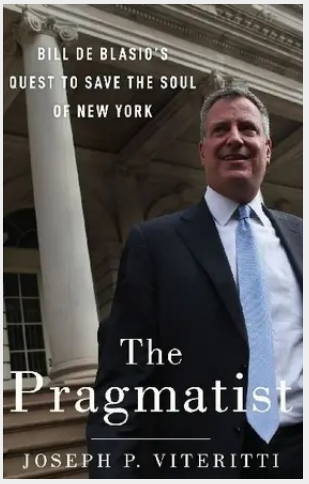
Viteritti

Pragmatist

Bill de Blasio's Quest to Save the Soul of New York



When Michael Bloomberg handed over the city to Bill de Blasio, New York and the country were experiencing record levels of income inequality. De Blasio was the first progressive elected to City Hall in twenty years. Invoking Fiorello La Guardia's name, he pledged to improve the lives of those marginalized by poverty and prejudice. Unlike La Guardia, de Blasio did not have allies in Washington like President Franklin D. Roosevelt who could effectively support his progressive agenda. As de Blasio approached the end of his first term, the situation worsened, with Donald Trump in the White House and a Republican-controlled Congress determined to further reduce social programs that help the needy. As a result, de Blasio's mayoralty is an illuminating case study of what mayors can and cannot do on their own to address economic and social inequality. As the Democratic Party attempts to reassemble a viable political coalition that cuts across boundaries of race, class and gender, de Blasio's efforts to redefine priorities in America's largest city is instructive. Joseph P. Viteritti's The Pragmatist is the first in-depth look at de Blasioboth the man himself and his policies in crucial areas such as housing, homelessness, education, and criminal justice. It is a test case for the viability of progressivism itself. Along the way, Viteritti introduces the reader to every NYC mayor since La Guardia. He covers progressives who breathed life into the "soul of the city" before the devastating fiscal crisis of 1975 put it on the brink of bankruptcy, and those post-fiscal crisis chief executives who served during times of limiting austerity. This engaging story of the rise, fall, and rebirth of progressivism in America's major urban center demonstrates that the road to progress has been a longand continuingjourney.

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