

WORK WON'T LOVE YOU BACK

**Reading
Group Guide**

How
Devotion to
Our Jobs Keeps
Us Exploited,
Exhausted, and
Alone

**SARAH
JAFFE**



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1.** Throughout this book, Jaffe discusses how much of what we love about work is not the work itself, but rather the quality of life afforded by it, our coworkers, or rare moments of pleasure. Do you like your job? Did reading this book change your feelings toward work?
- 2.** Have you experienced burnout? How did you deal with it?
- 3.** Jaffe writes widely about different kinds of unions, as well as their historical victories and losses. Do you belong to a union? How has it protected you and your coworkers?
- 4.** Jaffe writes that when work “demand[s] our love along with our time, our brains, and our bodies,” our relationships and lives suffer. Can you relate? When have you had to sacrifice personal well-being or social time in order to be seen as a good worker, or to survive?
- 5.** In the introduction, Jaffe writes about the process of outsourcing jobs from the United States and western Europe into poorer countries, as well as the flows of migrants from colonized nations into the United States seeking work. How did neoliberal capitalism shape these global patterns? Does this argument change how you think about working conditions outside of the United States?
- 6.** Throughout the book, Jaffe calls readers toward collective action and organizing. After reading this, what kinds of actions do you want to take to make your working conditions better for you and fellow workers?
- 7.** In Chapter 1, Jaffe writes that the family is an economic and political institution, and that women do “reproductive labor” within and outside of the home. Growing up, who did the maintenance work of cleaning, cooking, and providing care in your family? What have you observed about reproductive labor in your current household?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS *continued*

8. Jaffe discusses the various ways that anti-Blackness, white supremacy, and misogyny harm the most marginalized workers in every field, from service work to social work, from academia to athletics. What are some of the ways you've experienced or witnessed these dynamics in your own workplace? Have you been able to combat them, whether collectively or individually?

9. Throughout the book, Jaffe challenges the distinctions made between "skilled" and "unskilled" labor, especially as it relates to the qualities we tend to believe are innate for "women's work" or for "men's work." What are some skills you have had to learn, or unlearn, to do your job? Where do you see these binaries enforced in your own life? Whose labor do these binaries view as more or less valuable?

10. In the conclusion, Jaffe points to the reclamation of public space in the spirit of liberation as essential to contemporary social movements. Have you ever been in spaces where you get to slow down, be present, and connect with other people—where you can begin to glimpse a vision of society outside of, or after, capitalism? How did it make you feel?

11. What surprised you most from this book?

12. As Jaffe asks in the conclusion to this book, what would you do with your time if you didn't have to work?