

## REVIEW OF *DISILLUSIONED*

Possibly I should have gone for the text version instead of the audiobook. Herold does a good job narrating it himself, but the way the book jumps around in time and space made it easy for me to get lost whenever I wasn't giving it my full undivided attention.

But the book's basic thesis was eye-opening for me. Herold describes a cycle in which American suburbs are built on debt and government subsidy and then fall into crisis due to chronic underfunding (from e.g. an unwillingness to raise taxes). Then those residents (or descendants) who have the financial ability to escape—thanks in part to the ways that the municipality's unsustainable benefits helped their families accrue wealth—move to a new suburb and initiate the same process there, leaving others to deal with the problems in the old suburb that can no longer be procrastinated. Often, the people who benefit from this cycle are white, while people of color are left holding the bag.

Herold's stories mostly revolve around schools. I don't have kids, and I often forget how large the issue of school quality tends to loom in the minds of parents. Good schools can be the primary factor drawing people to a town; when a town's finances are mismanaged, the schools can face devastating consequences. Parents' concern for their children's emotional and physical well-being and career prospects make the schools into political battlegrounds.

One thing the book shows vividly is the difference between treating a child with love, patience, and personalized support, compared with an impersonal approach. Herold relates an incident from his own childhood in which he was caught trying to steal a purse—and there were *no consequences*, because the authorities cared about him and didn't want one mistake to derail his life. Such grace is not equally available to everyone. I found it interesting that some of the Black parents in the book were particularly averse to schools using suspension as a method of punishment—presumably because it sets the student up to fall behind and fall into further trouble.