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Robert Gottlieb. *Care-Centered Politics: From the Home to the Planet*. (Cambridge, The MIT Press, 2022)

David N. Pellow

Robert Gottlieb has been a leading voice in the scholarship on environmental justice, food justice, power and inequality, resource politics, and global cities for decades. Ever since the publication of his groundbreaking 1993 book, *Forcing the Spring: The Transformation of the American Environmental Movement*, I have followed his work with great interest, as he shapes and reshapes fields of study with careful attention to detail and compassionate ethical–political perspectives.

His most recent book, *Care-Centered Politics*, is a clarion call for hope and transformation during these troubled times. The political and cultural context for this inspired work emerges from the continued struggles against neoliberalism, that brutal anticare policy framework that has been recently amplified by the triple threats of global climate change/disruption, the Covid-19 pandemic, and the scourge of systemic racism. Gottlieb explores how each of these threats makes care-centered politics both more challenging and absolutely necessary.

The book does an excellent job of providing a thorough consideration of the long tradition and more recent iterations of feminist activism and scholarship on the concept of care. ''Care is a form of labor, both paid and unpaid, and an economy'' (p. 3), but it is also an ethic, a practice, a form of solidarity and interdependence, a set of institutional and sectoral relationships, and, perhaps most importantly, a politics. Weaving these distinct and overlapping ideas of care, the book articulates a persuasive framework for linking care (in all of its forms) across all economic sectors, social domains (from the private to the public), to our ecosystems and climate.

Care theorists have produced important ideas about how best to reframe the Marxist concept of social reproduction—actions that make possible labor participation in the production process—to include ''life-making activities'' such as caring for family members and the fulfillment of our basic needs. Community leaders have invested enormous volumes of time and energy into that work, including environmental justice advocates who have always articulated a care politics as it relates to our daily lives (e.g., the environment includes those places where we live, work, play, learn, eat, and pray), and who have insisted on caring for the land, water, and all living things.

The National Welfare Rights Organization, the National Domestic Workers Alliance and numerous local community-based groups (such as the South Bronx Cooperative Home Care Associates, LA Green Grounds, and New Communities) figure prominently in this volume. These groups embody specific examples of how activists have articulated and applied care politics to multiple realms of society and environment against concerted opposition by state and corporate institutions committed to neoliberal politics and anticare. Perhaps the central struggle we are up against is the way that capitalism has subordinated social reproduction to production.

In other words, capitalism attaches primary value to the dictates of the market, while systematically devaluing care work and life itself—the essence of anticare. Building on the works of feminist scholars and activists such as Nancy Fraser, Nancy Folbre, Ai-jen Poo, Sylvia Federici, Joan Tronto, Kathi Weeks, and many others (including André Gorz), Gottlieb contends that we must transform our society so that all people may enjoy a basic income, access to child care, a shorter work week, clean water, affordable and nutritious food and housing, living wages, and much more. Such a vision and practice will require valuing care in human life and extending that idea to all living things and the planet itself (p. 43).

Gottlieb offers a comprehensive and generative assessment of the various Green New Deal proposals that have emerged in recent years around the world. He

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praises these frameworks for their attention to ecological sustainability and social equity, but rightly notes that they tend to lack a depth of commitment to care politics and their underlying logic is almost invariably hitched to the wagon of hypergrowth. He places the Green New Deal in conversation with important economic models such as the *foundational economy*, which consists of goods and services that are critical to our well-being such as housing, education, health care, and childcare. Gottlieb notes that, despite its promise, that model stops short of offering an alternative to neoliberal economics that center privatization and financialization, thus creating deep inequalities.

Addressing some of those concerns is the concept and practice of the *solidarity economy*, which places its primary emphases on cooperation and mutual aid. This is a model that is witnessing a massive resurgence across the world as social inequalities, health disparities, and climate change-driven disasters produce harm, whereas governments are either absent or incapable of addressing those needs. The solidarity economy is exemplified by the work of everyday people to mobilize medicine, clean water, food, shelter, and other critical resources that are then shared—*not sold*—to many of us who need it most during times of crisis. This extraordinary community work is also reflected in the aims and objectives of the many cooperatives that are springing up around the world to improve access to housing, food, energy, communication, and financial stability across societies.

All of this inspiring and impactful activity reflects the power and possibility of a *care economy*—a model and practice that builds on the most promising dimensions of the foundational and solidarity economies and that seeks to create democratic structures and policy mechanisms that refuse neoliberalism entirely. To achieve the development of a thriving care economy will require major investments and bold initiatives such as a transformative Green New Deal, Medicare for All, and reparations for centuries of systemic racism and environmental and climate injustices. Gottlieb argues that such a transformation will be possible only through the actions of robust grassroots social movements, a utopian imagination, and creative and just approaches to language so that we reorient ourselves and our worldviews away from market-driven anticare.

Throughout the book, Gottlieb counterbalances despairing trends with hopeful examples of care, repair, and transformation that ordinary people are mobilizing around, even in the context of rising authoritarianism in the United States and around the world. The realities of global climate change and the traumas of health disparities and militarized racist violence are placed in contrast to the (mostly unpaid!) work that community advocates, neighbors, coworkers, and colleagues are performing at multiple scales. These are folks who are ''caring with'' rather than only ''caring for'' (to borrow a phrase from Joan Tronto) one another to reduce power differentials and increase equity.

At times I found myself wondering what a care politics might look like if it included attention to the ways in which more-than-just-humans also engage in ''life making activities'' that function within and across species boundaries, revealing collaborations, cooperation, and entanglements that meet basic needs and facilitate flourishing outside of human-centered frameworks. And although I appreciate Gottlieb's consideration of the promise of mutual aid, some readers might want to see more attention to other forms of care that also de-center the state, since states tend to concentrate rather than share power.

As a scholar who has been searching for writings that bring together theories and practices of care work with the literature and politics of environmental justice, I am delighted to have found Robert Gottlieb's *Care-Centered Politics*. This is a book that offers data and context for understanding how we reached this moment of crisis, and clear analysis and innovative pathways for productively channeling our rage.

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