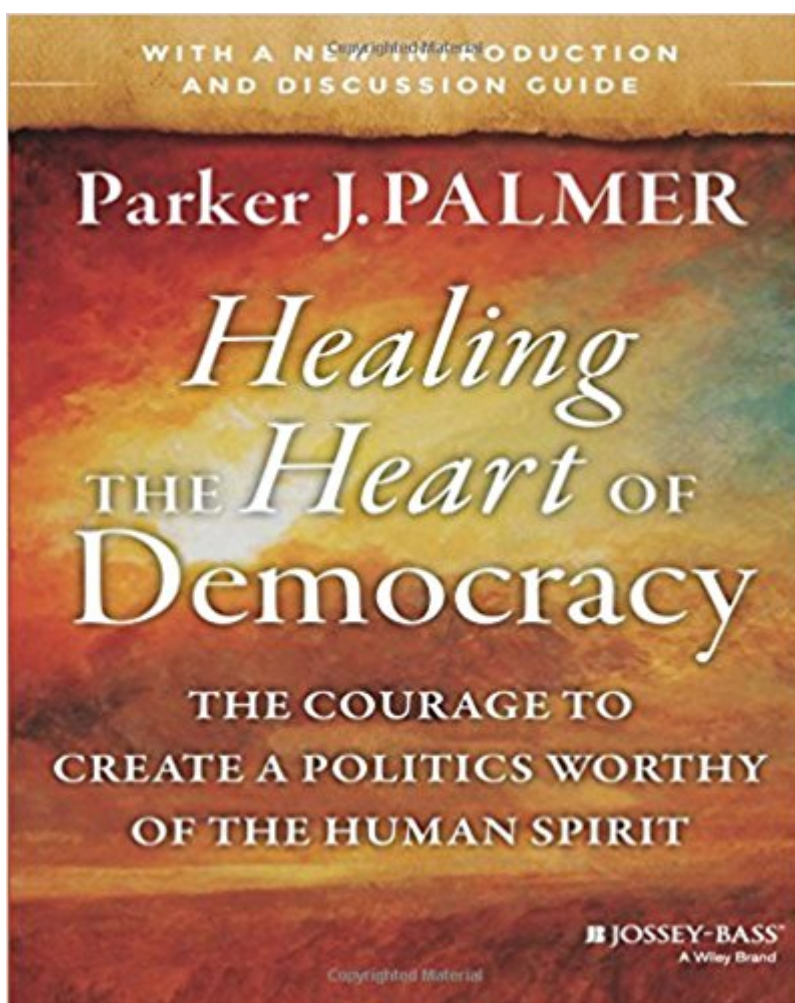




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# Healing The Heart Of Democracy: The Courage To Create A Politics Worthy Of The Human Spirit



## Synopsis

This 2014 PAPERBACK EDITION includes TWO NEW FEATURES: (1) A chapter-length INTRODUCTION in which Palmer explores his political experience since the book first came out in 2011, including a new way to understand "the great divide" in our political life. (2) A detailed DISCUSSION GUIDE with links to online resources -- including 40 brief video interviews with the author -- to facilitate more dialogue across political lines of the sort the book has inspired since it was published.

HOPE FOR AMERICAN DEMOCRACY IN AN ERA OF DEEP DIVISIONS

In *Healing the Heart of Democracy*, Parker J. Palmer quickens our instinct to seek the common good and gives us the tools to do it. This timely, courageous and practical work -- intensely personal as well as political -- is not about them, "those people" in Washington D.C., or in our state capitals, on whom we blame our political problems. It's about us, "We the People," and what we can do in everyday settings like families, neighborhoods, classrooms, congregations and workplaces to resist divide-and-conquer politics and restore a government "of the people, by the people, for the people." In the same compelling, inspiring prose that has made him a bestselling author, Palmer explores five "habits of the heart" that can help us restore democracy's foundations as we nurture them in ourselves and each other: (1) An understanding that we are all in this together. (2) An appreciation of the value of "otherness." (3) An ability to hold tensions in life-giving ways. (4) A sense of personal voice and agency. (5) A capacity to create community.

*Healing the Heart of Democracy* is an eloquent and empowering call for "We the People" to reclaim our democracy. *Publishers Weekly*, in a *Starred Review*, said "This beautifully written book deserves a wide audience that will benefit from discussing it." And the online journal *Democracy & Education* called it "one of the most important books of the early 21st Century."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"He bravely takes on the current political climate, and this book provides therapy for the American body politic. His insights are heart-deep: America gains by living with tension and differences; we can help reclaim public life by actions as simple as walking down the street instead of driving. Hope's hardly cheap, but history is made up of what Palmer calls 'a million invisible acts of courage and the incremental gains that came with them.' This beautifully written book deserves a wide audience that will benefit from discussing it." (A "Starred Review" from Publishers Weekly, 8 August 2011)

"Healing the Heart of Democracy is a hopeful book that lifts up and hallows the heart as a source of inner sight. Inspired by the efforts to understand and undergird democracy by Abraham Lincoln, Alexis de Tocqueville, Rosa Parks, and others; the author sends us on our way rejoicing with the small portion of hope that he has planted in our minds and souls."

(Spirituality & Practice)

"There is a deep and disturbing cloud hanging over the United States. It is a malaise that is leading to cynicism and self-centeredness. The antidote is to be found in the healing of the heart of our democracy, so that we might emerge from this private focus to a public one, which recognizes our interdependence. I know of no better guide to discerning the problem and the solutions, than this book by Parker Palmer. It is a prophetic book, one that needs to be taken with all due seriousness, if we are to emerge from our malaise stronger and healthier than before."

(Englewood Review of Books , 2011)

\* NEWS FLASH \* Healing the Heart of Democracy called "one of the most important books of the early 21st Century" for those who care about democracy. (Democracy & Education)\* NEWS FLASH \* Healing the Heart of Democracy named one of the "Best Books of 2011" on contemplation and social activism. (Spirituality & Practice)\* NEWS FLASH \* Parker J. Palmer named one of "25 Visionaries Who Are Changing Your World" -- people who "don't just think out loud but who walk their talk on a daily basis." (The Utne Reader)\* A Starred Review from Publishers Weekly \* Palmer's...newest was six years in the making. He bravely takes on the current political climate, with its atrophy of citizen participation, the ascendance of an oligarchy that shapes politics, and the substitution of vituperation for

thoughtful public discussion. It's a tall order that became even taller because Palmer had to climb out of a pit of depression -- his constitutional proclivity -- to do so. But wrestling with essential questions of public life became therapeutic, and this book provides therapy for the American body politic. Palmer's use of acute 19th-century observers of American life and character -- Tocqueville, Lincoln -- as well as his use of anecdotes and lessons from his own long career provide context and tonic. His insights are heart-deep: America gains by living with tension and differences; we can help reclaim public life by actions as simple as walking down the street instead of driving. Hope's hardly cheap, but history is made up of what Palmer calls "a million invisible acts of courage and the incremental gains that came with them." This beautifully written book deserves a wide audience that will benefit from discussing it.

~ August 8, 2011 ~

**ENDORSEMENTS**

\* We have been trying to bridge the great divides in this great country for a long time. In this book, Parker J. Palmer urges us to "keep on walking, keep on talking"--just as we did in the civil rights movement--until we cross those bridges together.

-- U.S. Congressman John Lewis, recipient of the Martin Luther King Jr. Nonviolent Peace Prize and the Presidential Medal of Freedom

\* The book we need for recovering the heart, the very core, of our selves and our democracy.

-- Krista Tippett, host of public radio's *On Being* and recipient of a 2013 National Humanities Medal

\* A master work by a master, a clear and uplifting resource that keeps shining light in all the dark places. Palmer is that rare, deep seer who is at home in the streets, a teacher by example who has the courage to stand openly and honestly in the public square.

-- Mark Nepo, author of *The Book of Awakening* and *As Far As the Heart Can See*

\* Can we keep our sights on the vision of what we aspire to be while working constructively to transform realities that do not yet fulfill that vision? How do we remain "open hearted" so that we can engage creatively with citizens who hold different views of the challenges we face?

*Healing the Heart of Democracy* asks these necessary questions and inspires us to answer.

-- Joan Blades, co-founder of MoveOn.org and Living Room Conversations

\* A book born for this moment. Wise, evocative, and pragmatic at its core, this dream for a new politics is grounded in dignity and liberty for all.

-- Terry Tempest Williams, author of *The Open Space of Democracy*

\* In this inspiring book, I find encouragement that all of us, citizens and elected officials alike, can learn to bridge the divides that keep us from genuinely respecting one another. By sharing his own life's struggles, Palmer reveals the common struggles we all endure. He provides us with a way forward, a way forward with hope.

-- U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin

\* A gracefully written anthem to democracy [that] breaks new ground in marrying the capacity of the human heart with the tensions inherent in politics [and] breathes new life into what it means to be a

citizen--accountable, compassionate, fiercely realistic. -- Peter Block and John McKnight, coauthors of *The Abundant Community* \* A "must read" for everyone who is concerned about the state of our democracy and has ever despaired about what can be done.

Palmer's stories, plainspoken analysis, and penetrating insights will inspire you to claim your full human capacities and to take part in healing democracy "from the inside out." -- Martha L. McCoy, Executive Director, Everyday Democracy \* The most important manifesto in generations for breaking through the divisiveness that has paralyzed our democracy.

Bill Shore, founder of Share Our Strength, author of *The Imaginations of Unreasonable Men* \* All who harbor concerns about American politics will find in this book a wise and kindred spirit who reminds us of choices we can make to help "reweave the tattered fabric of our civic life." You will close this book appreciating how much you can do, and how much depends on you.

Diana Chapman Walsh, President Emerita of Wellesley College \* A courageous work that is honest and true, human and humble, glitteringly intelligent and unabashedly hopeful. Palmer gives us constructive language, historical context and a practical vision for how we as individuals and communities can get to the real heart of the matter.

Carrie Newcomer, activist and singer-songwriter, *The Geography of Light* and *Before and After* \* Could not be more timely and needed. As one who has been guided through a time of personal reflection with Parker Palmer, I invite you to join in a journey through these chapters.

U.S. Congresswoman Lois Capps, grandmother, mother, nurse, and seeker after democracy \* A brave and visionary book. Palmer re-imagines our political lives as a deeply personal process within which all Americans--especially those of us inheriting this broken polity--have a chance to be heard, heal, and get on with the eternal work of perfecting this nation.

Courtney E. Martin, author of *Do It Anyway: The New Generation of Activists* \* Palmer has been our mentor as we've weathered the rough and tumble of political life. In this compelling new book, he challenges us to recognize that a more vital democracy begins within each of us, as we learn to hold the tensions inherent in community life and no longer fear to tread that most difficult terrain--the broken places in our own hearts.

Kathy Gille served for twenty years as a senior congressional aide. Doug Tanner, her husband, is a founder and former president of The Faith and Politics Institute. \* A book that should be read and talked about in every family, book club, classroom, boardroom, congregation and hall of government in our country. Palmer writes with clarity, good sense, balance, honesty, humor and humility, focusing on the essence of what is needed from each of us for the survival of our democracy.

Thomas F. Beech, President Emeritus, the Fetzer Institute

Palmer wrote *Healing the Heart of Democracy* before the U.S.A. election of 2016; however, the concerns he raised have become even more evident this last year. Palmer's view is that in order to make the Constitutional assurance of "We the People" work, we need to speak to those beyond our own and we must cease to demonize those who have ideas different than ours. Examples of the struggles Abraham Lincoln faced leading up to and during the Civil War are offered throughout the book, providing contextualization that puts our own times in perspective. The rights of diverse others was a central disagreement of the Civil War and it appears that diversity has again driven a wedge between us. Hope in our future can be recaptured by recognizing the mutual heartbreak of a government that doesn't work and of communities divided by class and culture. "When we hold suffering in a way that opens us to greater compassion, heartbreak becomes a source of healing, deepening our empathy for others who suffer and extending our ability to reach out to them." (p. 22) The relative stagnation of the U.S. economy is clearly a source of much of the heartbreak that many citizens share. "When material progress falters people become more jealous of their status relative to others" (p. 64); the jealousy then results in scapegoating others instead of working to problem solve our way to a more prosperous community. Palmer's optimistic views have contributed much food for thought for those of us committed to creating a better and more equitable world. His views are also realistic and have been documented in communities of hope where healing is underway. His historical and contemporary analyses of these places led him to discern four stages that are key in the process of healing: "deciding to live divided no more, forming communities of congruence, going public with a vision, and transforming the system of punishment and reward." (p. 189)

I'm recommending 'Healing the Heart of Democracy' to everyone I know! It's timely exchange is healing my heart by reminding me that goodness, respect and honest two way communication are powerful tools to repair what seems to be broken. After the bitter division in America following the presidential race I was disheartened and found no way out of the mess we had fallen into as a people. Parker J Palmer is a kind and sensible voice that cuts right through the noise. He offers solutions that each one of us can consider & take up to reconnect with our ideals of a united and creative nation. I continue to be moved and my spirit rehabilitated in the realization that we can

move toward a democracy of All the People, where the object is to evolve into a new and better country.

I have worried and wondered for 15 plus years about the declining skill of our elected representatives at all levels, Federal, State and local.. I have tried to visualize ways that these opposing ideologies can find common ground for dialogue. Polarization is getting worse and worse. I see no end in sight but chaos and the destruction of our nation from within. What this book is helping me realize is that you can't eliminate all differences. In fact, democracy needs differences to thrive., while "we the people" work toward identifying a common goal then being patient while we all work toward solutions for the good of all . Our present directions are going to destroy the "real democracy" that this nation was born out of and without that democracy we will not be able to survive as "we the people" were intended. We the people are contributing as much to the destruction of of government as our elected representatives. We all have a lot of work to do to turn the tide.

Parker Palmer is another hero of mine. A fantastic communicator with loads of kindness and courage.I think the method of healing proposed in this book will work and for some is working already as those who have read it tend to gather for the purpose of practicing and sharing the lessons offered therein. The central message of this book is that there is room for all of us in this world, it is just a matter of gaining the courage to make the renewal required in our time possible.

Every politician and political operative would do well to read this book. I worked so hard during the 2016 election only to come up against entrenched Party machine beliefs time and time again. I was sick of politics all together until I read this book. Now, I'm back, but more interested in the Zen of politics. Just won my first election too, using all positive methods without getting sucked down.

Spectacular and profound, this book is one that I wish everyone could read, especially in this year of political controversy. I have been inspired to open up conversation among others, starting with my own family. Truly, how can we expect politicians to engage respectfully and with decency if we cannot dialogue with our own family members and friends who may believe differently than we do? The author of this book has done a brilliant job of providing not only inspiration but practical suggestions. It is not so much about the issues, or where we are standing politically, but rather about the discussions we need to be having in our communities. I wish I could give this book 6

stars!

This book lays out a framework for moving from frustration to political change guided by your heart. Reading it is a cathartic experience in the current political climate. I highly recommend it.

This is a book the concepts of which return to me again and again. It is a thoughtful way for us to return to our power and to be able to reclaim an authentic America. Parker Palmer writes clearly and with memorable stories.

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