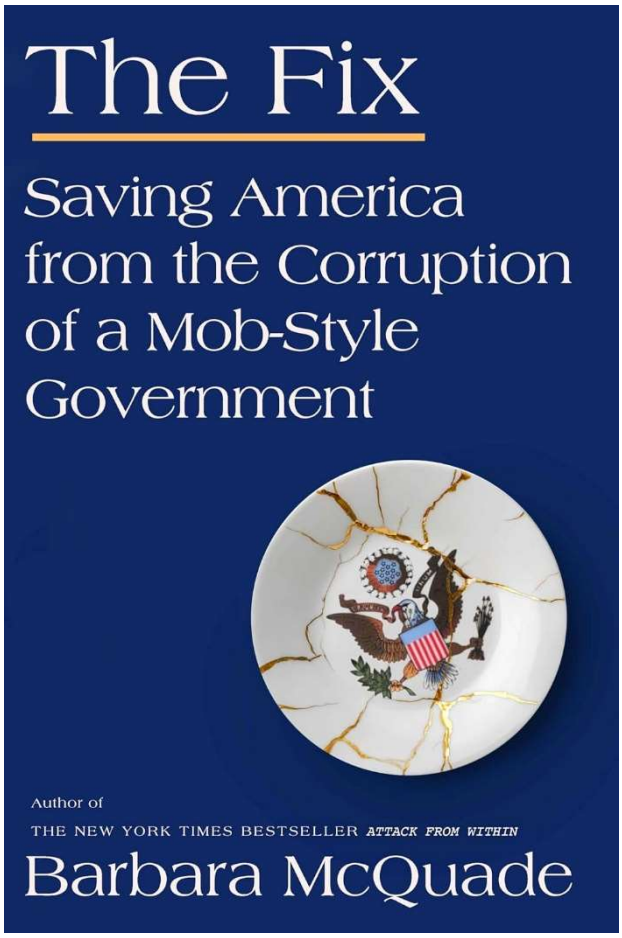
BOWLING GREEN DAILY NEWS

Barbara McQuade exposes mob-style government in 'The Fix'

Posted: Sunday, August 16, 2026

"The Fix: Saving America from the Corruption of a Mob-Style Government" by Barbara McQuade. New York, NY: Seven Stories Press, 2026, 432 pages, $35.00 (hardcover).



"I know from my own work as a government manager that effective teams have members who feel safe speaking up and providing frank advice and candid feedback to the team's leader," Barbara McQuade explains near the beginning of "The Fix: Saving America from the Corruption of a Mob-Style Government," her scathing new expose on what the current administration has devolved into under Trump. "But in a crime organization, the objectives are different. Loyalty to the boss – not to the mission or the cause – is essential to ensure that subordinates do not reveal corrupt plans or damaging secrets."

"When mob bosses speak in terms of loyalty, what they really mean is obedience," the author continues. "Leaders of criminal organizations use carrots and sticks to build this sort of loyalty and to punish betrayal. Underlings quickly learn what they must do to stay in the boss's good graces, and a breach of loyalty is met with swift retribution. In gang terms, 'snitches get stitches.'"

"Donald Trump has long prized this form of loyalty," she adds poignantly.

So begins a fascinating and ultimately horrifying portrait of how the government works when led by an individual who seems to care more about himself than the citizens he was supposedly elected to represent. In painstaking detail, backed up with reliable sources from both political persuasions, McQuade describes what it's like for those charged with making sure Trump's every whim receives the attention he feels it deserves. She also illuminates the immeasurable harm Trump has done – and continues to do – to our democratic form of government via his insistence that it's all about him, not us. The consequences are indeed dire, although an undercurrent of hope runs just below the surface of her prose. She believes strongly that there is something indomitable about the American spirit that will eventually precipitate our salvation.

One of the more extensively researched manuscripts I have had occasion to delve into recently, "The Fix" contains 62 pages of source notes at the conclusion of the introduction and 14 chapters that comprise the main narrative. Structurally, the book is presented in three major sections: "Part I: The Playbook of Power- The New Authoritarianism," which is made up of the first four chapters; "Part II: Capturing Centers of Power," comprised of chapters four through ten; and "Part III: How We Take It Back," the final four chapters. The writing is crisp and concise; McQuade has a gift for tackling complex and multifaceted issues and simplifying them so readers with no more than a superficial understanding of what's at stake can instantly see the concerns being raised, their implications, and her recommended countermeasures.

Whereas most Presidents have seen their role as one of bringing us closer together, McQuade sees Trump's motivations as being entirely in the opposite direction. He feeds on creating adversarial

environments that accentuate an “us vs. them” mentality. This is all intentional and by design, fueled by a view of leadership better characterized in a bygone era. Trump’s concept of leadership is infused with the arcane idea that power is derived from defeating one’s enemies. This is clearly illustrated in “Scapegoats and Pawns,” the eight chapter and one I found particularly instructive.

“Following the murder of conservative political activist Charlie Kirk in September 2025, Trump had an opportunity to seek national unity,” McQuade writes. “Instead, he used the tragedy to further stoke division. During Kirk’s memorial service, his widow, Erika Kirk, publicly forgave her husband’s murderer and said the best response to hate is not hate, but love. In shocking contrast, Trump followed her moment of grace by telling the crowd, ‘I hate my opponent, and I don’t want the best for them.’ Trump would exploit Kirk’s death by blaming ‘the radical left.’”

“A twenty-two-year-old man was charged with Kirk’s murder,” McQuade continues, “and his contemporaneous text messages indicated a political motive, stating he had ‘had enough’ of Kirk’s ‘hate,’ but all evidence indicated that he had acted alone. Ignoring recent attacks targeting Democrats, such as the murders two months before of Minnesota legislator Melissa Hortman and her husband, Trump fanned the flames of conspiracy by blaming political violence on organized networks of left-wing operatives and funders.”

A Professor of Law at the University of Michigan, McQuade is a legal analyst for NBC News as well as MS NOW. She served as US Attorney for the Eastern District of Michigan from 2010 until 2017, having been appointed by President Obama; she was the first woman to hold that post. The recipient of many awards and honors, including the Detroit News’s Michiganian of the Year Award and the Arab-American Civil Rights League’s Tribute to Justice Award, McQuade’s resume also includes co-hosting the #SistersInLaw podcast. After completing her undergraduate degree in 1987 from the University of Michigan, she earned her J.D. from the University of Michigan Law School. This is her second book, the first being “Attack from Within: How Disinformation Is Sabotaging America,” at New York Times bestseller which was published in 2024.

Some of the most optimistic passages of “The Fix” can be found in “Building Guardrails,” the twelfth chapter, where McQuade provides recommendations for how we can, once the current wave of exploitation and corruption runs it course, minimize the possibility that it will occur again. She notes it won’t be easy, but it can be done. These strategies include discussions of how the American people, through their elected lawmakers, can raise standards for government officials, restore Department of Justice independence, codify the Domestic Investigations Operations Guide (DIOG), ban law enforcement masks, clarify the definition of “emergency,” extend ethics laws to the president and vice president, empower the courts, restore state and local power, build resilience to disinformation, protect knowledge, and significantly enhance and strengthen our election laws.

McQuade spends considerable time demonstrating how each of these tenets can be effectively realized even within the confines of a playing field that feels absurdly slanted toward the chief executive. It is obvious her vision of the future is not obscured by rose-colored glasses; she is astonishingly rational in her critique of the task that lies ahead. But I do like the world she believes is attainable.

“We can be a country that is united in lifting people up rather than casting them out,” she asserts in “Civic Awakening,” the fourteenth chapter, “a nation that is collectively moving toward more equality and opportunity, with less economic and racial injustice. Grievance and resentment look backward. Hope looks forward. With the will of the people, we can send the Donald Trumps of the world to the scrap heap of history and achieve our best version of America.”

“Of course, our nation will not fix itself,” she reiterates. “It will take work and participation by its citizens. With unity of purpose, we can fix our country and make its promises a reality for all Americans.”

I could not agree more. Highly recommended.

Reviewed by Aaron W. Hughey, University Distinguished Professor, Department of Counseling and Student Affairs, WKU.