

Analysis of strangers in their own land



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Strangers in Their Own Land focuses on Arlie Russell Hochschild who is a sociologist from Berkeley. She wants to understand the emotion and decision making behind the conservative voters. She believes that one's affiliation with a certain political party has become the largest divider in society.

Her interest in understanding the true emotion behind Republican voters comes from the fact that most votes are looked at as economic and political self-interest rather than the emotion behind voter's decisions. Conservatives contradict this theory because the red states (Republican states), who tend to have poorer health in their people, poorer education, and poorer environments, still vote against the government programs that could improve on all of those. She calls this the Great Paradox. Hochschild focuses her research on the deeper emotions of conservatives such as how they view themselves, what they believe their place in society is, and their relationships with non-conservatives. Her goal is to show her research in order to create a sense of empathy between conservatives and liberals and start to heal America. In her five years of research, she interviewed mostly older white folks who belonged to the middle class, around the city of Lake Charles, Louisiana. Environmental pollution became the issue she decided to make prevalent in her interviews.

The book starts off with Hochschild meeting Mike Shaff, an oil worker whose home was destroyed by a sinkhole that could have been prevented by government regulation. Even still, Shaff does not believe in government regulations like many other conservatives and wants to cut the funds of the Environmental Protection Administration. Hochschild sees Mike's views as a great example of the cause of the Great Paradox. She wants to understand

Mike's reason for opposing what could have saved his home. Hochschild then meets Lee Sherman, who used to be a pipe repairman for the Pittsburgh Plate Glass company. Those pipes transported deadly chemicals. One night, Lee was asked to dump some toxic sludge into the bayou in secret.

Pittsburgh Plate Glass then fired Lee when he became sick. Despite this, Lee does not want the government to get involved with regulations. In an attempt to understand Lee's view, Hochschild interviews a family affected by the toxic sludge. The Arenos live downstream from where Lee dumped the sludge. After the dumping, everything started to die and almost all the Arenos got cancer. The family still votes Republican even though they believe in environmental regulations and know the government won't do anything about it, they just don't trust Democrats.

Hochschild's next stop is to find out what makes Louisiana the prime example of the Great Paradox. She studies the political race for state governor of two pro-oil conservatives and an environmental activist named Russel Honore. He thinks that the other two candidates are trying to force citizens to vote between having a job and having a healthy environment (which is not true). Hochschild seeks out Dr. Templet to figure out the true role of oil in the Louisiana economy. He says that oil has done almost nothing for the state. The current governor had destroyed Louisiana's public sector of work for a tax break to give to the oil companies, despite the fact that most oil companies have jobs that are done by workers out of state.