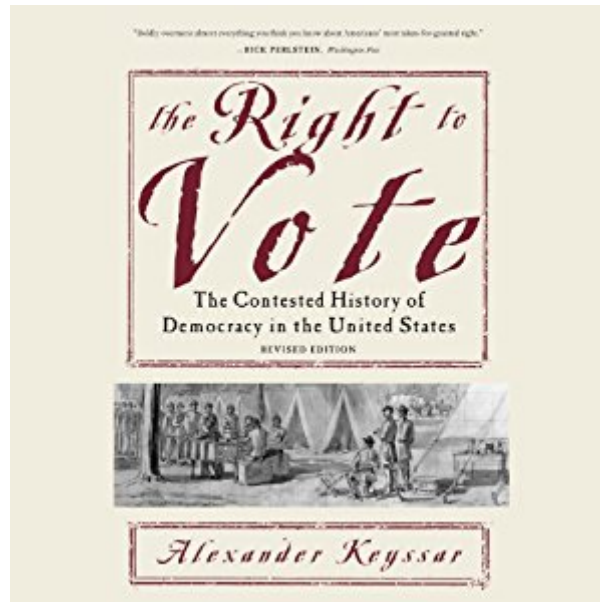


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# The Right To Vote: The Contested History Of Democracy In The United States



## Synopsis

Originally published in 2000, *The Right to Vote* was widely hailed as a magisterial account of the evolution of suffrage from the American Revolution to the end of the 20th century. In this revised and updated edition, Keyssar carries the story forward, from the disputed presidential contest of 2000 through the 2008 campaign and the election of Barack Obama. *The Right to Vote* is a sweeping reinterpretation of American political history as well as a meditation on the meaning of democracy in contemporary American life.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is a book that will make you angry. If you are a conservative, this book should make you feel very guilty. It is important to begin with that this book is a detour from Keyssar's larger project, which was supposed to be a history of the American working class' electoral participation. After struggling with the work for several years he realized that he needed to publish a whole book explaining what the right to vote actually was in American history. The result is a history of the slow and uneven path to universal suffrage in American history. We learn about the existence of the vote before 1776, the improvement that occurred with the revolution, and the larger improvement that occurred with the Jeffersonian/Jacksonian period in which the large majority of white men were able to vote. At the same time we learn of efforts to counter the expanding suffrage, such as disfranchisement of free blacks all over the country before 1861, attacks on the voting rights of paupers, felons, migrants and aliens, as well as the disfranchisement in the early 1800s of the limited voting rights women had in

the early 1800s. Keyssar then goes on to discuss the narrowing of the portals from the 1860s to the 1920s, periods ironically bounded by giving the vote to blacks in the 1870s and to women by the 1920s. But in between that period nearly all blacks and many whites were disenfranchised in the south, while literacy, residence, nationality and registration systems sought to limit the vote in the North (while "asiatics" were barred in the west).

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