

Adventure Capitalism

A History of Libertarian Exit, from the Era of Decolonization to the Digital Age

Raymond Craib

Imagine a capitalist paradise. An island utopia governed solely by the rules of the market and inspired by the fictions of Ayn Rand and Robinson Crusoe. Sound far-fetched? It may not be. The past half century is littered with the remains of such experiments in what Raymond Craib calls "libertarian exit." Often dismissed as little more than the dreams of crazy, rich Caucasians, exit strategies have been tried out from the southwest Pacific to the Caribbean, from the North Sea to the high seas, often with dire consequences for local inhabitants. Based on research in archives in the US, the UK, and Vanuatu, as well as in FBI files acquired through the Freedom of Information Act, Craib explores in careful detail the ideology and practice of libertarian exit and its place in the histories of contemporary capitalism, decolonization, empire, and oceans and islands. *Adventure Capitalism* is a global history that intersects with an array of figures: Fidel Castro and the Koch brothers, American segregationists and Melanesian socialists, Honolulu-based real estate speculators and British Special Branch spies, soldiers of fortune and English lords, Orange County engineers and Tongan navigators, CIA operatives and CBS news executives, and a new breed of techno-utopians and an old guard of Honduran coup leaders. This is not only a history of our time but, given the new iterations of privatized exit—seasteads, free private cities, and space colonization—it is also a history of our future.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Raymond Craib is the Marie Underhill Noll Professor of History at Cornell University and the author of *The Cry of the Renegade: Politics and Poetry in Interwar Chile*, *Cartographic Mexico: A History of State Fixations and Fugitive Landscapes*, and with Barry Maxwell, co-editor of *No Gods No Masters No Peripheries: Global Anarchisms*.

ACCOLADES

"They don't like hobbles and they can't stand fences, and so today's libertarian frontiersmen are looking for land, lots of land, perhaps in New Zealand. Or maybe they'll jet to Mars, build cities in the thick of Honduras or string barges together and create a floating republic, anything to avoid regulations, laws, and oversights. Ray Craib's brilliant *Adventure Capitalism* is a fascinating story of some spectacular fiascos, but it also makes a more profound point: there does exist a class of super-billionaires so rich they'd rather leave the world in ruins than admit humans are social beings and our survival requires recognition that we need each other."

—Greg Grandin

"A masterpiece of historical excavation into libertarian dreams of a brave new unfree world."

—Debjani Bhattacharyya

"Brilliant ... a fascinating story."
—GREG GRANDIN, author of *The End of the Myth*

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SUBJECT CATEGORY

Political Science / Libertarianism /
Capitalism / Political Economy

PRICE

\$24.95

ISBN

9781629639178

PAGE COUNT

304

SIZE

6x9

FORMAT

Paperback

PUBLICATION DATE

07/05/2022

US DISTRIBUTION

Publishers Group West
1-866-400-5351

www.pgw.com • ips@ingramcontent.com

CANADA DISTRIBUTION

Publishers Group Canada
1-800-663-5714

customerservice@raincoast.com

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IPS_International.Orders@ingramcontent.com

UK DISTRIBUTION

Turnaround Publisher Services Ltd
020-8829-3000 • orders@turnaround-uk.com

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