

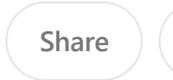
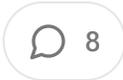
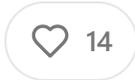
PREVIEW- Coming Up Short: A Memoire Of My America

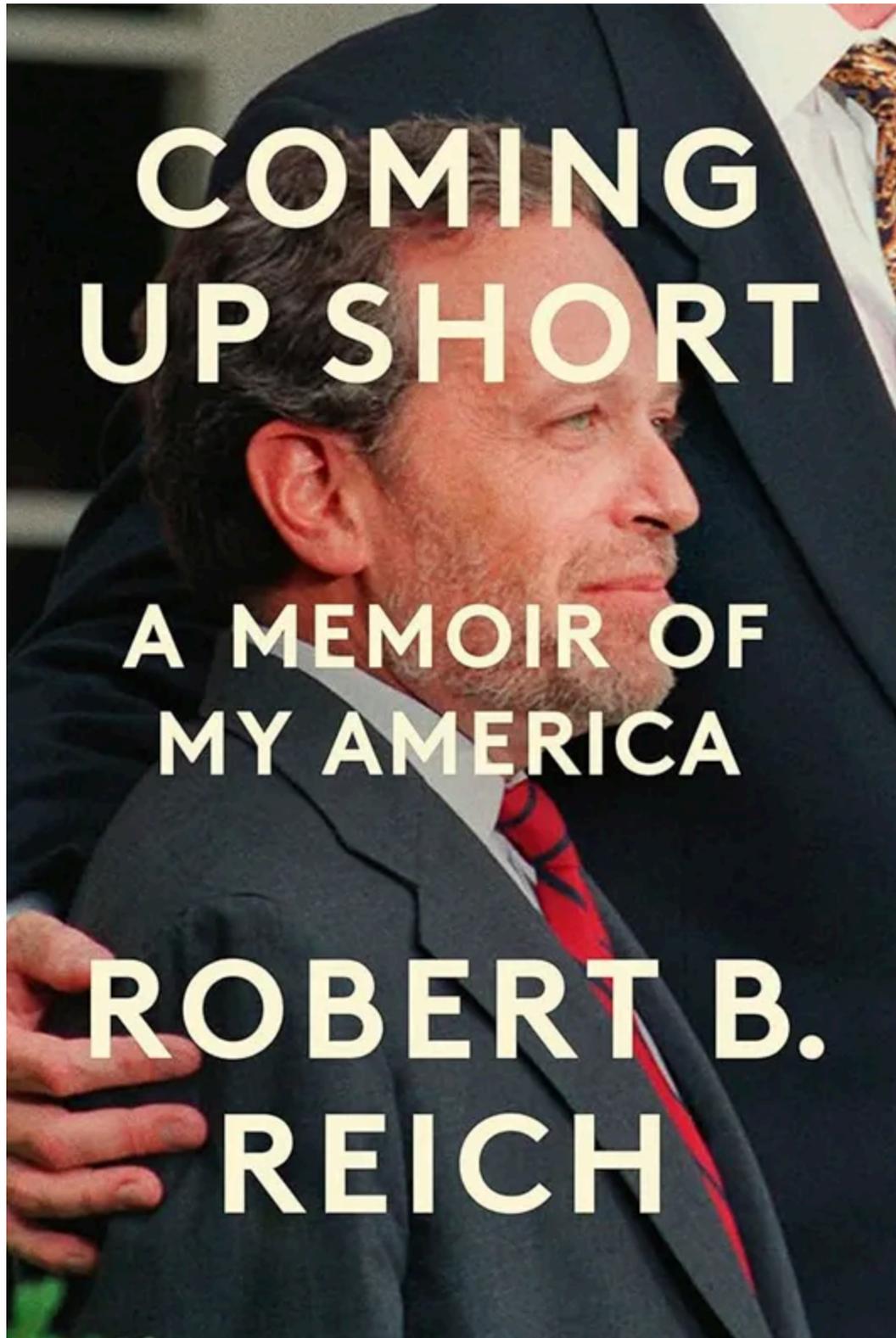
“The fact is that Democrats have lost support with all working-class voters across the electorate.”



BARRY GANDER

AUG 24, 2025





When Trump first ran as a candidate for president in 2015, [Robert Reich](#) viewed him as an anomaly - a cartoon caricature of a con man trying to gain political power. He spent most of his life bullying others — employees, contractors, vendors, women. Tenants

lawyers, bankers, politicians, producers. He was and is a bully's bully — vulgar, chaotic, angry, uninformed, impulsive, vindictive. How he got to power is one of the splinter-stories in Reich's new best-selling book "Coming Up Short".

The book is much more than an accounting of current political trends – it is also an action film of the inside of a tornado...a satellite view of the policy-makers of his generation.

The title is a play on words: Reich himself is very short (4' 11"), but as he sees it, his baby-boom generation has also come up short, in terms of making the world a faire place.

He observes that most Americans' incomes are flattening even though the economy continues to grow. The lion's share of economic gains have gone to the top. Most Americans, especially those without college degrees, have felt very little improvement in their lives and their jobs have grown less secure.

Some \$50 trillion has been siphoned from the bottom 90 percent of Americans to the richest 1 percent.

Meanwhile, Reich has watched Democrats abandon the working class. John F. Kennedy was the last Democratic president to depend on the votes of working-class Americans.

Sixty years later, Joe Biden depended on the votes of college-educated Americans while losing the votes of the white working class by two to one. Kamala Harris lost working class by an even larger margin.



Reich with Gavin Newsom

Reich had a front-row seat when they bailed out Wall Street because its gambling addiction threatened to blow up the entire economy but the leaders never bailed out homeowners who lost everything.

To his credit, Joe Biden redirected the Democratic Party back toward its working-class roots. but many of the changes Biden catalyzed wouldn't be evident for years and could easily be reversed. And he had great difficulty communicating effectively about the In her brief, bright campaign, Kamala Harris rarely mentioned inequality.

Her campaign had enormous energy but was on a perilously short runway, and she was not able to address why so many Americans were working harder than ever yet still struggling economically against the power of large corporations and the rich to rig the market and siphon off most of the economy's gains.

Reich wanted to champion the working class: to demand paid family leave, Medicare for all, free public higher education, stronger unions, and higher taxes on great wealth. He aimed to create the biggest boom in residential home construction since World

War II. He argued that corporations must share their profits with their workers and limit CEO pay; that stock buybacks should be illegal; that corporate welfare (subsidies and tax credits unrelated to the common good) be stopped and giant corporations should be busted up.

He and his “boomer” generation failed to create the decent, sustainable, and just society that was within their grasp. This is not my accusation; this comes from Reich...”In this regard. I’m sorry to say, we all came up short.”

Reich’s story is of how a winning formula was thrown away for the greed of a owner class. Surprising almost everyone. the nation emerged economically stronger after WW2. Almost all Americans had been put to work during the war and almost every factory was run at full capacity, ending the Great Depression more effectively than of the many programs that President Franklin D. Roosevelt launched.

The war and the Depression decade before it had obliterated the fortunes of the Gilded Age. Industrial robber barons. monopolists. titans of Wall Street. and heirs to vast wealth lost almost everything they had accumulated or had it taxed away. The vast playing field of the American economy was greatly leveled, opening the way to the largest middle class the world had ever seen.

McCarthyism was the by-product of the Republican Party’s postwar effort to eradicate the New Deal. During the hearings into McCarthy’s accusations of treason, McCarthy’s chief counsel was Roy Cohn, who became one of America’s most notorious bullies. Cohn had gained prominence as the Department of Justice attorney who successfully prosecuted Julius and Ethel Rosenberg for espionage.

Reich calls him “the polestar of human evil. The worst human being who ever lived the most evil, twisted, vicious bastard ever to snort coke at Studio 54.”

Cohn proved himself useful to a young real estate developer named Donald Trump. bequeathed to Trump a penchant for ruthless bullying, profane braggadocio,

opportunistic bigotry, lying, and more lying. Like Trump, Cohn was utterly without principle and prioritized personal power that could be leveraged for wealth, influence and celebrity.

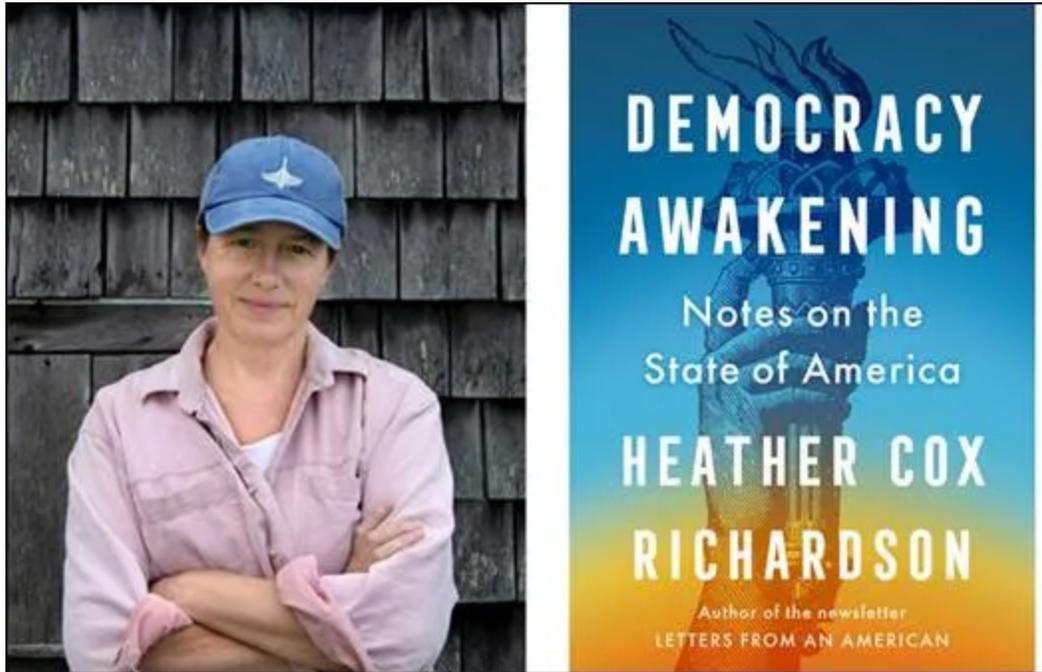
Cohn introduced Trump to another of Cohn's clients, Rupert Murdoch. And helped another young man named Roger Stone.

In his first and best - known book. *The Art of the Deal*. Trump drew a distinction between integrity and loyalty. He preferred the latter, and for him, Roy Cohn exemplified it.

Lest the reader thinks that Reich is speaking from a position of moral excellence, he is quick to sketch out childhood incidents that were not...exemplary. "I was expelled from Miss Bouton's nursery school because of excessive sarcasm. I was four years old..."

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Next week we will review a new best-seller by author and historian HEATHER COX RICHARDSON whose million followers on Substack make her the site's most successful individual author.



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"The Lord helps those who help themselves."

I become frustrated with accusations of the "working class" being "abandoned" by progressives. I watched President Biden walk picket lines with workers striking for better wages and benefits. I heard candidate Harris propose federal programs for training and education to aid the transition to high tech industries. I heard both of them call for universal health care and robust social services programs to assist those in need. I then watched in dismay as middle America voted against their self-interests.

"Ignorance is bliss." And, growth and change are uncomfortable. Yes, it is easier to believe that a charlatan can "fix" it all for you and magically progress will grind to a halt and computers and robots will disappear. Just passively wait for the wealth to "trickle down" from the benevolent fascist overlord.

Robert Reich has dedicated his life to educating and helping others to get ahead in a world of rapid and confusing progress. He and other progressives can lead the way, but "we the people" have the gumption to get off our couches and act like adults. To paraphrase Jimmy Buffet:

"Some people claim

there's a liberal to blame,

but I know

it's my own damn fault."

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3 replies by BARRY GANDER and others



Andy Andy's Substack 16h Edited

♡ Liked by BARRY GANDER

A quote from Robert Reich:

"The reason I write this daily [substack] newsletter is not just to inform (and occasionally amuse) but also to arm you with the truth — about how the system works and doesn't, where power is located and where it's lacking, and the myths and lies used by those who are blocking positive social change so YOU can fight more effectively for the common good."

I used to subscribe to Reich's Substack since the 2024 DNC convention, but I dropped it in January 2025.

And, a lot of it was because of that last line in the quote from his website "so YOU can fight more effectively for the common good."

Robert Reich Welcome!

<https://rbreich.com/>

Not because he wrote that line, but because he confirmed exactly what I felt he was doing while reading his substack.

America, and the world, is in the middle of an existential crisis. The 2024 elections showed bizarre anomalies. Nobody was investigating them. He was one of America's senior leaders that could have pressured Biden for an audit.

I found myself increasingly frustrated by the disconnect between his influence and his lack of action. He tells others "how" to fight for the common good, but rarely stepped into the fray himself.

He would write about what needed to change in terms of SCOTUS, election laws, etc. Or, he described the history of how a current system worked.

But, he would stop short of doing anything himself, to the point he wouldn't even write about what

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