



LIBERTARIAN AUTOBIOGRAPHIES: MOVING TOWARD FREEDOM IN TODAY'S WORLD

Posted on November 1, 2023 by Jo Ann Cavallo and Walter

E. Block

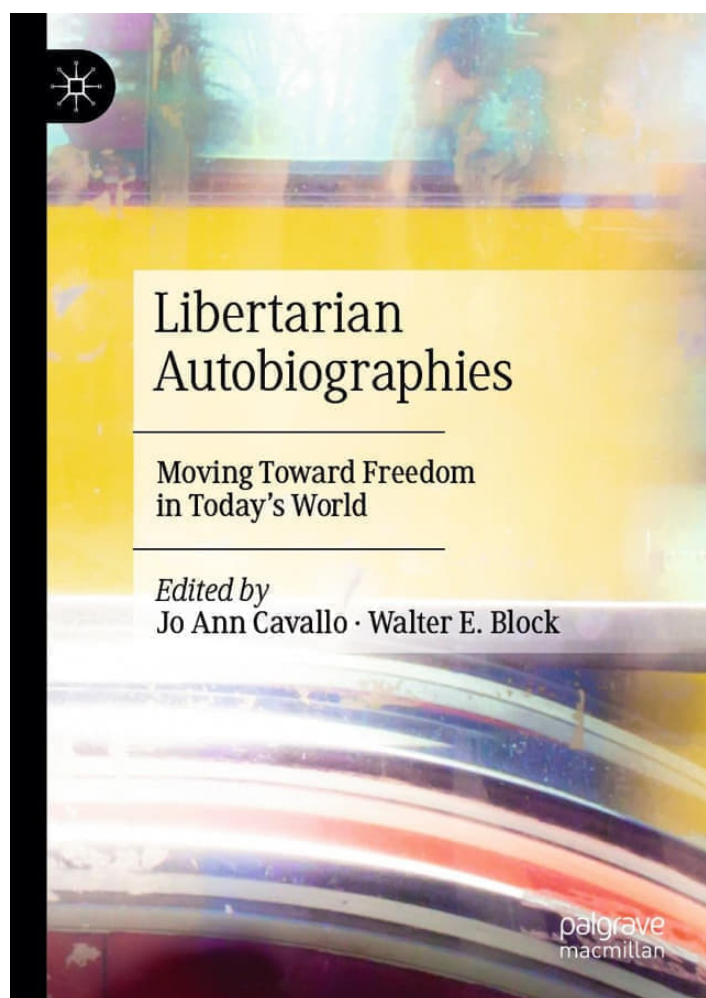


The following is an amended excerpt from *Libertarian Autobiographies: Moving Toward Freedom in Today's World*, co-edited by Jo Ann Cavallo and Walter E. Block. The book gives voice to 80 libertarians from around the world who share their hopes, fears, expectations and achievements, in their efforts to achieve a freer world. Please consider supporting the work of Professors Cavallo and Block and [purchase a copy](#) of this inspiring work.



It is our fervent belief that libertarianism is the last best hope for humankind with regard to economics, liberty, justice, prosperity, peace, and thus even survival (pardon us for hyper-ventilating, but we maintain this is indeed the case). This belief of ours is predicated upon the crucial importance of the non-aggression principle (NAP): proper law should allow all people to engage in whichever acts they prefer, with the one exception being any behavior that violates this precept or any threat thereof. Thus, murder, rape, theft, kidnapping, fraud, and similar evil actions should be prohibited, and virtually everything else should be legally permitted.

But why assemble a collection of autobiographies penned by libertarians? Why not, instead, offer a collection of scholarly articles demonstrating the benefits of liberty? Many of the contributors to this volume have published just that sort of work on numerous occasions. Why not do so one more time? Although people may gain an understanding of this philosophy via rational argument, it cannot be denied that autobiographies, too, are important for the promotion of liberty. The personal touch may reach some people not approachable via any other means. Additionally, we all want to know the libertarian stories of people such as those who appear on these pages. Indeed, we find that libertarians have the most interesting stories to share because they often embrace this philosophy as the result of intense encounters with foundational texts or life-changing experiences.



One of the big “problems” we have with some of the best-known libertarians throughout history—such as John Locke, Lord Acton, Ludwig von Mises, Isabel Paterson, Henry Hazlitt, Friedrich Hayek, and Murray Rothbard—is that they never wrote an autobiography. Of course, if they had, alternative costs being what they are, they would likely not have been able to write other precious publications of theirs. But what about libertarians alive today? Would they be willing to share their stories? We already have the example of two volumes of libertarian autobiographies: *Why Liberty: Personal Journeys Toward Peace & Freedom* (Cobden Press), with 54 autobiographies edited by Marc Guttman, and *I Chose Liberty: Autobiographies of Contemporary Libertarians* (Mises Institute), with 82 autobiographies edited by one of the co-editors of this present volume, Walter Block (available as a free pdf at <https://mises.org/library/i-chose-liberty-autobiographies-contemporary-libertarians>). Both volumes were published over a decade ago, however, in 2010. We wanted to learn more about the lives of

contemporary libertarians not covered in these two volumes and of others who have emerged since the time of these publications.

We therefore reached out to a number of influential scholars, activists, professors, journalists, and cultural icons who have worked toward a freer society across the globe, inviting them to write a brief autobiography for this collection. We asked them to articulate, for example, what their lives and thoughts were before they embraced libertarianism; which people, texts, or events most influenced their intellectual formation; what experiences, challenges, tribulations, and achievements they have had as participants or leaders in this movement; and how this philosophy has affected their personal or professional lives.

A volume of autobiographies on the part of libertarians immediately raises the question of precisely what constitutes this political economic philosophy. In our “big-tent” view, it comprises several strands. They all have something in common, such as an appreciation for individual liberty, private property rights, the rule of law, and free enterprise, but there are also discernible differences. That is why if you get ten libertarians in a room and ask them a question, you’ll likely get eleven (or more!) different responses. In this volume, we invited libertarians across the political-philosophical spectrum, including (1) anarcho-capitalism; (2) minimal government libertarianism, or minarchism; (3) constitutionalism; (4) classical liberalism; (5) thick libertarianism. The contributors to this volume range over the five main viewpoints mentioned above, and also fill in the gaps between them. Their essays express different perspectives on many issues even while articulating the same core principles. In fact, it is our desire that their very differences of opinion on some matters will invite readers to think for themselves. What we have sought to present is a sampling of the myriad individual journeys toward libertarianism, however defined.

Although the majority of contributors to the volume live in the United States, we are grateful to the libertarians from around the world who accepted our invitation to share their stories. This volume thus includes voices from Argentina, Austria, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Czech Republic, England, Germany, Guatemala, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Korea, Nigeria, Peru, Poland, Romania, Russia, Scotland, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, and Ukraine.

It is the hope and expectation of the editors that by bringing together a range of contemporary voices from outside the dominant left-right paradigm, this volume will contribute to the viewpoint diversity that is crucially needed in today’s public discourse. Moreover, these personal and intellectual journeys

not only offer compelling insights into their individual authors and the state of the world in our lifetime, but may also serve as an inspiration for the next generation who will feel called upon to make our society a freer one.
