



California Comeback: How A "Failed State" Became a Model for the Nation

Narda Zacchino

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An in-depth look at California's remarkable 21st century turnaround, focusing on the role played by the state government under Jerry Brown.

In the most economically important state in the country—and the 7th largest economy in the world—a political revolution of historic importance has occurred which has not been sufficiently covered by the media. In the state where the Reagan Revolution was born, there has recently occurred a remarkable progressive revolution under the leadership of another governor, four-term Democrat Jerry Brown.

Over the past several decades, as it has evolved from a red state to solid blue, California has boldly reinvigorated the notion that government is not a dirty word but rather an instrument for uniting people and improving their lives.

From raising taxes on those with annual incomes over \$250,000, to shifting money toward the schools in low-income communities, from seeking environmental alliances with other countries to limit climate change, to the rejection of militaristic solutions to illegal immigration, California has been a laboratory of innovation. Californians have rejected the "race to the bottom" right-wing philosophy that catapulted conservative politics in recent years. That model of endorsing privatization, deregulation, reductions in government spending, and a tax system that disproportionately favors the wealthy, is exemplified by conservative governors and rejected by the pragmatic liberal Jerry Brown.

In *California Comeback*, award-winning journalist Narda Zacchino, who has covered California politics for over three decades, clearly lays out the history of California's initial experiments with progressivism under Brown, its swing to the right under Reagan, near financial collapse under Schwarzenegger, and recent return to stability—bulwarked but the progressive policies made possible by the second coming of Jerry Brown. This progressive mindset, forged in the crucible of the tumultuous last half century, is California's true contribution not only to the country, but to the world.

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