progress that has been made since 1965 has been lost. When Moral Monday protests occurred in North Carolina in 2014 a prescient sign reading "Welcome to North Carolina/turn your watch back 50 years" provided an accurate feeling of how so few in southern state legislatures can cause so much damage in such a short space of time. "Give Us the Ballot" is an exceptionally well-crafted and documented book. The personal stories of many voters who were not allowed to register and/or vote are presented here and their reflections are all too sad... and yet for them, necessary to be related to readers. I highly recommend "Give Us the Ballot" because it tells the

story of how a great country of ours can be reduced by those people in power who can't see the forest for the trees."

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