



The Opening of the American Mind

By Lawrence W. Levine

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Publicly greeted as the definitive answer to recent attacks on the university, Lawrence W. Levine's book is a brilliantly argued positive vision of American education and culture.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

In 1987 *The Closing of the American Mind*, Allan Bloom's famously ferocious critique of the corrosive effects of political correctness in American universities, exploded like a bomb in the halls of the academy; even today, its conservative analysis is constantly enlarged upon by academics and political pundits alike, from Dinesh D'Souza to William J. Bennett. In *The Opening of the American Mind*, Lawrence W. Levine has produced a direct rebuttal. The conservative complainers are, he says, discomfited by perfectly healthy developments in education. Levine argues that opening the academic canon to cultures beyond Western civilization is a natural and laudable outgrowth of the increasing diversity of America. The universities are changing, says Levine, to keep in touch with the real world, and are "doing a more thorough and cosmopolitan job ... than ever before."

From Publishers Weekly

Responding to critics of the university as a bastion of PC, historian Levine (*Black Culture and Black Consciousness*) provides some worthy context. Curricula have always been evolving, he stresses, and historians long ignored non-Western and social history. The university, he adds, has also been evolving; however, his observation that the balkanized campus merely reflects endemic American fragmentation ignores how universities can act to further separatism or integration. Levine is most effective in explaining how the Great Books and Western Civilization courses developed to shape American identity after WWI, and how American literature entered the canon 50 years ago. Many historians, he notes, did not accept the "melting pot" notion and believed that ethnic distinctiveness could be prized; every criticism of integration today has been made before. Levine contends rationally that multicultural studies and "the new historiography" do not cause fragmentation but reflect it. Still, however accurate his argument may be in general, it has a detached air and will not fully engage those who decry campus excesses. 40,000 first printing; author tour.

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From Library Journal

Levine (history, Univ. of California, Berkeley) effectively rebuts best-selling works by Allan Bloom (*The Closing of the American Mind*, LJ 5/1/97), Dinesh D'Souza (*Illiberal Education*, LJ 3/15/91), and other conservative academicians who say they fear for the future of civilization because "political correctness" is diluting the quality of college-level instruction. As he did in his book of essays on culture, *The Unpredictable Past* (LJ 5/15/93), Levine shows how the experience of ordinary Americans has constantly transformed the study of history. For example, he points out that American literary history was not offered in colleges until the end of World War II, and English literary history played a negligible role in the academic curriculum in America before 1900. Levine asserts that college instructors must embrace new ways of learning and be receptive to all constituencies of students, including the working class, minorities, and women.

Recommended for general readers, as well as literature and history scholars. ?Joyce W. Smothers, Monmouth Cty. Lib., Manalapan, N.J.

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Sharon Hall:

As people who live in the particular modest era should be upgrade about what going on or details even knowledge to make these individuals keep up with the era and that is always change and move ahead. Some of you maybe can update themselves by examining books. It is a good choice for you personally but the problems coming to a person is you don't know which one you should start with. This The Opening of the American Mind is our recommendation to make you keep up with the world. Why, because book serves what you want and wish in this era.

Michael Quintanar:

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