The Gateway Arch Book Review

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Since the year 1965, the monumental Gateway Arch has been a significant part of St. Louis' tradition and history. The Arch is the most fascinating and beautiful landscape in St. Louis that attracts everyone's attention due to its elegant structure and beauty. The great monument of Gateway Arch was a large part of westward expansion in the United States, but the overall development of this great landscape was not popularized. Tracy Campbell, professor of History at the University of Kentucky, acknowledges the racist motives and the political corruption that encompassed the establishment of the monumental Gateway Arch which left a lasting impression on the lives of so many Missourian businesses and families.

Main Points

In the book, Gateway Arch, Campbell begins his arguments by delving into the background and history of St. Louis before, during, and after the establishment of the great Gateway Arch. He presented the argument that the construction of the Arch left many families and businesses of Missouri with nothing but mere destruction as Dickmann, the mayor of the city, "saw the city's problems through the eyes of a real estate broker" after the construction of the Arch (Campbell, 2013). Campbell also presented a controversial argument that the establishment of the Arch had an evident racial motive as engineers, constructors, and city leaders used reconstruction of the riverfront to "made the occasion for an enforced slum clearance program" for ridding ethnic inhabitants of the Missourian land (Campbell, 2013). The racist motive that led to wiping out the riverfront is very profoundly spoken by a city engineer, W.C. Bernard, who worked to uphold Dickmann's desires that "rapidly increasing Negro population constitutes a problem in the maintenance of real estate values" admitting the racist notions behind the construction of the Arch (Campbell, 2013).

Furthermore, Campbell presents one of the foremost arguments that shows the obvious corruption intended by those who had no compassion and empathy for the house-owned families and Missourian corporations being forced out of their homes and business communities. The motive was merely fueled by those in power just in search of capital gain. Moreover, Campbell presents the argument of overall relevance and necessity of the construction of the Gateway Arch during, after, and today in the city of St. Louis. However, Tracy Campbell also touches on the conflicting opinions regarding the location and construction of the Gateway Arch amongst the constructors as well as visitors of the newfound monument. One of the visitors, Lorenzo W. Milam, wrote "giant, useless Arch" because of its location surrounded by the river on one side and the highway on the other, creating a barrier

between the memorial and the city.

Development

In the book, the Gateway Arch, Tracy Campbell unfolds a fascinating story of an iconic, great, and modern Arch which “represents a significant chapter in the history of the American cities” and the core cultural views of the United States. The monumental arch disregarded older modes of urban life and favored the automobile and urban renewal that reflected America’s core cultural values. He explained how officials and other people in power can make and take decisions at the expense of the citizens favoring only their own desires, greed, and nefarious designs without being philanthropic.

As the book progresses, the author told the readers that Bernard Francis Dickmann was the mayor that the city of St. Louis elected in 1933 who had the mandate to do everything in the city and its surrounding. He identified a business gap as an entrepreneur as he was able to view the problems within and around the large number of rental apartments in the city which gave her the idea to build the “Jefferson National Expansion Memorial Association” to attract more tourists and generate more revenue in the city.

Tracy Campbell illustrates the evidence of racism in his book as this action of constructing a memorial site would cost the inhabitants including African Americans of the St. Louis riverfront. The detrimental impacts of monument construction left residents with destruction as their properties, houses, and businesses were demolished. Ironically, the idea of mass destruction as a result of the memorial building did not cross Mayor Dickmann’s mind. As Dickmann desired and resolved to push African Americans back to their previous inhabitance in order to build something beautiful, attractive, and fascinating, bad leadership, racist notions, and fraud unfolded some bitter hidden truths that reflect a racial insensate in the Missourian society.

Critique

The unfolding of the story as the book progresses covers a variety of positive notions about the construction of the great Gateway Arch after its establishment and even its importance in today’s society of St. Louis. First and foremost, Campbell discusses the strength and beauty of the Arch which attracted tourists from all around the globe as this monument brings the past and the present of the United States. Secondly, the story although seems simple yet complicatedly addresses the commitment and energy of the leaders to display the cultural values of the Americans in the monument. He also uses metaphors and polite language in exposing unethical issues that happened during the time the monument of the Gateway Arch was being built in the hands of the leaders and those in power.

Moreover, in reading through the book “Gateway Arch”, the political as well as economic power and disputes that existed at the time of constructing the artistic monument, imperatively involve the

racial discrimination against African Americans who were forced to be homeless due to greed and selfishness of the wealthy and powerful people. The information presented in the book shows the independence of the ideas presented by the author which seems that the book has not used other resources of the history and this is the missing aspect of the narrative Campbell presents. It is vivid that a resourceful article should be borrowed from other books, articles, historical narratives, and ideas of other writers, especially where the relevancy of the events is required. However, the book meticulously builds on the narrative of the significance of the construction of the Gateway Arch which enables the readers to understand the flow of facts and information from the beginning to the end of the narrative.

References

Campbell, T. (2013). *The Gateway Arch: A Biography*. Yale University Press.