

The whites of their eyes



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The Whites of their Eyes The Tea Party began with a rant on live television by CNBC reporter Rick Santelli (Lepore, 20). It was the depths of the recent financial crisis and the stimulus funding was promising to take money away from people who met their financial obligations and give it to people who did not. This act, perceived by many on the right as socialistic, created the nucleus of the tea party movement. Santelli's rant encouraged a movement. The upward trajectory of the debt has encouraged more to join since then. These people look back to the Founding Fathers for guidance. They want a return to an America that can pay its bills and is not so spendthrift. Virtually all members of the Tea Party oppose President Obama's policies. Jill Lepore, the author of "The Whites of Their Eyes," has little respect for the Tea Party. In her book, she suggests they have misunderstood and are distorting history. Over the last couple of years there have been a number of attacks on the Tea Party, most of them politically motivated. Critics suggest that the Tea Party are goons, hicks, or racists. They suggest that they are motivated by populism and conspiracy theories. Lepore's book covers some of this ground, but she focuses more on the movement's use of history. As an historian, Lepore is upset by the ignorance she feels is displayed by members of the Tea Party. She suggests they are exploiting an "the echo of the Revolution" to give themselves "a degree of legitimacy and the appearance, almost, of coherence" (Lepore, 14). She feels that is manipulative and wrong and seeks, in this book, to set the record straight. Lepore sees history as in part an argument. A lot of things are at stake in a person's reading of history. A country's identity and direction are in some senses tied to its history. What she intends to do with this book is enter the argument. She feels that the historical interpretations used by the Tea Party

are incorrect and she wants this noted for the record. She wants to show that there is more than one interpretation of the meaning behind the Constitution and more than one reason for the American Revolution. Lepore describes how Founding Fathers such as John Adams were concerned that the story of the American independence movement would be simplified and distorted in years to come (Lepore, 44). She has little or not patience for those Tea Party members who say that they want to kick the politicians out of Washington and put in place people who believe in the Constitution. She notes how often the Constitution is confused with the Declaration of Independence by Tea Partiers. Overall, this is an interesting book. Lepore admits that there is no single Tea Party and no single voice from this movement. One thing that she does not put enough stress on is the legitimate concerns of many members of this group about fiscal issues. What else is worth protesting about if not the massive debts being incurred by the government? In general, however, this is a very useful book. Work consulted Lepore, Jill. *The Whites of their Eyes - The Tea Party's Revolution and Battle over American History*. Princeton, 2010.