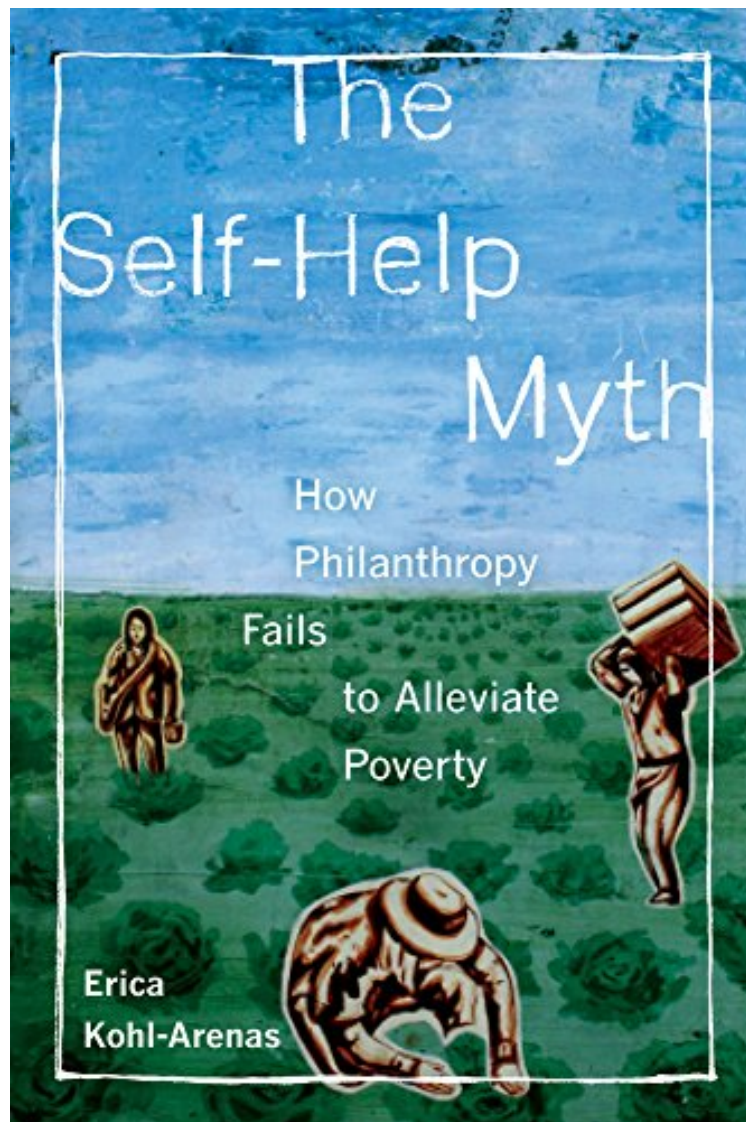


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## The Self-Help Myth: How Philanthropy Fails to Alleviate Poverty (POVERTY, INTERRUPTED)

*Erica Kohl-Arenas*

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**Erica Kohl-Arenas : The Self-Help Myth: How Philanthropy Fails to Alleviate Poverty (POVERTY, INTERRUPTED)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Self-Help Myth: How Philanthropy Fails to Alleviate Poverty (POVERTY, INTERRUPTED):

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Charity sidetracking. By Rex T. Nelson Excellent research analysis of conflicts of interest in donor-foundation-provider-client chain. Based on extensive data from both primary secondary sources. Real world, practical analysis. VERY DENSE CONTENT INTENDED FOR THE ACADEMIC AUDIENCE. Well worth the effort for ANYONE puzzled by problems of poverty that never get solved. 3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Perhaps her greatest contribution is to demonstrate that philanthropic influence is rarely ... By Craig McGarvey Professor Kohl-Arenas is out to bust some fondly held philanthropic myths in this, her first book. By means of three extensively researched case studies set in California's Central Valley, she shows us how private foundation funding has little appetite for taking on the American economic system that created the "capital surplus" that allows for philanthropy's pool of wealth--and how funding often dilutes, diverts, and co-opts grassroots community organizing aimed at changing power structures. Perhaps her greatest contribution is to demonstrate that philanthropic influence is rarely heavy-handed, top-down or hegemonic. Rather, it is more often a set of complex negotiations, full of nuance, within contextual constraints on both the philanthropic and community sides of the table. Beautifully written and convincingly argued, *The Self-Help Myth* is an important contribution to the literature on American philanthropy. A fuller review may be found at the blog of the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy: <http://blog.ncrp.org/2016/01/the-self-help-myth.html> 3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Kohl-Arenas documents the limits of good-intentions as well as the ... By Dr. William C. Ayers Kohl-Arenas documents the limits of good-intentions as well as the foolishness (whether intentional or naive) of avoiding the structures of law and policy when the putative goal is effectively addressing our entrenched history of inequality. This is an important book for this moment, a moment when all manner of reform initiatives and entrepreneurial gestures are doomed to fail in their stated purposes because they dodge a first principle in social change: the people with the problems are also the people with the solutions. I hope *The Self-Help Myth* will change the way we think about and discuss philanthropy and well-meaning interventions, as well as what's required to build a more balanced, just, and joyous world.

Can philanthropy alleviate inequality? Do antipoverty programs work on the ground? In this eye-opening analysis, Erica Kohl-Arenas bores deeply into how these issues play out in California's Central Valley, which is one of the wealthiest agricultural production regions in the world and also home to the poorest people in the United States. Through the lens of a provocative set of case studies, *The Self-Help Myth* reveals how philanthropy maintains systems of inequality by attracting attention to the behavior of poor people while shifting the focus away from structural inequities and relationships of power that produce poverty. In Fresno County, for example, which has a \$5.6 billion-plus agricultural industry, migrant farm workers depend heavily on food banks, religious organizations, and family networks to feed and clothe their families. Foundation professionals espouse well-intentioned, hopeful strategies to improve the lives of the poor. These strategies contain specific ideas in philanthropy terminology, theories of change that rely on traditional American ideals of individualism and hard work, such as self-help, civic participation, and mutual prosperity. But when used in partnership with well-defined limits around what foundations will and will not fund, these ideals become fuzzy concepts promoting professional and institutional behaviors that leave relationships of poverty and inequality untouched.

"Recommended."