

The Deep Story

Behind all I was learning about bayou and factory childhoods and the larger context—industry, state, church, regular media, Fox News—of the lives of those I had come to know lay, I realized, a deep story.

A deep story is a *feels-as-if* story—it’s the story feelings tell, in the language of symbols. It removes judgment. It removes fact. It tells us how things feel. Such a story permits those on both sides of the political spectrum to stand back and explore the *subjective prism* through which the party on the other side sees the world. And I don’t believe we understand anyone’s politics, right or left, without it. For we all have a deep story.

There are many kinds of deep story, of course. Lovers come to know each other’s childhood in order to understand how it feels to be the other person; they learn a personal deep story. Foreign leaders and diplomats try to understand national deep stories in order to relate more effectively to world leaders. They gather international deep stories. The deep story here, that of the Tea Party, focuses on relationships between social groups within our national borders. I constructed this deep story to represent—in metaphorical form—the hopes, fears, pride, shame, resentment, and anxiety in the lives of those I talked with. Then I tried it out on my Tea Party friends to see if they thought it fit their experience. They did.

Like a play, it unfolds in scenes.

Waiting in Line

You are patiently standing in a long line leading up a hill, as in a pilgrimage. You are situated in the middle of this line, along with others who are also white, older, Christian, and predominantly male, some with college degrees, some not.

Just over the brow of the hill is the American Dream, the goal of everyone waiting in line. Many in the back of the line are people of color—poor, young and old, mainly without college degrees. It's scary to look back; there are so many behind you, and in principle you wish them well. Still, you've waited a long time, worked hard, and the line is barely moving. You deserve to move forward a little faster. You're patient but weary. You focus ahead, especially on those at the very top of the hill.

The American Dream is a dream of progress—the idea that you're better off than your forebears just as they superseded their parents before you—and extends beyond money and stuff. You've suffered long hours, layoffs, and exposure to dangerous chemicals at work, and received reduced pensions. You have shown moral character through trial by fire, and the American Dream of prosperity and security is a reward for all of this, showing who you have been and are—a badge of honor.

The source of the American Dream is on the other side of the hill, hidden. Has the economy come to a strange standstill? Is my company doing okay? Will I get a raise this year? Are there good jobs for us all? Or just a few? Will we be waiting in line forever? It's so hard to see over the brow of the hill.

The sun is hot and the line unmoving. In fact, is it moving backward? You haven't gotten a raise in years, and there is no talk of one. Actually, if you are short a high school diploma, or even a BA, your income has dropped over the last twenty years. That has happened to your buddies too; in fact, some of them have stopped looking for good jobs, because they figure for guys like them, good jobs aren't out there.

You've taken the bad news in stride because you're a positive person. You're not a complainer. You count your blessings. You wish you could help

your family and church more, because that's where your heart is. You'd like them to feel grateful to you for being so giving to them. But this line isn't moving. And after all your intense effort, all your sacrifice, you're beginning to feel stuck.

You think of things to feel proud of—your Christian morality, for one. You've always stood up for clean-living, monogamous, heterosexual marriage. That hasn't been easy. You've been through a separation yourself, a near—or actual—divorce. Liberals are saying your ideas are outmoded, sexist, homophobic, but it's not clear what *their* values are. And given a climate of secular tolerance, you remember better times, when as a child you said morning prayer and the flag salute—before “under God” had to come out—in public school.

The Line Cutters

Look! You see people *cutting in line ahead of you!* You're following the rules. They aren't. As they cut in, it feels like you are being moved back. How can they just do that? Who are they? Some are black. Through affirmative action plans, pushed by the federal government, they are being given preference for places in colleges and universities, apprenticeships, jobs, welfare payments, and free lunches, and they hold a certain secret place in people's minds, as we see below. Women, immigrants, refugees, public sector workers—where will it end? Your money is running through a liberal sympathy sieve you don't control or agree with. These are opportunities you'd have loved to have had in your day—and either you should have had them when you were young or the young shouldn't be getting them now. It's not fair.

And President Obama: how did *he* rise so high? The biracial son of a low-income single mother becomes president of the most powerful country in the world; you didn't see that coming. And if he's there, what kind of a slouch does his rise make you feel like, you who are supposed to be so much more privileged? Or did Obama get there *fairly*? How did he get into an expensive place like *Columbia* University? How did Michelle Obama get enough money to go to *Princeton*? And then *Harvard* Law School, with a

father who was a city water plant employee? You've never seen anything like it, not up close. The federal government must have given them money. And Michelle *should feel* grateful for all she has but sometimes she seems mad. She has no right to feel mad.

Women: Another group is cutting ahead of you in line, if you are a man: women demanding the right to the men's jobs. Your dad didn't have to compete with women for scarce positions at the office. Also jumping in line ahead of you are overpaid public sector employees—and a majority of them are women and minorities. It also seems to you that they work shorter hours in more secure and overpaid jobs, enjoying larger pensions than yours. That assistant administrator at the Department of Regulation has cushy hours, a fat pension awaiting her, lifetime tenure—and she's probably sitting at her screen doing online shopping. What has she done to deserve perks that you don't enjoy?

Immigrants: And now Filipinos, Mexicans, Arabs, Indians, and Chinese on special visas or green cards are ahead of you in line. Or maybe they snuck in. You've seen Mexican-looking men building the man camps that are to house Sasol's Filipino pipefitters. You see the Mexicans work hard—and you admire that—but they work for less, and lower white American pay.

Refugees: Four million Syrian refugees are fleeing war and chaos, thousands a day, appearing in boats on the shores of Greece. President Obama accepted 10,000 of them, two-thirds women and children, to settle in the United States. But word has it that 90 percent of the refugees are young men, possibly ISIS terrorists, poised to get in line ahead of you and get their hands on your tax money. And what about you? You've suffered floods, oil spills, and chemical leaks. There are days when you feel like a refugee yourself.

The brown pelican: Unbelievably, standing ahead of you in line is a brown pelican, fluttering its long, oil-drenched wings. The Louisiana state bird, pictured on the state flag, nests in mangrove trees on ribbons of sand along the coast. The brown pelican was at one time nearly wiped out by chemical pollution, but in 2009 it was removed from the endangered species list—a

year before the 2010 BP oil spill. To keep surviving, it now needs clean fish to eat, clean water to dive in, oil-free marshes, and protection from coastal erosion. That's why it's in line ahead of you. But really, it's just an animal and you're a human being.

Blacks, women, immigrants, refugees, brown pelicans—all have cut ahead of you in line. But it's people like *you* who have made this country great. You feel uneasy. It has to be said: the line cutters irritate you. They are violating rules of fairness. You resent them, and you feel it's right that you do. So do your friends. Fox commentators reflect your feelings, for your deep story is also the Fox News deep story.

You're a compassionate person. But now you've been asked to extend your sympathy to all the people who have cut in front of you. So you have your guard up against requests for sympathy. People complain: Racism. Discrimination. Sexism. You've heard stories of oppressed blacks, dominated women, weary immigrants, closeted gays, desperate refugees, but at some point, you say to yourself, you have to close the borders to human sympathy—especially if there are some among them who might bring you harm. You've suffered a good deal yourself, but you aren't complaining about it.

Betrayal

Then you become suspicious. If people are cutting in line ahead of you, someone must be *helping* them. Who? A man is monitoring the line, walking up and down it, ensuring that the line is orderly and that access to the Dream is fair. His name is President Barack Hussein Obama. But—hey—you see him *waving* to the line cutters. He's helping them. He feels extra sympathy for them that he doesn't feel for you. He's on *their* side. He's telling you that these line cutters *deserve* special treatment, that they've had a harder time than you've had. You don't live near the line cutters or have close friends in most categories of the line cutters, but from what you can see or hear on Fox News, the real story doesn't correspond to his story about the line cutters, which celebrates so many black people, women, and

immigrants. The supervisor wants you to sympathize with the line cutters, but you don't want to. It's not fair. In fact, the president and his wife are line cutters themselves.

You feel betrayed. The president is *their* president, not *your* president. Now you have your guard way up. Watch out for lies. Presidents and other officials often wear a small pin showing the American flag—a flag pin. Did you see what a *small* flag pin he is wearing today? Maybe that means he's not proud of America. So the great pride you feel in being an American cannot be conveyed through him. As a source of honor, being an American is more important to you than ever, given the slowness of this line to the American Dream, and given disrespectful talk about whites and men and Bible-believing Christians.

Obama's story seems "fishy." You're not a paranoid type, but it seems to you that either the federal government funded Obama's education or, even worse, secret strings were pulled. A friend of yours asks you whether or not you noticed that Obama took off his wristwatch for Ramadan. (She is referring to a custom of removing jewelry during the Muslim holy month.) "He was brought up on the Koran," a neighbor says.

You may not yet have the biggest house, but you can certainly be proud of being American. And anyone who criticizes America—well, they're criticizing you. If you can no longer feel pride in the United States through its president, you'll have to feel American in some new way—by banding with others who feel as strangers in their own land.

Intermission

Meanwhile, for the white, Christian, older, right-leaning Louisianans I came to know, the deep story was a response to a real squeeze. On the one hand, the national ideal and promise at the brow of the hill was the American Dream—which is to say *progress*. On the other hand, it had become *hard to progress*.

As an ideal, the American Dream proposed a right way of feeling. You should feel hopeful, energetic, focused, mobilized. Progress—its core

idea—didn't go with feeling confused or mournful. And as an ideal, the American Dream did not seem to guide people in what to feel when they had attained some of their goals but not others—a state inspiring a more cautious impulse to protect what you already have.

Progress had also become harder—more chancy and more restricted to a small elite. The Great Recession of 2008 in which people lost homes, savings, and jobs had come and gone, but it had shaken people up. Meanwhile, for the bottom 90 percent of Americans, the Dream Machine—invisible over the brow of the hill—had stopped due to automation, off-shoring, and the growing power of multinationals vis-à-vis their workforces. At the same time, for that 90 percent, competition between white men and everyone else had increased—for jobs, for recognition, and for government funds. The year when the Dream stopped working for the 90 percent was 1950. If you were born before 1950, on average, the older you got, the more your income rose. If you were born after 1950, it did not. In fact, as economist Phillip Longman argues, they are the first generation in American history to experience the kind of lifetime downward mobility “in which at every stage of adult life, they have less income and less net wealth than people their age ten years before.” Some become so discouraged they stop looking for work; since the 1960s, the share of men ages twenty-five to fifty-four no longer in the workforce has tripled.

This stalled American Dream hits many on the right at a particularly vulnerable season of life—in their fifties, sixties, and seventies. It is a time during which people often check their bucket list, take stock, and are sometimes forced to give up certain dreams of youth. It's a season of life in which a person says to him- or herself, “So this is it.” As one man told me, “I thought one day I'd meet the girl of my dreams. I haven't and now I don't see her coming into my life.” Another man had hoped to start his own swamp tour company but wasn't able to get it off the ground. Yet another had hoped to travel to rodeo shows around the South, but got sick. Who could one blame for such disappointments? Oneself, of course. But that only increases your intense focus on your place in line.

Age also meant age discrimination. Older men now in their sixties were

the first to experience the diminishing American Dream, either by virtue of their lack of up-to-date training or because of company reluctance to pay age-related higher wages. But where were those federally funded training centers? And who can explain why it's so hard to get a good job?

A sixty-three-year-old man I met in Lake Charles, whom I will call Bill Beatifo, had a full crop of gray hair and a cherubic smile. As I came to know his story, I came to deeply appreciate his brave refusal to be discouraged.

His passion was sales. "I cut my teeth in cold calling," he said. "Sold trucks through Ryder truck rentals, Kirby vacuum cleaners, Amish sheds, short-term health insurance, you name it. For sixteen years I had done really well as a salesman and sales manager." Then a watershed moment came in 1992. "I was asked to fire some people under me. Then they got me. I'd been making \$60,000. They said we've got to cut you to \$40,000, but you can make up the \$20,000 in commissions. But that \$20,000 was really a cut. So I quit. They were cutting the older employees because we were more highly paid. I felt betrayed, especially by a co-worker who knew what was about to happen but didn't tell me."

Then he tried to replace the job he had lost:

"I called . . .

"E-mailed . . .

"Called . . .

"E-mailed . . .

"Waited . . .

"I almost never heard back. They can tell how old you are from your resume." The longer Bill was locked out of jobs in sales, the harder it became. He went on unemployment. "I was a ninety-nine-weeker," he said in a mirthless laugh, referring to maximum unemployment insurance. "It was almost too long; you don't actually look for work every day." He applied for a full-time job stocking grocery shelves but realized that, at his age, eight hours on his feet was too much.

Bill found a part-time job as a bookkeeper at a nearby truck garage for ten dollars an hour—the same wage he had earned summers as a college student in a union-protected factory job forty years earlier. He had applied

for a job as a part-time guard at a gated community, which he didn't get. He also spent more time with what had long been a sideline: selling non-FDA-approved magnetic shoe inserts that "get rid of aches and pains," and he had bought stocks in a company that was "about to produce" a medical device he hoped to sell to hospitals. He sold Organo Gold coffee (non-government-certified "organic") to friends and acquaintances, which his daughter feared was a scam (you have to buy it before you sell it). But Bill wasn't the type to give up. He could endure pain. "I'm a capitalist," he said. "When they get the medical device out of production and into the market, my wife and I will be millionaires." As with other men I spoke with, the repeated term "millionaire" floated around conversations like a ghost.

Meanwhile, if men like Bill were being squeezed by automation, outsourcing, and the rising power of multinationals, they were also being squeezed by greater competition from other groups for an ever-scarcer supply of cultural honor. As we shall see, the 1960s and 1970s had opened cultural doors previously closed to blacks and women, even as immigrants and refugees seemed to be sailing past the Statue of Liberty into a diminishing supply of good jobs.

And the federal government was helping this happen. After Clinton's 1990s claim to "end welfare as we know it," rates of financial aid to the poor fell. But in response to the Great Recession, after 2008, welfare rose—mainly through Medicaid and SNAP—although these rates have peaked and are falling. (On this, see Appendix C.) Given trends in the economy and a more open cultural door, news of more "government giveaways" rang alarm bells. That was the squeeze.

Not all white middle- and working-class men in this squeeze moved right, of course. But many self-starters, men who'd done well for what they'd been given, those in evangelical churches in right-leaning rural and Southern enclaves, those who had emotionally endured—and the women who were like them or depended on them—were inclining right.

Catcalls

“Crazy redneck.” “White trash.” “Ignorant Southern Bible-thumper.” You realize that’s *you* they’re talking about. You hear these terms on the radio, on television, read them on blogs. The gall. You’re offended. You’re angry. And you really hate the endless parade of complainers encouraged by a 1960s culture that seems to have settled over the land.

On top of that, Hollywood films and popular television either ignore people like you or feature them—as in *Buckwild*—in unflattering ways. “Two missing front teeth, all raggedy, that’s how they show us,” one man complained. The stock image of the early twentieth century, the “Negro” minstrel, a rural simpleton, the journalist Barbara Ehrenreich notes, has now been upgraded, whitened, and continued in such television programs as *Duck Dynasty* and *Here Comes Honey Boo Boo*. “Working class whites are now regularly portrayed as moronic, while blacks are often hyper-articulate, street smart . . . and rich.”

You are a stranger in your own land. You do not recognize yourself in how others see you. It is a struggle to feel seen and honored. And to feel honored you have to feel—and feel seen as—moving forward. But through no fault of your own, and in ways that are hidden, you are slipping backward.

You turn to your workplace for respect—but wages are flat and jobs insecure. So you look to other sources of honor. You get no extra points for your race. You look to gender, but if you’re a man, you get no extra points for that either. If you are straight you are proud to be a married, heterosexual male, but that pride is now seen as a potential sign of homophobia—a source of dishonor. Regional honor? Not that either. You are often disparaged for the place you call home. As for the church, many look down on it, and the proportion of Americans outside any denomination has risen. You are old, but in America, attention is trained on the young. People like you—white, Christian, working and middle class—suffer this sense of fading honor demographically too, as this very group has declined in numbers.

You have the impulse to call out, “I’m part of a minority *too!*” But you have criticized just such appeals for sympathy when others have made them on

similar grounds. You feel stuck between a strong desire to be recognized for who you really are and all you've really done, and dread at joining the parade of "poor me's." You want to rise up against these downward forces. There is a political movement made up of people such as yourself who share your deep story. It's called the Tea Party.

Checking Back with My Friends

I return to my new Louisiana friends and acquaintances to check whether the deep story resonates with them. When I relate the story to him, Mike Schaff writes in an e-mail, "*I live your analogy. We pay hundreds of millions of dollars in hard-earned taxes for these bureaucrats at the Department of Environmental Quality and the EPA to do their job and they do nothing of the sort. To add insult to injury, these slackers jump the line to retire before the workers who pay their salaries can. When the tax payer finally gets to retire, he sees the bureaucrats in Washington have raided the fund. And the rest of us are waiting in line.*"

When I relate it to Lee Sherman, he tells me, "You've read my mind." Janice Areno tells me, "You have it right, but you've left out the fact that the people being cut in on are *paying taxes that go to* the people cutting in line!" Another comments, "You didn't finish the story. After a while, the people who were waiting have had it and they get in their *own* line." And yet another adds, "That's it, but the American Dream is more than having money. It's feeling proud to be an American, and to say 'under God' when you salute the flag, and feel *good* about that. And it's about living in a society that believes in clean, normal family life. But if you add that, then yes, this's my story."

In his interviews with Tea Party members in New York, Jersey City, Newark, and elsewhere in New Jersey, the sociologist Nils Kumkar found spontaneous mention of the idea of annoyance at others cutting in line. In their interviews with Tea Party advocates in Massachusetts, Virginia, and Arizona and in their 2011 examination of nearly a thousand Tea Party websites, the sociologists Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson also reported

attitudes toward blacks, immigrants, public sector workers, and others parallel to those I found here.

Many spoke of sympathy fatigue. “Liberals want us to feel sympathy for blacks, women, the poor, and of course I do up to a point,” one kindly restaurant proprietor explained. “I hear stories and they break my heart. But then sometimes, I don’t know if I’m being had. I get men applying for a job. I give them a job and they don’t show up. Is it just to put on their record that they applied and can continue on unemployment insurance? A woman came up to me at Wendy’s saying she had two children and was looking to pay for a hotel because she was homeless. I asked her where her children were. ‘Oh they’re with mama.’ Well, then aren’t you living with mama? A man from the Red Cross came asking for food for Sunday dinner for the homeless. I gave it to him because it’s food. But I don’t even want to go over there to see. Maybe they’re not trying to be independent. I don’t want to change my mind about giving the food. I want to give.” But he wanted to do it on the understanding his recipients were trying to better themselves, a requirement he worried liberals left out.

Behind the Deep Story: Race

The deep story of the right, the *feels-as-if* story, corresponds to a real structural squeeze. People want to achieve the American Dream, but for a mixture of reasons feel they are being held back, and this leads people of the right to feel frustrated, angry, and betrayed by the government. Race is an essential part of this story.

Curiously, the people of the right I came to know spoke freely about Mexicans (4 percent of Louisianans were Hispanic in 2011) and Muslims (who accounted for 1 percent) but were generally silent about blacks, who, at 26 percent, were the state’s largest minority. When the topic of blacks did arise, many explained that they felt accused by “the North” of being racist—which, by their own definition, they clearly were not. They defined as racist a person who used the “N” word or who “hates” blacks. Mike Schaff did neither. Born on the Armelise sugarcane plantation, grandson of the overseer,

he describes himself as a “former bigot . . . I used to use the ‘N’ word, and a lot of black kids I played with did too. But I stopped that back in 1968. I remember yelling from the stands of my college football stadium in 1968, rooting for our best player. ‘Run! Nigger! Run!’ And the next year in 1969 I was yelling, ‘Run! Joe! Run!’ I haven’t used the word since. I look forward to a day when color just won’t matter at all. I think we’re halfway there.”

As I and others use the term, however, racism refers to the belief in a natural hierarchy that places blacks at the bottom, and the tendency of whites to judge their own worth by distance from that bottom. By that definition, many Americans, north and south, are racist. And racism appears not simply in personal attitudes but in structural arrangements—as when polluting industries move closer to black neighborhoods than to white.

Among the older right-wing whites I came to know, blacks entered their lives, not as neighbors and colleagues, but through the television screen and newspaper where they appeared in disparate images. In one image, blacks were rich mega-stars of music, film, and sports—Beyoncé, Jamie Foxx, Michael Jordan, Serena Williams. Pro basketball legend LeBron James, they knew, earned \$90 million from endorsements of commercial products alone. So what could be the problem? In a second image, blacks were a disproportionate part of the criminal class, and of its glorification in raunchy rap lyrics about guns, “hos,” and “bitches.” And in a third image, blacks were living on welfare. (But see Appendix C.) Missing from the image of blacks in most of the minds of those I came to know was a man or woman standing patiently in line next to them waiting for a well-deserved reward.

Behind the Deep Story: Gender

Gender, too, lay behind the disorientation, fear, and resentment evoked by the deep story. All the women I talked to worked, used to work, or were about to return to work. But their political feelings seemed based on their role as wives and mothers—and they wanted to be wives to high-earning men and to enjoy the luxury, as one woman put it, of being a homemaker. According to national polls, more men than women are Republican, or Tea

Party, and more men (12 percent in 2012) are members or supporters of the Tea Party than women (9 percent). And even within these conservative groups, women are more likely than men to appreciate the government's role in helping the disadvantaged, in making contraception available, in equal pay for equal work. It was this range of issues—especially the need for parental leave—that had led me, as I note in the preface, on this journey in the first place. The women I spoke to seemed to sense that if we chop away large parts of the government, women stand to lose far more than men, for women outnumber men as government workers and as beneficiaries.

I also noticed a curious gender gap *within* the right. When the conversation got around, as it inevitably did, to nonworking people getting “hand-outs” paid for by workers further back “in line,” a gender divide emerged. When I asked one couple what proportion of people on welfare were gaming the system, the woman estimated 30 percent while her husband estimated 80 percent. There, inside the Tea Party, was the gender gap. Despite this difference, women and men of the right voted in similar ways, and more than gender—those affirmative action women cutting ahead in line—they jointly focused on race and class.

*Behind the Deep Story: Class, the Federal Government,
and Free Market as Proxy Allies*

One can see the experience of being “cut in on” by one group after another as an expression of class conflict. This is perhaps a curious term to use. Certainly it is a term avoided by the right, and it is applied elsewhere by the left. But throughout American history such conflicts have appeared in different theaters of life, with different actors and different moral vocabularies in play. Each called for deep feelings about fairness. In the industrial nineteenth century, the classic form of class conflict took place on the factory floor, between owner and worker, and the issue was one of fair recompense for work. In 1892, a general strike took place in New Orleans. Railroad conductors struck against management for the ten-hour day, overtime pay, and the right to unionize. Other unions joined in sympathy, white workers

standing with blacks despite attempts to divide them. The Chicago garment workers' strike in 1910 against a management cut in the piece rate, or the 1934 West Coast Longshore strike—all these took place between managers and workers, in a workplace, over pay, hours, or working conditions.

Today, although many such strikes continue—the Walmart strike of 2012, for example—many industrial work sites have been moved offshore to Mexico, China, Vietnam, and elsewhere. Other forms of social conflict have arisen in different theaters. One theater animates the politics of the left. It focuses on conflict in the private sector between the very richest 1 percent and the rest of America. Occupy Wall Street has such a focus. It is not between owner and worker over a higher wage or shorter hours of work. It is between haves and have-nots, the ever-more-wealthy 1 percent and the other 99 percent of Americans. What feels unfair to Occupy activists is not simply unfair recompense for work (the multi-million dollar bonuses to hedge fund managers alongside the \$8.25 hourly rate for Walmart clerks) but the absence of tax policies that could help restore America as a middle-class society.

For the right today, the main theater of conflict is neither the factory floor nor an Occupy protest. The theater of conflict—at the heart of the deep story—is the local welfare office and the mailbox where undeserved disability checks and SNAP stamps arrive. Government checks for the listless and idle—this seems most unfair. If unfairness in Occupy is expressed in the moral vocabulary of a “fair share” of resources and a properly proportioned society, unfairness in the right's deep story is found in the language of “makers” and “takers.” For the left, the flashpoint is up the class ladder (between the very top and the rest); for the right, it is down between the middle class and the poor. For the left, the flashpoint is centered in the private sector; for the right, in the public sector. Ironically, both call for an honest day's pay for an honest day's work.

Left and right also seemed to ally with different sectors of society. It is almost as if those I talked with thought about the government and the market in the same way others think of separate nations. Just as various nations back different sides in a foreign war, fighting each other on a “proxy”

battlefront, in the same way those I spoke with seemed to talk about the federal government and the free market. The free market was the unwavering ally of the good citizens waiting in line for the American Dream. The federal government was on the side of those unjustly “cutting in.”

Feeling betrayed by the federal government and turning wholeheartedly to the free market, the right is faced with realities the deep story makes it hard to see or focus on. Giant companies have grown vastly larger, more automated, more global, and more powerful. For them, productivity is increasingly based on cheap labor in offshore plants abroad, imported cheap foreign labor, and automation, and less on American labor. The more powerful they've become, the less resistance they have encountered from unions and government. Thus, they have felt more free to allocate more profits to top executives and stockholders, and less to workers. But this is the “wrong” theater to look in for the conflict that absorbs the right—except when a company like Texas Brine causes a sinkhole like the one in Bayou Corne.

And this may explain why much of the right isn't bothered by something else—the unaligned interests between big and small business. Many members of the Tea Party run or work in a small business—oil company suppliers, trailer parks, restaurants, small banks, and shops. Small businesses are vulnerable to the growth of big monopolies. What is transpiring today, Robert Reich argues in *Saving Capitalism*, is that big monopolies support policies that help them compete against smaller businesses by rewriting property bankruptcy and contract laws that favor big business over small. Under recently revised bankruptcy laws, the billionaire Donald Trump can freely declare bankruptcy while insulating himself from risks to investment, while smaller businesses cannot. The choice is not, Reich argues, between a governed and an ungoverned market, but between a market governed by laws favoring monopolistic companies and one governed by those favoring small business. Ironically, the economic sector that stands to suffer most from big monopolies is small business, many of which are run by those who favor the Tea Party. It might not be too much to say that the embrace of the 1 percent by mom-and-pop store owners is a bit like the natural seed—using small farmers' embrace of Monsanto, the corner grocery store's embrace of

Walmart, the local bookstore owner's embrace of Amazon. Under the same banner of the "free market," the big are free to dominate the small.

But it is very hard to criticize an ally, and the right sees the free market as its ally against the powerful alliance of the federal government and the takers. Even Lee Sherman, who had greatly suffered at the hands of Pittsburg Plate Glass, owned stock in it and exclaimed proudly to me, when I asked him how he felt about getting fired, "I was pissed and stunned but, hey, I didn't lose everything. I had \$5,000 in stocks!"

In the undeclared class war, expressed through the weary, aggravating, and ultimately enraging wait for the American Dream, those I came to know developed a visceral hate for the ally of the "enemy" cutters in line—the federal government. They hated other people for needing it. They rejected their own need of it—even to help clean up the pollution in their backyard.

But that kind of extraordinary determination takes a certain kind of person—a deep story self.

