

Bootstrapped

LIBERATING OURSELVES
from the AMERICAN DREAM

ALISSA QUART



An Imprint of HarperCollins *Publishers*

BOOTSTRAPPED. Copyright © 2023 by Alissa Quart. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews. For information, address HarperCollins Publishers, 195 Broadway, New York, NY 10007.

HarperCollins books may be purchased for educational, business, or sales promotional use. For information, please email the Special Markets Department at SPsales@harpercollins.com.

Ecco® and HarperCollins® are trademarks of HarperCollins Publishers.

FIRST EDITION

Designed by Angela Boutin

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data has been applied for.

ISBN 978-0-06-302800-5

ScoutAutomatedPrintCode

Acknowledgments

MOST BOOKS ARE testaments to both the effort and vision of individual authors and the collectives of which they are a part. This book is no exception: it, too, is the beneficiary of the very interdependence celebrated in its pages. Fortunately for me, my life is interwoven with—and I am dependent on—a vast array of gifted writers and editors.

Thanks first off to my consistently lovely editor, Gabriella Doob, and appreciation to my beloved agent, Jill Grinberg, and her colleague Denise Page. Gratitude in advance to the publicity team at Ecco, headed by Miriam Parker, who are reliably excellent. And thanks to Denise Oswald for seeing the promise of this book from the get-go.

I'd also like to thank my friend Maia Szalavitz, who read many drafts and was a constant force of editorial care and reassurance. I'd like to credit two Anns, Ann Neumann and Ann Peters. They both bravely read early drafts and served as the most thoughtful interlocutors. Ditto for the wonderful Kim Cutter, who prompted me with great queries, including while we went on long pandemic walks, all while the book was still incomplete. As the book progressed, the inimitable Genevieve Field offered beautiful line edits, as did Julie

Lasky. In addition, Julie assisted in the concept of the cover, as did ace designers Scott Menchin, Yvetta Fedorova, Penny Blatt, and my dearest artist friend Rachel Urkowitz. John Webb and Kyla Jones provided inspired and adept copyedits and research help, respectively.

In addition to the most active readers, I'd also like to thank the many friends I've discussed this book with over the years who offered a variety of reporting, historical, and even chapter title suggestions, including the cherished Jared Hohlt, Elena Krumova, Anne Kornhauser, and Hamilton Nolan. Additional advice was offered by prized pals Laura Secor, Sarah Safer, Lauren Sandler, and Kathy Stewart. My mother, Barbara Koenig Quart, has been a stalwart as well.

Appreciation also goes to my incredible colleagues at the Economic Hardship Reporting Project, most crucially David Wallis but also to Duy Linh Tu and Jane Englehardt, among others. A hat tip also to the Logan Nonfiction Foundation, which provided a fellowship, where I was given a week in the country, free from work and family, to complete a round of final edits. I'd be remiss also if I didn't name-check some of the editors and granters who supported pieces of reporting that went into this and the idea of the book overall, from Maddie Oatman at *Mother Jones* to the late, excellent Chris Shea at the *Washington Post* to Sarah Gustavus Lim and Alexis Krieg. I must also praise Barbara Ehrenreich, whose legacy and writing have fundamentally shaped not only my reporting and mindset but also my professional existence.

Let me acknowledge as well how much I owe to the generosity and honesty of my sources for the creation of this title. I think of Cissy White here among many others. I am grateful that you shared your stories with me.

Finally, gratitude to my husband, the great writer Peter Maass, and my child, the great daughter Cleo Quart Maass. You are the mutual aid society that is our home. I love you immensely.

Notes

Preface

- xii the antique sociological concept of “organic solidarity”: The nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century French social scientist Émile Durkheim argued there were two kinds of solidarity. The first was mechanical—the cohesiveness of smaller and more homogenous and tribal societies. The second was organic, where more complex and diverse societies are brought together through a more complicated division of labor.

Chapter 1: The Backstory

- 5 As the broadsheet *Working Man's Advocate* put it: A newspaper published a squib, “KNOW YE, that I, NIMROD MURPHREE, of the city of Nashville, and state of Tennessee, have discovered perpetual motion. N. MURPHREE,” on September 30, 1834. This article was in turn parodied in a piece in *The Working Man's Advocate* on October 4, 1834.
- 6 The absurdist use of the idiom: *The Dial: A Monthly Magazine for Literature, Philosophy and Religion*, M. D. Conway, editor, 1860, volume 1, https://books.google.com/books?id=yUIUAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA709&lpq=PA709&dq=Sir+William+Hamilton+bootstraps&source=bl&ots=f10y7CIK6v&sig=ACfU3U1Crtqhc3nbUIGa2HMLgtXeY86_9g&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiH0Za3mvb1AhWmVt8KHVRDAFwQ6AF6BAgiEAM#v=onepage&q=Sir%20William%20Hamilton%20bootstraps&f=false.

- 6 “The attempt of the mind to analyze itself”: Jan Freeman, *Boston Globe*, January 25, 2009, http://archive.boston.com/bostonglobe/ideas/articles/2009/01/25/the_unkindest_cut/?page=2.
- 6 “self-made man,” as popularized by the Kentucky politician Henry Clay in 1832: “Clay famously used the phrase ‘self-made men’ in the US Senate while defending the American System, which advocated federal support for manufacturing and infrastructure. Clay praised Kentucky manufacturers as ‘enterprising and self-made men’ who deserved the nation’s favours because they had ‘acquired whatever wealth they possess by patient and diligent labor.’” Pamela Walker Laird, “How Business Historians Can Save the World—from the Fallacy of Self-Made Success,” *Business History*, November 9, 2017, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00076791.2016.1251904?journalCode=fbsh20>.
- 7 including “welfare queens”: Reagan’s anti-entitlement conservatism also, ironically, attracted many of the same World War II veterans who benefited from the GI Bill. These vets were among “the core [Reagan] constituency opposing taxpayer funding of social programs, with the result that only meager benefits await those returning from today’s wars,” as the journalist Edward Humes wrote. As one GI Bill recipient put it to the writer Studs Terkel: “It was bad in a way. A lotta people just sat, they didn’t even look for jobs. Just like welfare.” In addition the GI Bill provided many working-class young men with educations and helped them buy homes, yet it didn’t offer the same help for Black veterans.
- 7 “a cancer eating at our vitals”: “The Original ‘Welfare Queen,’” NPR, *Code Switch*, June 5, 2019.
- 7 Tim Boyd, the now-former mayor: “A Former Texas Mayor Said Residents Should Fend for Themselves,” Christine Hauser, *New York Times*, February 18, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/18/us/tim-boyd-mayor-colorado-city-texas.html>.
- 8 in group efforts like barn raisings: In the 1914 account in the book *Rural Manhood*, I read how in eastern Pennsylvania when one family required a new barn for themselves and their 150 cattle, they hired a single carpenter and that carpenter created a barn-raising party where the men arrived at six in the morning from a radius of four miles away and brought their picks and shovels, and teams of horses and heavy wagons, ready to dig an enormous trench. They would lay down twenty-seven thousand feet of lumber for framing and five thousand feet of flooring. The barn was ultimately sixty-five feet high, one of thousands of raisings that occurred in that time, and part of a collectivist impulse often within religious sects in the Northeast.

- 9 “color a stigma”: From a taped interview with Martin Luther King Jr. with NBC News Sander Vanocour at Atlanta’s Ebenezer Baptist Church, May 8, 1967, less than a year before his assassination. <https://www.prime timer.com/watch/the-rarely-seen-1967-nbc-news-interview-of-dr-martin-luther-king-jr>.
- 10 tax rate of 91 percent: Bernie Sanders announced this fact in November 2015 in Des Moines, Iowa. According to the Tax Foundation’s federal income tax rates history, during the eight years of the Eisenhower presidency, from 1953 to 1961, the top rate was 91 percent.

Chapter 2: Where’s Walden?

- 15 As political philosopher Nancy Fraser: In a 1994 essay, they write that the bias against dependence in the nineteenth century could be considered racist. Those who were “dependent” were forced to be so either legally or due to social norms—they were slaves, colonial natives, and women who worked in the home. Nancy Fraser and Linda Gordon, “‘Dependency’ Demystified: Inscriptions of Power in a Keyword of the Welfare State,” *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1994): 4–31, <https://doi.org/10.1093/sp/1.1.4>.
- 17 In the summer of 1836, for instance: Descriptions of some of the Transcendental Club meetings derive from Samuel A. Schreiner Jr.’s book *The Concord Quartet: Alcott, Emerson, Hawthorne, Thoreau, and the Friendship That Freed the American Mind* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2006).
- 17 “suddenly well and strong . . . [Thoreau is] as full of buds of promise as a young apple tree”: This letter from Emerson is reprinted in Jeffrey S. Cramer, *Solid Seasons: The Friendship of Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint Press, 2019).
- 18 He inherited \$11,600 in 1834: From Albert J. von Frank’s *An Emerson Chronology* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1994), 91.
- 18 Emerson’s second wife, Lidian: This detail is from the fine and Emerson-loving biography by Richard D. Richardson, *Emerson: The Mind on Fire* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 1995).
- 19 “imperial self”: Quentin Anderson, *The Imperial Self: An Essay in American Literary and Cultural History* (New York: Knopf, 1971).
- 19 As scholar James Read writes in his essay: “The Limits of Self-Reliance: Emerson, Slavery, and Abolition” was presented by James H. Read to the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Toronto, September 3–6, 2009, detailing how Emerson “saw antislavery activism as a distraction from his own proper work of freeing ‘imprisoned spirits, imprisoned thoughts, far back in the brain of man.’”

- 19 the critic Leo Marx writing scathingly: Irving Howe, reply by Leo Marx: “Emerson and Socialism: An Exchange,” *New York Review of Books*, May 28, 1987, <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1987/05/28/emerson-and-socialism-an-exchange/>.
- 20 “the captain of a huckleberry party”: From the book by Scott A. Sandage, *Born Losers: A History of Failure in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), and my interview with Sandage.
- 22 Mrs. Rowson’s Academy for Young Ladies in Boston: Clare Hunter, *Threads of Life: A History of the World Through the Eye of a Needle* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2019), 190–91.
- 22 The students at Susanna Rowson’s famed school: The school’s creator, Susanna Rowson, also an actor and an author, offered the girls design sources from literature and history so they might improve their minds while doing the embroidery, considered appropriate women’s work.
- 23 labored in anonymity: At Rowson’s Academy, for instance, in 1806, Narcissa Sewall, then fifteen years old, created needlework pictures in fine silk thread. She sat, head bent, surrounded by other girls and young women. One needlework picture depicted the poem “The Friar of Orders Gray”—when she wasn’t stitching, she was memorizing and reciting the poem. Sewall wasn’t the only teenager making fine craft based on literature. An effort by one of Sewall’s contemporaries was based on a painting of a theatrical production of *Antony and Cleopatra*. Now Sewall’s work is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/746465>.

Chapter 3: Little House of Propaganda

- 26 “poisonous cultural worship.” Alex Acks, “The Weird Libertarian Trojan House That Is Little House,” *Book Riot*, November 26, 2018, <https://bookriot.com/the-weird-libertarian-trojan-horse-that-is-the-little-house-books/>.
- 27 In 1928, Hoover used the phrase “rugged individualism”: He used it in a 1928 campaign speech. The phrase “American Individualism” can be found in his book of the same title. From the book: “The American pioneer is the epic expression of that individualism, and the pioneer spirit is the response to the challenge of opportunity, to the challenge of nature, to the challenge of life, to the call of the frontier. That spirit need never die for lack of something for it to achieve,” <https://www.hoover.org/research/future-american-individualism#:~:text=The%20American%20pioneer%20is%20the,something%20for%20it%20to%20achieve.>
- 28 “We have a dictator,” Lane wrote of Roosevelt in her journal: Judith Thurman: “Wilder Women: The Mother and Daughter Behind the Little

- House Stories,” *New Yorker*, August 3, 2009, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2009/08/10/wilder-women>.
- 28 It supported 6,600 writers: Douglas Brinkley, “Unmasking Writers of the W.P.A.,” *New York Times*, August 2, 2003, <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/08/02/books/unmasking-writers-of-the-wpa.html>. In addition to helping journalists survive, FWP work often came in original formats: for example, federally funded reporters produced an American Guide Series for city and state travel.
- 30 and those like them: Oklahoma Historical Society, “The Final Period, 1867–1892,” <https://www.okhistory.org/research/airemoval>. The Kansa-
pedia or the Kansas Historical Society site writes of a tribal population killed and starved by US treaties, that in that time “declined from several thousand to 1,500 by 1800, to 553 by 1872, and to 194 within 16 years of the 1873 move to Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma),” <https://www.kshs.org/kansapedia/kaws-or-kansas-kansas/17371>. Accessed February 2022.
- 30 “Was the American frontier ‘conquered’ by single scouts”: Carol Tavis, *The Mismeasure of Woman* (New York: Touchstone, 1993).
- 31 “big-veined and almost black”: Agnes Smedley, *Daughter of Earth*, reprint (New York: The Feminist Press at CUNY, 1993).
- 32 different notion of independence than the one propagated by *Little House*: My daughter had never shown any interest in the romantic immigrant children’s literature that was *Little House*’s correlative, all books I consumed with fervor when I was young. They were centered around cheerful hardworking kids on the Jewish Lower East Side of yesteryear, including titles like *How They Grew* by Margaret Sidney.
- 32 Sunaura Taylor: Joshua Rothman, “Are Disability Rights and Animal Rights Connected?,” *New Yorker*, June 5, 2017, <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/persons-of-interest/are-disability-rights-and-animal-rights-connected>.
- 32 the Homestead Act of 1862: Kerri Leigh Merritt, “Race, Reconstruction, and Reparations,” *Black Perspectives*, February 9, 2016, <https://www.aaihs.org/race-reconstruction/>.
- 33 an origin point of Black landlessness: The number of adult descendants of the original Homestead Act recipients in 2000 has been estimated at around forty-six million Americans.
- 34 a “massive transfer of wealth”: In *Freedom from the Market*, Konczal writes that the word *freedom* should be used to describe “free land,” or “free time,” rather than “freedom” from, where we are supposedly entirely independent of our society. Mike Konczal: *Freedom from the Market: America’s Fight to Liberate Itself from the Grip of the Invisible Hand* (New York: The New Press, 2021).

- 34 he was not such a great farmer: This is described in Caroline Fraser, *Prairie Fires: The American Dreams of Laura Ingalls Wilder* (New York: Henry Holt, 2017). Pa Ingalls, Fraser writes, also had a “moral ambiguity missing from the portrait his daughter would one day so lovingly polish.”
- 34 Vernon Parrington, called “the great barbeque”: Colin Gordon, “The Great Barbecue Revisited,” *Dissent*, July 4, 2013, <https://www.dissentmagazine.org/blog/the-great-barbecue-revisited>.
- 35 NBC’s highest-rated scripted program: Joel Swerdlow, “TV’s Ringing Hit in the Heartland,” *Washington Post*, May 25, 1980, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/1980/05/25/tvs-ringing-hit-in-the-heartland/29d75461-217e-4596-b9a3-901926c0a42d/>.
- 35 cover of *TV Guide* twenty-two times: “Landon appeared on the cover of TV Guide 22 times, second only to Lucille Ball,” “Michael Landon,” Television Academy, <https://www.emmys.com/bios/michael-landon>.
- 35 Reagan and Michael Landon had a similar suntanned affability: Reagan and Landon represented differing yet overlapping values my leftist parents found both artificial and reprehensible.

Chapter 4: The Horatio Alger Lie

- 40 his fourth young adult book: Horatio Alger, Jr., *Ragged Dick: Or, Street Life in New York with the Boot Blacks* (Boston: A. K. Loring, May 1868).
- 41 they help him make it off the streets: In *Ragged Dick*, wealthy men give him a new suit to replace his tattered clothes. Dick seeks out tutoring and opens a bank account. In a strange twist, he winds up with a job at a business firm. No longer a vagabond, he changes his name from the low-living, informally boyish “Dick” to the grander “Richard.” This was what the Alger specialist Jeffrey Louis Decker calls “market pluck.”
- 41 Alger’s boys “escape precarious financial circumstances”: Alger scholar Nackenoff told me in an interview that there “is really no role for government beyond the police in [Alger’s] stories.” Everything happens without government intervention, which while today might be called libertarian is also a distinctly pre–New Deal worldview. Some of Nackenoff’s insights derived from interviews with her, but also from her book *The Fictional Republic: Horatio Alger and American Political Discourse* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).
- 41 not the one found in the well-known Ralph Gardner biography: Ralph D. Gardner, *Horatio Alger: Or, the American Hero Era* (London: Arco Publishing Company, 1978).
- 42 As James Martel, a professor at San Francisco State University: I refer to both his paper “Horatio Alger and the Closeting of the Self-Made Man” and an interview I conducted with the professor of political theory.

- 43 He spent his free time observing these homeless kids: Information presented by the Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness, <http://nyc.homelesshistory.org/era/nineteenth/>.
- 44 Republican-leaning people say that “hard work” is the explanation behind wealth: “Most Americans Point to Circumstances, Not Work Ethic, for Why People Are Rich or Poor,” Pew Research Center, March 2, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2020/03/02/most-americans-point-to-circumstances-not-work-ethic-as-reasons-people-are-rich-or-poor/>.
- 44 In 2015, while Wanek was at the helm: From a 2015 OSHA news release, accessed on March 4, 2022, <https://www.osha.gov/news/newsreleases/region5/02022015>.
- 46 entitled *Mean Girl*, writes: Lisa Duggan, *Mean Girl: Ayn Rand and the Culture of Greed* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2019).
- 46 Rand inspired Whole Foods Market’s CEO John Mackey: John Mackey, “The Whole Foods Alternative to ObamaCare,” *Wall Street Journal*, August 11, 2009, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052970204251404574342170072865070>.
- 47 and was contributor to her book *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal*: The subtitle of this book cracks me up, as capitalism can seem to be the only ideal Americans universally know. Ayn Rand, *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal*, first edition (New York: New American Library, 1966).
- 48 Rand’s biographer Anne Conover Heller depicts: Anne C. Heller, *Ayn Rand and the World She Made* (New York: Anchor Books, 2009).
- 49 The setting of *The Fountainhead*: *The Fountainhead*, King Vidor, director, Warner Brothers (1949).
- 49 The usually reliable director King Vidor: Raymond Durnat and Scott Simmon, *King Vidor, American* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 1988), 263. The writers put it like this: the film borrows “film noir’s angles and darkness, its paranoia.” Film noir here is considered a befitting form for Rand’s over-the-top individualism because noir focuses on the one person, trapped by circumstance (and by shadows). As they write, “Every man walks alone down dark, mean streets.”
- 49 In its time, the film, deservedly, bombed: Perhaps I should have tried to watch the film earlier in the day, as my eyes fluttered shut during the film’s chain of absurdly didactic and stilted scenes. The high point was when Neal’s character, Dominique, cheekbones as sharp as the film’s architectural monstrosities, slaps Cooper’s Roark with a riding crop.
- 50 a “privatized state”: Political scientist Chiara Cordelli explains the privatized state that we dwell in today as distinct from that of the last century, with its bureaucrats, ministers, public officials, and civil servants—today’s America emphasizes corporate fixes and institutions at every turn. Chiara

Cordelli, *The Privatized State* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020).

Chapter 5: Rich Fictions

- 56 “Well, one day I’d like to go to the moon”: Paul Orfalea says this in the 2006 documentary *The One Percent*, directed by Jamie Johnson.
- 57 earlier in the last decade was 354 to 1: Sorapop Kiatpongsan and Michael I. Norton, “How Much (More) Should CEOs Make? A Universal Desire for More Equal Pay,” *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 9, no. 6 (2014), https://www.hbs.edu/ris/Publication%2520Files/kiatpongsan%2520norton%25202014_f02b004a-c2de-4358-9811-ea273d372af7.pdf.
- 57 Thomas Piketty estimated that roughly 60 percent: This wealth comes in the form of savings, houses, and investment, that “people with inherited wealth need save only a portion of their income from capital to see that capital grow more quickly than the economy as a whole.” Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).
- 57 At the same time, Americans think their odds of success: Sweden, the home of copious social welfare, nonetheless has pessimistic citizens. The Swedes believe their chance for mobility from the bottom quintile to the top to be roughly 9 percent, according to research by the economists Alberto Alesina, Stefanie Stantcheva, and Edoardo Teso, when the likelihood of success was actually better: 11 percent.
- 58 European counterparts: In contrast, Americans were much more optimistic about their potential mobility. They also had far less reason for bullishness. In their 2018 study in *American Economic Review*, “Intergenerational Mobility and Preferences for Redistribution,” the other pessimistic, mobility-doubting countries in the study included Italy and Sweden, and the authors found “strong political polarization. Left-wing respondents are more pessimistic about mobility: their preferences for redistribution are correlated with their mobility perceptions.”
- 58 “To say that Steve Jobs didn’t build Apple”: Romney’s line about Papa John’s was clearly part of the Romney campaign’s response to then-President Barack Obama’s speech the previous week in Virginia, where he said, “If you’ve got a business—you didn’t build that,” implying how interdependent entrepreneurs and workers are, but it was also just as clearly part of the rich fiction of self-propulsion.
- 58 as Robert Reich suggested: Robert B. Reich, “Entrepreneurship Reconsidered: The Team as Hero,” *Harvard Business Review*, May 1987, <https://hbr.org/1987/05/entrepreneurship-reconsidered-the-team-as-hero>.

- 58 the annual *Forbes* billionaires list in April 2021: “Billionaires Club Grew by Nearly a Third, to 2,755, During Pandemic,” Hannah Denham, *Washington Post*, April 6, 2021, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2021/04/06/billionaire-wealth-forbes-pandemic/>.
- 59 psychiatrists now call a “moral injury”: “What Is Moral Injury,” The Moral Injury Project, Syracuse University, accessed September 8, 2021, <https://moralinjuryproject.syr.edu/about-moral-injury/>.
- 59 Gregg Gonsalves tweeted in 2020: In addition, Gonsalves tweeted, “the small and sundry Generation X were told all of our lives, starting with Reagan’s presidency, that the ‘government is the problem.’”
- 59 through everything from political ads and business cable shows to think tanks: If we consider think tanks, we might look at Charles Koch and his brother, the late David Koch. The Koch brothers funded the Cato Institute and the Institute for Humane Studies, which describes itself as a “non-profit educational organization that engages with students and professors around the country to encourage the study and advancement of freedom,” injecting many millions a year into several hundred US universities to encourage libertarianism. Possessed by anti-government mania, Cato and others argue that we are supposed to take care of ourselves, and we should be neither assisted nor empathized with in our downward descents.
- 60 According to Subsidy Tracker, Tesla received nearly \$2.5 billion: Or, as Jerry Hirsch’s *Los Angeles Times* headline reads, for all of Musk’s companies at that time, according to their data: “Elon Musk’s Growing Empire Is Fueled by \$4.9 Billion in Government Subsidies” (May 30, 2015).
- 61 individual effort in success: In a similar vein, Ivanka Trump’s “motivational quotes” during her father’s presidential tenure included “If you are content, that’s probably not good enough,” faulting women for not being able to surmount obstacles, as if they were ne’er-do-wells creating roadblocks for themselves, the glass ceiling all in their heads.
- 61 feminist Sheryl Sandberg puts it in her 2013 bestseller *Lean In*: Sheryl Sandberg, *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead* (New York: Knopf, 2013).
- 61 a cute neologism coined by the founder of the online women’s retailer Nasty Gal, Sophia Amoruso: Sophia Amoruso, *#GIRLBOSS* (New York: Portfolio, 2014). She poses on the cover of one edition in a tight black dress with a plunging neckline and her hair so perfectly straight it might well be a Lulu-Brooks-goes-Instagram wig.
- 62 from scratch themselves: A villainous version of the “girlboss” was Elizabeth Holmes, the mastermind behind the scam blood-testing company Theranos.
- 62 as Andi Zeisler writes: Andi Zeisler, *We Were Feminists Once: From Riot*

- Grrrl to CoverGirl*®, *the Buying and Selling of a Political Movement* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2016).
- 63 As the scholar Tressie McMillan Cottom puts it: Tressie McMillan Cottom, “Trickle-Down Feminism, Revisited: ‘Having It All’ Is Not a Feminist Theory of Change,” *Dissent*, April 21, 2016, <https://www.dissentmagazine.org/blog/anne-marie-slaughter-trickle-down-feminism-unfinished-business-review>.
- 64 Gelman’s plush velvet-and-brass bootstrapping form of feminism: Amanda Hess, “The Wing Is a Women’s Utopia. Unless You Work There,” *New York Times Magazine*, March 17, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/17/magazine/the-wing.html>.
- 65 So Lerner began a study: Melvin J. Lerner and Carolyn H. Simmons, “Observer’s Reaction to the ‘Innocent Victim’: Compassion or Rejection?,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 4, no. 2 (1966): 203–10, [http://web.mit.edu/curhan/www/docs/Articles/biases/4_J_Personality_Social_Psychology_203_\(Lerner\).pdf](http://web.mit.edu/curhan/www/docs/Articles/biases/4_J_Personality_Social_Psychology_203_(Lerner).pdf).
- 66 characterized the woman negatively: Within the experiment, participants were asked to vote for an action that should be directed at the victim: negative reinforcement, positive reinforcement, or control. At some point, the women were also asked to describe their impression of the victim’s personality and asked how attractive she appeared and how much they identified with—or saw themselves in—her. These written comments from the college students led to the most “interesting data,” wrote the researchers.
- 66 that other people get what they deserve: We tend to believe that if we try hard enough for the best education, we will attain our hopes and dreams, and we are told to ignore the disadvantages around race and class woven into our public education system that make achieving our ambitions too rarely the outcome. The just-world hypothesis flourishes because we tend to blur out the disadvantages that our social differences have created for us, and if a person is not solvent or successful on paper, they are somehow inherently weaker. This leads to disturbing related beliefs and attitudes. For instance, those who believe in a “just world” also tend to disapprove of affirmative action.
- 67 The just-world theory: “Americans Overestimate Social Mobility in Their Country,” *Economist*, February 14, 2018, <https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2018/02/14/americans-overestimate-social-mobility-in-their-country>.
- 69 “Somebody will say, ‘We have a problem’”: This remark was in archival footage in the fine 2020 Showtime documentary series *The Reagans*.

Chapter 6: The Self-Made Voter

- 73 After hearing of a spate of farmer suicides: Katie Wedell, Lucille Sherman, and Sky Chadde, “Midwest Farmers Face a Crisis. Hundreds Are Dying by Suicide,” *USA Today News*, March 9, 2020, <https://www.usatoday.com/in-depth/news/investigations/2020/03/09/climate-tariffs-debt-and-isolation-drive-some-farmers-suicide/4955865002/>.
- 73 Roecker estimated that on average farmers in his town were each losing \$30,000 a month: According to the Department of Agriculture, Wisconsin lost 10 percent of its dairy farms in 2019, a total of 819. Joseph Zeballos-Roig, “Wisconsin Lost 10% of Its Dairy Farmers in 2019,” *Markets Insider*, January 14, 2020, <https://markets.businessinsider.com/news/stocks/trump-trade-war-impact-farmers-wisconsin-biggest-decline-on-record-2020-1-1028815780>.
- 73 direct government payments to farmers in 2020: Dan Charles, “Farmers Got a Government Bailout in 2020, Even Those Who Didn’t Need It,” NPR, December 30, 2020, <https://www.npr.org/2020/12/30/949329557/farmers-got-a-government-bailout-in-2020-even-those-who-didnt-need-it>.
- 74 The most striking one was conducted by Jared McDonald: Jared McDonald, David Karol, and Lilliana Mason’s survey on this subject was published in the journal *Political Behavior* in 2019 and entitled, winningly, “An Inherited Money Dude from Queens County: How Unseen Candidate Characteristics Affect Voter Perceptions.” The researchers at some point in the proceedings offered accurate information to the respondents regarding how Trump’s father influenced his son’s career.
- 75 an heir accruing debt who liked nightclubs: David Barstow, Susanne Craig, and Russ Buettner, “Trump Engaged in Suspect Tax Schemes as He Reaped Riches from His Father,” *New York Times*, October 2, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/10/02/us/politics/donald-trump-tax-schemes-fred-trump.html>.
- 75 and Fred Trump had received financing: Thomas J. Campanella, “To the Manor Born: On the Rise of Fred C. Trump, Homebuilder,” *Literary Hub*, October 3, 2019, <https://lithub.com/to-the-manor-born-on-the-rise-of-fred-c-trump-homebuilder/>.
- 77 her perceptive readings of the nonurban state of mind: The Democratic-leaning folks told Cramer that “pulling yourself up will only get you so far,” while Republicans told her, “If only you work hard things will work out,” and “the government is not the solution but the enemy.”
- 78 a hearty number of union members also went for Trump in 2020: While Biden won 57 percent of union households nationwide, still 40 percent

supported Trump. Ian Kullgren, “Union Workers Weren’t a Lock for Biden. Here’s Why That Matters,” *Bloomberg Law*, November 10, 2020, <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/daily-labor-report/union-workers-werent-a-lock-for-biden-heres-why-that-matters>.

- 79 evaporating social status: “Loss aversion” was also present, I think, along with white nationalism and all sort of other terrible impulses on dark day of January 6, when rioters stormed the US Capitol: violent, mostly white crowds gathered to falsely claim Trump’s presidential win. While some conspirators looked like stills from a hooligan version of a Wes Anderson movie, covered in Daniel Boone pelts, lost-cause-true-believers fighting “for our beloved President Donald J. Trump,” they also included a West Virginia political delegate and a good number of the 82 seditious rioters who had been arrested by January 9 (the number grew to 440 by May) were middle-class, with fewer honest personal economic grievances than you might expect, including the CEO of a marketing consulting agency called Cogensia, who lived in a posh, suburban Midwest home and had enough money to donate \$28,000 to Republican causes.
- 79 As the policy analyst Heather McGhee writes: Heather McGhee, “The Way Out of America’s Zero-Sum Thinking on Race and Wealth,” *New York Times*, February 13, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/13/opinion/race-economy-inequality-civil-rights.html?referringSource=articleShare>.
- 80 Today, two-thirds of American adults lack four-year degrees: Elise Gould, “Two-thirds of Adults Have Less Than a Four-Year Degree,” Economic Policy Institute, June 22, 2018, <https://www.epi.org/publication/two-thirds-of-adults-have-less-than-a-four-year-degree-policymakers-should-work-to-make-college-more-attainable-for-them-but-also-strengthen-labor-protections-that-help-all-workers/>.
- 80 college degree: Philosopher Michael Sandel argues that Americans who are credentialed—with advanced or prestigious degrees—have bought into what Sandel calls “a rhetoric of rising.” It’s another false meritocracy, where high-end educations are twinned with worthiness rather than simply being “self-made” and without elite degrees. Perhaps those with credentials thus feel less than and ultimately seek recognition elsewhere, potentially becoming the “poorly educated” voters that Trump celebrated.
- 80 including earning less now than in 1979: “Real Wage Trends, 1979 to 2019,” Congressional Research Service, updated December 28, 2020, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R45090.pdf>.
- 81 many quarters of media: The people watching Fox and logging on to Breitbart were getting a very airbrushed rendition of Trump.
- 82 Trump’s Latino voters in Florida and Nevada and elsewhere: Christian Paz,

- “What Liberals Don’t Understand About Pro-Trump Latinos,” *Atlantic*, October 29, 2020, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2020/10/trump-latinos-biden-2020/616901/>.
- 83 pieces in conservative publications during that time: Tanner Aliff, “Finding the Bootstraps My Father Always Talked About,” *Daily Signal*, December 1, 2020, <https://www.dailysignal.com/2020/12/01/finding-the-bootstraps-my-father-always-talked-about/>.
- 83 the famed nineteenth-century Black writer Frederick Douglass: The now defunct far-right “anti-tyranny” publication the *Daily Fodder* also co-opted Douglass in 2020 for pro-gun purposes, writing that the abolitionist “understood the vital role firearms played in preserving individual freedom.” I read these sites that reimagine Douglass as a John Wayne-style gunslinger and wince. Douglass knew firsthand that the institutions that were meant to be creating these independent Americans—from public schools to the ballot box to home ownership—were white dominated and racist by design.
- 84 that there were “no such men as self-made men”: Douglass famously also wrote in this lecture, “We have all either begged, borrowed or stolen . . .,” highlighting our universal vulnerabilities and vices. I read him as ambivalent about the self-made man construction, as he also offers a somewhat positive view of the conceit in the same lecture, that the self-made men are “men of work.”

Chapter 7: Zen Incorporated

- 87 mindfulness and meditation: Marianne Garvey, “Meditation Rooms Are the Hottest New Work Perk,” *MarketWatch*, October 26, 2018, <https://www.marketwatch.com/story/meditation-rooms-are-the-hottest-new-work-perk-2018-10-26>.
- 87 David Gelles, the *New York Times* business writer and a corporate-mindfulness guru: David Gelles, *Mindful Work: How Meditation Is Changing Business from the Inside Out* (New York: HarperCollins, 2015). This is according to research done by Aetna with Duke University in the early 2010s. As he writes in the book, “In 2012, as the mindfulness programs ramped up, health care costs fell 7 percent. That’s \$6.3 million going straight to the bottom line, partly thanks to mindfulness training, it appears.”
- 87 placed meditation rooms throughout the company’s San Francisco headquarters: Benioff described his decision, and the monks’ input into the building’s layout, at the 2016 *Forbes* CIO Summit. Alex Conrad, “How Monks Convinced Marc Benioff to Install ‘Mindfulness Zones’ Throughout Salesforce’s New Offices,” *Forbes*, March 7, 2016, <https://www.forbes>

- .com/sites/alexkonrad/2016/03/07/how-monks-convinced-benioff-to-put-mindfulness-zones-in-salesforce/?sh=479238ec1e24.
- 87 zealously suggested Transcendental Meditation to hundreds of his employees: Dalio introduced TM to his 735 employees around 2008. He has also donated tens of millions of dollars to the *Twin Peaks* director David Lynch's TM foundation. Richard Feloni, "The World's Largest Hedge Fund Reimburses Employees Half the Cost of \$1,000 Meditation Lessons," *Business Insider*, November 10, 2016, <https://www.businessinsider.com/transcendental-meditation-bridgewater-associates-2016-11>.
- 88 more than half of Americans were profoundly unhappy in their jobs: I quote from the 2019 Great Jobs study conducted jointly by the Lumina Foundation, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Omidyar Network, and Gallup. These organizations surveyed 6,600 workers, and the 2020 Great Jobs study as well. "Not Just a Job: New Evidence on the Quality of Work in the United States," Gallup, October 20, 2019, <https://www.gallup.com/education/267650/great-jobs-lumina-gates-omidyar-gallup-quality-download-report-2019.aspx>.
- 88 a recent study of mindfulness programs: "For Mindfulness Programs, 'with Whom' May be More Important Than 'How,'" *News from Brown*, February 16, 2012, <https://www.brown.edu/news/2021-02-16/mindfulness>. Study author Brendan Cullen, working with Assistant Professor Wiloughby Britton and her team, started their research looking at the effect of mindfulness practices on stress and depression, and learned that the group one practices with can also lead to emotional changes.
- 89 The meditation booths were called AmaZen: You can read more about these booths in articles like this piece in *Vice* titled "Amazon Introduces Tiny Zen Booths for Stressed Out Warehouse Workers," <https://www.vice.com/en/article/wx5nmw/amazon-introduces-tiny-zen-booths-for-stressed-out-warehouse-workers>; or *New York* magazine's "Amazon Amazen Booths Would Make Even a Dystopia Wince," by Sarah Jones, May 27, 2021, <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2021/05/amazon-amazen-booths-would-make-even-a-dystopia-wince.html>.
- 90 strategies to keep us trapped by self-reliance myths: In a Fast Company round-up entitled "CEOs on Their Mindfulness Practices," Ryan Napier-ski, the president of the multilevel marketing skin-care company Nu Skin, commented: "When I pray and meditate in the morning, I focus on that. When I mountain bike, I focus on the trail, so I don't crash. . . . These activities force me to have a single focus on what I'm doing right now. . . . So, when I am at the office, I can focus my efforts to be more productive and to be direct and decisive in my work." He was not interviewed,

- of course, about what working for a multilevel marketing, or MLM, company might be doing to MLM workers having to sell Nu Skin (as anyone who has worked in selling products in this way can attest, a morning meditation isn't enough to make it any less stressful). All this is from Beck Bamberger, "8 CEOs on Their Mindfulness Practices," *Fast Company*, October 14, 2019, <https://www.fastcompany.com/90416477/8-ceos-on-their-mindfulness-practices>.
- 91 That was when Jon Kabat-Zinn promoted: Kabat-Zinn has written two bestselling books that have been translated into multiple languages, and offers DVD sets of three different meditation programs for sale through his website, <https://www.mindfulnesscds.com/>.
- 91 American Psychological Association's then-president Martin Seligman: Seligman said at the first Positive Psychology Summit in Lincoln, Nebraska (September 1999), "The most important thing, the most general thing I learned, was that psychology was half-baked, literally half-baked. We had baked the part about mental illness; we had baked the part about repair of damage. But as Corey was telling us today, that's only half of it. The other side's unbaked, the side of strength, the side of what we're good at."
- 93 "a trendy method for subduing employee unrest": Ron Purser and David Loy, "Beyond McMindfulness," *Huffpost*, July 1, 2013, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/beyond-mcmindfulness_b_3519289.
- 93 "Chewing on a raisin": Linnemann is a Dutch reporter
- 94 mindfulness was being marshaled: Sarah Perez, "Meditation and Mindfulness Apps Continue Their Surge Amid Pandemic," *TechCrunch*, May 28, 2020, <https://techcrunch.com/2020/05/28/meditation-and-mindfulness-apps-continue-their-surge-amid-pandemic/>.
- 94 five professors: Christopher Lyddy, Darren J. Good, Mark C. Bolino, Philip S. Thompson, and John Paul Stephens, "Where Mindfulness Falls Short," *Harvard Business Review*, March 18, 2021, <https://hbr.org/2021/03/where-mindfulness-falls-short>
- 95 have questioned the concept: As the educational watchdog publication the *Hechinger Report* put it of "grit," with genteel dismissiveness, "criticisms range widely." This is what Jill Barshay wrote in her March 11, 2019, piece, "Research Scholars to Air problems with Using 'Grit' at School," <https://hechingerreport.org/research-scholars-to-air-problems-with-using-grit-at-school/>.
- 96 *gratitude*: Despite the tens of millions of gratitude hashtags and famous speakers like Tony Robbins proclaiming publicly about his own gratitude, posts by former "gratitude journal-ers" reveal trying to be grateful can

exact a high personal cost, with the state of being functioning as a kind of toxic positivity. As one such journal-er wrote, “My life was full of ‘should bes’ around gratitude in the absence of actual gratitude.”

- 96 the ones who must adapt to the stressed workplace: David Forbes, *Mindfulness and Its Discontents: Education, Self, and Social Transformation* (Black Point, Nova Scotia: Fernwood, 2019).
- 97 teaching mindfulness to teenagers: Forbes discussed this framework in an October 2020 webinar presented by the Association for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education titled “Critical Social Mindfulness: Foundations and Emergent Practices for a New Mindful Deal.”

Chapter 8: Go Fund Yourself

- 105 “dental fairs”: These fairs were a phenomenon reported on by one of my organization’s fellows, Bobbi Dempsey, who described her own front lower teeth as a jagged shard, as she, too, had grown up without the oral care she had needed.
- 106 He ultimately raised \$4,015: Katie Kindelan, “8-Year-Old Presents School with \$4K Check After Making Keychains to Pay off Classmates’ Lunch Debts,” *Good Morning America*, February 5, 2020, <https://www.goodmorningamerica.com/living/story/year-presents-school-4k-check-making-keychains-pay-68725360>.
- 108 survive on to begin with: Fauntleroy would have had a much easier time of it had he been born in France, Ireland, Germany, or Estonia, just to name a few countries that have superior social protections.
- 109 to continue to receive benefits: Aimee Picchi, “Social Security: Here’s What Trump’s Proposed Budget Could Mean for Your Benefits,” *USA Today*, February 12, 2020, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/2020/02/12/social-security-trump-budget-aims-cuts-disabled-workers-program/4738795002/>.
- 109 in 2017, eleven million Americans said they had had “catastrophic medical expenses”: Kristen Kendrick, “Despite ACA Coverage Gains, Millions Still Suffer ‘Catastrophic’ Health Care Costs,” NPR, November 12, 2020, <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2020/11/12/934146128/despite-aca-coverage-gains-millions-still-suffer-catastrophic-health-care-costs>.
- 110 as of September 2020, more than \$625 million had been raised: Alison Van Houten, “GoFundMe: Enabling Giving,” *TIME*, April 26, 2021, <https://time.com/collection/time100-companies/5953754/gofundme-disruptors/>.
- 110 640 colleges and universities operated food pantries on campus: As of May 2018, 640 food pantries were registered in the College & University Food

- Bank Alliance (CUFBA), a national association, according to the CUFBA site, <https://cufba.org/about-us/>. The CUFBA site in 2021 says its numbers are now closer to seven hundred.
- 110 found that nearly half of them were food insecure: This was according to a study by the College & University Food Bank Alliance, the National Student Campaign Against Hunger and Homelessness, the Student Government Resource Center, and the Student Public Interest Research Groups partnered to conduct the survey between March and May 2016. The pandemic numbers came from Sara Goldrick-Rab et al., “#RealCollege During the Pandemic,” the Hope Center, https://hope4college.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Hopecenter_RealCollegeDuringthePandemic.pdf.
- 111 social media charity campaigns: As one character said in the film *Children of Men*, about a future of worldwide infertility where a few hardy souls try to save the human race on their own: “I can’t really remember when I last had any hope, and I certainly can’t remember when anyone else did either.”
- 113 dystopian social safety net: In 2021, Barber created a campaign called a National Call for Moral Revival. He held events like one at the West Virginia Capitol to exert pressure on Senator Joe Manchin to finally support President Biden’s bill that included crucial social services. Barber successfully enticed congresspeople to join him in his efforts and also used strategies like publishing digital ads in the state’s newspapers to try to push Manchin.

Chapter 9: Mothers’ Revolution

- 118 overlooked day care as a matter of course: Jordan Weissmann, “Child Care Is a Serious Economic Problem,” *Slate*, February 11, 2019, <https://slate.com/business/2019/02/child-care-day-care-policies-paid-family-maternity-leave-gdp.html>. Our scarce and pricey day care makes our country an anomaly globally.
- 120 the US Census Bureau revealed that in January 2021: This is according to research at the time by the Institute for Women’s Policy Research. These out-of-work mothers can appear to resemble a social conservative’s fantasy. As recently as 2013, a Pew poll showed that 51 percent of those surveyed believed that their kids were better off if their mother stays at home with them, while only 8 percent said that fathers shouldn’t work. “Breadwinner Moms,” Pew Research Center, May 29, 2013, <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2013/05/29/breadwinner-moms/>.
- 120 In 2020, nearly two in five caregivers: National Association for the Education of Young Children, “Holding On Until Help Comes: A Survey Reveals Child Care’s Fight to Survive,” July 13, 2020, <https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/our-work>

- /public-policy-advocacy/holding_on_until_help_comes.survey_analysis_july_2020.pdf. The survey lays out some more of these grim findings.
- 120 economist Katica Roy: Katica Roy, “It Won’t Take 257 Years to Reach Intersectional Gender Equity If We Do These 5 Things,” *Fast Company*, December 20, 2020, <https://www.fastcompany.com/90588023/it-wont-take-257-years-to-reach-intersectional-gender-equity-if-we-do-these-5-things>.
- 120 Rapid Assessment of Pandemic Impact on Development—Early Childhood Project: <https://medium.com/rapid-ec-project>.
- 122 Women were not only much more likely than men to lose their jobs or be furloughed: Megan Cassella and Eleanor Mueller, “A Lack of Child Care Is Keeping Women on Unemployment Rolls,” *Politico*, June 25, 2020, <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/06/25/child-care-women-unemployment-339012>.
- 123 fathers have been found by researchers: Herminia Ibarra, Julia Gillard, and Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic, “Why WFH Isn’t Necessarily Good for Women,” *Harvard Business Review*, July 16, 2020, <https://hbr.org/2020/07/why-wfh-isnt-necessarily-good-for-women>. The researchers found “that women are more likely to carry out more domestic responsibilities while working flexibly, whereas men are more likely to prioritize and expand their work spheres.”
- 123 “asymmetrical giving”: As the philosopher Kate Manne wrote, women “giving” to men is what our male-dominated society glides by on. Kate Manne, *Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).
- 125 “sourball of every revolution”: Mierle Laderman Ukeles, “Manifesto for Maintenance Art,” 1969, <https://queensmuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Ukeles-Manifesto-for-Maintenance-Art-1969.pdf>. I saw Ukeles’s work with my curator friend Laura a few years ago at the Queens Museum, including an installation of hundreds of gloves of sanitation workers. I had never before seen art that was so reminiscent of my experience of mothering.
- 125 The title of Marvin Olasky’s 1992 book *The Tragedy of American Compassion*: The book argued “for a biblical model for fighting poverty”: Daniel Bazikian, “Book Review: *The Tragedy of American Compassion* by Marvin Olasky,” Foundation for Economic Education, <https://fee.org/articles/book-review-the-tragedy-of-american-compassion-by-marvin-olasky/>.
- 126 it’s less than 0.5 percent in the domestic product of the United States: “Public Spending on Childcare and Early Education,” OECD Family Database, accessed August 20, 2021, https://www.oecd.org/els/soc/PF3_1

- _Public_spending_on_childcare_and_early_education.pdf. It wasn't just the most indigent who were experiencing the hell of familial interdependence in a society that undervalues just that. "I'm one of many relatively rich people experiencing what poor people experience all the time—total abandonment by our government," as the *New York Times* columnist Michelle Goldberg put it. Band-Aids wouldn't resolve these structural inequalities.
- 127 "“global death cult”": Jedediah Britton-Purdy, "A Possible Majority," *Dissent*, October 27, 2020, https://www.dissentmagazine.org/online_articles/a-possible-majority.
- 129 I felt I always had to strive to survive: As Eula Biss writes in her limp memoir, *Having and Being Had*, being middle class—part of a cadre of professionals and business owners—means that, like others of her ilk, she is defined as someone who makes investments, in real estate, in education, in the stock market, and also invests in the very idea of striving.
- 131 Swedish feminists lobbied zealously: Ingela K. Naumann, "Child Care and Feminism in West Germany and Sweden in the 1960s and 1970s," *Journal of European Social Policy*, February 1, 2005, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0958928705049162>.

Chapter 10: The Con of the Side Hustle

- 138 \$39 billion by March 2021: Erin Griffith, "Instacart Raises \$265 Million, More Than Doubling Its Valuation to \$39 Billion," *New York Times*, March 2, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/02/technology/instacart-raises-265-million.html>.
- 141 "These words have gained a strange kind of prestige from downwardly mobile, college-educated tech workers": John Patrick Leary, *Keywords: The New Language of Capitalism* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2019).
- 141 30 percent of Americans who do something else for pay in addition to their full-time jobs, according to an NPR/Marist survey: "A Close-Up Look at Contract Workers," NPR, January 22, 2018, <https://www.npr.org/2018/01/22/579629353/a-close-up-look-at-contract-workers>.
- 142 according to a survey conducted in 2020 by the Pew Research Center: Kim Parker, Juliana Menasce Horowitz, and Anna Brown, "About Half of Lower-Income Americans Report Household Job or Wage Loss Due to COVID-19," Pew Research Center, April 21, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2020/04/21/about-half-of-lower-income-americans-report-household-job-or-wage-loss-due-to-covid-19/#many-adults-have-rainy-day-funds-but-shares-differ-widely-by-race-education-and-income>.
- 142 "a knot in your stomach, a rash on your skin, are losing sleep, and losing touch with your wife and kids": Nitasha Tikku, "The Gospel of Hard

- Work, According to Silicon Valley,” *Wired*, June 2017, <https://www.wired.com/2017/06/silicon-valley-still-doesnt-care-work-life-balance/>.
- 143 scholar Tressie McMillan Cottom observes: Tressie McMillan Cottom, “The Hustle Economy,” *Dissent*, Fall 2020, <https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/the-hustle-economy>.
- 144 additional job: As Malcolm X wrote, “everyone in Harlem needed some kind of hustle to survive,” which could mean anything from running the numbers to a side business.
- 146 Meanwhile, the Uber “Greenlight Hubs”: Kia Kokalitcheva, “Uber Temporarily Closes Local Hubs for Drivers amid Virus Outbreak,” *Axios*, March 13, 2020, <https://www.axios.com/uber-temporarily-closes-local-hubs-for-drivers-amid-virus-outbreak-a6778d15-5f56-465a-bff8-cb3de4b164d4.html>.
- 147 “change as we find it necessary to change it, as we go on making our own language and history,” according to Raymond Williams: *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (Kent, UK: Croom Helm, 1976).
- 147 the word *security* when it comes to work: Chuck Marr et al., “House COVID Relief Bill Includes Critical Expansions of Child Tax Credit and EITC,” Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, March 2, 2021, <https://www.cbpp.org/research/federal-tax/house-covid-relief-bill-includes-critical-expansions-of-child-tax-credit-and>.
- 148 no other source of support: The United Food and Commercial Workers Union Local 1546 in Chicago, which represents grocery workers, criticized Instacart for these layoffs, which included ten of its own members.
- 149 “small parcels of nervous energy picked up by the recombining machine”: Franco Bifo Berardi, *After the Future* (Chico, CA: AK Press, 2011).

Chapter 11: Class Traitors

- 155 “willing to do the only thing that is actually going to get us there”: Juliana Kaplan, “Inequality Flamethrower Anand Giridharadas on Why Billionaires Shouldn’t Exist and His Hopes for the Biden Administration,” *Business Insider*, December 8, 2020, <https://www.businessinsider.com/anand-giridharadas-why-billionaires-shouldnt-exist-biden-philanthropy-inequality-2020-12>.
- 156 their group overall is a tiny minority: The wealthy are not just a minority in America, they are a tiny segment of the population. They’re also getting richer at a staggering rate. During the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, 614 billionaires increased their net worth by nearly \$1 trillion. Aimee Picchi, “U.S. Billionaires Gained Almost \$1 Trillion in Wealth During the Pandemic,” *CBS News*, October 20, 2020, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/billionaires-pandemic-1-trillion-wealth-gain/>.

- 156 but they do, demographically, put Ho in the top 10 percent: “Are You Rich? Where Does Your Net Worth Rank in America?,” *New York Times*, August 12, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/12/upshot/are-you-rich-where-does-your-net-worth-rank-wealth.html>.
- 158 dubious loopholes like carried interest: The Tax Policy Center defines the carried interest loophole as “Carried interest, income flowing to the general partner of a private investment fund, often is treated as capital gains for the purposes of taxation.” “Briefing Book,” Tax Policy Center, accessed January 2021, <https://www.taxpolicycenter.org/briefing-book/what-carried-interest-and-how-it-taxed>.
- 158 Warren’s own proposal: Emmanuel Saez and Gabriel Zucman, “Progressive Wealth Taxation,” BPEA Conference Draft, Brookings, Fall 2019, <https://www.brookings.edu/bpea-articles/progressive-wealth-taxation/>. Also by Saez and Zucman: “Jobs Aren’t Being Destroyed This Fast Elsewhere. Why Is That?,” *New York Times*, March 30, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/30/opinion/coronavirus-economy-saez-zucman.html>.
- 159 “designed to counter unsustainable behaviors”: Allison Christians and Tarcisio Diniz Magalhaes, “The Case for a Sustainable Excess Profits Tax,” SSRN, March 24, 2021, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3811709>.
- 160 Schoenberg had posted portions of his returns online: Eric Schoenberg, “How I Paid Only 1% of My Income in Federal Income Tax,” *Huffpost*, April 25, 2011, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/how-i-paid-1-of-my-income_b_852948.
- 160 wealth generated in the prior year went to the richest 1 percent: “‘World’s Richest 1% Get 82% of the Wealth,’ says Oxfam,” Katie Hope, *BBC News*, January 22, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-42745853>. This is global as well. As UNICEF had found, there is a sickeningly unequal distribution of wealth: UNICEF, “1 in 5 Children in Rich Countries Lives in Relative Income Poverty, 1 in 8 Faces Food Insecurity,” June 15, 2017, <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/1-5-children-rich-countries-lives-relative-income-poverty-1-8-faces-food-insecurity>.
- 160 As the near-billionaire philanthropist Nick Hanauer has written: Yoni Appelbaum, “Is Big Philanthropy Compatible with Democracy?,” *Atlantic*, June 28, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2017/06/is-philanthropy-compatible-democracy/531930/>.
- 161 palliate a teensy-weensy piece of student debt overall: “A Look at the Shocking Student Loan Debt Statistics for 2022,” Student Loan Hero, February 7, 2022, <https://studentloanhero.com/student-loan-debt-statistics/#:~:text=General%20student%20loan%20debt%20facts&text=The%20most%20recent%20data%20indicate,Americans%20with%20student%20loan%20debt>.

- 163 according to the Council for Aid to Education: Emily Arnim, “How Community Colleges Attract Major Gifts,” August 26, 2021, EAB, <https://eab.com/insights/daily-briefing/advancement/how-community-colleges-are-attracting-major-gifts/>.

Chapter 12: The Feeling Is Mutual Aid

- 165 For months, New York City’s residents: The network of community refrigerators has continued to grow in New York and beyond, and the impact of one on the community of Ridgewood, Queens, led local car service owner Antonio Vaca to start a free food market. Jessie Edwards, “Inside the Brooklyn Fridge That Started a Mutual Aid Movement,” *BKReader*, April 27, 2021, https://www.bkreader.com/2021/04/27/inside-the-brooklyn-fridge-that-started-a-mutual-aid-movement/?fbclid=IwAR1XNFh6VqIrRmVuGJHfQOZq_fPDqosgOL4_NIhkTv-wpqOpUywf-Ce1Kn0.
- 166 In Columbia, South Carolina, Dylan Gunnels, who founded the mutual aid group the Agape Table: “Dylan Gunnels Interview,” COVID-19 Oral History Class Collection, May 19, 2020, <https://digital.library.sc.edu/exhibits/covid-oral-history/interviews/dylan-gunnels-interview/>.
- 166 “Why Today’s Social Revolutions”: Rinku Sen, “Why Today’s Social Revolutions Include Kale, Medical Care and Help with Rent,” Zócalo Public Square, July 1, 2020, <https://www.zocalopublicsquare.org/2020/07/01/mutual-aid-societies-self-determination-pandemic-community-organizing/ideas/essay/>.
- 166 Anke al-Bataineh created a mutual aid network of neighbors: Jean Hopfensperger, “In Minnesota, Mutual Aid Groups Surge in Wake of Floyd Death,” *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, August 10, 2020, <https://www.startribune.com/in-minnesota-mutual-aid-groups-surge-in-wake-of-floyd-death/572060882/>.
- 167 organized under the ancient Greek name Lysistrata: “We Are an Online, US Based, Community Run Sex Worker Activist Cooperative,” Lysistrata, accessed February 14, 2022, <https://www.lysistratamccf.org>.
- 167 “We can buy into the old frameworks”: Jia Tolentino, “What Mutual Aid Can Do During a Pandemic,” *New Yorker*, May 11, 2020, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/05/18/what-mutual-aid-can-do-during-a-pandemic>.
- 171 Czar Alexander II’s most beloved teen assistant: Peter Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (London: Freedom Press, 2009, reprint).
- 172 It also came from Darwin: Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (London: J. Murray, 1871).

- 173 “If Kropotkin overemphasized mutual aid”: Stephen Jay Gould, *Natural History* 97, no. 7 (1988): 12–21.
- 173 spent a year studying bonobos: Johnson saw the bonobos fighting, but over the course of an hour they would inevitably make up and become one with the group, including Johnson himself; he believed they thought of him as a “the strange hairless ape.”
- 174 Darwin’s “pro-social” view of nature: Jason G. Goldman, “7 Questions with . . . Eric M. Johnson,” *Scientific American*, September 3, 2010, <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/thoughtful-animal/7-questions-with-8230-eric-m-johnson>.
- 174 community-minded version of Darwin: Of course, we mustn’t forget that critics find evidence of “scientific racism” in his work, citing examples like this sentence from *The Descent of Man*: that at “some time the civilized races of man will exterminate and replace throughout the world the savage races.”
- 174 the late scholar and activist David Graeber wondered: David Graeber, “What’s the Point If We Can’t Have Fun?,” *The Baffler* 24 (January 2014), <https://thebaffler.com/salvos/whats-the-point-if-we-cant-have-fun>.
- 174 “A Symbiotic View of Life”: In an essay by Scott Gilbert, Jan Sapp, and Alfred I. Tauber from 2012 titled “A Symbiotic View of Life: We Have Never Been Individuals,” the authors write that while “the notion of the ‘biological individual’ is crucial to studies of genetics, immunology, evolution . . .” in the twenty-first century, the level at which animals and plants are interconnected with “symbiotic microorganisms” has come to disrupt the boundaries of the individual, <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/full/10.1086/668166>.
- 175 Some of the responses to the phrase “mutual aid”: A man with the Twitter handle “staying in (on the lam)” tweeted, “Still blows my mind that people will so willingly give to a national aid or some random non-profit because it has a dot org but they won’t give even \$5 to a Venmo/PayPal Mutual Aid . . .” Or “Puff the Magic Hater,” who wrote, “pls Don’t turn your mutual aid projects into nonprofits.”
- 176 Kristin Ross calls “communal luxury”: Kristin Ross, *Communal Luxury: The Political Imaginary of the Paris Commune* (Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2016).

Chapter 13: Boss Workers

- 180 higher than at other businesses—\$19.67 per hour: Tim Palmer, “2019 Worker Cooperative State of the Sector Report,” Democracy at Work Institute, January 29, 2020, <https://institute.coop/resources/2019-worker-cooperative-state-sector-report>.

- 181 rolled out the Drivers Cooperative: The precursor to the Drivers Cooperative could be the Union Cab Collective, founded in Madison, Wisconsin, in 1979, which proved that worker/driver cooperatives could function and thrive. Today, Union Cab has 157 members, 109 of whom are primarily drivers. It started taking online orders in the 1990s and launched its own app in 2017.
- 186 a national network of cooperative groups: Du Bois published a monograph in 1907 as part of a series titled “Economic Cooperation Among Negro Americans.” At the time, he listed 154 African American–owned cooperative businesses: 14 “producer cooperatives,” 3 “transportation cooperatives,” 103 “distribution or consumer cooperatives,” and 34 “real estate and credit cooperatives.”
- 187 as much as their white counterparts in that time: Bruce J. Reynolds, “Black Farmers in America, 1865–2000: The Pursuit of Independent Farming and the Role of Cooperatives,” USDA, RBS Research Report, October 2003, <https://www.rd.usda.gov/files/RR194.pdf>.
- 187 The third sprouting of the Black cooperatives: If I were a filmmaker, I’d try to make a film like *Hidden Figures*, but about Black cooperatives in the 1960s. *Hidden Figures*, if you recall, was an inspiring albeit schmaltzy Hollywood pic that documented the contributions of a group of Black NASA female mathematicians who were central to the space race. Instead of making such a film, for now I’m writing this chapter.
- 189 were responsible for the unhealthy conditions: Albert Samaha and Katie J. M. Baker, “Smithfield Foods Is Blaming ‘Living Circumstances in Certain Cultures’ for One of America’s Largest COVID-19 Clusters,” *Buzzfeed*, April 20, 2020, <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/albertsamaha/smithfield-foods-coronavirus-outbreak>.

Chapter 14: Inequality Therapy

- 192 physical and sexual abuse: Christine Cissy White, #BeReal—Christine Cissy White,” *Hasty Words* (blog), August 7, 2015, <https://hastywords.com/2015/08/07/bereal-christine-cissy-white/> Accessed on March 4, 2022.
- 193 the original ACEs Study, the CDC-Kaiser Permanente Adverse Childhood Experiences Study: this was a huge investigation into childhood abuse and neglect that ran from 1995 to 1997, collecting data from seventeen thousand Health Maintenance Organization members, <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/about.html>.
- 195 intersection of emotional suffering and inequity: These are forms of therapy and counseling that combine social awareness and collective identity with more traditional therapeutic goals like individual healing.

- 196 Harriet Fraad: “Dr. Harriet Fraad,” accessed January 25, 2021.
- 198 the competitive nature of today’s market system may be at the root of many clients’ problems: Kalman Glantz and J. Gary Bernhard, *Self-Evaluation and Psychotherapy in the Market System* (Oxfordshire, UK: Routledge, 2018).
- 198 a 2020 study of US adults ages thirty and over: J. M. Twenge and A. B. Cooper, “The Expanding Class Divide in Happiness in the United States, 1972–2016,” *Emotion* (2020, advance online publication), <https://doi.org/10.1037/emo0000774>.
- 199 “statistically significant positive relationship between income inequality and risk of depression”: Vikram Patel, Jonathan K. Burns, Monisha Dhingra, Leslie Tarver, Brandon A. Kohrt, and Crick Lund, “Income Inequality and Depression: a Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of the Association and a Scoping Review of Mechanisms,” *World Psychiatry*, February 17, 2018: 76–89, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5775138/>.
- 199 as if they were already in some way suspect: Thomas E. Trail and Benjamin R. Karney, “What’s (Not) Wrong with Low-Income Marriages,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 73, no. 3 (May 24, 2012): 413–27, <https://online.library.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2012.00977.x>.
- 199 a 2020 analysis by Princeton University: Nathan N. Cheek and Eldar Shafir, “The Thick Skin Bias in Judgments About People in Poverty,” *Behavioural Public Policy*, Cambridge University Press, August 14, 2020: 1–26, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/behavioural-public-policy/article/thick-skin-bias-in-judgments-about-people-in-poverty/2A8CCE13402F69C2B0D1145BE5270E1D>.
- 200 the American Sociological Association’s *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*: Vikram Patel et al., “Income Inequality and Depression: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of the Association and a Scoping Review of Mechanisms,” *World Psychiatry* 17, no. 1 (February 2018): 76–89, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5775138/>.

Chapter 15: Volunteering Ourselves

- 209 our volunteerism also has a dark side: Nina Eliasoph, *Making Volunteers: Civic Life at Welfare’s End* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011).
- 213 Celina Su surveyed twenty-five thousand PB participants: Celina Su: “Beyond Inclusion: Critical Race Theory and Participatory Budgeting,” *New Political Science* 39, no. 1 (2017) 126–42, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/07393148.2017.1278858>.
- 214 according to Alexander Kolokotronis, a young scholar: Alexander Kolokotronis, “What to Do Once We’ve Defunded the Police,” *Current Affairs*,

July 9, 2020, <https://www.currentaffairs.org/2020/07/what-to-do-once-weve-defunded-the-police>.

Chapter 16: Unmaking the Self-Made Myth

- 218 hybrid narratives: This sort of narrative was proposed as the most effective format in the Norman Lear Center's March 2021 report "Stories Matter" by Erica L. Rosenthal. While "personal responsibility narratives" in films or television shows "focus on individual choices and responsibility" with an "emphasis on willpower or lifestyle choices," "hybrid narratives" combine "personal responsibility with external factors, situating individual stories within a larger structural context. . . . Research has shown that audiences experience greater empathy in response to this type of narrative."
- 220 by August 2021, America's billionaires could have covered a \$3,400 check: They could have but they didn't, like bullies who took everyone else's sweets—as a kind of "moral injury." What do I mean by that? Psychiatrists tend to use "moral injury" now to describe the trauma that, say, soldiers experience after battles or killing—when they enact or fail to prevent or simply see events that contradict their fundamental beliefs. But I'd argue that people who have survived the pandemic economically intact experience a kind of "moral injury" when so many Americans were threatened to be ejected from their homes.
- 221 of other organizations: These included Academy of American Poets and PEN America.
- 221 "media extinction event": In 2020, thirty-seven thousand media workers had lost their jobs—poof! One of the many who came to me and my organization for financial help was a fifty-one-year-old photojournalist who four different doctors agreed had coronavirus and was suddenly unable to pay their rent. They needed money—and we gave them what we could, \$1,500, to continue to stay in the profession and pay their rent.
- 222 1933 painting: I visited this Alice Neel painting during the pandemic, the 1933 work *Investigation of Poverty*, at the Russell Sage Foundation, which showed two impoverished old men on one side and foundation workers on the other, the latter staring in an apathetic-seeming way at the poor guys they were supposed to be helping. (The painting has little to do with today's venerable Russell Sage Foundation but rather that entity nearly a century ago.) I didn't think it was happenstance that Neel's own painful familial experiences gave her insight into the perils of detached philanthropy.
- 223 You will likely have your own list: One inspiration for this practice comes from the podcaster and author Bob McKinnon, the creator of Your Amer-

- ican Dream Score, who encourages guests on his podcast *Attribution* to credit those who have helped them for this very reason.
- 223 Michelle Hughes at the National Young Farmers Coalition: Michelle Hughes, “Dismantling the Bootstrap Myth,” ExtraNewsfeed, January 16, 2017, <https://extranewsfeed.com/dismantling-the-bootstrap-myth-8ba295f92431>. As Hughes writes, “Simply put, we live in a nation in which some are issued boots and some are not.”
- 225 We might embrace the notion of “secular faith”: Martin Hägglund writes in his book *This Life: Secular Faith and Spiritual Freedom*, “Both capitalism and religion prevent us from recognizing in practice that our own lives—our only lives—are taken away from us when our time is taken away from us.”
- 225 “new main characters, better plots, and at least the possibility of some happy endings,” as one activist writer puts it: That writer is Lynne Segal in her book *Radical Happiness: Moments of Collective Joy* (Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2017).
- 225 radiant with expressiveness: Vivian Gornick, *The Romance of American Communism* (Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2020).

Epilogue: My Interdependence Day

- 228 bestselling illustrated memoir: I am thinking of a drawing from the artist Alison Bechdel’s 2021 book *The Secret to Superhuman Strength*, in which the artist conceives of her own participation in workout crazes and her compulsive exercise as a kind of twisted Emersonian striving.
- 230 Marilyn Friedman, “relational autonomy”: And as law and political science professor Jennifer Nedelsky writes in *Law’s Relations: A Relational Theory of Self, Autonomy and Law*, “People are not simply self-made,” rather they are constituted socially.