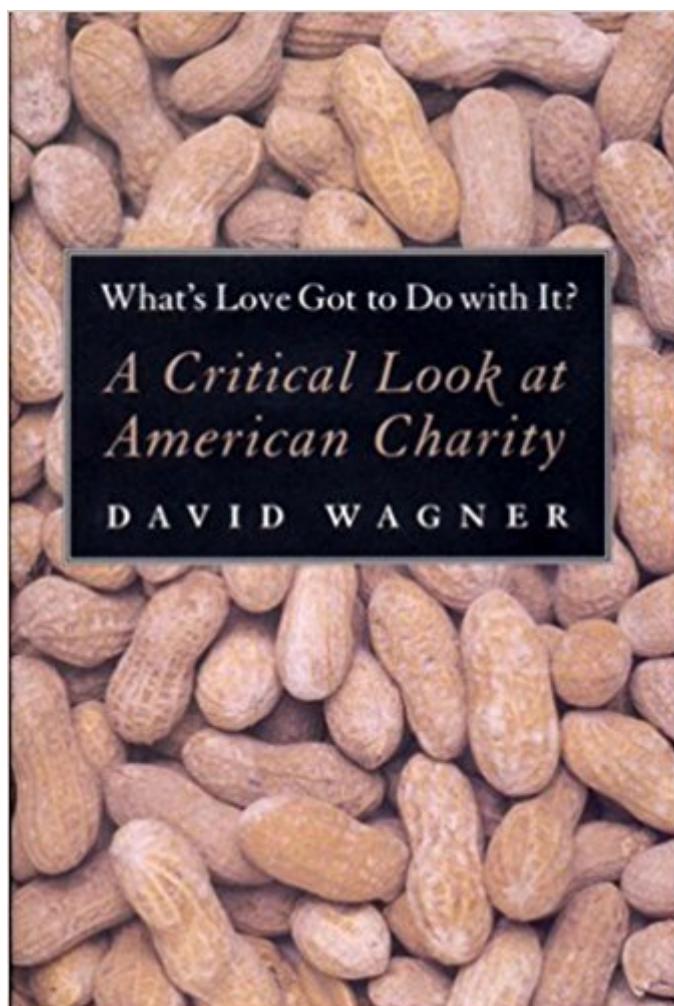


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# What's Love Got To Do With It?: A Critical Look At American Charity



## **Synopsis**

An insightful debunking of the way charitable giving disguises American neglect of the public welfare. Observing that the United States has the weakest public social welfare system in the industrialized world, *What's Love Got to Do With It?* explores the extent to which the huge charity enterprise industry legitimates and supports this state of affairs. Independent philanthropy, the book argues, provides a cover for the harshness of America's free market capitalism. It also exposes the warlike posture of a state apparatus that focuses on discipline and correction rather than on eradicating inequality. David Wagner, a professor of social work and sociology at the University of Southern Maine, traces the origins of the charitable mystique from a historical and sociological perspective--from its religious roots in the missions to convert indigenous peoples, through the long period of the poorhouse, the rise of foundations, and the development of new alternative social service agencies. Wagner goes on to show how America has glorified its private sector at the expense of providing material benefits, such as income support, housing, or medical insurance, to its citizens. This has immense social costs, not the least of which is the institutionalization of poverty among many U.S. citizens. One of the few works to examine the overall role of charitable giving in America, *What's Love Got to Do With It?* is bound to spark debate and, ideally, reform.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

A stinging critique that exposes the dark side of private benevolence in America. -- Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward[M]akes the provocative case that charity can be a bad thing. -- Baltimore Sun, Kate Shatzkin, 6 February 2000[R]aises sobering questions for all of us who want to

live in a just society. -- Howard Zinn, author of *A People's History of the United States*[T]renchant--and sure to be controversial... deconstructs some of America's most venerated icons. -- Michael B. Katz, University of Pennsylvania[W]ell-reasoned analysis. -- Booklist, 15 February 2000

Advanced Praise: "What's Love Got to do with it?" demolishes the conventional wisdom that private philanthropy is innately superior to public welfare measures. Calmly, reasonably, and drawing on an abundance of research, author David Wagner builds toward the jarring conclusion that organized charity is far better at serving the rich than the poor. If this book gets the attention it deserves, it will do more to end poverty than any number of contributions to elite private charities like the United Way." Barbara Ehrenreich "David Wagner cuts through the self-congratulation that accompanies charity giving in the United States, and asks the important question: why, with all this philanthropy, does the country have so much poverty, homelessness, infant mortality, imprisonment? He points rightly, to the need for a change in the way our economic system distributes benefits. He raises sobering questions for all of us who want to live in a just society. He does all this in clear, lively language which makes his book wonderfully readable" Howard Zinn "This book could not be more timely. As the right-wing call to replace inadequate public services with the 'compassionate conservatism' of private charity steams ahead, David Wagner brings us a stinging critique that exposes the dark side of private benevolence in America. A bracing contribution to a major contemporary debate" Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward

I appreciate this book however the subject matter is much much greater than is covered by David Wagner and needs to be written about more and more comprehensively. I wish the author would have spent more time working on it and included more detailed evidence of his perspective, of which I happen to agree with. I recommend the book because there are scant works on this subject. Much more is needed.

"Wagner's concise and vivid chronicle of the rise of paternalistic American charity is a valuable handbook for anyone who wants to challenge the duplicitous nostrums that the vapid stars of both political parties have lately offered up on everything from welfare to the widening class gap to the impoverishment of public education to the more and more degraded public-health system"

"Wagner's book will be interesting reading for donors, policymakers and advocates for the

poor...with charities' influence growing, the time is right to raise red flags -- and Wagner's (criticisms) are largely on target....His book attempts principally to raise questions in an unquestioning age."

David Wagner's book *What's Love Got to Do With It*, provides the reader to an insightful perspective on American charity. Penetrating the veneer of "do-gooderism," Wagner exposes the abuses, distortions and deliberate social control mechanisms that have been a part of the American charitable enterprise since its inception. This book is a must read for anyone involved in philanthropy, social welfare service provision, or social work education.

Good quality!! it was as explained!!

this book is utterly useless. the author makes good points, but he would have been better off just writing a short essay. the book drones on and on, every paragraph feels exactly like the one before it. saying something over and over again, hammering it in like that works sometimes but this authorly surely cant. go to borders, read the introduction and the last chapter, and then move onto something better.dont waste your money on this.

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