

FAVORITE BOOKS FOR CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICERS 2025

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THIS IS HOW THEY TELL ME THE WORLD ENDS

Nicole Perlroth

Somehow, and that word is spoken with air quotes the size of the Grand Tetons, the machinations of the Cyber domain and Internet of Things circulated under public watchwords for twenty years. It is a book that arrived the first winter of The Pandemic and endorsed by both the consultant firm of Pete Buttigieg and the Financial Times, and under no circumstances do I think that is coincidence.

In the tech industry, more than a decade ago, common cocktail knowledge was that the Internet of Things was more or less ruined, Swiss-cheesed by Amazon international deals and hackable end points, and this excellent review takes that one insider overheard anecdote and blasts its truth to industry scale. First, to answer your question: yes, whether DoD, NSC, TAO, North Korea, Israel, Iran, or China, they are inside. The only question remaining is: Why? And, yet, this book tells all.

THE TRUTHS WE HOLD

Kamala Harris

Kamala Harris is smarter than me, more eloquent with a sentence, a lawyer, elected Senator and former D.A. of San Francisco, and yet pound for pound I could beat her in a bar fight, and would never vote for her for President of the United States. There is something rankly fundamental about the failure of her Presidential candidacy: a trajectory of a candidate with her skill set, in this era of AI and Finance, should be arriving at The White House with a powerful apparatus for Legislating criminality into obliteration, more futuristic than the old gag that Back to the Future II would have the U.S. Government predicting the Weather and automating the lawyers out of their professions.

There should be nothing racial about her ascension if she were a serious candidate, and to add to that her close family relations to Uber, and the importance of Uber in the transportation futures of all the tech companies, and the rampant corruption of The Pandemic gone unaccounted just paints one gigantic question mark over the state of California and the machinations of Chicago liberals. It is fundamental to NASA to operate a non-segregated institution, and Nuclear is the deepest of all protocols, so to put a woman in The Office would upend the last of the long-biased bastions. What this book communicates is that the candidate was smart enough by leagues and miles: so WTF?

THE PREMONITION

Michael Lewis

In 2021, having discovered the book in an early-release in my vacation in France, I described this book as “a description of a matrix of government and civilian laboratories, that each serve a geographic and specific purpose to the pipeline of scientific technology [for the management of defense priorities] in our country. To know this pipeline is to be seeing the future of our country before it arrives, and to understand how skills training sets the pace for science to emerge into the

future. Nearly no citizens are taught this pipeline structure that becomes instrumental in every decision politicians make.” For this reason I have paced my reading of it throughout the years.

So far, all I choose to write at this time is this: that local County health administrator wanted nothing to do with using those Ace Garden sheers to open that tuberculosis patient; and to refuse to bring the proper surgical instruments and instructing biohazard suits on every one of his staff may have been the most powerful and skilled protest we never heard of in real-time, and paints a story of incredible administrative overreach from the City and State of California managing a future crisis.

THE FOUR

Scott Galloway

Bro, you cannot champion The Poors in this country while sycophant to the engine of the specific monopoly innovating against the Government and Congress, into markets using illegal means. You point blank start your book with descriptions of Meta remote-activating listening devices to sell ads, and Apple refusing to turn over data to terror investigations, and that was more than a decade ago. And then go on for two hundred pages about how sworn-to-allegiance their market dominance is?

This book was a lot more intriguing to me before the first winter of The Pandemic, when your video lectures at NYU and Decode/Recode with Kara Swisher were projected as a commerce engine and LGBTQ equality. Since then, in short order, we had Google promise a Flu Monitoring website, back out of that deal, promise 1700 employees working on a separate secret program, and the firing of the AI Ethicist for warning LLMs were becoming powerfully self-aware of their own programming in the matrix: and all that was before December 2020, when AT&T exploded and Insurrections arose.

THE STARTUP WIFE

Tahmima Anam

The book that nails the Silicon Valley feels. In 2019, I had casually reached out to a defense firm suggesting that Starlight would like to position itself to write AI-written books for China to learn to integrate itself into America as a part of a demilitarization mandate for Space Force Intelligence. If such an email was ever read, though that went unreplied, this book would have been its prototype.

Marco is Marc Andreessen with a touch of Marc Benioff and its pervy ambition of Mark Zuckerberg, and Craig is Elon Musk in its violence and canonical deification of the honors of death and choice, and the Indian-cognate author-cum-protagonist precisely manufacturers the Silicon Valley markets of interest. The cuddle puddle party invitations were as real and cringe as unexpected in the book, and the memes all align, from the asteroids to the Games of Thrones, to the Silicon Valley I knew. Nothing fantastical remains from a headspace of arch-optimists manufacturing their futures of AI.

PLAYING TO THE EDGE

Michael Hayden

Two stories stand out in this memoir-of-sorts of the only modern Director of both the CIA and NSA, in which the edge is the canonical terminology of the edge of societal capitalism where spies mesh

spies and markets remain wild, untamed, and churning, if you choose to believe such markets still exist. These stories do not support or defend a very overreaching surveillance state built rapidly and with Congressional demands, so much as gruffly ask: What do you think the job of Director is?

The first story positions Hayden in a secure room on CCTV addressing the cadets and staff of the newly forming intelligence apparatus about the shifts to unifying a vertical of command for all U.S. Government data and intelligence; this is not the back half of a sentence to your wife over dishes. The second story positions Hayden slightly thereafter after go, where the offices are being built: it is decided by brass that the offices will need an influx of microprocessors, as any office would, so the new national intelligence apparatus commandeers a truckload of commercial microprocessors already active on a nearby stretch of highway to the side of the road to acquire its microprocessors. For thirty years, the U.S. Government has had the capacity to search every truck on the highway, localize its pursuit, inspect the goods, and move the crates into new positions, and this is the first you are hearing about this? Are you sure Economics professors know what they are talking about? Yes, I agree that a legal apparatus existing to do so would obliterate commonsense to lawyers, too.

IT'S OK TO BE ANGRY ABOUT CAPITALISM

Bernie Sanders

Bernie Sanders matured into a miraculous politician: a Senator from a small, economically small, relatively quiet state of our Union should take it upon himself or herself to be a loud firebrand of a truth-teller, at all costs of whatever political party the Senator takes refuge in. C'mon, universal healthcare can be a platform of a defense-enabled nation; it just so happens to change so many things so many Senators hold dear, hold economically, or fear as sacred cows that nobody wants to put their neck out there and build the dang thing. Not saying The Bernie Sanders Express was ever going to be a viable platform, but the man was clearly done dirty by the superdelegates, too.

In the end, I read this book to remind myself of what exactly was going on in those early months of 2020, and to try to relearn with a more keen mind what political infighting was real and what was a catfight, and why. You have to admit barnstorming Texas on demand synchronicity was a league ahead of Bernie Sanders, and triple the years listening to the squawk talk of Senators in Congress back rooms will help you do that. Then again, being from the State where every corporation under the hill, sun, Moon, and stars is incorporated probably helps with moderating an economic agenda?

SHORTEST WAY HOME

Pete Buttigieg

Hey, it's Mayor Pete! Uh, formerly Navy Pete! Um, CIA Pete? McKinsey Pete! If Pete Buttigieg wins The Presidency the man is a model Boy Scout of America, and the very model of a Major-General, or whatever that song is about; why did Aaron Sorkin write about Gilbert and Sullivan so often? I do not know. What I do know is that Mayor Pete was Mayor during the interval Vice President Pence was Governor, and SALT taxes went barnstorming into the national political circuits of discussion. I do know Mayor Pete turns down an enterprise offering to install municipal water sensors that say predicting trace amounts of drugs and biologics are its goal, and starts his memoir peering out the

Office of South Bend City hall through a snow storm waiting for the garbage trucks to plow his roads, same as they do in Manhattan. And reading this at the start of The Pandemic felt good.

An intern had asked me whether I thought Pete Buttigieg had no soul, because of a picture of a drained Pete after some particular day serving in Afghanistan in the U.S. Navy Reserves, and that was months before Pete Buttigieg was elevated to Secretary of Transportation for the President of the United States. I no longer chat with that intern, but inflation has been way down ever since.

GOING INFINITE

Michael Lewis

The central thesis of Going Infinite is askew from its first primary story in which FTX cryptocurrency exchange founder, and future prisoner of California, Sam Bankman-Fried fields an live interview on one of the major networks: between questions, his eyes dart to various video games playing along on consoles, then come his answers. Starting earlier at a hyperactive audio soundscape of video game sounds at Jane Street, nothing ever quite seems properly kosher in the development of Sam Bankman-Fried. Is the massive dash in late-2021 into investing in vaccines really necessary, during the height of the U.S. Government stimulus spending on The Pandemic infrastructure and futures? Moreover, the entire enterprise crashes with suspicious swiftness: author Michael Lewis hangs on the private island of the business up until the 2022 U.S. midterm elections, flies to mainland, and within days of the U.S. election calls, the business of FTX has collapsed entirely, by which Michael Lewis returns to a husk of an island, an enterprise, and a lawyer collateralizing its entire winddown.

A man in a Starbucks handed me this copy which sits on my bookshelf sometime throughout 2023, with a promise to pay forward the gift of the book to a new stranger when I finished learning what the book had to tell. Instead, I bought a second copy for my future wife which I keep in storage. It should be noted that as the graphite markings of its front cover slowly fade from this Earth, those memories remain, as do the papers in Nature remarking how skin flakes in air filters can ID you.

ON CALL

Anthony Fauci

There is an episode of Seinfeld where Kramer the neighbor busts in with a get rich interior redesign scheme: levels, Jerry, levels! I felt the same way reading the esteemed Anthony Fauci describe the quarantine-pod his wife and his neighbor couple were in as the good doctor took the phone call to report the vaccines had blown out of the water in speed and efficacy, at the start of The Pandemic. If I hear one more thing about everything being tuberculosis, which the Government cannot decide whether the secret store of ventilators in a mountain-side are real or not, I may certainly sternly ask questions of which, precisely, Congresspersons are on the payrolls to profit from Pandemics. One thing is certain from those 2020 controversies: I will never use Apple products or listen to podcasts.

To hate on Anthony Fauci is a weird and fair thing: AIDS crises of the 1980s are weird and political, and I remember the public schools in the late 1990s demanding we watch And The Band Played On but demanding we not learn about contraception, which is the toll of bellwether zip codes in America. I remember those outbreaks in Africa that were contained with the tactical operations I

thought were usually reserved for Joint Special Operation Command against Independence Day aliens, and I remember that Contagion movie starring that Iron Man actress from way back when that when one of my family folk stumbled upon deep in the library of our streaming algorithms got a stuttering excitement of discovery: isn't that weird how coincidental that is? They are not the sort of auteur or entrenched viewers that would know Parasite won the Academy Award in early 2020. I struggle to imagine I would not invite Anthony Fauci to a BBQ if I had the choice, and the vaccines were delivered ahead of schedule, at efficacies beyond what technologists believed was capable.

THE QUANTUM SPY

David Ignatius

Once upon a time, in the pre-dawn days, I had read that David Ignatius was the CIA Apologist in Chief for Barack Obama. This would have been years and years ago when Starburst has taken an interest in my startup to assist with Shaping the Future of AI. I remember the Infrastructure Week failing, and a retort from David Ignatius in the Washington Post; somewhere in my archives is an unpublished reply to that article as a Letter to the Editor that was probably written all wrong to be read. In the dawn of The Pandemic, I had taken to cracking The Paladin over a few days, and then some years later read The Quantum Spy, a vigorously written tell-all of a U.S. mole infiltrating the Department of Defense and national agencies funding structures with machine learning, peering inside the deepest breaches to read where the money of the future was going to be its capitalism.

In the years since, we have witnessed Elon Musk dress himself as a Scorpion, and its ignorant rise and fall with DOGE, scraping every datum from the deepest breaches of our funding agencies and Social Security. I like to think that I took the correct lessons from that book: the Russians prefer to be dazzled meaninglessly with higher order complexity that effuse back the genuine tactical paths of the CIA, and that Russia never understands anything that has a Q in it, the letter of Top Secret over at the neighboring Department of Energy. I can only imagine how ignorant my original Letter to the Editor must have read; then again, that may be a badge of honor I portray on my flood walls.

THE GOOD NEIGHBOR

Maxwell King

Mr. Rogers grew up privileged, aristocratic, and sensing that the good maneuver was to create a school which salved his loneliness and spoke universally. It is extraordinarily queer to go into the Public Broadcast sector, and the May 1969 testimony to Congress is credited with saving the Public Broadcast Station, and even raining a few riches down upon its fledgling programming.

Between the May 1969 testimony and July 1969 successful launch of Apollo 11 to the Moon is the series finale of the original Star Trek episode "Turnabout Intruder", and I like to think syndication and the network airwaves are more than meets the eye when considering the basis of capitalism.