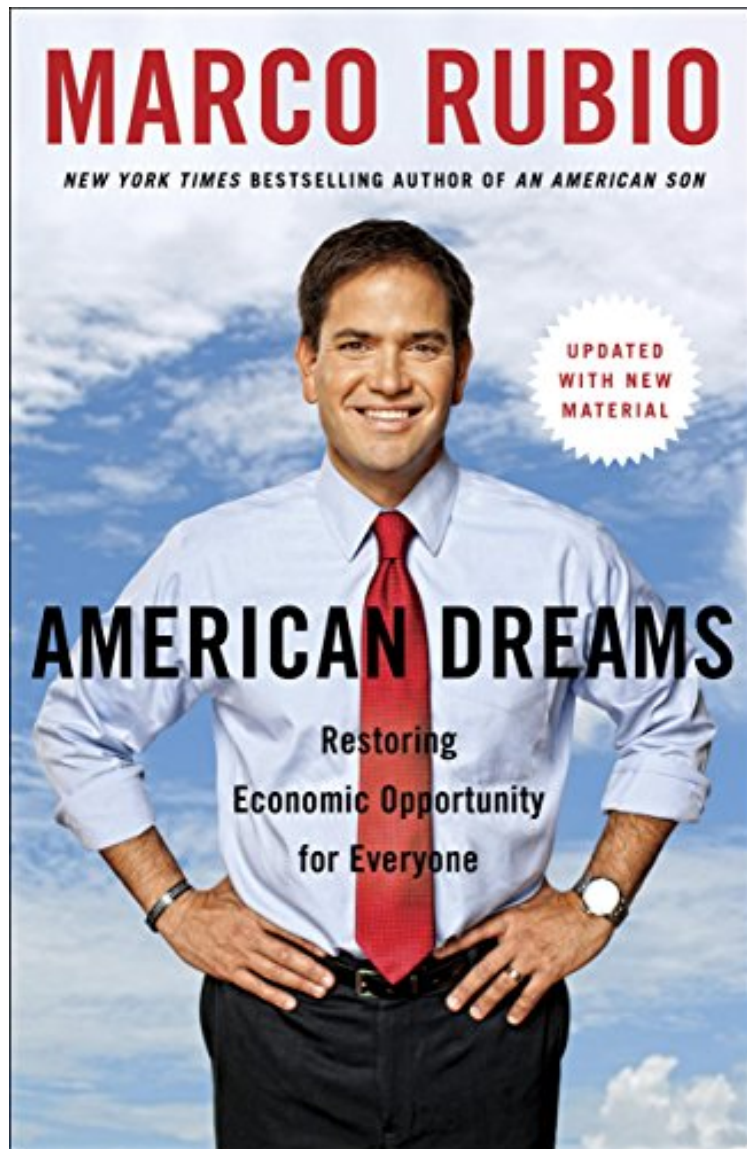


(Library ebook) American Dreams: Restoring Economic Opportunity for Everyone

American Dreams: Restoring Economic Opportunity for Everyone

Marco Rubio

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Marco Rubio : American Dreams: Restoring Economic Opportunity for Everyone before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised American Dreams: Restoring Economic Opportunity for Everyone:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Informative book By smartgardener Without getting political, (but how can you help it!) I was interested in Rubio, and wanted to hear more about his ideas. He has thought through many issues facing us, such as college debt and healthcare, and has many good solutions that you haven't heard from either side and is not getting enough media attention. Sad that he had to drop out of the race, even my socialist leaning

husband, after reading this book was really excited to vote for him even though he never votes Republican. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Four Stars By fredMarco is on the right track, but depends too heavily on big government methodology. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. I wanted this young man to be my President. ... By Miriam Lopez I wanted this young man to be my President. I will not give up hope that some day he Will Be Our President!

In 1956, Marco Rubio's parents came to America as poor immigrants with grade-school educations. They found a land of opportunity where anyone could work hard, play by the rules, and build a better future for themselves and their children. His family proved the reality of the American Dream, where the children of maids and bartenders could become doctors, lawyers, small business owners, and maybe even a U.S. senator. But now the American Dream is on life support. Years of government-centered, tax-and-spend liberalism have failed to lift the poor or sustain the middle class. Millions of everyday Americans have been left behind by an economy that doesn't value their skills and a government that would rather give them a handout than a hand up. In this follow-up to his bestselling memoir, *An American Son*, Senator Rubio offers a road map for restoring the land of opportunity. He explains why we now stand at a critical junction and why the next few years will determine the future for our children and grandchildren. He shares his plan for scaling back the nanny state, helping families save for college and retirement, and making it easier for small businesses to create millions of good jobs. Above all, he urges us to return to the values and can-do spirit that made our country exceptional in the first place. From the Hardcover edition.

"Readers of *American Dreams* will quickly observe a bold conservative plan with a realistic trajectory. Other presidential candidates would do well to note his refreshing plan over political naysaying." - Eric Bledsoe, Conservative Book Club "[*American Dreams*] is well worth reading, if for no other reason than that it gives precise illustrations on how the present system is ruining lives and needs to be fixed, or eliminated so that people can become successful again." - Intellectual Conservative.com About the Author MARCO RUBIO served in the Florida House of Representatives from 2000 to 2008 and was elected Speaker of the House in 2006. In 2010, he was elected to the U.S. Senate. His first book, *An American Son*, was a New York Times bestseller. He and his wife, Jeanette, have four young children and live in West Miami. His new book is *American Dreams: Restoring Economic Opportunity for Everyone*. Excerpt. copy; Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Introduction RESTORING THE AMERICAN DREAM My grandfather Pedro Viacutector Garciacutecut; was born in rural Cuba in the last year of the nineteenth century. He was stricken with polio at a young age, which left him permanently disabled. Since he was unable to work on the family farm, his parents sent him away to school because it was the only way he would ever have a chance to support himself when he grew up. He learned to read and write quite well, a skill that got him hired as a lector, reading newspapers and novels to workers at a cigar factory. He also learned to be a telegraph operator, a skill that would one day land him a job with a railroad company. In time, though, he lost his job at the railroad to a politically connected coworker. After that, he struggled to provide for his seven daughters. My mother remembers how he spent all day looking for odd jobsmdash;not easy for a disabled man in a developing country. He would return home in the evenings with bleeding cuts and scrapes on his legs because his limp had caused him to slip and fall throughout the day. Ultimately, he ended up repairing shoes in Havana before coming to America. Papaacutecut;, as we called him, lived with us for most of the first thirteen years of my life. Every day he would put on a suit and tie and sit outside on a folding aluminum lawn chair to smoke one of his three daily cigars. I spent hours sitting with him, listening to him share his stories about history, politics and baseball. I could always count on him to feed my curiosity about history, ranging from World War II to Cuban independence. Looking back now, I realize that the greatest impact Papaacutecut; had on me was a simple and powerful lesson embedded in all of our talks. When he was young, he had big dreams and ambitions for himself. He had an interest in politics and world affairs, as well as the gift of communication. He wanted to put those talents to use as a leader of industry or state. But he was disabled. He wasn't politically connected. And his family had no wealth. So, as with most people in the world, his future was determined more by the circumstances of his birth than by his dreams or his ability. Papaacutecut; wanted me to know that my life could be different. Unlike him, I would have the chance to go as far as my talent and my work would take me. I was a citizen of the one place on earth where even the son of a bartender and a maid could grow up to achieve any dream. I was an American. It is easy for those of us who were born and have lived our entire lives in the United States to fail to appreciate how unique our country is. But people like my grandfather knew. And if we listen, they remind us of something important. Over two centuries ago, a nation was founded on the belief that all people had a God-given right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. From then on, the world would never be the same again. Our founders put in place a republic and a free-enterprise economy designed to promote and protect this God-given right. And the result was the single greatest nation in all of human history. Papaacutecut; split his time between Miami and Las Vegas, where we lived for a few years during my childhood. By the summer of 1984, he knew he was nearing the end of his life, so he decided to cut his time in Miami short and come home to us. In August, he fell and broke his hip. My mother asked me to ride in the ambulance with him to the hospital so I could help him communicate with the

paramedics. I remember standing in the hallway outside the X-ray room and hearing him groan in pain as they tried to take X-rays of his broken hip. And I remember standing by his bedside the next day as he began to slip into a coma in the last hours of his life. As he slipped away, I held his hand and I made him a promise: I was going to study. I was going to make something of myself. I would not waste the opportunity I had to achieve my dreams. And he squeezed my hand as if to let me know he was at peace. Every day since that day I have worked to make good on my promise to my grandfather. Like everyone, I've made mistakes and I've fallen short. But, thanks to him, to my parents, and to the promise of the country they adopted as their own, I have been able to realize his dream for me. I have a wife and family that I love. I am privileged to represent the people of Florida in the U.S. Senate. My life is blessed. What bothers me most about my country today is that there are Americans like memdash;Americans who have worked hard and tried to do the right things to get aheadmdash;but whose lives aren't so blessed. Jennifer, a young woman in her twenties who lives in Miami, is such an American, an heir to the American Dream just as I am. But her life has not worked out as plannedmdash;at least not so far. She has done everything right. She has played by the rules. But she hasn't achieved her American Dream. She's starting to doubt she ever will. When Jennifer was growing up, her father always told her that an education was the key to a life better than his own. She took him at his word, worked hard and went to Florida International University. Four years ago, she graduated with a degree in public administration. She was the first in her family to go to college. Despite having paid for what she thought was the ticket to a better life, Jennifer has begun to wonder whether college was a waste of her time and money. The only job she can find has nothing to do with her degree. Her salary is barely enough to cover her monthly bills, let alone put anything aside to save for a house of her own. To make matters worse, her father recently got laid off. And because she doesn't make enough to help him out, they've had to do what too many other Americans have had to do: form a "multigenerational housing unit." In other words, they've moved in with Jennifer's grandmother. A generation ago, Jennifer's current wage might have been enough for her to reach the middle class. But today, her monthly expenses are prohibitive: \$300 for her car payment, \$200 for car insurance, \$200 for gas, \$200 for food, \$100 for her cell phone billmdash;just to name a few. She'd like to go back to school to earn a graduate degree, but she doesn't want the \$50,000 in debt she would incur. She has none of the confidence, held by earlier generations of Americans, that investing in herself through education will pay off in the job market. Like me, Jennifer grew up in a country that has always prided itself on offering an equal opportunity for its people to get aheadmdash;not a guarantee of equal success, but of an equal opportunity to go as far as your hard work and your wits can take you. People everywhere dream of better lives for themselves and for their children, of course. Yet for the vast majority of humanity, and for the vast majority of history, this simply wasn't possible. As my grandfather never let me forget, though, it is different in America. Here, so many people from humble or disadvantaged backgrounds have achieved their ambitions that this universal hope has been given a name. It has come to be known as the American Dream. The American Dream still lives. But it is slipping further and further out of reach of millions of Americans, and this is the central challenge of our time. How we respond to this challengemdash;and whether we are successfulmdash;will determine whether we continue to be an exceptional nation. For conservatives especially, this is a defining moment. The failure of government-centered, command-and-control liberalism to lift the poor and sustain the middle class is apparent as never before. Whether we are able to step forward with our own solutionsmdash;and not simply rail against the expansion of the statemdash;will determine our future as a movement. Our recent history in this regard is not encouraging. President Barack Obama was elected on a promise to fight for poor and middle-class Americans like Jennifer. During his campaigns for president, he talked directly to the American people about the girl who's worried she can't go to college because she can't afford it, about the dad who doesn't know if his wages will cover the winter heating bill, about the single mom who's stressed about what her children are doing after school while she's at work. Meanwhile, my party talked about tax cuts and waited for the American people to punish the president for the economy. They didn't. He won. We lost. And yet seven years into his presidency, struggling Americans aremdash;by every measuremdash;worse off today than they were before he took office. Why has a president elected as a champion of the disadvantaged failed so miserably at helping them? Because, like most liberals, he doesn't understand the real causes of the erosion of equal opportunity we are experiencing today. He has raised taxes, increased regulations and taken over health caremdash;all according to the outdated liberal theory that Americans struggle when government doesn't tax the rich enough and spend on the poor enough. But the results, such as they are, speak for themselves. After seven years of old-school liberalism, fewer Americans are working than at any time since Jimmy Carter, new business creation is 30 percent lower than it was in the 1980s and the economy shrank by the highest rate since the Great Recession in the first quarter of 2014. It's getting harder for millions of Americans to get ahead, not because our taxes are too low or our government is too stingy. The poor and the middle class are struggling because while our economy is undergoing a dramatic and disruptive transformation, our policies have not changed with it. Our economy is no longer producing enough well-paying jobs, not enough people have the skills they need for better-paying jobs and the values needed for success are eroding at an alarming rate. The rise of dozens of developed economies means we have more competition for jobs than ever before. Yet our tax code makes it more expensive to invest in America in comparison to our competition. Rapid

advances in technology and the globalization of the economy have meant that many of the jobs that once made the American Dream possible are now being outsourced or automated. Overall, our regulations are causing us to lose our advantage in innovation. Many of our low-skill jobs once paid enough to make it to the middle class. But now many of them pay wages that have not kept up with the cost of living. Today's better-paying jobs require higher education or skills training, but we have an outdated, expensive, inaccessible education system that fails to graduate students with skills that prepare them for work. Older students who have to work full-time and raise a family struggle to access a higher education system that wasn't built for them. And a college education has become more expensive than ever, leaving millions of young Americans with massive student loans. Underlying these economic changes are societal ones. To succeed in life, you don't just need skills and a good job. You need to have values like hard work, discipline and self-control. No one is born with these values. They have to be taught by families and faith. But today, we face a serious erosion of family life in America. Millions of children are growing up in unstable homes in which they are not taught the values necessary for personal and economic success. The result is a pervasive—and growing—sense of insecurity. Instead of adjusting to the realities of the new era, however, our leaders are doubling down on policies and institutions designed in the middle of the last century. Our taxes, our schools, our regulations, our immigration system and our poverty and retirement programs—they're all relics of the last century. They were conceived and created at a time when America faced limited international competition, at a time when, even with no formal education, you could find a low-skill job that paid a middle-class wage. But this is not the world we live in anymore. Failing to adjust to the realities of a new era is a recurring theme in history. We don't want to be the generals who are busy fighting the last war. During World War II, the U.S. Army's last chief of the cavalry, Major General John Herr, was asked to develop a plan to confront and defeat the German Panzers. He concluded that the cavalry horses were failing to stop the German tanks because they were too tired after a long journey to the front. Herr's brilliant insight was to use tractor trailers to move the horses closer to the battlefield so they would be better rested and thus able to defeat the Panzers. Fortunately for America and the world, General George Marshall's response to this plan was to retire General Herr, get rid of the horses and reorganize the army. General Herr's kind of thinking is exactly what is wrong with our politics today. Liberals want to spend more money on the ideas of yesterday. Some conservatives want to keep the ideas of yesterday and just spend less on them, as if programs that aren't working will somehow be made to function if only their budgets are cut. But neither of these approaches will ever work. No matter how much we spent on those horses or how efficient we made them, they were never going to stop those tanks. And no matter how much we spend on the ideas of the last century, or how much we streamline some of them, they are never going to help us reclaim the American Dream for all. America needs leaders who understand the new world we live in and who will promote and implement new ideas for a new era. We can't solve our twenty-first-century challenges by simply investing more into twentieth-century solutions. And yet this is precisely what those who would succeed President Obama show every intention of doing. On each of the major challenges facing America, for example, Hillary Clinton has proven herself wedded to the policies and programs of the past. Instead of reforming a higher education system that costs too much money, is too hard for nontraditional students to access and awards too many degrees that do not lead to jobs, another Clinton presidency will be about spending more money on a broken system. Instead of cutting back on regulations that stifle innovation and deny consumer choice, another Clinton presidency will be about enacting regulations her friends in the corporate world use to prevent competition. Instead of reforming an anticompetitive tax code that has made America one of the most expensive places on earth to invest and create jobs, another Clinton presidency will be about raising taxes to pay for a growing government. The election of Hillary Clinton to the presidency, in short, would be nothing more than a third Obama term. Another Clinton presidency would be a death blow to the American Dream. For our part, conservatives have also failed to address the challenges of the new economy—but there are promising signs that this is changing. As the opposition party, we have typically responded to attempts to build an ever bigger, ever more intrusive government by calling for less government and less spending. These are essential and nonnegotiable goals for conservatism. But, as conservative writer and editor Yuval Levin has pointed out, absent a broader governing agenda, this response leaves the impression that all conservatives care about is a less expensive welfare state, one that costs fewer of the 1 percent's tax dollars. This response neatly sets up a debate that the left is all too happy for the American people to hear: liberals, who care about people like you, versus conservatives, who don't. To their credit, Levin and other thinkers and policy makers on the right—particularly those at the American Enterprise Institute—have begun to move conservatives away from fixating on what we are against and instead toward thinking about what we are for. It is difficult work. America's economic and cultural problems are serious and complex. But conservatives come to this effort with a distinct advantage: We are not the party of government. We are not the party wedded to the status quo ideas and the Washington interest groups that are failing Americans today. We don't need to abandon our faith in free enterprise, federalism and limited government to find solutions for middle-class Americans. In fact, our principles are the necessary supports for such an agenda. We need only to find innovative and creative ways to apply these principles to real people's lives. The American Dream may not survive another four years of outdated, status quo leadership. America is in dire need of a new direction, a true break with the

ineffectual liberal policies of the last century. We need a clear vision forward that puts opportunity over cronyism, work over dependency and the health of the American family over all. America needs a conservative reform agenda. This book is my attempt to construct such an agenda, told through the voices of the real people most in need of help today. Through the stories of an ambitious small-business man, a struggling single mother, an out-of-work and in-debt college graduate, among others, I focus on the three central elements to the achievement of the American Dream: equal opportunity, economic security and family. These are the American virtues that have always defined the dream, and they are the ones most threatened today. Americans believe, with increasing reason, that the equal opportunity to work and to succeed that our nation has always promised has been lost in a system rigged to favor the wealthy and well connected. Economic security, which used to be possible to achieve through a high school education and hard work, is no longer within reach of many families. And the family itself—always both the means and the ends of the American Dream—is struggling as never before. Now is not the time to downgrade the American Dream. Now is the time to rescue it. Despite the hard times so many American families are experiencing, there is reason for great optimism. America is still the place my parents were drawn to in 1956; it is still a country where people can achieve their dreams. We can restore the American Dream and expand it to reach more people than ever before. But to do so, we must set out a new direction that gives us a government with less debt and less power, an economy with more stable middle-class jobs, and families healthy and secure enough to achieve their dreams. The challenges before us are formidable, but before we start feeling sorry for ourselves, we need to remember the sacrifices that brought us to this point. Every generation of Americans before us has been asked to take bold and difficult steps to preserve what makes us special. Reforming our entitlements will be difficult, yes. But does it really compare with defeating the Nazis or eliminating Jim Crow? Imagine if our parents and grandparents hadn't risen to those challenges. Think about how different our lives would be. When I was in college and then later in law school, my parents wanted me to focus on my studies. They didn't want me working and going to school part-time. So I lived at home. My father worked as a bartender well into his seventies, long past the time he should have retired. Many of the banquets he worked were on Friday and Saturday nights. So many late nights I recall hearing the jingle of his keys at the door, well past midnight, as he returned from another ten-hour day at work. I didn't fully appreciate it then, but I know now that the sound at the door wasn't just the sound of keys. It was the sound of the unfulfilled dreams of my father's youth. It was the sound of a father whose entire life was now about making sure I would never have to go through what he went through. It was the sound of his American Dream. This story is not mine alone. It is the story of a young mother who dreams of something better for her daughters. It is the story of small-business owners struggling to survive in a system rigged against them. It is the story of a young woman who rises from homelessness and abuse to become a teacher. Hearing their stories has given me a sobering glimpse of the human toll that our failed response to the changed economy is having on American families. But it has also given me hope. It has convinced me that, despite our many differences, we are more united than our politics would lead you to believe. We are all the descendants of immigrants and slaves who refused to accept the limits of the Old World. They were men and women who took great risks and paid a great price to earn a better life. This is who we come from. Their blood runs in our veins. No one book, no one man or woman, can restore the American Dream. But a movement, focusing its principles on creative and innovative solutions for American families, can provide the starting point. And a people, eager to be more than wards of government—eager to achieve their own American Dreams—can turn those solutions into realities. I believe deeply in the conservative reform proposals presented in these pages. But what they seek to achieve—a rising, striving America for all of us—isn't partisan. There isn't a Republican Dream and a Democratic Dream. There is only one American Dream. Before us lies the chance not just to restore it, but to bring it within reach of more people than ever before. This is our chance to claim our heritage as a people who always leave behind a nation better than the one left to them. My grandparents and parents kept the dream alive. So did yours. Now it's our turn.

Chapter One
THE AMERICAN DREAM, DOWNSIZED

Jose's dad used to tell him, "You don't drown by falling in water. You drown by staying in water." So when his accountant embezzled from his architecture business he didn't dwell on the fact that he was the victim of a crime. He didn't seek revenge. The accountant was a mother of three—three kids who needed her—so Jose didn't press for jail time. He just wanted restitution. The court awarded him that restitution, but when the recession hit and Jose's firm went under, he faced his employees and took responsibility for the failure. The buck stopped with him. When you talk to him about it today, he tells you, unbidden, that he wishes he saw more of that in Washington. At forty-one, he has lost his business, and with a wife and two kids to support, Jose has had to start his life over again. He had to go back to school to get his master's degree, which he hopes will give him an edge in a competitive market. At the same time, he works full-time, leads the Boy Scout troop at his church and worries about the burden that puts on his wife, Lisa, who manages to work part-time while taking point with their eleven-year-old son and nine-year-old daughter. Adding to his troubles is the fact that grad school is expensive. A residential program, where he would sit in a classroom with other students, was out of the question. Jose managed to find a more affordable program—one of the few distance learning master's programs in architecture in the country—out of state. He takes his classes online, but once a month he has to travel 1,750 miles round-trip to

meet with his professors. He estimates he already owes \$50,000 to \$60,000 in student loans and he has no idea how he's going to pay them off, but he wants more for his family, so he'll find a way. Jose and Lisa are living, breathing refutations of one of the most unfortunate ideas to gain currency recently: the notion that Americans have somehow changed, that there is now a large number of us who would rather depend on government than work. This simply isn't true. Of course, there will always be some who would rather get a handout than a hand up. But the vast majority of Americans, like Jose and Lisa, are willing to do whatever it takes to get ahead. The flip side of that argument, however, is equally offensive. It's the idea that if you're successful—even if you're just ambitious—you don't have yourself and your hard work to thank; you have government to thank. Perhaps the most famous articulation of this view came in the summer before the 2012 election, when President Obama told a campaign audience in Virginia, "If you've got a business, you didn't build that. Government can play a role in our success, of course. The rule of law, infrastructure, access to quality education and a pro-growth tax and regulatory code help create the environment for prosperity. This is the proper and important role of government in making free enterprise work. But what President Obama, Hillary Clinton and other liberals believe goes well beyond this limited role. They believe that government doesn't just create the environment for prosperity; they believe it is its primary driver. And they believe that the one thing struggling Americans need or want most is a government check. In this view, the government safety net isn't a temporary bridge to a better life but a permanent way of life. Politically, this can be a compelling agenda. When people lament the quality of our schools, it can be an effective talking point to say how much you want to spend on education, as opposed to empowering parents with more choices. And when the struggles of people like Jose and Lisa come up, it can be a rewarding position during an election to propose to spend money to lower interest rates on student loans or to offer government-subsidized health insurance, rather than encourage innovation and competition to bring prices down. The problem with this approach, however, is that in the end it just makes Americans feel better while they're clinging to a lower rung of the economic ladder. It doesn't help them rise. Like a record number of Americans during the Obama presidency, Lisa and Jose considered government assistance when the recession hit and their business failed. For a while, they weren't sure they were going to be able to keep their house. Jose is grateful the help is available. But what he really wants is to get his degree and be able to provide for himself and his family. He is frustrated that the assistance he gets doesn't help him do that. What's more, he sees government tipping the scales against his success. He used to dream of starting his own business again after getting his degree, but these days he's not so sure. "The truth is, right now I am very cautious about embarking on that journey again," says Jose. "I don't believe that the rules are on my side to succeed." A few years after his business failed, he and Lisa tried to start another business, but the cost of insurance and benefits forced them to, as he says, "bring them on as independent contractors, without tax withholding or benefits. Since then, the prospects for businesspeople like Jose and Lisa have only gotten worse. The regulations placed on small-business owners have grown so burdensome that Jose now finds himself tempted by the idea that he might be better off working for someone else for the rest of his life rather than try to build something of his own. "I have no idea what's being mandated or what problems we could run into," he says. "How can anybody move forward with blind faith?" Among the challenges people like Jose now face are the realities of a new economy that is fundamentally different from the one his parents—and my parents—encountered when they came to America decades ago. The opportunity to better yourself no matter who you are is something that has appealed to Jose about America since he came here as a child. But now, like too many Americans, Jose feels that, even though he is working hard, that sense of limitless opportunity is slipping away. "The American Dream is kids doing better than their parents," he says. "I look around and I really feel like we're going backwards." Americans still want to work, achieve and get ahead. Liberals have failed to adequately appreciate this, and conservatives have failed to adequately support it. What America needs now is a conservative movement that understands the challenges people like Jose and Lisa face, and offers bold and relevant ideas to help them thrive in a changed economy.