

The Education Myth

author: Jon Shelton

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Synopsis

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The Education Myth questions the idea that education represents the best, if not the only, way for Americans to access economic opportunity. As Jon Shelton shows, linking education to economic well-being was not politically inevitable. In the 18th and 19th centuries, for instance, public education was championed as a way to help citizens learn how to participate in a democracy. By the 1930s, public education, along with union rights and social security, formed an important component of a broad-based fight for social democracy.

Shelton demonstrates that beginning in the 1960s, the political power of the education myth choked off powerful social democratic alternatives like A. Philip Randolph and Bayard Rustin's Freedom Budget. The nation's political center was bereft of any realistic ideas to guarantee economic security and social dignity for the majority of Americans, particularly those without college degrees. Embraced first by Democrats like Lyndon Johnson, Jimmy Carter, and Bill Clinton, Republicans like George W. Bush also pushed the education myth. The result, over the past four decades, has been the emergence of a deeply inequitable economy and a drastically divided political system.

The book is published by Cornell University Press. The audiobook is published by University Press Audiobooks.

"A provocative and inspired intervention into debates about education, inequality, and the political realignments of the last half century." (Lily Geismer, Claremont McKenna College)

"Required reading for anyone concerned about the fate of American democracy." (Jennifer C. Berkshire, coauthor of *A Wolf at the Schoolhouse Door*)

"A definitive account of how education policy displaced a broader social democratic agenda in the US, and how education has defined the fault lines of contemporary politics." (Cristina Viviana Groeger, Lake Forest College)

Reader's comments

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