



State of Resistance: What California's Dizzying Descent and Remarkable Resurgence Means for America's Future

Manuel Pastor

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A leading sociologist's brilliant and revelatory argument that the future of politics, work, immigration, and more may be found in California

Once upon a time, any mention of California triggered unpleasant reminders of Ronald Reagan and right-wing tax revolts, ballot propositions targeting undocumented immigrants, and racist policing that sparked two of the nation's most devastating riots. In fact, California confronted many of the challenges the rest of the country faces now—decades before the rest of us.

Today, California is leading the way on addressing climate change, low-wage work, immigrant integration, overincarceration, and more. As white residents became a minority and job loss drove economic uncertainty, California had its own Trump moment twenty-five years ago, but has become increasingly blue over each of the last seven presidential elections. How did the Golden State manage to emerge from its unsavory past to become a bellwether for the rest of the country?

Thirty years after Mike Davis's hellish depiction of California in *City of Quartz*, the award-winning sociologist Manuel Pastor guides us through a new and improved California, complete with lessons that the nation should heed. Inspiring and expertly researched, *State of Resistance* makes the case for honestly engaging racial anxiety in order to address our true economic and generational challenges, a renewed commitment to public investments, the cultivation of social movements and community organizing, and more.

State of Resistance: What California's Dizzying Descent and Remarkable Resurgence Means for America's Future Details

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Seth says

A terrific primer for aspiring progressives or anyone new to politics and wants to know what liberals need to know in order to get involved and make necessary political change. It's all in the context of California but the information can be just as easily applied to the whole nation.

Leslie says

After I read this book my anxiety abated (at least until the next tweet). Fascinating primer for moving forward.

Mason says

A searingly potent portrait of California's recent social and political history. Pastor draws insightful parallels between California's 'crack-up' and today's national meltdown, as well as pointing to a possible way out.

Liz Milner says

State of Resistance: What California's Dizzying Descent and Remarkable Resurgence Mean for America's Future. Manuel Pastor, 2018

Lemmings are small rodents that were erroneously thought to fling themselves over cliffs in droves when stressed. In the late 1990s, California appeared to be following The Path of the Lemming. Riven by racial strife and economic inequality, hobbled by a government that ? starved by Proposition 13 ? could not respond to crises, California appeared to be teetering at the edge of the cliff. Making matters worse, it was governed by "a celebrity with a big ego and no experience." The Golden State seemed to be transforming itself into dreck while the rest of the country was booming. Then, the impossible happened. California pulled itself back from the abyss and reinvented itself as a thriving, progressive powerhouse.

In this book, Manuel Pastor draws parallels between the state of California in the 1990's and today's national politics and attempts to show how California's transformation over the last 20 years can serve as a roadmap for the rest of the country.

Drawing extensively from recent quantitative research, journal and newspaper articles, Pastor chronicles how California broke down, how it reinvented itself and how it can be a model of positive, progressive change for the nation.

Though this book was published in 2018, Pastor makes no mention of the cycle of wildfires and mudslides that threaten the sustainability of California's renaissance.

Jay Hinman says

I abandoned this one after reading about a third of it. It's more of a handbook for labor organizers and activists than the sort of illuminating overview of California's recent bounce-back than I had hoped. Definitely written for progressive members of the choir with not a lot of insight or nuance beyond what you'd expect, say, Dolores Huerta or Rebecca Solnit to write.

Peggy Page says

Manuel Pastor believes that our nation can learn much from the experience of California in the past half century, and he makes a fascinating and forceful case. The unraveling of the California Dream is an object lesson in what happens when the social compact falls apart, and it is happening now on a national scale. California has begun to repair the damage, and Pastor eloquently spells out the lessons learned. He all too briefly lists them in the final chapter, but these stood out for me:

"...offer a compelling, practical and progressive economic vision"

"...be clear about analyzing and building power"

"...change the electorate"

I highly recommend this book not because it has all the answers but because it offers much to think about.

i. says

I'm agnostic about this book, and I think that I'll need to do a more careful, critical read of it to fully elucidate my thoughts. While Pastor takes a nuanced approach to California that is not reflected in the title (and was one of my greatest skepticisms of this book) by outright acknowledging the ways in which the "California approach" cannot be used as a blanket approach to every state in the federal system, and while I admire his focus on the local/community as a nexus for change and mobilization, rather than the federal, I am skeptical of some of his other contributions. Particularly, I am skeptical of Pastor's main claim in this book, that it was when California "succumbed to racism" -- or, in a broader sense, succumbed to difference-making -- that California "fell" in its broad arc of history. As a settler-colonial state project, difference-making and the enforcement of difference was and is part of the core of the California identity, not a diversion from it. While I understand why this is Pastor's framework, and the optimistic logics that he operates within, I have trouble accepting this account of California, and its role as an "example" from which the federal system can learn from.

However, I must give Pastor his due credit in how well-written this book is, from a stylistic perspective. As someone who is not a Californian, with only limited knowledge of the state's racial and legislative history, I worried about following this, but Pastor does a very good job at making this information accessible to readers, while still getting across his analytical and theoretical contributions. I can see why this book is getting much praise, both outside of and within the academy, my disagreements with and skepticism of this book notwithstanding.

