

allow some flexibility within a public school system, but, as *The Prize* demonstrates, charters are quite dependent on politics, and this may affect both how they are perceived in the communities they serve and how effective they can truly be.

Whatever its very mild limitations, *The Prize* is a fascinating and informative account of the political machinations of education reform. The attempt to remake the Newark, New Jersey, public school system provides an excellent case study of how and why educational reform efforts often fail.

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Disinherited: How Washington Is Betraying America's Young

Diana Furchtgott-Roth and Jared Meyer

New York: Encounter, 2015, 130 pp.

Diana Furchtgott-Roth and Jared Meyer have written a concise book that is important for both the young and old. *Disinherited: How Washington is Betraying America's Young* is a clear and effective case for an end to Washington's harmful policies holding back America's youth. The authors pleasingly weave rational, empirical evidence with the first-hand testimonies of a number of American youths whose lives have been negatively affected by Washington's failed policies. This blend of cold, hard facts and eye-opening personal accounts makes for an enlightening and well-grounded read.

As a former chief economist at the U.S. Department of Labor, Furchtgott-Roth naturally has a firm command of the facts and statistics. I recently saw Meyer speak on a panel at the American Action Forum, and he likewise impressed me with his command of the material. Furchtgott-Roth and Meyer tackle the issues that inhibit the young from achieving their full potential, including health care, primary and secondary schooling, college debt, occupational licensing, and the minimum wage.

The authors first address the problem of the young paying for the services of the old through entitlement programs such as Social Security and Medicare. The authors point out that "Social Security and Medicare account for 40 percent of federal spending in 2014 and that young people and their employers continue to pay a combined

15.3 percent of their paychecks into the programs, funding current retirees with contributions the young will probably never see back.” The authors argue that, if nothing changes, Social Security funds will run out by 2033 and Medicare funds will be gone by 2030. In this current situation, young people may never see a return on their mandatory investment.

Next, Furchtgott-Roth and Meyer reveal the problem of the decreasing quality of primary and secondary education as a result of teachers unions and inadequate graduation requirements. The authors argue that our public education system favors older and even inexperienced teachers over younger and potentially innovative teachers because many teachers are unionized. In New York, it took an average of 502 days and \$216,588 to go through the hearings required to fire a single unionized teacher.

Another problem with public education detailed in *Disinherited* are graduation requirements that consist of community service hours and hours of attendance rather than a set of final exams like many European countries require. The authors claim that such final exams make it easier to demonstrate what students have learned.

Furchtgott-Roth and Meyer also argue that too many young people are encouraged by high school counselors to attend a four-year college or university when they might be better suited to a cheaper and more practical community college. The price of college has risen drastically over the years, and overall student loan debt has increased by 325 percent since 2004. Students owe an average of \$29,400 in student debt. The authors claim that this college debt delays many young people from pursuing many of the dreams they might have after graduation. The book tells the story of Annie Johnson, who graduated from a small liberal arts college after going to community college for two years. Annie is \$70,000 dollars in debt and says that she sees “a quality of life difference between myself and my friends who do not have student loan debt.”

Moreover, for those youth who do not want to go to college but would rather open a hair salon or become an interior designer, they still have to obtain licenses from the government that can require hundreds of dollars and hundreds of hours to complete. In another personal story detailed in *Disinherited*, Becky Maples wanted to become a cosmetologist but was prevented from doing so because the required license cost hundreds and took over a year to obtain.

Now, Becky is working in a factory instead of fulfilling her dream of becoming a cosmetologist.

The last and most significant argument for Washington's abandonment of American youth is the raising of the minimum wage. Many cities and states, including Seattle and Hawaii, have recently raised their hourly minimum wage to \$10.10 or higher. Furchtgott-Roth and Meyer explain that this will push young and low-skilled workers out of the workforce because employers will not be able to afford them. Many young people use minimum wage jobs to gain their first professional work experience and climb the professional ladder.

Internships are also vital toward developing professionally. The authors claim that the prohibition of unpaid internships diminishes the number of internships available for students to use to gain work experience. Having put together a panel about the ban on volunteering at for-profit institutions, I can confirm that the authors have hit the nail on the head. This practice prevents young people from taking the necessary steps toward professional skill development and career advancement.

Throughout *Disinherited*, Furchtgott-Roth and Meyer suggest logical solutions to these important and pressing problems. The work complements Furchtgott-Roth's other books addressing different employment demographics and issues. The entire book is easily understandable and, with its short length, absolutely merits a read. Young and old alike should open their eyes to the critical problems the youth of this nation are facing. *Disinherited* is an important step in turning the tide against Washington's failed policies.

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Wealth, Poverty and Politics: An International Perspective

Thomas Sowell

New York: Basic Books, 2015, 328 pp.

In 2015, Thomas Sowell turned 85 and published a new book. In it, he interjects himself foursquare into the debate over income inequality. He has written on the topic before, but never so comprehensively. His analysis of the topic is systematic and cuts across the main lines of the current debate.