

Inequality and American Democracy: What We Know and What We Need to Learn // Russell Sage Foundation, 2005 // 9780871544131 // Political Science Lawrence R Jacobs, Lawrence R. Jacobs, Theda Skocpol // 2005 // 246 pages

In *Inequality and American Democracy*, editors Lawrence Jacobs and Theda Skocpol headline a distinguished group of political scientists in assessing whether rising economic inequality now threatens hard-won victories in the long struggle to achieve political equality in the United States. *Inequality and American Democracy* addresses disparities at all levels of the political and policy-making process. Kay Lehman Scholzman, Benjamin Page, Sidney Verba, and Morris Fiorina demonstrate that political participation is highly unequal and strongly related to social class. America is a republic. Nevertheless, more and more voices today are calling for America to become a direct democracy. Egalitarianism threatens our republic by undermining the social, familial, religious, and economic distinctions and inequalities that undergird our liberty. Copied. Select a Section 1/0. Toggle open close. Contrary to popular belief, America is not, nor was it meant to be, a pure democracy. America is a republic. Nevertheless, more and more voices today are calling for America to become a direct democracy. If we are confident about democracy as the fundamental principle governing society, then learning to practice democracy must become a golden thread throughout education. What this means varies for different stages of education, types of institution, places and people, but there are many examples from which to learn. The following seven steps suggest a strategy for transforming education into an engine of democracy, drawing on examples from across the world. 1. Teach practical politics at university. But when we forget this, rancorous populism and plebiscitary politics take hold, and we need to be given an old-fashioned history lesson to warn of the dangers ahead. As Grayling reminds us, democracy, understood as the rule of the majority, has never been sufficient in itself. From these classical debates, increasingly complex defenses of representative democracy emerged in England, America and France. Leading thinkers in the age of revolutions tried to reconcile the need for modern republics of great size and diversity with the idea of popular sovereignty — without succumbing to traditional sources of division and faction, most notably brought about by inequalities of property and wealth.