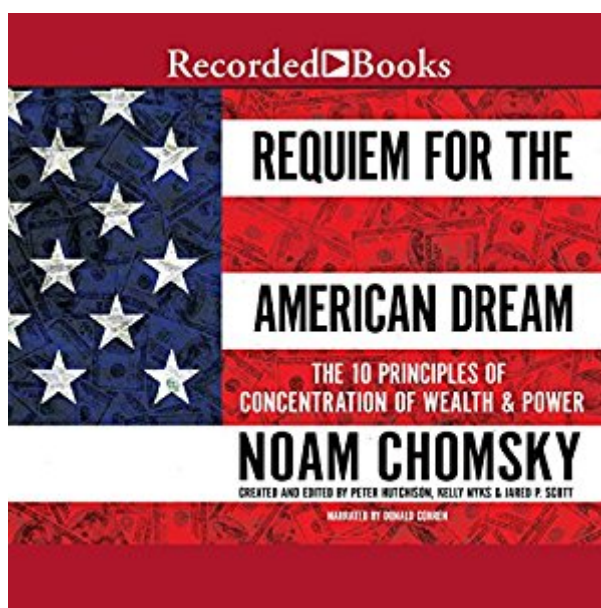


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# Requiem For The American Dream: The Principles Of Concentrated Wealth And Power



## Synopsis

Noam Chomsky is widely regarded as the most influential thinker of our time, but never before has he devoted a major book to one topic: income inequality. "During the Great Depression, things were much worse than they are today, but there was an expectation that things were going to get better. There was a real sense of hopefulness. There isn't today.... Inequality is really unprecedented. In terms of total inequality, it's like the worst periods in American history. But if you refine it more closely, the inequality comes from the extreme wealth in a tiny sector of the population, a fraction of 1 percent.... Not only is it extremely unjust in itself, inequality has highly negative consequences on the society as a whole because the very fact of inequality has a corrosive, harmful effect on democracy."(Noam Chomsky, in *Requiem for the American Dream*) *Requiem for the American Dream* is not an essay collection but an entire work of some 70,000 words, based on four years of interviews with Chomsky by the editors. Chomsky considers these to be his final, long-form documentary interviews. It is a book that makes Chomsky's breadth and depth accessible and at the same time gives us his most powerful political ideas with unprecedented, breathtaking directness. It will go down as one of his greatest and most lasting contributions. *Requiem for the American Dream* is being produced in tandem with the film of the same name that was recently released in selected theaters to rave reviews and standing ovations. It will be on Netflix and touring colleges prior to the book's release.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

For decades, economic scholars have commented on the dangers inherent in the growing concentration of wealth in Western society. Though misleadingly referred to as “income inequality” in the new media, this critically important topic actively entered public debate in 2011 with Occupy Wall Street. Nobel Prize-winning economists Joseph Stiglitz and Paul Krugman and others added to the debate in the years that followed. Then, Senator Bernie Sanders flogged the issue at every opportunity in his presidential race in 2016, giving the issue further prominence. If there’s anyone alive and alert in America today who isn’t aware that the concentration of wealth is a growing problem for our society, I’d be surprised. Few contemporary American observers have a clearer-headed understanding of the issue and its causes than Noam Chomsky. Chomsky, born in 1928, is widely regarded as the father of modern linguistics and one of the founders of the field of cognitive science. He’s also well known “some might say notorious” as an activist and social commentator. He has written dozens of books on the technical aspects of his academic work, and even more on politics. But his latest, *Requiem for the American Dream: The 10 Principles of Concentration of Wealth & Power*, is not a book he wrote. Instead, the book was distilled from a 2015 film of the same name, a documentary patched together using interviews filmed over four years with Chomsky. Unlike the books he has written, most of which are slow going and many (the texts on linguistics, impenetrable), *Requiem* consists entirely of transcriptions from the spoken word. The style is conversational and uses only a bare minimum of jargon. It’s a quick read, and an enlightening one. As Chomsky notes, “Power has become so concentrated that not only are the banks too big to fail, but as one economist put it, they are also too big to jail.” Given our experience over the past decade, it would be difficult to argue with that. And anyone who closely follows events in American society today would say the same about this observation by Chomsky: “the rich and powerful, they don’t want a capitalist system. They want to be able to run to the nanny state as soon as they’re in trouble, and get bailed out by the taxpayer.” If the American people fully understood how much tax money is funneled to corporations as subsidies, and how much the tax code has been distorted to favor them and their shareholders, they would storm Washington DC by the millions. In *Requiem*, Chomsky presents ten “principles” that together explain how the massive concentration of wealth in America today has come about. (His analysis applies to other wealthy countries as well, but it fits the U.S. best.) His argument is best summed up as what he calls a vicious circle: “Concentration of wealth yields concentration of power, particularly so as the cost of elections skyrockets, which

forces the political parties even more deeply into the pockets of major corporations. The 10 principles underlying this reality, as Chomsky sees them, are: Reduce Democracy Shape Ideology Redesign the Economy Shift the Burden Attack Solidarity Run the Regulators Engineer Elections Keep the Rabble in Line Manufacture Consent Marginalize the Population. I've never seen a more comprehensive or economical explanation of how wealth has come to be so concentrated in so few hands in the U.S. today. Most of these principles are self-evident at a glance. Only two may require explanation. Chomsky uses the word "solidarity" as a synonym for empathy, caring for others, or "concern for your fellow man," to cite another archaic expression. His Principle #8, "Keep the Rabble in Line," refers to the coordinated 45-year effort by Big Business and Right-Wing ideologues to destroy the labor movement. The editors of *Requiem*—Peter Hutchison, Kelly Nyks, and Jared P. Scott—have interspersed short passages from other sources among the 10 Principles. The sources range over the centuries: from Aristotle and James Madison to Harry Truman and Martin Luther King Jr. These short excerpts from classic documents, speeches, press reports, and social commentaries add depth to the book's presentation and enhance understanding of Chomsky's message. Chomsky's views have often been regarded as extreme. Certainly, he is vilified by commentators and scholars on the Right. But if you read *Requiem for the American Dream*, I think you'll find his reading of history is accurate, his logic is sound, and his view of America today is "sadly" right on target.

Clear summary of the fundamentals and history of the mechanisms enabling and sustaining concentration of power to the few with wealth. Included are excerpts of related writings supporting the topics from a variety of sources: Adam Smith, James Madison, Aristotle, Alan Greenspan, Citigroup document, Standard and Poors research, John Dewey, etc. The related material gives you a hint that what Chomsky is writing about is not far fetched but grounded in a rich history of ideas about how the world should work.

Chomsky's elaboration of how we got to now and the techniques and strategies of the wealthy ruling elite is delivered in a succinct and easy-to-understand text. Essential reading for those trying to make real sense of the world today or looking for ways to take control back from the few and give a voice to the masses.

Very timely. Very interesting. It's the companion book to the documentary by the same name. I liked

that he went back 50 years to put what is happening today in our government and society in prospective and giving us the history of what has led up to today. He gives examples as well as excerpts of his source materials. This is written so it can be understood by everyone. I learned a lot. There is a lot to think about in these pages.

How is power eroding from citizens to elites. A gradual disenfranchising of the commons in favor of power concentration and elitism.

Ever since the mid 1960s when he decided to take an incredibly insightful, courageous and ethical stand just before the thick of the Vietnam War, Chomsky's been expounding and writing at length about Washington-Israeli lawlessness and brutality across the globe. In so many of those magnificent works (roughly over 70 books!) he'd occasionally toss in a few passages about the American domestic politico-economic scene as well. These chapters started to increase in frequency in the early 1990s when the stark reality of the decline U.S. working people were experiencing and massive runaway inequality were too blatant to ignore. By then the ruling class' assault on unions and workers' solidarity had been a relentless undertaking for well over a decade. As to be expected most of the establishment press gave the desperate plight of American workers and struggling middle class folks short shrift, not Chomsky. Along with a handful of other intellectuals at the time (Alexander Cockburn, Adolph Reed, Michael Parenti, James Petras, Holly Skar, committed labor activists, and some other intellectuals I'm forgetting at the moment) Chomsky delivered truth trips detailing exactly what was occurring and how we got to the point of a tiny obscenely rich parasitic financial elite pounding the bottom 90% of the population over the head. 'Requiem for the American Dream' is solely focused on this economic crisis the vast majority of us are now suffering under. It's simply spectacular in that among other domestic issues it concentrates on this recent post Occupy Wall Street period of the last several years. From runaway debt peonage to 70 hour work weeks to the plethora of bankruptcies and the decline in life expectancy for struggling folks across the nation, it's all documented and explained by Chomsky in his usual cogent and hard hitting manner, of course stunningly well-sourced and documented. He's always had that gift for cutting through the fog and baloney and actually saying something forthright and galvanizing, this gift is once again brought forth in this most recent work. Requiem for the American Dream must be read by anyone who recognizes the developing politico-economic nightmare and craves the historical background along with the contemporary analyses and critiques to formulate a strategy to wage class war against the elites who increasingly find themselves

fearfully sequestered in their gated communities with gun toting security at the ready.

My only problem with Noam's talks is that he'll say something outrageous and saddening, and I often won't know where to find the sources of his information to review myself. This is the much needed missing link, a lot of the stuff you can hear him talking about on YouTube is properly grounded in references here.

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