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The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare

Volume 42
Issue 2 June

Article 9

2015

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Naomi Klein. Reviewed by Sheila D. Collins.**

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Recommended Citation

Collins, Sheila (2015) "Review of *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate*. Naomi Klein. Reviewed by Sheila D. Collins.," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 42: Iss. 2, Article 9.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15453/0191-5096.3908>

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol42/iss2/9>

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Book Reviews

Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate*. (2014). Simon & Schuster. \$30 (hardcover), 576 pages.

For the past two decades, the Canadian journalist, Naomi Klein, has written a book that captures the zeitgeist of an era. She has an uncanny ability to see the forest when the rest of us see only trees. So it was with her first book, *No Logo* (2000), a penetrating dissection of the ubiquity of the corporate marketing and “branding” of the world. Her next book, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (2007), analyzed the way advanced capitalism restructures itself for greater global dominance through, or in the wake of, major disasters, during which the populace is in a state of shock and unable to respond.

Books on climate change now number in the hundreds, if not thousands, but if you can read only one book on the subject, this thoroughly researched and riveting polemic should be it. Klein begins with her own confession of denying, until now, the imminence of catastrophic climate change, calling on her readers to look it squarely in the face. After going through the reasons most people—even well-read, intelligent progressives like her—tend to place climate change at the bottom of their priorities, she goes on to explain why it is so difficult for contemporary societies to do what is necessary to halt greenhouse gas emissions and get us on a path to climate sustainability. The reason is, simply, that to do so requires us to change everything—our way of thinking and relating to the world, of producing and consuming, of exchanging and investing. “Extractivism,” a philosophy dating back to the Enlightenment, where humans treat the earth as an endless source of enrichment, is blamed for the mess in which both capitalism and state socialism have left us. State socialism is gone, but market fundamentalism is incapable of saving us; and too many powerful interests have too much to lose.

Hardly anyone is exempt from Klein’s trenchant analysis of the barriers to effective action on climate change. One of the

tragic aspects of our time, she points out, is that at the very moment we should be radically reducing our fossil fuel use and empowering the government to fund renewable energy solutions, our political system has been captured by climate denialists and small government ideologues. Going into the board rooms and conferences where such people meet, she gives us behind-the-scenes accounts of how they operate. But her critique does not stop with the usual suspects. Klein shows how supposed converts to environmentalism, CEOs like Richard Branson, founder of Virgin Group and former New York City mayor, Michael Bloomberg, in their desire for short-term profits, are found to be subverting the very cause they say they stand for; and many of the large environmental organizations like the Natural Resources Defense Fund and the Nature Conservancy, to name a few, stand indicted for taking hand-outs from corporate polluters. Even Germany, that model of renewable energy adoption, has increased its greenhouse gas emissions in the last two years. Klein devotes an entire chapter to skewering the boosters of geoengineering—the large-scale, deliberate manipulation of the environment to counteract the effects of global warming through such processes as spraying sulfate aerosols into the stratosphere to block the sun or fertilizing oceans with iron to pull carbon out of the atmosphere. Klein shows that such technological “fixes” are a way of avoiding the need to reduce our emissions. She exposes the techno-fallacy involved in such thinking, as well as the potential danger such projects pose to social justice.

This book is not all doom and gloom. Klein’s travels around the world have convinced her that there is a growing movement she calls “Blockadia” that is uniting what were previously single-issue groups around the threat posed to all of us by the climate crisis. A “great many people,” she explains, “have reacted to this crisis not by abandoning the promise of genuine self-government, but rather by attempting to make good on that promise in the spheres where they still have real influence.” The second half of the book is a useful compendium of the strategies and tactics, the mechanisms of governance that such groups are using.

Though widely admired, Klein’s book is not without its critics on the Left. Some, like Tom Hayden, think she gives too little credit to the kind of “radical reform” that occurred during

the Great Depression or that her criticism of big environmental organizations is counterproductive. Others have faulted her for sometimes vague construction of the movement she celebrates or the contradiction in some of her arguments, like calling for more government intervention on the one hand and celebrating the actions of “small is beautiful” groups on the other. The role of militarism in global warming is given only a passing glance, but then, very few others have written about this either. These, however, are not reasons not to read this book. It is a rich source of solidly researched information and insight and provides a valuable basis for further discussion. Its lucid prose makes it highly accessible. It would be a terrific book around which to organize book groups and should be considered required reading for students in the social and environmental sciences.

*Sheila D. Collins, Emerita, Political Science,
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Joyce Bell, *The Black Power Movement and American Social Work*. (2014). Columbia University Press. \$50.00 (hardcover), 256 pages.

Joyce Bell has presented a rigorous archival research study on the influence of the Black Liberation Movement on the separatist activities of Black social workers in the late sixties and early seventies. These separatist activities challenged mainstream professional social work organizations and culminated in the founding of the National Association of Black Social Workers in 1968 and the creation of the Black Caucus Journal in 1973. The 1967 theoretical distinction between individual and institutional racism by Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton was tremendously influential in social work. Changes were made to social work curricula, and a return to an emphasis on systemic reform was encouraged. This author also captures the perpetual struggle in the profession of social work with C. Wright Mills’ sociological imagination—the tension between personal troubles and public issues, between clinical treatment and social change.

During the late sixties and early seventies, marginalization in social work existed at many levels. Career