

## 'What the Heck Are You Up To, Mr. President?': Jimmy Carter, America's 'Malaise,' and the Speech That Should Have Changed the Country

Kevin Mattson

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At a critical moment in Jimmy Carter's presidency, he gave a speech that should have changed the country, instead it led to his downfall and ushered in the rise of the Conservative movement in America. Kevin Mattson gives us a behind-the-scenes look at the weeks leading up to the speech, a period of great upheaval in the US: the energy crisis had generated mile-long gas lines, inciting suburban riots and violence, the country's morale was low and Carter's ratings were even lower. The administration, wracked by its own crises, was in constant turmoil and conflict. What came of their great internal struggle, which Mattson conveys with the excitement of a political thriller, was a speech that deserves a place alongside Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address" or FDR's First Inaugural. Prominent politicians on both sides of the aisle play important roles, including President Jimmy Carter, Vice President Walter Mondale, and speechwriter Hendrik Hertzberg, within the administration, and Jerry Falwell, Ronald Reagan, and Ted Kennedy, without. Like the best of political writing, Mattson provides great insight into the workings of the Carter White House as well as the moral crisis that ushered in a new, conservative America.



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