



What's the Matter with Kansas? How Conservatives Won the Heart of America

Thomas Frank

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One of “our most insightful social observers”* cracks the great political mystery of our time: how conservatism, once a marker of class privilege, became the creed of millions of ordinary Americans

With his acclaimed wit and acuity, Thomas Frank turns his eye on what he calls the “thirty-year backlash”—the populist revolt against a supposedly liberal establishment. The high point of that backlash is the Republican Party’s success in building the most unnatural of alliances: between blue-collar Midwesterners and Wall Street business interests, workers and bosses, populists and right-wingers.

In asking “what’s the matter with Kansas?”—how a place famous for its radicalism became one of the most conservative states in the union—Frank, a native Kansan and onetime Republican, seeks to answer some broader American riddles: Why do so many of us vote against our economic interests? Where’s the outrage at corporate manipulators? And whatever happened to middle-American progressivism? The questions are urgent as well as provocative. Frank answers them by examining pop conservatism—the bestsellers, the radio talk shows, the vicious political combat—and showing how our long culture wars have left us with an electorate far more concerned with their leaders’ “values” and down-home qualities than with their stands on hard questions of policy.

A brilliant analysis—and funny to boot—*What’s the Matter with Kansas?* presents a critical assessment of who we are, while telling a remarkable story of how a group of frat boys, lawyers, and CEOs came to convince a nation that they spoke on behalf of the People.

**Los Angeles Times*

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Mary Torres:

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