



The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship (Series Q)

By Lauren Berlant

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In *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City*, Lauren Berlant focuses on the need to revitalize public life and political agency in the United States. Delivering a devastating critique of contemporary discourses of American citizenship, she addresses the triumph of the idea of private life over that of public life borne in the right-wing agenda of the Reagan revolution. By beaming light onto the idealized images and narratives about sex and citizenship that now dominate the U.S. public sphere, Berlant argues that the political public sphere has become an intimate public sphere. She asks why the contemporary ideal of citizenship is measured by personal and private acts and values rather than civic acts, and the ideal citizen has become one who, paradoxically, cannot yet act as a citizen—epitomized by the American child and the American fetus.

As Berlant traces the guiding images of U.S. citizenship through the process of privatization, she discusses the ideas of intimacy that have come to define national culture. From the fantasy of the American dream to the lessons of Forrest Gump, Lisa Simpson to Queer Nation, the reactionary culture of imperilled privilege to the testimony of Anita Hill, Berlant charts the landscape of American politics and culture. She examines the consequences of a shrinking and privatized concept of citizenship on increasing class, racial, sexual, and gender animosity and explores the contradictions of a conservative politics that maintains the sacredness of privacy, the virtue of the free market, and the immorality of state overregulation—except when it comes to issues of intimacy. Drawing on literature, the law, and popular media, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City* is a stunning and major statement about the nation and its citizens in an age of mass mediation. As it opens a critical space for new theory of agency, its narratives and gallery of images will challenge readers to rethink what it means to be American and to seek salvation in its promise.

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

Assailing the privatization of citizenship and the idealization of the citizen as a child, Berlant (English, Univ. of Chicago) criticizes a national political discourse that has shifted from public-sphere issues like economic inequities to the private realm of sexual intimacy. Berlant argues that the Reagan revolution based the redefinition of citizenship and national identity on a politicized private sphere overseen by a federal government increasingly less committed to social justice. She illustrates her argument with examples from television programs such as *The Simpsons* and the Clarence Thomas-Anita Hill congressional hearings. Still, she does not adequately explore whether the privatization of citizenship has occurred because historically white, middle-class American male heterosexism has been so pervasive. A scholarly study; recommended for academic collections in American culture studies. —Charles L. Lumpkins, Bloomsburg Univ. Lib., Pa.
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Review

"Berlant offers a trenchant genealogy of the imaginary realm of citizenship, resituating cultural contests over sex, race, and nation as conflicts over the defining fantasies of public life. Few cultural critics move with as much skill and insight between debates over the public sphere and how best to read pornography. This text links the analytic concerns of cultural studies with the fugitive struggles over the imaginable bounds of citizenship. A keen and disarming book."—Judith Butler

"Taking her (counter)cue from that celebrated sitcom of American life, 'The Reagan Years,' Lauren Berlant makes an exhilarating argument for a theory of 'comedic' citizenship. What happens when the collusive myths of the 'common culture' become obsessed and estranged by the fraying and freeing of the American people—plurally identified, demographically diverse, sexually ambivalent, culturally mongrel? Berlant's wit and insight lie in going with the 'silliness' of everyday existence, inhabiting its persuasive, popular forms, and then, in ways you least expect, throwing up a devastating picture of the way we live now."—Homi K. Bhabha

From the Back Cover

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Leonard Bassett:

This book untitled *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship* (Series

Q) to be one of several books in which best seller in this year, that is because when you read this reserve you can get a lot of benefit in it. You will easily to buy this particular book in the book retailer or you can order it via online. The publisher of this book sells the e-book too. It makes you more readily to read this book, because you can read this book in your Touch screen phone. So there is no reason to you to past this e-book from your list.

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