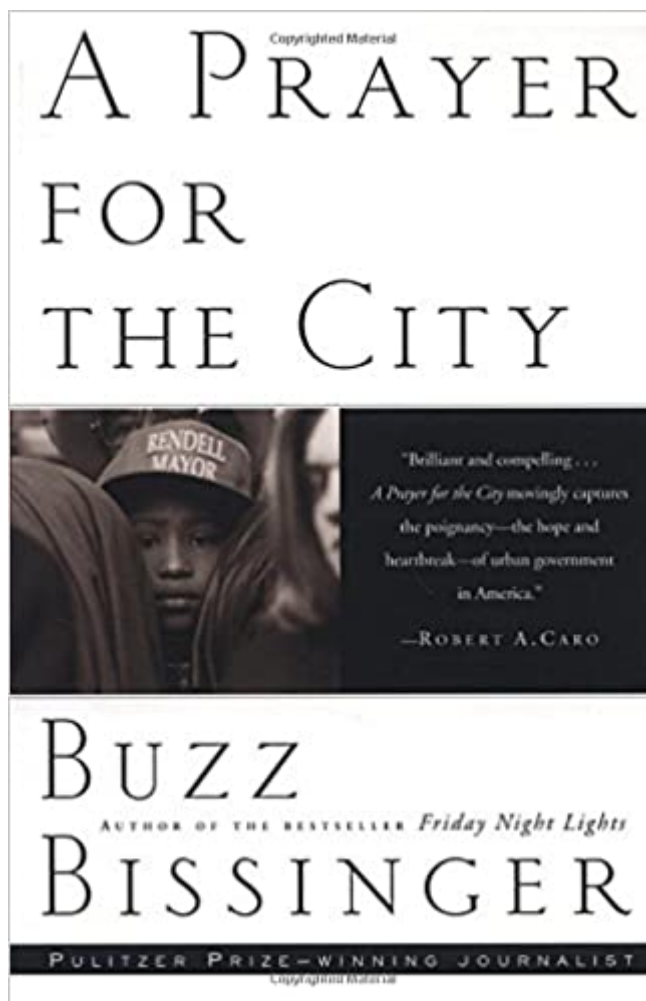


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# A Prayer For The City



## Synopsis

From the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Friday Night Lights*, the heart-wrenching and hilarious true story of an American city on its knees and a man who will do anything to save it. *A Prayer for the City* is acclaimed journalist Buzz Bissinger's true epic of Philadelphia mayor Ed Rendell, an utterly unique, unorthodox, and idiosyncratic leader willing to go to any length for the sake of his city: take unions head on, personally lobby President Clinton to save 10,000 defense jobs, or wrestle Smiley the Pig on Hot Dog Day—all the while bearing in mind the eternal fickleness of constituents whose favor may hinge on a missed garbage pick-up or an overzealous meter maid. It is also the story of citizens in crisis: a woman fighting ceaselessly to give her great-grandchildren a better life, a father of six who may lose his job at the Navy Shipyard, and a policy analyst whose experiences as a crime victim tempt her to abandon her job and ideals. "Fascinating, humane" (*The New Yorker*) and alive with detail and insight, *A Prayer for the City* describes the rare combination of political courage and optimism that may be the only hope for America's urban centers.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

We've had our share of "season with the team" books about basketball, baseball, and football, so why not a book about an event of political importance: an insider's account of an entire term of a big city mayor? And it might as well be about one of America's best, most interesting mayors, Philadelphia's Ed Rendell. Buzz Bissinger follows Rendell, his chief of staff, and four other Philadelphians through four years of his sincere, flamboyant struggle against Philadelphia's

crushing poverty--four years of dealing with the staff, the press, the constituents, and the feds. It doesn't end with the eradication of the city's many social ills, but it does end with a second term, and with hope. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Bissinger is the author of *Friday Night Lights* (LJ 8/90), a contributing editor at *Vanity Fair*, and a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist who worked at the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. After following the administration of Philadelphia Mayor Ed Rendell for four years, he provides a passionate account of big-city life and politics in the 1990s that puts a human face on the problems and promise of urban America. From his portrayal of the mayor's anguish in comforting the families of slain and injured police officers, which serves as a prolog, to his discussion of union negotiations, crime fighting, and economic decline in later chapters, Bissinger offers a compelling narrative. Scholars will appreciate the inside political story, and lay readers will appreciate the heroes. Highly recommended for all collections.-?William L. Waugh, Georgia State Univ., Atlanta Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

For locals, a unique and valuable look behind the work and person of later-governor Rendell. For others, an interesting and instructive account of how truly dedicated public servants work. Also a depressing but vital account of the plight of cities and the concomitant divisions in American society generally. I'd LOVE to see a sequel.

In many ways, Buzz Bissinger's "A Prayer for the City" is one of the most remarkable books ever written about an American city. In stark and sometimes shocking detail, Bissinger lays out the crises assailing the modern urban core: violence, poverty, economic development, poor public educational systems and so on. What's truly wonderful about Bissinger's book is that he leaves so many questions open. He isn't shallow or dismissive about these urban dilemmas; Bissinger doesn't give pat answers or bromides about how these problems can be solved. And that's a remarkable achievement on the author's part, particularly given the manner in which he structures this book. Though he sketches the lives of several Philadelphia citizens, there are undeniably two central characters in this book: Philadelphia Mayor Ed Rendell and his Chief of Staff David Cohen. In some ways -- and I think Bissinger purposefully and effectively conveys this image - Rendell and Cohen should be seen as two sides of the same coin. Both Rendell and Cohen possess essential characteristics that will be needed in the fight to save the city, but the skills of each are different and, as such, they need each other to do what must be done. Rendell is the affable, easy-mannered,

though sometimes short-tempered old politician who is out front. Cohen is the workaholic lawyer whose ruthless attention to the minutiae and detail of public policy brings him 17-hour days and little public glory. The highly public role Rendell plays is laid out in one particularly moving section toward the beginning of the book. Bissinger details a funereal November, 1994 car ride that Rendell took to a city hospital where a police patrolman who had been shot was being treated. Bissinger describes Rendell's interaction with the policeman's family, as well as his palpable anger that a patrolman could be so senselessly cut down in the line of duty. In moving language, Bissinger shows the depth of the problem confronting Rendell and Cohen. In addition to the generic problems besetting Philadelphia, Bissinger also details those specific to Pennsylvania's largest city. Throughout the book, Bissinger writes of Rendell's and Cohen's attempts to save the Philadelphia Naval Ship Yard from closure by the U.S. Department of the Navy. The story of the struggle for the shipyard, which means the difference between Philadelphia losing or keeping thousands of crucial jobs, provides a penetrating insight into how the municipal and federal governments often move in disparate directions, and how that can have staggering consequences for the local level. Bissinger's tone in this book is somber, without veering into the maudlin. The author provides great detail about urban problems, but not in a voyeuristic or exploitative way. Though he is clearly rooting for Rendell, Bissinger does not become fawning or mawkish. Indeed, Bissinger's reporting is impeccable, due no doubt to the wide-open access to Rendell he was clearly granted. Primarily, "A Prayer for the City" succeeds because Bissinger set out to tell a great story, and that essential goal is something that far too many journalistic treatments miss these days.

This is one of the best descriptors I've read of the plight of the Cities from the fifties to the present times. It is written so well that you think you were there in the meeting room with those people as events occurred.

A great view inside the workings of city government. Everything from the grandiose plans for the future to the mean, small minded racial fighters that care more about advancing their own image than improving life for the citizens.

I was assigned this reading for a Political Science class in undergrad and must say I was pleasantly surprised. This book keeps you engaged from the beginning until the end (you won't want to put it down). Gives an inside look at Philadelphia during the 90s and the crisis the city faced. The commentary makes you feel as though you are sitting in the room with former mayor Ed Rendell as

he made some tough decisions. I would recommend this book to anyone whether Poli Sci major or not!

Anyone new to Philly must read this book. It's a primer for understanding the current economic recovery in the city.

A wonderful book! I would recommend it to anyone who has lived in Philly, and wants a very real, deep personal story about what the city was, what the city had to go through, and what made the city what it is today.

Great book. Ed Rendell is a flawed person, but he saved Philadelphia.

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