



Reset: My Fight for Inclusion and Lasting Change

Ellen Pao

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The “necessary and incisive” (Roxane Gay) account of the discrimination case that “has blown open a conversation about the status of women” in the workplace (*The New York Times*)

SHORTLISTED FOR THE 2017 FINANCIAL TIMES AND MCKINSEY BUSINESS BOOK OF THE YEAR | NAMED A BEST FALL BOOK BY ELLE AND BUSTLE

In 2015, Ellen K. Pao sued a powerhouse Silicon Valley venture capital firm, calling out workplace discrimination and retaliation against women and other underrepresented groups. Her suit rocked the tech world—and exposed its toxic culture and its homogeneity. Her message overcame negative PR attacks that took aim at her professional conduct and her personal life, and she won widespread public support—*Time* hailed her as “the face of change.” Though Pao lost her suit, she revolutionized the conversation at tech offices, in the media, and around the world. In *Reset*, she tells her full story for the first time.

The daughter of immigrants, Pao was taught that through hard work she could achieve her dreams. She earned multiple Ivy League degrees, worked at top startups, and in 2005 was recruited by Kleiner Perkins, arguably the world’s leading venture capital firm at the time. In many ways, she did everything right, and yet she and other women and people of color were excluded from success—cut out of decisive meetings and email discussions, uninvited to CEO dinners and lavish networking trips, and had their work undercut or appropriated by male executives. It was time for a system reset.

After Kleiner, Pao became CEO of reddit, where she took forceful action to change the status quo for the company and its product. She banned revenge porn and unauthorized nude photos—an action other large media sites later followed—and shut down parts of reddit over online harassment. She and seven other women tech leaders formed Project Include, an award-winning nonprofit for accelerating diversity and inclusion in tech. In her book, Pao shines a light on troubling issues that plague today’s workplace and lays out practical, inspiring, and achievable goals for a better future.

Ellen K. Pao’s *Reset* is a rallying cry—the story of a whistleblower who aims to empower everyone struggling to be heard, in Silicon Valley and beyond.

Praise for *Reset*

“Necessary and incisive . . . As Ellen Pao detailed her experiences, while also communicating her passion for the work men often impeded her from doing, I was nothing short of infuriated. It was great to see a highly accomplished woman of color speaking out like this, and hopefully this book will encourage more women to come forward, give voice to their experiences in the workplace, and contribute to meaningful change.”—Roxane Gay

“[*Reset* delineates] the very fine line that a professional woman in a male-dominated field will, at some point, most likely find herself treading: ‘Is it possible that I am really too ambitious while being too quiet while being too aggressive while being unlikable?’ . . . The genteel chauvinism of the enlightened elites at Kleiner Perkins . . . carried with it the sting of betrayal. They promised her a meritocracy and gave her a glass ceiling instead: ‘It just wasn’t fair.’ She’s right.”—*The New York Times Book Review*

Reset: My Fight for Inclusion and Lasting Change Details

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Shelby M. (Read and Find Out) says

Won another Goodreads giveaway!

Stephanie Donahue says

Honest and well written book about Ellen's experience with gender discrimination in the venture capital industry. I could relate to some of the challenges and the struggle to know how to handle them. I appreciate that she can acknowledge her mistakes as well. This isn't a feminist 'men are terrible people' kind of book - she also acknowledges the men who were supportive throughout her career. It's a good read and inspired me to do more to support other women, especially mentoring those just getting started in their careers.

Melissa says

What heights might we have reached as a society, what technologies might we have already developed, where might we be if we simply believed that women are as good as men at everything we believe men to be good at? I'm not positing that we'd be living in some utopian Themyscira or that women are capable of solving all of the world's problems, but honestly - what might we have already accomplished as a species if our culture wasn't so invested in protecting men's ability to have business meetings in strip clubs, to force women to stand aside despite their talents just so men can tell sexist, dumbass jokes in the workplace?

Mehrsa says

It's too bad you can't win a law suit for the most pernicious forms of sexism--the exclusion, the vulgar comments, and the general unseen forces of sexism that is at the root and in the branches of practically every male-dominated sector. But no, you have to specify a bad egg and a specific line of causation that led to harm. Pao writes a convincing narrative showing how pervasive sexism is in tech. But it's not a scandalous narrative and it's not at all surprising to any woman who has every worked in a male-dominated field. But for that, I applaud her. Nothing harrowing happened to Pao, but I am 100% convinced that her story is 100% accurate and just the tip of the iceberg. Particularly in this #metoo moment, I hope to see many more stories like this and maybe even decide that the behavior is unacceptable. Go Pao and others!

One of the most interesting tidbits in the book for me was how all these tech billionaires have a fear of the end of the world and are building themselves bunkers all over the world. They think they will be hunted in a coming race/class war. This makes me happy because I love that they live in fear understanding that their fortunes are undeserved and they fear that the rest of us will come for them. It makes me angry because we will never come for them. They will keep their carried interest loopholes, keep building 500 million dollar bachelor pads and keep excluding women and minorities from the levers of power

William Moses Jr. says

I came to know who Ellen Pao was when she was the interim CEO of reddit. At that time, I learned that she was the evil CEO who fired Victoria, a much loved /r/IAMA community manager, and was trying to limit the freedom of a community. The Victoria incident pissed me off, but honestly, I was happy that she got rid of subs like /r/fatpeoplehate. And then it emerged much later that she wasn't the one who messed with Victoria. Instead, the former founder of reddit, Alexis Ohanian, was behind that and conveniently let her take the fall for it. The above was enough reason for me to be interested in her life.

And then I found out that she filed a gender discrimination lawsuit against a major VC firm in the Valley. Intriguing.

And then I found out that she wrote a book where she talks about inclusion and gender discrimination. Hmm, not so interested. Wait, but why? Well, I have seen a lot of articles of late by people that read like rants about how the world is against them and everything wrong in the world is to be blamed on straight white men. That has turned me off from several books and people. I understand that there are problems and discrimination exists in some ways and something should be done, but I utterly dislike rants that attempt to polarize me against an entire group....in this case, straight white men. So, I almost didn't read this book, but I figured, what the hell, let's give it a shot.

With all that in mind, I can clearly say that I loved this book. No, I don't agree with everything Pao says, but I truly appreciated the even-handedness of this book. I got a look into her life (interesting), a look into the culture of VC firms (interesting), a look into her stint at reddit (very interesting to me, tbh), and a look into why she felt discriminated against (very interesting). The feeling I got from her is not that of a whiny person desperately seeking attention, but rather that of someone who worked hard, got the short end of the stick, realized that many people in her situation faced the same issues, and went and did something about it. I appreciate her for what she has done. And I appreciate this book for really giving me a visceral understanding of what it feels like to die a death of a thousand cuts. My blood boiled while reading several parts of this book and I was well and truly enraged. But in the end, what she did mattered. If for no other reason than to convince this one reader that gender and color-based discrimination is not yet a thing of the past.

Mike Zickar says

Ms. Pao details her rise and then fall in the tech world, telling candid stories of success and failure, and calls out the many ways that men control the levers of success in the tech industry and business at large. These stories include big and small instances of discrimination and exclusion that contribute to a climate that makes it much harder for women to succeed.

This is actually a beautiful book that I hope gets a wide audience. Throughout much of the book, Pao details how her male colleagues describe her as cold and negative. She writes that their constant badgering and harassment led her to act like this. In this book, Pao comes across as somebody who has really found her mission, which is to promote more inclusion in the workplace, thus helping people who have been shut out of the corridors of power as well as helping organizations by getting more out of people who haven't before

been allowed to shine.

I really enjoyed the book and devoured it quickly.

Jess Johnson says

This took me a long time to finish - perhaps because some of it just resonated a bit *too* well. While I respected Pao before reading it, it really hit me how hard she struggled after reading it and just how resilient she was. Having dealt with some discrimination and gaslighting in the past, I felt like it nearly broke me when people kept telling me the problem was me. When HR told me "Why would he hire women if he didn't treat them well?" it felt like the onus was on me to justify someone else's bad behavior. I wanted to curl up in a small ball when I heard that and I have no idea how Pao just kept showing up and pushing through that.

Really recommend reading to understand the depths the absurdity she went through. The end attempts to start towards a resolution but is, in many ways, incomplete because the struggle is still real. The book poses a lot of questions for which we just don't have easy answers.

Jean says

I first heard about Ellen Pao when our local paper covered her lawsuit against her employer Kleiner Perkins Caufield and Byers for gender discrimination. It was no surprise that she lost the case.

This book primarily discusses her case of gender inequality in the science and business world. Pao has her degree in engineering from Princeton, a law degree from Harvard and an MBA from Harvard. Pao describes the problem women have in male-dominated fields. She says ambitious women are seen as aggressive. I have found this is a common theme in many books about gender inequality. As a female scientist I also have been subjected to many of the various tactics described in the book. I am much older than Pao so what we faced in many ways was far worse than she encountered. I remember in high school having to fight the school administration to be allowed into science classes. Then I was the only female in the class.

Pao tells of her life as a child in Maplewood, New Jersey growing up in a high-achieving Chinese immigrant family. She tells of her education and life in the business world. She also describes the treatment she received from men during and after her lawsuit. The last part of the book is about the work she is doing and the organization she has started to create diversity in the tech industry.

The book is well written. The pernicious misogyny she describes is a common problem faced by most women over the years and it only gets worse the higher women try to climb in their field.

I read this as an audiobook downloaded from Audible. The book is almost eleven hours long. Emily Woo Zeller did a great job narrating the book. Zeller is an Audie nominated narrator and has earned multiple Earphone and SOVRS awards. She also received Audiofile magazines Best Voice Award in 2013 and 2015.

Trish says

I venture to guess that anyone reading Ellen Pao's personal experience about the discrimination she alleges at the hands of partners in the Silicon Valley venture capital firm Kleiner Perkins will find something in it with which to identify. I don't expect anyone disbelieves her account. The cliquish melodrama of board meetings or the exclusionary after-hours drinking and strip clubs will be familiar to many, not all of them women. The truth is, the watch-your-back lifestyle of partners out for themselves in a corporate environment can get pretty ugly, particularly when large amounts of money are thrown about.

Pao is just one of the first women to document how such exclusionary behaviors affects so-called attempts to diversify management away from white men who probably [should] feel a little uncertain about sitting atop a corporation that is supposed to have its hand wrapped around the zeitgeist. But any uncertainty these white men feel about their position is no excuse for discrimination based on sex, color, sexual orientation.

Let's face it: Ellen Pao is one very special individual, but she's not going to change American corporate culture all on her own. She merely points out how childish corporate culture can become when adults with family responsibilities and an obligation to think outside the box and be challenged in their thinking try to find ways around those obligations.

Ellen goes through whole sordid, tiresome saga of being given seats in the back of the room, not being invited to business dinners (or even some business meetings!), of being asked to get the coffee or pass the cookies, chapter and verse, yada yada, but here it is, bluntly:

"As my time in venture wore on, more and more I began to notice my colleagues' desperate unwillingness to depart from what they knew. The fear seemed, to me, to come from social anxiety. Almost all these men—and they were nearly all men—were awkward with each other and filled the awkwardness with clunky, inappropriate conversations. They might spend a full hour discussing porn stars and debating their favorite type of sex worker...Some would check out and flirt with the much younger administrative assistants—half to a third their age—and some would make racist jokes that weren't funny...Or sexist jokes...week after week after week, and sometimes more than once in the same day."

I will take a stab at suggesting that we've all been there...in high school. Ellen Pao grew up Asian American in a white world. She knows all about different. She knows about Asia *and* she knows about America. Not exclusionary. Not arrogant. Not, in fact, entirely sure of herself, despite three IV-league degrees in engineering, law and business. But she's had enough of the chortling adolescents with sexual hand gestures—in school *and* at work.

Pao's loss against Kleiner Perkins may define her, but not in the way the partners thought. Ellen Pao is not only a star, but a thought leader. At the end of this book detailing her discrimination case against the venture capital firm Kleiner Perkins, she writes of work done as CEO of reddit. They were one of the first internet firms to take down user content that was anti-social, hate speech, pornographic, or harassing. Those are difficult decisions to make. No other company was able to make that decision until she had. After reddit she set up a venture, Project Include, to help early- to mid-stage tech firms diversify their leadership and management teams. She acknowledges change is hard, that it won't happen on its own, and that lessons her team has learned can be useful for firms wanting to start but who are overwhelmed with choices.

This book is not merely Pao's side of the Kleiner Perkins lawsuit. It is Pao's take-aways from that soul-crushing experience. This book is how you know this woman is going to power up and over any obstacle in

her way. The thing she seems to understand is that diversity is, well, diverse. Not everyone thinks alike. That can divide a group, but Pao is betting that making people feel comfortable speaking out, contributing, and showcasing their special talents will bring a cohesiveness that will make the group succeed. Let's hope so. Be prepared for something radical. And watch this woman. My money's on her.

Some extremely nasty commentary took place in the media before, during and after the Kleiner Perkins lawsuit, including this somewhat absurd piece in *Fortune* by Fox News contributor and now *Fortune* executive editor Adam Lashinsky and Katie Benner. The authors point out a real logical inconsistency: that Ellen Pao's "jaw-dropping" and "bold" lawsuit against Kleiner Perkins "flew in the face of past criticisms levied against her by Kleiner partners — that she was passive, that she waited for orders, and that she was risk-averse." Pao answers all the questions raised in this article fully and adequately, even eloquently, in this book. As I contend, I've seen these behaviors before. Theirs don't make sense. Hers do. I'm with her.

Roxane says

I was really interested in this story about a highly accomplished woman of color negotiating the white male-dominated tech industry, having followed Pao's story in the news. Overall, I wanted the book to be more rounded. There were certain moments and observations where I wanted Pao to sit and reflect more, tell us more. I wanted to see more of an acknowledgment of her privilege, which in no way negates the discrimination she faced at Kleiner Perkins but at times, it was like, "I went to Princeton and I went to Harvard and my husband and I have plenty of money," and it's like, girl, reflect on that a bit, perhaps, and what it has allowed you, and then imagine what it is like to be part of the tech industry without those blessings with more than a sentence or two.

That said, this is also a well-written, necessary and incisive look at how pernicious misogyny is in the tech industry and the culture at large. As Pao detailed her experiences while also communicating her passion for the work men often impeded her from doing, I was nothing short of infuriated and overwhelmed because in so many ways, the misogyny she faced seems so ingrained, so pervasive, so constant, that it is hard to imagine the industry overcoming it. It was great to see a woman speaking out like this and hopefully this book will encourage more women to come forward, give voice to their experiences in the workplace, and contribute to meaningful change.

Jen says

While reading, the meta-processor in my head pondered how difficult this book must have been to write. I, like Ellen, identify as introverted and private – and this book is such a deeply personal story, one that takes courage to tell. At the same time, some of the best memoirs are actually the by-product of deeply emotional healing writing. With Ellen's story being made available for others, I hope it will inspire so many more to join the path towards progress and inclusion.

I'm taking this quote with me, from the epigraph:

"If you are free, you need to free someone else. If you have some power, then your job is to empower somebody else."

Joerg Rings says

Let's bring out the critic first: Especially in the first third, the autobiographic narrative is a bit uneven. Well, but even so, it is honest, and powerful, and very thoughtful.

This is a testament to the horrific misogynistic world of both law and tech, documented with meticulous care; and makes the fact she lost her law suit both less and more surprising.

May the "Pao Effect" keep on going and burn down the patriarchy!

Sean Massa says

This is a powerful telling of Ellen Pao's story. I'm glad she was able to tell it freely.

This book is a necessary part of understanding the discrimination issues we're still facing today.

Everyone should read it.

Doug says

This book should be read by anyone who has ever worked with other people.

Alana Benjamin says

"Informing ourselves on all facets of the challenges we face is the first step to understanding how to overcome them"

Ellen Pao started her career in tech in the 90s. In 2005, she was recruited to join Kleiner Perkins, one of the prominent venture capital firms. Her experience at the firm ultimately lead to her highly publicised discrimination lawsuit. After working at Kleiner, Pao worked briefly as Reddit CEO where she oversee some of the more significant changes in handling online harassment. This lead her to her current career as a diversity and inclusion activist and tech investor.

This book is nothing short of courageous. I refrain from calling it a memoir because it is very much structured to be a reflective re-telling of her discrimination case against Kleiner Perkins, her controversial exit from Reddit and her work as a founding member of Project Include. The book is very straightforward and holds no punches. Pao made it very clear who were her allies and who were her adversaries. I truly appreciated that she recognised and articulated that she was in an unique position to take action and not everyone in the same position can afford these options for many reasons.

Although her accounts are very matter of fact, you feel the emotion of the story. She goes into excruciating detail of the instances of misogyny and discrimination during her career. These accounts were particularly infuriating to read because you have probably experienced or bear witness to similar unchecked behavior. However, Pao did pepper hindsight advice throughout the book as well as give concrete steps on how to navigate difficult workplace cultures at the end. The way she addressed how the negative circumstances

impacted her personal life was truly heartbreaking.

There is a lot of repetition to make the connections and at times making the book dry in some areas. It was also surprisingly factual without injecting too many negative feelings towards her adversaries. At times, I wanted her to express more angry at certain situations, including (view spoiler)

This book is painfully very relevant but shockingly, did not make the New York Times Bestseller list. This is a #Metoo story that needs to reach the masses. Please slip this book into the hands of every graduate about to embark on their career trajectory
