



Angels by the River: A Memoir

James Gustave Speth

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Angels by the River follows James Gustave Speth's unlikely path—from a Southern boyhood to his career as an influential mainstream environmentalist to his current system-changing activism.

In this compelling memoir, Speth explores the issues, and realities, that have shaped the nation since the 1950s, and that turned an “ultimate insider” into someone willing to be arrested in front of the White House.

Born and raised in a town where both the best and worst of the South shone through—a town that eventually became the scene of South Carolina's horrific Orangeburg Massacre—Speth explores how the civil rights movement and the South's agrarian roots influenced his academic career at Yale and later work in the heyday of the environmental movement, when he helped launch two landmark and influential environmental groups—the Natural Resources Defense Council and the World Resources Institute—advise the White House on climate and other emerging issues, and lead the UN's development efforts around the globe.

Speth fought to create and uphold the nation's toughest environmental laws, but now believes a new environmentalism is needed to confront today's challenges. The advancing climate crisis cannot be addressed, he warns, as long as we remain fixated on endless growth and consumption, corporate profits, increasing the incomes of the well-to-do, neglecting those just getting by, and helping abroad only modestly.

An American tale, in all its complexity, Speth's memoir is an inspiration—especially for readers contemplating how to make a difference in an increasingly complex world.

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