



A Summer Reading List for Limited Government, Free Marketers

By Deborah D. Thornton

Women's and men's magazines, sports, and business magazines all offer their recommended summer reading lists for your vacation and time at the beach or for your time as a bleacher bum at your child's games. Accordingly, it seems appropriate to offer one for supporters of limited-government, free-market philosophies. While this reading may not be as exciting as the latest romance novel or spy thriller it will provide more lasting sustenance.

Matthew Spalding, Vice President for American Studies at The Heritage Foundation, wrote the best-seller *We Still Hold These Truths: Rediscovering Our Principles, Reclaiming our Future*, in 2009. It has become a "guiding text for the Tea Party movement."¹ In it he reviews the 10 core principles of the United States, including "liberty and equality, natural rights and the consent of the governed, private property and religious freedom, the rule of law and constitutionalism, self-government at home and independence in the world."² Spalding offers both theory and practical advice on how to return our country to the original core principles.

The number 10 was popular in 2009, as Mark Levin laid out 10 "hard things" a conservative should do in his book *Liberty and Tyranny: A Conservative Manifesto*. He views these 10 items as critical to the work of reversing statism.³ Others have proposed many of these same recommendations, including eliminating the progressive income tax. A lawyer before he became a radio talk show host, Levin writes as well as he speaks and has the academic credentials to back up his positions.

As we move into a Presidential election year and continue to celebrate the 100th birthday of President Ronald Reagan, it is appropriate to read *Reagan, In His Own Hand: The Writings of Ronald Reagan That Reveal His Revolutionary Vision for America*. This is a collection of 670 radio commentaries he personally "wrote and delivered between 1975 and 1979" – key years leading up to his nomination as the Republican candidate for President in 1980.⁴ In particular, several essays focus on his vision for American foreign policy, which is very different from that in place today.

A fundamental philosophy of the Public Interest Institute is that "Ideas have Consequences." The origination of the phrase comes from a book by Richard Weaver, written in 1948. The book is considered a primary source for the development of the conservative movement. Weaver goes back to the 1300s in documenting the decline of religion and increase in belief in scientific rationalism, leading ultimately to "rampant egalitarianism and the cult of the masses."⁵ The ideas he discusses, including moral relativism and rejection of eternal truths, are of critical importance still today.

The decline of these moral truths is further documented in Myron Magnet's 1993 book, *The Dream and the Nightmare: The Sixties' Legacy to the Underclass*.⁶ As the baby boomers of the 1960s, the initiators of the free love, sexual revolution movement, and encouragers of "personal liberation," move ever more rapidly into their retirement years, the rest of us must deal with the fallout of their actions. This book details those actions and analyzes the results. It offers motivation for those who are attempting to teach personal responsibility and accountabil-

A Publication of: **Public Interest Institute at Iowa Wesleyan College**

600 North Jackson Street, Mt. Pleasant, Iowa 52641-1328

If you wish to support our efforts, please donate by sending a check to us at the above address.

If you wish to donate by credit card, please go to our website: www.LimitedGovernment.org.

PII is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization and all contributions are tax deductible.

E-Mail: Public.Interest.Institute@LimitedGovernment.org

Phone: 319-385-3462 Fax: 319-385-3799

ity to our children today, and who are working to overturn the entitlement mentality everywhere around us.

Educational choice is a key component of the limited-government, free-market philosophy, and a book by Mikel Holt, editor of "The Milwaukee Community Journal." *Not Yet "Free at Last," The Unfinished Business of the Civil Rights Movement, Our Battle for School Choice*, should be on the summer, fall, and winter reading list of anyone involved in K-12 education today. All those participating in Governor Branstad's Iowa Education Summit on July 25-26 certainly should read it. Holt argues persuasively that African-American and other low-income children are not really better off today than 50 years ago and that school choice is the best solution to the problems of high dropout rates and illiteracy.⁷ The public school system is failing these children. All parents, not just the wealthy, should be empowered to choose what is best for their child. Though the book was published in 2000, Holt is still working for school choice and actively challenging President Obama, the Democrat Party, and the Negrocracy, which he believes are putting themselves and their wants before those of our children.⁸

This reading list is not "light" or "fluffy" and there are many other summer activities awaiting our attention. We should all still make the time to read, make notes, and better understand where American philosophy and government came from in order to help determine where we are going. As Senator Barry Goldwater said, "the conservative approach is nothing more or less than an attempt to apply the wisdom and experience and the revealed truths of the past to the problems of today."⁹ We cannot do this without having read and learned of the experience of those coming before us.

However, if you must have a political thriller on your nightstand, try Ralph Reed's *The Confirmation*. A newly elected Republican President attempts to get a Supreme Court nominee confirmed, with enough twists and turns to keep every political junkie on the edge of their seat.¹⁰ As Iowans move forward with three newly appointed State Supreme Court Justices and upcoming retention votes for the other four, there are interesting parallels in Reed's novel.

(Endnotes)

¹ "About the Staff: Mathew Spalding, Ph.D.," The Heritage Foundation, <<http://www.heritage.org/about/staff/s/matthew-spalding>> accessed on May 21, 2011.

² Lee Edwards, *Reading the Right Books, A Guide for the Intelligent Conservative*, First Principles Series, The Heritage Foundation, 2009, p. 26.

³ Ibid., p. 24.

⁴ Ibid., p. 20.

⁵ Ibid., p. 13.

⁶ Ibid., p. 110.

⁷ Mikel Holt, *Not Yet "Free at Last," The Unfinished Business of the Civil Rights Movement, Our Battle for School Choice*, Institute for Contemporary Studies, Oakland, California, 2000.

⁸ Mikel Holt, "Unapologetically Black," *The Milwaukee Community Journal*, May 10, 2011, <<http://www.communityjournal.net/?p=11613>> accessed on May 22, 2011.

⁹ Barry M. Goldwater, *The Conscience of a Conservative*, MJF Books, New York, 1990, p. xxxvii.

¹⁰ Ralph Reed, *The Confirmation*, B&H Publishing Group, Nashville, Tennessee, 2010.

Deborah D. Thornton is a Research Analyst with Public Interest Institute, Mount Pleasant, Iowa.

Permission to reprint or copy in whole or part is granted, provided a version of this credit line is used: "Reprinted by permission from INSTITUTE BRIEF, a publication of Public Interest Institute." The views expressed in this publication are those of the author and not necessarily those of Public Interest Institute. They are brought to you in the interest of a better-informed citizenry.