

Colin Woodard

American Historian, New York Times Bestselling Author, Pulitzer Prize Finalist

What holds us together? Union: the Struggle to Forge the Story of United States Nationhood: In *Union*, Woodard told the story of the struggle to create a national myth for the United States, one that could hold its rival regional cultures together and forge an American nationhood. On one hand, a small group of individuals—historians, political leaders, and novelists—fashioned and promoted the idea of America as a nation that had a God-given mission to lead humanity toward freedom, equality, and self-government. But this emerging narrative was swiftly contested by another set of intellectuals and firebrands who argued that the United States was instead the homeland of the allegedly superior “Anglo-Saxon” race, upon whom divine and Darwinian favor shined. Woodard’s engaging talk tells the story of the epic confrontations between these visions of our nation’s path and purpose through the lives of the key figures who created them, a cast of characters whose personal quirks and virtues, gifts and demons shaped the destiny of millions. It explains how we got here and offers the background essential to finding our way back to a better, more unified state.

American Nations: The 11 Rival Regional Cultures Of North America: There’s never been one America, Woodard argues in his award-winning book, *American Nations*, but rather several Americas, each with its own, centuries-old ideals, values, and religious and cultural heritage. Understanding the real map of the continent and its rival cultures is essential to understanding our history, from the divisions of the American Revolution and the Civil War to the “blue county / red county” election cycles, past, present, and future. In this gripping and enlightening presentation, Woodard shows how early colonial settlement patterns shaped the continent’s cultural, political, and religious landscape, the constitutional structure of the union, and our linguistic, political, and genealogical landscape.

American Character: The Epic Struggle Between Individual Liberty And The Common Good: The struggle between individual rights and the good of the community as a whole has been the basis of nearly every major disagreement in America’s history, from the debates at the Constitutional Convention and the run-up to the Civil War, to the fights surrounding the agendas of the Federalists, the Progressives, the New Dealers, the civil rights movement, and the Tea Party. Balancing these forces is the key and never-ending task of a liberal democracy, and if one or the other is neglected, tyranny follows, oligarchic on one hand, Orwellian on the other. In this presentation, Woodard traces these two key strands in American politics and political philosophy through the two and a half centuries of the nation’s existence; explores how different regions of the country and the nation as a whole have successfully or disastrously accommodated them; and lays out a path forward that would heal our battered republic. These themes he explored in *American Character*, a Chautauqua Prize finalist.

Blackbeard and the Republic of Pirates: Woodard tells the jaw-dropping tale of a single band of pirates whose brief career in the early 18th century shook the foundations of four empires, presaged the radical democratic spirit of the American and French revolutions, and gripped the popular imagination so tightly it has never let go. Led by Blackbeard, Sam Bellamy and others, the pirates set up a roughshod republic at Nassau in the western British colony of the Bahamas, elected and deposed their captains, welcomed runaway slaves to their ranks, and saw themselves leading a maritime revolt against the ship owners and captains who’d made their lives miserable. A compelling and revealing story, it makes people rethink their assumptions about the colonial era, the “skull and bones” pop culture of piracy, and the deep roots of democratic sentiments of Jacksonians and Jacobins alike. Based on his groundbreaking archival research for his New York Times bestselling history, *The Republic of Pirates*.