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No Is Not Enough: Resisting Trump's Shock Politics and Winning the World We Need

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Naomi Klein, *No Is Not Enough: Resisting Trump's Shock Politics and Winning the World We Need* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2017), 272 pp., \$16.95.

In this inspiring book, Naomi Klein draws from her previous books *No Logo*, *The Shock Doctrine*, and *This Changes Everything* to argue that the rise of Donald Trump is rooted in the corporate capitalist turn away from material production towards branding with Trump promoting himself as a super brand, that we should expect Trump to increasingly use the politics of shock to push through his extremely conservative agenda, and that we must respond radically to Trump since his promotion of fossil fuels will soon eliminate the rapidly diminishing opportunity of keeping climate change within minimally acceptable boundaries. The radical response requires that we go beyond saying “no” to Trump and seeking to defend past policies and gains: we should “chart a credible and inspiring path to a different future” (220), get rid of the “entire pro-corporate economic playbook” (234) and say “yes” to a world of “care for the land, for the planet’s living systems, and for one another” (240f).

In Part I, “How We Got Here,” Klein discusses how Trump gradually shifted in the 1990s from being a real estate developer to becoming an innovator of branding high-end real estate. What greatly enabled Trump to amass wealth through selling his name was the success of *The Apprentice*. His popular books, especially *The Art of the Deal*, also helped to cement Trump as a celebrity brand. Through his experience with reality TV, as well as through his appearances at World Wrestling Entertainment events (insulting the losers, encouraging crowd rage, etc.), Trump acquired the skills of selling his brand in the political arena, exploiting the increasing blending of entertainment and political news in the media.

On Klein’s account, the Trump brand stands for wealth, while his closely-related personal brand is somewhat different (33). She continues: “His brand is being the ultimate boss, the guy who is so rich he can do whatever he wants, whenever he wants, and to whomever he wants (including grabbing whichever woman he wants, by whichever body part he wants).” The brand includes that Trump creates his own facts. Klein explains: “In Trump’s world, and according to the internal logic of his brand, lying with impunity is all part of being the big boss. Being tethered to

fixed, boring facts is for losers” (56). Relatedly, it may be noted that what matters in branding is less objective success (the quality of the brand) than people believing in the brand and, so, “truth” is whatever helps to sustain the brand.

Klein’s branding account of the rise of Trump sheds light on how he succeeded in dominating the news cycle during his presidential run. It also helps to explain his constant lying and universe of alternative facts. The branding proposition is, however, less successful in explaining what motivated those who elected Trump. His brand as artful dealmaker might have led his working-class voters to believe that he would bring back manufacturing jobs, while his brand was obviously also attractive to “lock her up” misogynists. Further, Trump sold the lie that he as billionaire would be above corruption and would drain the swamp, appealing to the growing distrust of government since Reagan and the growing awareness of money buying congressional votes. More broadly, Trump as “winner” peddled the illusion “that he would make America a country of winners again – exploiting those deep economic anxieties and using all the reality-simulation skills that he had picked up from years at the helm of a top-rated TV show” (50). However, Trump’s religious politics regarding white Evangelicals, his exploitation of xenophobic sentiments, his appeal to rural resentment of urban political dominance, his culture war, etc., all were instrumental in his election and seemingly not constitutive of his brand.

In Part II, “Where We Are Now,” Klein discusses how the Trump administration has promoted the fossil-fuel economy and sought to eradicate the notion of Anthropocene climate change. In this context she briefly reiterates her argument in *This Changes Everything* that conservative market fundamentalists deny climate change not only because it necessitates leaving trillions in wealth in the ground but also because effective greenhouse gas mitigation requires the end of the capitalist market (79ff). Other topics covered are how Trump exploited racial and gender resentments in his election campaign and how Clinton’s “trickle-down identity politics” with the message that increased diversity at the top would gradually extend to lower-class minorities failed in comparison to Trump’s white identity politics in drawing their respective audiences to the polls (94). Notably, in crucial states such as Ohio and Wisconsin Clinton received significantly fewer Democratic votes than Obama because of lower turnout among Blacks. Klein further argues that Trump seeks to increase manufacturing “to make American manufacturing cheap again” (104) through the elimination of environmental protections, lower corporate taxes,

wage theft, and the like, adding to the growing economic inequality of our times. The answer is not the “philanthrocapitalism” of liberal billionaires, the “Davos class,” the supporters of the Clinton Foundation (114ff), but the kind of economic populism promoted by Bernie Sanders (126f).

In Part III, “How it Could Get Worse,” Klein observes that decent people view disaster as an occasion for assistance and solidarity, while hard-core market fundamentalists see it as an opportunity for exploitation and dominance. Trump profited from the debt crisis in the 1970s in New York to gain very favorable terms for his building projects; now he has created a “disaster capitalism cabinet” (145), with appointments of individuals who favor (and at times personally have benefited from) for-profit jails, increased defense and homeland security budgets, and private security contractors. The fossil-fuel mania of the Trump administration also may lead to war in order to raise the price of oil (171ff.). Other “shocks” might include economic crises due to deregulation, natural disasters due to climate change, and terrorism due to waging a cultural war on Islam. A large-scale terrorist attack on US soil may lead to massive arrests of immigrants, Black Lives Matter organizers, climate activists, giving local police a free hand, and attempts to intimidate the courts (164f). This idea that Trump may (further) suspend “core democratic norms” through a “state of emergency” should have been elaborated, especially in light of the growing illiberal sentiments among American citizens (the “deconsolidation of democracy” as articulated by Roberto Stefan Foa and Yascha Mounk).

In Part IV, “How Things Could Get Better,” Klein addresses resistance to a wide range of past and present shocks, including the broad and diverse resistance against Trump during the first few months of his administration. In this context, Klein poses an important question: “[W]hy did those crises [such as the Great Depression of 1929 and the 1969 oil spill in Santa Barbara] produce such visionary change, while more recent ones – Katrina, the subprime mortgage debacle, BP’s Deepwater Horizon disaster – have left so little progressive public policy behind?” Her answer is that envisioning a radically different world has always been central to fundamental social change and that such a vision has been largely absent since “the cry of No first began echoing around the world in 2008” (220). On a critical note, the problem is not so much the absence of radical visions but rather one of understanding and creating social conditions that make people act on such visions. At any rate, Klein continues to argue that “No Is Not Enough,”

especially when dealing with Trump's agenda. To resist successfully, we must counter his regressive world with a truly progressive world, and we must do this very soon to avoid severe climate change. In short, it is "time for a people's shock" and "leap" to a better society.

In her conclusion, "The Caring Majority Within Reach," Klein sums up her view that a centrist response to the current crisis is inadequate and that only a Left radical agenda will be effective in stopping the conservative onslaught, including demanding now no college tuition, 100% renewable energy, demilitarization of the police, and welcoming refugees, and reaching in the future for more radical ideas, such as conceivably prison abolition and worker cooperatives as central to a green economy (263). Klein's vision of a different future is further elaborated in the Postscript "The Leap Manifesto: A Call for a Canada Based on Caring for the Earth and One Another." Klein and dozens of representatives of Canadian progressive groups articulated the Manifesto in 2015 (and since then it has been endorsed by close to fifty thousand people). The Manifesto calls for an economy of care with green and democratic energy, more localized agriculture, extensive public transportation, a reduced work week, more caring jobs, a basic income for all, racial and gender equality, and more local democracy. The Manifesto displays a weakness more generally present in Klein's book: Little is said about the forms of ownership that should replace corporate capitalist companies (worker cooperatives are mentioned only in passing). Even though Klein expresses sympathy with the socialist tradition, she does not seem to tap significantly from its rich intellectual history. Still, Klein's book succeeds admirably in calling for resistance to Trump and working toward a progressive, greener world and, so, we should celebrate that it has quickly become a bestseller.

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