

Booklist

Advanced Review – Uncorrected Proof

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★ **Wrestling with the Angel of Democracy: On Being an American Citizen.**

Griffin, Susan (Author)

Apr 2008. 304 p. Shambhala/Trumpeter, hardcover, \$24.95. (9781590302972). 323.60973.

Democracy is a work in progress as both a political system and a state of mind. Griffin, recipient of a MacArthur grant, continues the unique “social autobiography” she began with *A Chorus of Stones: A Private Life of War* (1992) in this inquiry into the “interior life of democracy” and the divide between theory and practice. Glimpses into her fractured postwar California childhood, discovery of the profound revelations of nature, passion for jazz, and introduction to social activism illuminate democratic values in the private realm, while a series of fresh and probing profiles strike at the very heart of America’s cruel paradoxes. What contrary forces were at work when Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence and refused to accept people of color as his equals? How to explain the juxtaposition between Emerson’s perception of the “empathic connection between the human spirit and all life” and the genocidal actions against the Cherokee? Given the legacy of workers’ rights advocate Rose Schneiderman, what underlies today’s conflicts over immigration? With a light yet devastating touch, Griffin charts our continued “wrestling” with democratic ideals as New Orleans is abandoned in the wake of Katrina and the Iraq War is launched with lies. Griffin’s incisive search for the soul of democracy stirs up pride, despair, and hope.

— *Donna Seaman*