

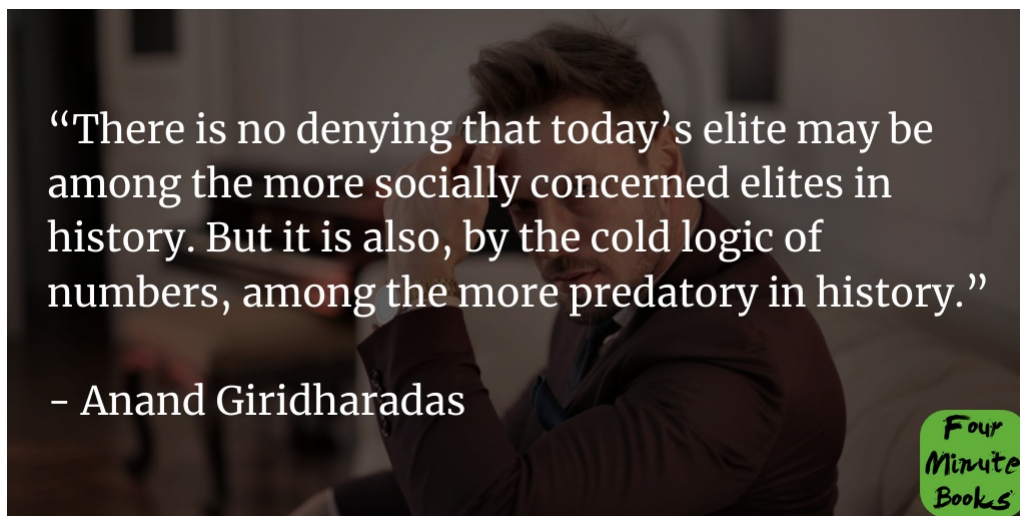
Winners Take All Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *Winners Take All* helps you see the ultra-rich in a more accurate light by identifying their shady strategies, including using the idea of “making the world a better place” as a front that only serves as a way to solidify their wealth and power.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



The world is progressing quickly. It seems all around us advancements in technology and productivity are making things better for everyone. Our lives are surely easier today in a lot of ways, but are we getting all of the benefits of these improvements?

Unfortunately, while we might think of the many progressive movements going on around us, the majority of people don't benefit from them. It's the elite that suck up almost all the potential good that comes from societal growth.

I think this is perfectly summed up in a recent Tweet from Ron Placone:

“Any country that's about to get their first trillionaire while simultaneously having people lined up for food a la the Great Depression is a failed state.”

Regardless of its exact accuracy, this statement identifies one of the biggest atrocities of our day. And these issues are exactly what Anand Giridharadas dives into in his book *Winners Take All: The Elite Charade of Changing the World*.

Here are the 3 most despicable lessons I've learned about the wealthiest people:

1. The elite control social progress, which we think is happening for our benefit but really only benefits them.
2. Inequality is rampant because the “win-win” attitude of the ultra-rich is actually a lie to cover up their plans to only look out for themselves.
3. Powerful people often deny their influence, which ironically just cements their status even further.

Are you ready for your daily dose of social justice? Let's see how we can find some in these lessons!

Lesson 1: Social progress makes us think that our lives are improving, but it's just one weapon that the elite use to help themselves.

Hilary Cohen was a recently graduated philosophy major who was curious about what to do with her future after the recent recession. Knowing she wanted to make a positive difference in the world, the only question was how. Entrepreneurship, and using it's principles to help stop inequality, seemed like the best answer.

Unless you've been in a coma for the last few decades, you know how bad inequality has become. It's gotten especially bad in the US where searches for the word doubled in just the four years between 2010 and 2014.

In that same year, an article came out identifying just how bad it had become. The research discovered that people getting into the top 10% of earners would make double the amount they would have if they had done the same thing in 1980.

But the bottom half of people would only make a total of \$200 more.

So it made sense for Cohen to join a management consultancy firm. After all, what's the harm in using business principles to help alleviate the social issues in the world?

Well, hidden behind this idea is the thought patterns of neoliberalism. It's centered around the free market, which values little economic regulation and letting prices be governed by what people want and need.

According to the author, we may think this makes people happy, but it's actually a huge risk because of the way it helps people in power stay in their positions.

Lesson 2: “Think win-win” might be a good adage for individuals to follow, but businesses use it as a front to hide their selfishness and greed.

You've got to love Stephen Covey's classic self-improvement book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. It's been one of my favorites since I first read it as a teenager. But one of the habits, "Think Win-Win" is dangerous when business elites apply it.

If everyone can be a winner then in these people's minds whatever benefits them also helps everybody else. With this mindset, it seems like the process of social progress is simple, painless, and without any sacrifice. It seems like a no-brainer that if businesses profit, everyone does.

In the real world, however, things aren't working out in favor of this mentality.

Take a problem like productivity. Seems simple enough, right? A Silicon Valley go-getter might think it's a great idea to build software that helps people and companies improve their efficiency. Couldn't everyone can benefit from something like that?

It turns out this approach is solving the wrong problem. Productivity has already been increasing dramatically in the last few years. **Some estimates say that between 1973 and 2014 it's gone up 70%!**

But the distribution of the benefits isn't going to everyone.

For the average worker, their income has only gone up about 10% for that massive increase in performance. In other words, the elite took the benefit!

Lesson 3: People in power have a hard time being honest about how much control they actually have because they know it solidifies their status.

It's been exciting for me to see the change in the nature of jobs in recent years. I've seen many people give up conventional work for a more entrepreneurial vision of their career, and it's amazing. For me, this transformation has made my life significantly better.

But according to the author, this isn't a good thing. It's just another way that the ultra-rich keep themselves in power.

And if you think about it, putting stock in a prediction of what the future will be like is the perfect way to hide an agenda.

If you're a business, all you have to do is find what story will benefit you and spin it as a mere guess at what life and work will be like. When everyone thinks that scenario is inevitable, it's easier for you to have things turn out as you want.

The everybody an entrepreneur idea is just that. It's easier for businesses to deny employees of health care or retirement plans under these pretenses, for example.

Big wigs also deny their power by making their businesses seem like they're humble do-gooders.

Uber, for example, identifies as one fighting against monopolies, taking down "taxi cartels." But the power they have over their workers is obvious. They have to follow strict rules or risk being fired, for example.

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Winners Take All Review

I have mixed feelings about *Winners Take All*. There wasn't much data to back up the claims it made and it seemed to have a clear agenda. Identifying the corruption of the ultra-rich is important, but doing so carries the danger of making us think wanting money is bad, which only harms us more.

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Who would I recommend the Winners Take All summary to?

The 56-year-old billionaire who wonders why their conscience is always bothering them, the 27-year-old who is worried about social justice, and anyone who is sick of the corrupt and greedy elite controlling the world.