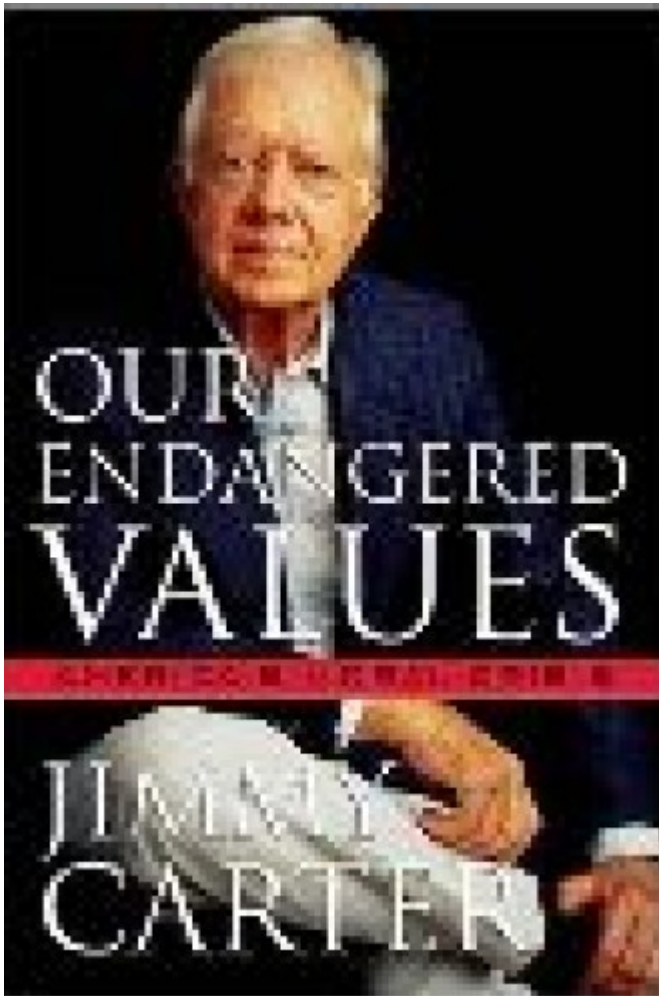


CC recommends

Books in the [December 12, 2006](#) issue

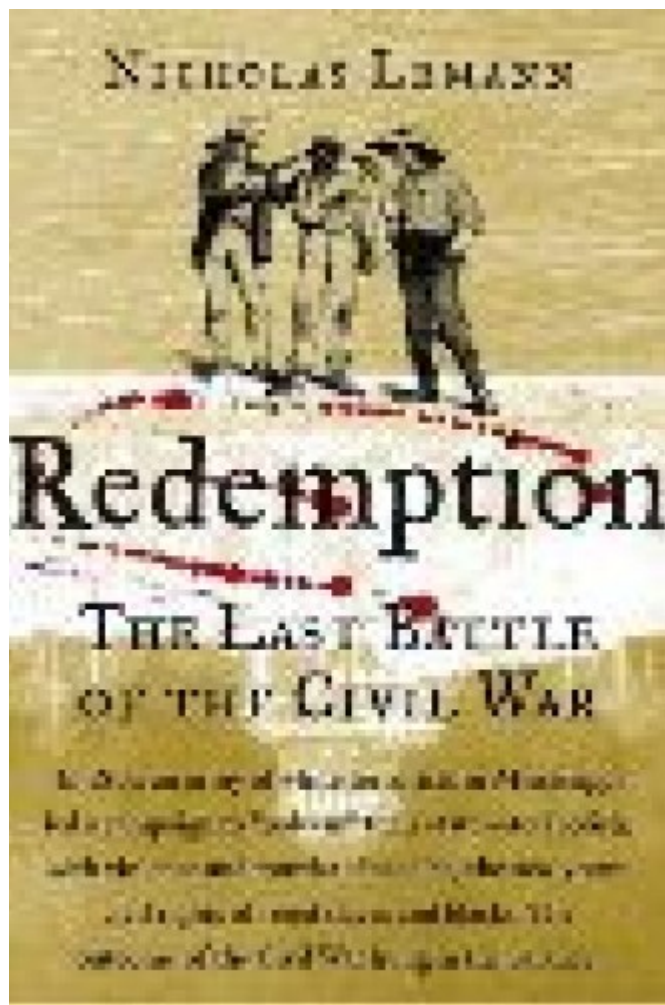
In Review



Our Endangered Values: America's Moral Crisis.

Jimmy Carter

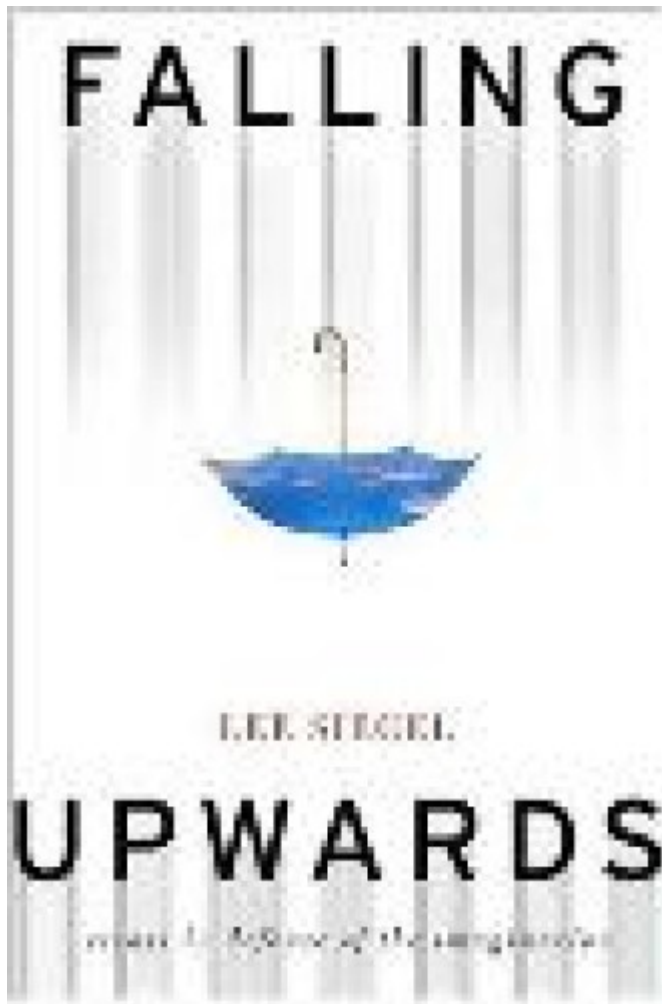
Simon & Schuster



Redemption: The Last Battle of the Civil War

Nicholas Lemann

Farrar, Straus & Giroux



Falling Upwards: Essays in Defense of the Imagination

Lee Siegel

Basic Books

Partisan but nonetheless persuasive, the former president enumerates the reasons—and numerous they are—why he believes that the country has been heading in a very wrong direction. Forcefully yet gracefully, Carter argues that traits of religious fundamentalism such as rigidity, domination and exclusion have become pervasive in politics and government.

The “redemption” of the title is ironic. This is the story of how whites in the South in the 1870s “redeemed” their military defeat in the Civil War by imposing a brutal social and legal tyranny on blacks. Lemann focuses on the terror campaign against freed blacks in Mississippi during the tenure of a well-meaning but impotent Republican governor, Adelbert Ames.

There is no better commentator on popular culture than Siegel. This essay collection includes his brilliant account of the way that the television show *Sex and the City* unconvincingly idealizes sex in an emotional vacuum. The series accepts our culture's dominant fiction that "you can gratify yourself at no cost except to your wallet or your pocketbook." Siegel is equally perceptive describing the secretive screen persona of Kevin Spacey and the rejuvenating power of Quidditch in the Harry Potter series.