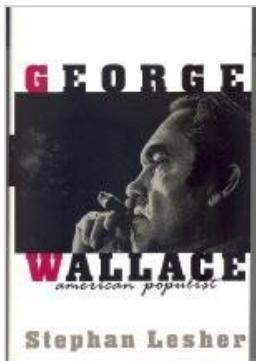


# George Wallace: An American Populist

By Stephan Lesher



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The coauthor of *Inside the Supreme Court* presents a full-scale biography of the complex life and times of George Wallace, from rural poverty under Roosevelt to national prominence in the age of segregation. 30,000 first printing.

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### Editorial Review

#### From Publishers Weekly

In this substantial biography, written with Wallace's cooperation, Lesher's portrayal of the four-term Alabama governor as "the dominant and most important issue maker of his time," shifting national campaign rhetoric to the right, is convincing, if overstated. The author, a former *Newsweek* correspondent, traces the origins and development of Wallace's powers of hucksterism and his need for an audience, laying out his "extraordinary racial schizophrenia": because of his political ambition, Wallace allowed his populist support for bills that often benefited blacks to be overshadowed by his racist political positioning. Thus Lesher recounts the twists and turns of Wallace's many campaigns, including his epochal third-party presidential bid in 1968 and his defense of segregation. Lesher points out that Wallace's populism, unlike that of Reaganite Republicans, took on the rich, and tells how Wallace, crippled in a 1972 assassination attempt, recovered a humanity that led him to make public apologies for his racism. Though this book is an essential resource and Lesher writes well, readers seeking an account of Wallace's strange magnetism should also consult Marshall Frady's 1972 minibiography, *Wallace*.

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#### From Library Journal

Former Alabama governor and presidential candidate George Wallace is remembered primarily for his opposition to racial integration in the 1960s and 1970s. Journalist Lesher's biography provides ample documentation, if any is needed, that Wallace encouraged racism and benefited from it in his campaigns. However, Lesher also argues that Wallace recognized and tapped a strain of populist sentiment in American politics that later politicians as different as Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton successfully used to further their own political careers. Moreover, he asserts that "every successful presidential campaign from 1968 through 1992 was founded on popular issues and rhetoric first identified and articulated by Wallace." This may be an exaggeration, but it is true that many contemporary politicians have more in common with Wallace than they would be comfortable acknowledging. The most comprehensive biography available of Wallace; highly recommended for academic libraries.

- *Thomas H. Ferrell, Univ. of Southwestern Louisiana, Lafayette*

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#### From Booklist

To his opponents on the left, George Wallace was the bête noire of their nightmares: a race-baiting demagogue whose snarling contempt portended a chilling brand of populist authoritarianism. To his supporters, Wallace was a straight-talking, decisive politician who promised to remember those whom a swollen federal government had long neglected--"average, hard working American[s]." As Lesher illustrates, the reality of Wallace was far more complicated. Lesher views him as a fascinating, charismatic, and enigmatic political figure whose influence on national politics

far exceeded his modest vote totals in the elections of 1968 and 1972. Lesher traces Wallace's personal and political development from his youth in dirt-poor Barbour County to his metamorphosis into a respected southern moderate of the New South. Along the way, Lesher reveals a man of toughness, competitive fire, and a surprising capacity for growth and compassion. Above all, Lesher's Wallace is a product of the Deep South, with its sense of pride and victimization always present in Wallace's personal and political psyche. For anyone who wishes to understand the current political and cultural schisms in America, Lesher's biography provides an invaluable service. *Jay Freeman*

## **Users Review**

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#### **Joseph Felix:**

Often the book George Wallace: An American Populist has a lot of information on it. So when you read this book you can get a lot of profit. The book was authored by the very famous author. This articles author makes some research previous to write this book. This book very easy to read you can get the point easily after reading this article book.

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