

## *Democracy in chains*

Guest commentary

By Shirley Jin

Historian and Duke University Professor Nancy MacLean, in her very important new book, “Democracy in Chains,” alerts Americans to the “single most powerful and least understood threat to democracy today: the attempt by the billionairebacked radical right to undo democratic governance.” The book was recently recommended by Oprah Winfrey.

MacLean is a historian of social movements and their impact on public policy.

She became interested in Virginia’s decision, made after the Brown v. Board of Education decision, to issue state-subsidized education vouchers for allwhite private schools. Her research led to James McGill Buchanan, a professor at George Mason University, who created, in 1956, an academic center with a quiet political agenda: to defeat what he considered a perverted form of liberalism by training a new line of thinkers.

Confidential letters between Buchanan and Charles Koch, from 1997-1998, disclosed Charles Koch’s investments, beginning in the 1970s, of millions of dollars in Buchanan’s Center for Study of Public Choice Program. It became a research and design center for a project to train operatives to staff far-flung and purposely separate, yet intrinsically connected, institutions funded by the Koch brothers and their large network of fellow wealthy donors.

Their purpose was a stealth bid to reverse-engineer all of America, at both the state and national levels.

MacLean reports that “in the late 1990s Koch concluded he had found the set of ideas he had been seeking— ideas so ground breaking, well thought out, so rigorously tight that once put into operation could save capitalism from democracy permanently.”

He knew the American people would not support his plans so to win his operatives had to work behind the scenes using a covert strategy.

It was not until 2012 that Americans began to sense that something extraordinarily troubling was happening. “In 2011 the new governor of Wisconsin, Scott Walker, put forth legislation to strip public employees of all their collective bargaining rights, teachers were attacked in New Jersey, large cuts to education occurred in several states with laws to enable unregulated charter schools. In 2011 and 2012 legislators in 41 states introduced more than 180 bills to restrict who could vote and how. The movement went national with an all-out effort to oppose the Affordable Care Act.”

Nancy MacLean provides knowledge about the vast plan to destroy American democracy that is moving with shock-and-awe speed. Thirty-three states are already totally controlled by the Republican Party. It is the plan of ALEC (The American Legislative Exchange Council), as disclosed on their website, to hold a constitutional convention and rewrite the U.S. Constitution to provide governance by and for the billionaires. Saving democracy is up to us. We, the people.

*Shirley Jin lives in Boulder.*



Charles Koch, CEO of Koch Industries Inc., is shown in this undated company handout photo.

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