

ALTAR TO AN ERUPTING SUN

A Novel by Chuck Collins

Altar to an Erupting Sun is near-future story of one community facing climate disruption in the critical decade ahead. Rae Kelliher is a veteran environmental activist and pioneer in the death-with-dignity movement. Facing a diagnosis of terminal illness, she engages in a shocking suicide murder, taking the life of an oil company CEO for his role in delaying responses to climate disruption. Seven years later, Rae's friends and family gather at her Vermont farm community to try to understand her violent exit and the rapid social transformations around them.

Praise for the Writing of Chuck Collins

"Collins not only talks the talk but walks the walk . . . this is a worthwhile book to read, digest, and share."

—*Publishers Weekly*

"Written in a well-crafted, conversational style, Collins' latest is a gentle yet clear reminder to readers that real change starts by looking outside ourselves and making even the smallest connection with others."

—*Booklist*

"A call to action for America's wealthy and a warning shot across the bows of their yachts if they fail to act, *Born on Third Base* offers a clear and compelling case for why the privileged and powerful must act to reverse widening inequality of income, wealth, and political power in America."

—Robert B. Reich, former US Secretary of Labor

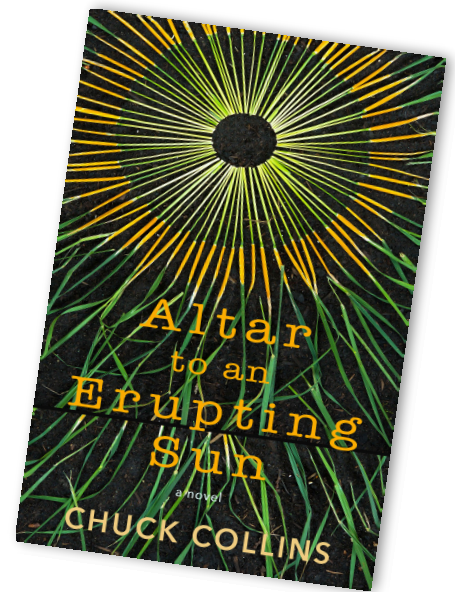
Praise for *Altar to an Erupting Sun*

"... a gift to our remembrance and inspiration for the future."

— Winona LaDuke

"... We need more books like this one."

— Kim Stanley Robinson



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Chuck Collins is the Director of the Program on Inequality and the Common Good at the Institute for Policy Studies where he co-edits *Inequality.org*. His most recent book, *The Wealth Hoarders: How Billionaires Pay Millions to Hide Trillions*, is about the wealth hiding industry (Polity 2021). He is the author of the popular book, *Born on Third Base: A One Percenter Makes the Case for Tackling Inequality, Bringing Wealth Home, and Committing to the Common Good* (Chelsea Green) and, with Bill Gates Sr., *Wealth and Our Commonwealth*, (Beacon Press), a case for taxing inherited fortunes. Collins was featured in an interview in *Sun Magazine* and also in an interview on *Fresh Air* with Terry Gross. Collins is an expert on U.S. inequality and the racial wealth divide and the author of numerous reports and several other books, including *Is Inequality in America Irreversible?*, with Mary Wright, of *The Moral Measure of the Economy*, a book about Christian ethics and economic life. He is a founding board member of the Patriotic Millionaires. *Altar to an Erupting Sun* is his debut novel.



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Praise for *Altar to an Erupting Sun*

"A fascinating look at movements and the people who make them up, in the spirit of Kim Stanley Robinson's *Ministry for the Future*."
–**Bill McKibben**, Schuman Distinguished Scholar, Middlebury College, and the author of *The Flag, the Cross, and the Station Wagon*

"This novel is indeed a gift to our remembrance and inspiration for our future. Collins tells a story of a movement, or movements, which need to be told. I know these stories, love them, and have lived many of them with characters bigger than life, more courageous than any heroes of the past, and a commitment to Mother Earth."

–**Winona LaDuke**, Honor the Earth, author of *All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life*

"This is a very provocative book, dangerous in the way it makes us think hard about what we might need to do to save Earth's biosphere, our only home, from a mass extinction event that is being caused not by all of us, but by some of us in positions of power. We have a wonderfully articulated rhetoric for arguments in words, but we don't have good rhetoric for actions in the world. What would work best? What would be morally justified in the fight for the Earth, our extended body? These are the questions that Collins explores here, and as we live these urgent questions through his characters they tug at our hearts and minds. We need more books like this one."

–**Kim Stanley Robinson**, author, *Ministry for the Future*

"As one who has long admired Chuck Collins's superbly documented writing about inequality, I followed him into a fictional past and future with fascination and enjoyment. He is as bold and on-target in this book as in his others. The story may be fanciful, but the issues are the most serious we have ever faced."

–**Adam Hochschild**, author of *King Leopold's Ghost* and *American Midnight*

"The future imagined in *Altar to An Erupting Sun* bursts with strategy and celebration, spirituality and sacrifice, ritual, and reverence. It is not magic or cataclysm or a zombie apocalypse. You'll weep because the writing is beautiful, the people feel real (and in most cases, they are thinly novelized versions of real people), and the vision is sound. This book has it all: a recipe for poppy tea, a short history of U.S. imperialism in the last 70 years, highlights of the nonviolent resistance that met it every step of the way, a compelling argument for green burials and funeral services for the living. You will fall in love with these characters, which will help you love your friends and yourself a little more. You will remember to revere this planet. You will mistrust the state a little more. You will feel called to make an altar to those you have lost. You will want more worship in your life (even just a little)."

–**Frida Berrigan**, activist and author of *It Runs in the Family: On Being Raised By Radicals and Growing Into Rebellious Motherhood*

"*Altar* introduces us to Rae Kelliher, a richly drawn heroine who accompanies us through some of the most dynamic and creative social movements of the past half-century, including present-day efforts to avert climate catastrophe. Collins weaves a riveting near-future story about the power of organized people to build resilient communities and thrive in harmony with the earth. As a lifelong campaigner, his inside depiction of grassroots movements transcends stereotypical activist caricatures and reaffirms that people make history together. A welcome antidote to a future vision of unconnected individuals and apocalyptic wastelands. This novel reminds us of the human potential to face the future with humor, possibility, and imagination."

–**Tope Folarin**, Executive Director, Institute for Policy Studies, and author of the award-winning novel, *A Particular Kind of Black Man*

"Collins' warm, affecting tale raises an important question, one well worth our pondering: Is there any measure or action that is too radical, too extreme if truly necessary to save the planet and its people? I love this book. Its characters will live with me now."

–**James Gustave "Gus" Speth**, author of *They Knew: The U.S. Federal Government's Fifty-Year Role in Causing the Climate Crisis*, former Dean, Yale School of the Environment

"Literary fiction can be a tool for exploring distressing moral choices forced upon us by social or environmental circumstances. In the best instance, we get both good fiction and moral insight. That's certainly the case here: Chuck Collins tells a gripping story that bravely probes the questions: How far would you go to stop climate change? What might be the unanticipated results? And, must you try anyway?"

–**Richard Heinberg**, Senior Fellow, Post Carbon Institute, author of *Power: Limits and Prospects for Human Survival*

"As a person raised in an activist household, *Altar to Erupting Sun* brought back a flood of memories of the campaigns and political moments of my childhood. The story also brought into focus the life choices of my adulthood and their political context. This is contemporary fiction at its best, delving into the personal amidst the political while providing a radical yet realistic hope for the future."
–**Dedrick Asante-Muhammad**, author, activist, and Chief for Race, Wealth, and Community in the National Community Reinvestment Coalition

"Chuck Collins starts with the unthinkable and rewinds the clock to explore what leads people to extreme actions, and the consequences of those decisions. Along the way, he asks us to question what crimes are acceptable, and what actions are judged harshly—and by whom. *Altar To An Erupting Sun* is an intentionally provocative book. It will leave you with questions. It will provoke thought, and hopefully conversation. If you're lucky, you'll find yourself discussing what really matters at this critically important time in human history."
–**Rivera Sun**, author, *The Dandelion Insurrection*

"*Altar* offers a moving history lesson on several decades of social movements through the life of a character that is a lovable cross between an activist Forrest Gump and a modern-day Dietrich Bonhoeffer."
–**Tim DeChristopher**, climate activist

"Chuck Collins has inspired me my entire adult life, and this book is no different. We need stories like this, a great tale about brave people who push up against the powers that be and sometimes make them budge."
–**Vicki Robin**, author, *Your Money or Your Life*, and host of the podcast, "What Could Possibly Go Right?"

"Pressing with passion and energy, Collins takes readers into the heart of the beauty and contradictions of social movements. What does it mean to be an activist when the world is falling apart? And what is the activist's moral responsibility? These are vital questions that *Altar* helps us explore."
–**May Bove**, Executive Director, 350.org

"I am a longtime fan and great admirer of Chuck Collins' work. And now a near-future novel that charts new territory in envisioning a relocalized, democratic, sustainable, and resilient future. Wow!"
–**Frances Moore Lappé**, author, *Diet for a Small Planet*, cofounder, Small Planet Institute